The Expression and Constraint of Human Agency Within the Massively Multiplayer Online Games of World of Warcraft and Eve-Online: a Comparative Case Study

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Abstract

This research aims to explore the human and nonhuman means by which human agency in MMOGs (Massively Multiplayer Online Games) is governed and negotiated. In this thesis a theoretical framework incorporating three theoretical perspectives is adopted to cope with the composite virtual, technical, and social 'spaces' of MMOGs.

The spaces of the MMOG are situated within Bourdieu's theories of field and capital, while the strategies and position-taking by actors within these fields are framed in a post-Foucauldian dialectic of governance, with particular emphasis on themes of control and surveillance. Finally, the complexity and agency of MMOGs in comparison to the architecture of the traditional panoptic institution, as arrays of interrelated technical objects, is accounted for by incorporating an actor network (ANT) perspective on non-human agency, with specific reference to Madeline Akrich's 'De-Scription of Technical Objects'.

Participant observation has been selected for the methodological approach to data collection for this study, conducted in two month-long participant observation periods in two vastly different MMOGs: 'World of Warcraft' (WoW) and 'Eve-Online' (Eve). Mixed methods are used in analysis, consisting of a grounded theory approach to open coding, supported by documentary sources. Findings are discussed in comparative mode, allowing for a greater level of understanding of the human and nonhuman forms of governance and the different impact the coded game environment has upon human agency.

Key findings highlight that the most significant forms of player agency and governance in each case are those are those negotiated by players, through obtaining authorial control over the coded rules that define the gameworld, despite publishers' vast power to define the gameworld through inscribing the code itself. These player-mandated practices of governance are usually framed as game play, and as they may be negotiated, their form and function are complex and shifting. This study aims to illustrate this by contrasting players' practices of governance and with coded rules in each case.

1.0 - Introduction

Massively Multiplayer Online Games (MMOGs) are complex socio-technical systems and commodified cultural products which utilise contemporary computer-mediated-communications (CMC) technologies and design to facilitate interaction between humans over the internet in the form of game play. As human agency within MMOGs must be translated through these technologies, action within MMOGs - their 'gameworlds' players act in - is entirely digital. Thus, in participating in MMOGs, humans enter into a heterogeneous network of non-human agents which both act as a medium for their actions, but this process also innately shapes them. As a result, in any context pertaining to computer mediated technologies, human agency is thus never entirely human, but circumscribed by the non-human actors which facilitate humans' use of these technologies.

In this manner, human agency within the setting of MMOGs - the spatial 'gameworlds' they construct - is preconfigured to match the affordances granted to humans in these settings as 'players'. Thus, MMOGs differ in how they govern human agencies through design. As they are commodified cultural products, underwritten by economic imperatives set by their publisher, MMOGs are designed with specific objectives and tastes in mind, which may conflict with those of the players who use them. Players cannot directly contest publishers' agency to design the gameworld in this regard, except in instances where they directly negotiate the technologies which compose it, such as through cheats or 'hacking' of the computer software used to access the gameworld.

However, publishers' vision for the design of MMOGs and the allowances players take

within them are never perfectly realised. Humans must be yielded a certain level of freedom within the gameworld to negotiate its rules and game structures; in this way, the final, end use of the design of the MMOG is contingent upon players' acceptance of it. Similarly, publishers of most MMOGs (including both cases in this study) continuously amend the rules of their game or add new content to it. These changes - called 'patches' contain flaws in the publishers' assumptions inherent in their design, or they attempt to correct the flaws of previous patches exposed by players. The continuous development of a MMOG signifies it as never 'finished', and its design - and thus how players are governed in the gameworld - is in a state of constant negotiation between players, publishers, and the code constituting the gameworld and its rules.

Aware of this, publishers of MMOGs (again this includes both cases here) attempt to govern players outside the context of the MMOG in their capacity as legal individuals, in order to maintain their authorial power to constitute what defines the MMOG as a game. This serves to delimit players' legal interest with regard to their actions in the gameworld, and through the agency legal authority provides, govern the agencies of players outside it which are still relevant to the publisher's interests, which in turn often refer to the economic objectives they possess in relation to the production and maintenance of the MMOG.

Thus, the production, implementation and end use of a MMOG is an ongoing, contested socio-technical process involving many agents and frames of analysis. As a result, studying the governance of human agency within a MMOG is complex and presents a number of issues in regard to both research methods and theoretical approach. Thus, the research questions I pose in this study attempt to acknowledge and address this complexity.

In this study, I first wish to explore the means by which human agency is expressed and governed within and relating to the MMOGs of 'World of Warcraft' (WoW) and 'Eve-Online' (Eve). This analysis is carried out in a comparative mode, and in my findings chapters I stratify forms of governance into a number of dimensions that can be examined across the two cases. In addition, I examine the negotiation of these dimensions of governance, and discuss the issue of framing 'human' and 'non-human' governing agencies.

To the end of addressing these goals, I adopt a theoretical approach utilising multiple perspectives to cope with the ontological challenges the MMOG - as both a 'site' for ethnographic fieldwork and an array of technical objects - imposes upon discussion governance of human agency within and relating to MMOGs.

To deal with this problem, I construct a theoretical framework utilising three perspectives. These are: Bourdieu's concepts of the field and capital (1993); 'government', 'governmentality' and the Panopticon from Foucault (Foucault 1977; Haggerty 2006; Dean 1999) and an Actor Network Theory-informed approach using Latour's work on non-human agency (1992, 2005), and Akrich's outline of the description of technical objects (1992). This theoretical framework is presented in chapter two.

In the third chapter I present a definition for what a 'MMOG' is, and examine current research published on MMOGs which relate to my research question and theoretical framework. I also examine key issues to be considered in conducting research of

MMOGs, and of computer-mediated-communications technologies in general.

The methodological approach is introduced in the fourth chapter. I adopt a constructivist approach toward an inductive method of data collection and analysis. The data itself is coded through a grounded theory approach (Glaser and Strauss 1967) to open coding (Flick 2005). Data is collected by ethnographic means including participant observation within the gameworlds of both WoW and Eve, chatlogs, fieldnotes, and the documentary analysis of websites, messageboards, game guides, and similar texts.

I construct the fields of WoW and Eve in the fifth chapter through the framework of Bourdieu's outlined in chapter two. Eve and WoW are analysed at macro, meso, and micro levels, in which key actors, capital, and positions are identified. In this chapter particular emphasis is placed upon the micro-level of analysis. The construction of the field here is expanded to define three sub-fields at this level: the micro-level fields of game play, paratexts, and legal governance. The fields of game play and paratexts are discussed in detail, whilst the micro-level field of legal governance is analysed in chapter six.

In chapter six I use the construction of the field and findings presented in chapter five to examine the governance of human agency in WoW and Eve. The analysis of governance is directed in a stratified manner. I discuss governance of human agency through: the code and rules of each game, paratexts, player practices, and through legal documents. Finally, in the conclusions chapter, I discuss the overall findings, and reflect upon theoretical, methodological, and analytical lessons raised in the course of conducting the study, and relate these to possible further research.

2.0 - Chapter 2 - Literature Review

In this chapter I will outline the theoretical framework that will be used in analysing the expression and constraint of human agency in Eve and WoW. Multiple perspectives are taken here to this end. Bourdieu's work on field and capital is adopted to perceive and construct the different spaces of MMOGs, whilst his concepts of human capital describe action in these. This is informed by Foucault's concept of the panopticon and his work on government, and more recent critiques which extend Foucault's account for the role of modern technologies involved in governing practices. These critiques are in turn developed by Actor-Network Theory's emphasis on non-human agency, which construct the digital setting of MMOGs as a space in which technical objects wield at least as much agency as human agents. In addition, studies of MMOGs which have incorporated these theories are reviewed in this chapter. None presented here adopt a similar combined approach, but extensive work has been produced which tackles various issues of governance, control, and surveillance in MMOGs which is directly relevant to the research question.

2.1 - Bourdieu: field, capital, and symbolic violence

Bourdieu's post-structuralist theory and concept of the 'field' are key concepts in this thesis. His concept of the 'field' is fundamental here. A field may be defined as a "separate social universe having its own laws of functioning independent of those of politics and the economy" (Bourdieu 1993:162), a "space of positions in which the positions and their interrelations are determined by the distribution of different kinds of resources or capital" (Hesmondhalgh 2006:213), or a "social network of relations among objective 'positions' held by 'agents' (Bourdieu, Waquant 1992:97). Any social

formation may be described using this work, but the field is most visible and easily applied to networks founded upon specific knowledge or skills, or those which are hierarchical. Academia, art, and sport are pronounced examples to which field theory can be readily applied.

Fields must be at least partially autonomous from others in order to be considered as such. To this end the demarcating boundaries of a field are only observable through struggle between its agents, the process of which defines their boundaries. Any field which is completely subject to another is effectively part of it (Bourdieu 1999:42). However, fields must also be heteronomous with one another - that is to say, they must share enough characteristics to allow for the passage of agents and capital between them, or they are effectively dissolute from other social formations. Locating any social entity as 'within' society is to automatically assume heteronomy. Groups of heteronomous fields form social systems; groups of systems form society. Fields may reside within other fields – and all in any given social formation will be at least partially within the domain of the 'field of power' - a composite of the fields of the economy and political legitimacy (Bourdieu 1993:39).

It is important to emphasise that the structure and outward appearance of a field is the expression of relationships between its agents as they compete for, transform, and maintain their positions, rather than the work of any underlying social structures which rigidly determine social action. Bourdieu's work here takes a slight constructivist bent: fields as structures exist, but are ephemeral. Nothing exists 'as is' in the social world perceived as a aggregation of fields (Bourdieu 1993:6).

At a micro-level, a field is composed of 'positions' held by social agents who can denote

roles of certain privilege, function, or status to their bearers, and embody, require, and generate capital. Agents compete to improve or maintain their position through 'strategies' of action, the form and potency of which is determined by their 'habitus', 'capital', and the agent's initial position. Positions within fields tend to reproduce themselves, hence giving them a solidity that generates an outward appearance or structure Bourdieu (1977:72). However, occupying agents may also transform their positions or, in the process of competing, create new ones. This is of importance in that micro-scale competition and transformation of positions by agents can change the macro-level appearance and boundaries of a field.

This process is visible in Bourdieu's empirical work in his construction of the eighteenth-century French literary and artistic field (1993). He describes how the more autonomous the artistic field becomes, the broader the distinction between the 'restricted' and 'mass' forms of art becomes in turn (1993:39). Through patronage, a demarcating line emerges between artists who produce for political or economic capital, increasing the heteronomy of the artistic field with the fields of power and the economy, and artists who produce art for 'art's sake', preserving its autonomy (1993:40). The greater the heteronomy of the artistic field, the more symbolic capital becomes concentrated in 'restricted' producers of art, and thus, the legitimacy to define what 'art' is, as 'mass' produced art. Thus, the autonomy of the artistic field comes to reflect the relative autonomy of the artists who define it. This forms a duality of struggles which describe the artistic and literary field in its entirety. The struggle within the field by individual artists to maintain their autonomy by competing over the definition of 'pure' art is counterpoised by the struggle to enforce heteronomy upon the field from outside it by the fields of the economy and power (and also from within, individual artists through

mass-produced art).

Bourdieu's application of field theory to empirical studies are limited to highbrow culture that do not easily apply to contemporary popular and mass-produced media and culture in which heteronomy between cultural and economic fields is not demarcated by a dichotomy of 'pure' and 'mass' produced culture. Through industrialisation and commodification, all works produced in popular media and cultural fields are informed by economic imperatives; the struggle becomes one of degrees. Fields of media and popular culture - and MMOGs are situated in both of these - are significantly distanced from the fields which Bourdieu studied; their construction strongly varies and his work lacks a precedent to which contemporary studies of these subjects may be contrasted. Digital media and culture raise an additional issue in that they strongly differ from traditional forms of high culture with their concern to ground deep meanings" (Bennett et al. 2009:22).

Regardless of these concerns, agents, in any field, act by mobilising strategies of action to compete. These are generated by their 'habitus', and mediated by their capital. Habitus are “systems of durable, transposable dispositions” acting as the “strategy-generating principle enabling agents to cope with unforeseen and ever-changing situations” (ibid). It is a concept which reconciles the objective and distant character of the field with the subjective, irreducible, and largely ungeneralisable nature of the social agent (Siisiäinen 2000:13). Although Bourdieu's theory grants agents a limited 'quasi-conscious strategic calculation', an agent's strategies are still largely unconscious and created in accordance with a range of objective possibilities that their habitus equips them to deal with (1977:76). While such a stance may be considered overly deterministic and inapplicable to micro-level, qualitative study, Bourdieu reminds us

that one should not instinctively reject an abstract explanation for social action, as agents do not possess infinite "free and wilful power to constitute, on the instant, the meaning of a situation by projecting the ends aiming at its transformation, and that we should reduce the objective intentions and constituted significations of actions and words to the conscious and deliberate intentions of their authors" (1977:73). If the field is the self-sustained arena in which agents compete for position using strategies reducible to their habitus, then Bourdieu's system of capital represents the resources agents generate through their habitus and from their positions in order to enter and compete within it (1993:8). Capital in field theory occurs in four broad forms – economic, cultural, social, and symbolic. They are transmutable, and may be traded on the basis of equivalency, but they are not directly cumulative or commensurable with one another (Siisiäinen 2000:13).

Economic capital refers simply to market currency in all its forms. Cultural capital is more nebulous and variable, but can be considered to be the possession of culturally acceptable 'tastes', attributes, skills, or specific awards or licenses (Bourdieu 1991:14) within a field. Any form of knowledge legitimated within the field may also be mobilised as cultural capital. Social capital resides within valued relationships, (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:119), membership of social collectives and formal organisations. The measure of an agent's social capital is dependent both on the size of the network they may mobilise, and the subjective quality of the relationships within it. As a field is a setting for struggle between agents, how social capital is mobilised is reducible collective action in pursuit of individual profit. Expenditure of the capital an agent mobilises through membership of a social group is dependent on subjective belonging generated on one side, and the guarantees of profit from association on the

other. As a direct result of this, the recognition and use of social capital is directly tied to the relative symbolic capital of both parties. (Siisiäinen 2000:12)

Finally, symbolic capital is distinct in that its successful mobilisation is as dependent upon the reception of those it is used upon, as it is upon its bearer. Notions of 'reputation', 'honour', and 'prestige' may all be loosely categorised as symbolic capital. All symbolic capital must be valued by the agents subject to them in order for them to carry any objective worth in a field, and above all else, it is through the subjective sense of 'worth' that symbolic capital instils that other forms of capital become legitimised (Siisiäinen 2000:13). This argument is present in Bourdieu's analysis of the French cultural and literary field of the 19th century: he considered the field founded upon an economy of belief, supported by symbolic capital, forming a consensual legitimation that works of art its agents produced were, in fact, works of art (Bourdieu 1993:35).

Inimical to the exercise of symbolic capital is 'symbolic violence'. This is any pedagogical or coercive act exercised upon an agent with their unknowing complicity, and may be embedded in forms of capital other than symbolic - “the violence of credit, confidence, obligation, personal loyalty, hospitality, gifts, gratitude, piety...” (1977:192). In short, possession, imposition, or exercise of any 'valued' (or simply legitimated) social trait which can be utilised to direct or restrict agency. Symbolic violence may be exercised strictly hierarchically, or by the weight of consensual self-regulation of a social formation, forming a recurring loop where each individual is obliged to maintain the integrity of the wider group for self-preservation (1977:196). Symbolic violence further applies to any number of orchestrated phenomena which hinder the ability of an agent to improve their position through means which deny resources, subject them to inferior treatment, or restrict social mobility (Schirato, Danaher, 2002:25). The most

important attribute of symbolic violence is that of its own reification. Symbolic violence is complicit in the reproduction of existing order, and given it occupies moral, affective, or normative dimensions (Bourdieu 1977:191), it forms a cycle, leading to a consensual notion that the extant social order they operate is the 'natural' way of things. Once a system for reproducing forms of symbolic violence is established, such as legitimated educational institutions, there is no need for dominant agents to directly impose upon the dominated, further embedding the process. Utilised upon knowing agents however, symbolic violence is simple coercion.

Bourdieu's field theory and its related concepts are of use in this study for a number of reasons. The abstraction of human social action into fields in Bourdieu's work provides a method for comparing MMOGs possessing wildly varying attributes. Entry to and position-taking in a MMOG can thus be as the leverage of an agent's capital to enter a field heteronomous, to any of those in the physical world. The distance and objectivity Bourdieu's methods of analysis afford are invaluable, but also challenging to implement. In 'Outline of a Theory of Practice ' (1995) and most subsequent work, Bourdieu focuses upon forms of high culture - art in particular - when outlining his concepts of the field and capital. In contrast, he paid little regard to mass media, popular culture, and the role of technical objects in general, such that it raises the issue that Bourdieu's work may be only intended, or at least only useful, for application to the forms of culture he himself was interested in. This is of particular concern for the context in which I wish to situate his work.

2.1.a - Critique of field theory, and the problem of 'technology' in Bourdieu's work

Applying Bourdieu's work to the context of MMOGs raises a number of problems. The first is that of Bourdieu's development and implementation of 'cultural capital' as he defines it in 'Distinction' (1977). While Bourdieu defines the broad concepts of cultural capital, cultural production, and cultural fields, the empirical subject for these in his own research is almost unequivocally upon 'high', rather than 'mass' forms of culture and media. Bourdieu only acknowledges the cultural significance of popular culture through its demarcation from the high culture that most interests him. Television, print media, and popular music are all eschewed in favour of field studies which concern classical music, poetry, and the visual arts (Benett et al. 2009:21).

Thus, Bourdieu's concepts of field and capital are vulnerable to critique that they are relevant only to the specific forms of music, performing arts, and poetry to which informed their development. Further, as Bourdieu himself did not demonstrate how field theory is to be applied to mass media and popular culture (which unto themselves may not share the simple dichotomy of 'pure' and 'mass' he uses to delineate fields' autonomy and cost of entry) this challenge is left to authors who adopt his work for these contexts.

Prior to a televised address entitled 'On Television and Journalism' (1998), Bourdieu's work makes no mention of the mass media at all (Couldry 2003:11). Couldry describes this conspicuous omission as an epistemological 'lacuna', or gap, for he argues that the field of mass media exerts agency upon all others - similar to the field of power, but in a purely symbolic manner. The ontology of field theory cannot describe this arrangement. To resolve this, Couldry reworks Bourdieu's concepts of symbolic power and violence - coercion that is not recognised as such through shared meaning or belief of the coerced

(1991:23) - and uses it to describe the unique agency of the field of mass media to influence (but not directly control) all others. Specifically, Couldry does this through illustrating its legitimacy over the construction of meanings which constitute social reality (2003:4) through its hegemony over symbolic power, affecting all other fields in a system, forming a 'meta-capital' generated by the media field. This is capital which, rather than being situated within the mass media field itself, allows the agency to "exercise power over other forms of power" (2003:12).

The diffuse power generated by the mass media field is apparent in considering the impact of broadcast (television and radio), and more recently, digital media technologies (the internet). These allow the meanings produced in the mass media field to extend far beyond it, endowing it with the heterogeneous agency to affect all other fields within society. Thus, Bourdieu's notion that "television's 'symbolic power somehow influences what actors in particular non-media fields do (because they think media attention helps them compete against their fellow academics, artists, cooks, and so on)" (2003:8) is logically extended to account for media in general. However, while this analysis points to the product of the agency of mass media and popular culture, Couldry's work here does not deconstruct the role of media technology to this end in itself, nor the rhizomatic dispersal of the agency to generate meta-capital (individual use of the internet and mobile phones, for example). Most significantly, he does not tackle the issue that Bourdieu himself never directly discussed technology *in situ,* thus leaving its role in field theory unaccounted for. This is another 'lacuna'. The work of Sterne (2003) attempts to address this..

Sterne readily states that "Bourdieu rarely wrote about technology *per se*" (2003:369).

As such, he employs a number of discursive tricks to account for Bourdieu's omission in order to make field theory more applicable to contemporary studies involving technology. The first of these is to deny the status of 'technology' as a reified concept. Sterne argues this allows the researcher to relinquish the struggle over what does or does not constitute 'technology', allowing them to take a more sociological approach, by which technologies are the products of the social processes which constitute technical objects, and which are embodied in them. This is distinct from the perspective of Actor-Network Theory (which I will shortly address) in that it constructs technical objects as aggregated, objectified forms of social action. That is, rather than wielding agency in themselves in a given setting, technical objects for Sterne instead are deconstructed as concentrated, human, *telos*. Indeed, he utilises this approach as a means to build a social 'praxeology' (study of human action) of technology (2003:376). The second 'trick' Sterne uses to allow Bourdieu's work to analyse technology follows from this methodology.

Sterne reworks Bourdieu's concept of habitus, and uses it in conjunction with an Actor-Network Theory (ANT) approach to conceptualising the action of technology (2003:377). Combined with the above deconstruction of 'technology' habitus comes to describe the action technical objects enact in a field by embodying "habits and practices, sometimes crystallising them, and sometimes promoting them" (2003:379). Sterne combines this reconstituted definition of habitus with Bourdieu's analysis of working-class photographers, depicting their valorisation of their amateur practice through the cheap cameras they used, deliberately separating themselves from 'professional' photography (2003:372). Thus, Sterne's analysis ties technical objects to "techniques of the body, to the ways in which people learn to use and relate [technologies] to their own bodies" (2003:380).

The analyses by Couldry and Sterne here respectively try to tackle Bourdieu's shortcomings in mass media, popular culture, and technology. The analysis conducted by each author to this end illustrates the great effort involved in trying to apply Bourdieu's work to these ends, and both of their methodologies involve a vast reworking of extant concepts to render them applicable to questions which involve media, popular culture, or technology (and subjects which combine some or all of these).

Additionally, neither of these arguments explain in detail the heterogeneous relationship between the mass media and economic fields, though Couldry does acknowledge this issue (2003:16). The economic field influences the production of symbolic power in the fields of mass media and cultural industries through commoditisation of cultural products and information. Conversely, the media field influences the generation of economic capital through meanings it produces. This is of particular relevance to the application of field theory to MMOGs, as the capital, relationships, and position which entail their construction broach all both of these fields. It is thus important to acknowledge these difficulties in applying Bourdieu's work to my own research as both of the solutions offered here are partial. Even combined, they cannot fully re-conceive Bourdieu's work to allow it to describe the field and technology as they relate to MMOGs. For this reason, I directly adopt an ANT approach to technical objects and non-human agency, and concepts of 'gaming capital' and the 'paratext' from Consalvo (2007) which directly accounts for the position of MMOGs within the sub-field of cultural industries, resolving their construction both as forms of 'media', and 'culture'.

2.2 - Foucault and 'Government'

The use of Bourdieu's theory of field and capital in this study will be informed and structured by themes of control and surveillance taken from Foucault's development of the Panopticon, and his later work on government. As a structuralist work, the Panopticon largely opposes the other theory I draw upon, but this is both intended and necessary. Field and capital are useful to delineate the boundary of interest with regard to researching MMOGs, and are conceptually robust enough to conceive of actions relating to a MMOG not restricted to the boundaries of its gameworld. Foucault's work will be as a canonical text with which to frame empirical findings, and as a structured, referential example of practices of control and surveillance with which these can be referred to.

'Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison' (1977) is a historically-situated account of the emergence of pedagogic and disciplinary structures within French ecclesiastical and military institutions during the 18th and 19th centuries. Foucault's deconstruction of the discrete elements of the 'panopticon' forms the most significant part of his discourse on the topic. A novel penal system first proposed by the philosopher Jeremy Bentham, the panopticon was intended to be a prison constructed in such a way as to facilitate automated, unwavering, and undetectable surveillance of inmates through perfect obedience guaranteed by its architecture and furnishings. The physical construction of the prison was to be enough to ensure complete and total visibility of prisoners, freeing human guards from the constant task of constant monitoring of inmates. This originally took the form of a simple circular design, with a guards' tower at its centre, and the inmates' cells placed along the periphery. Each cell would be backlit by a window, rendering its contents visible while central tower would be entirely closed, only

allowing visibility through narrow slits, preventing observation of its contents from outside. Thus, the prisoner is left incapable of knowing when they are under surveillance. Inmates would theoretically become conscious of this relationship, and come to regulate their own behaviour out of fear of detection (Foucault 1977:190). Surveillance is segregated from human activity, delegated to the building itself, and at the same time moves exercise of discipline from 'outside', by the guards upon the inmates, to 'inside', by inmates upon themselves (1977:179).

The structure of the panopticon may be separated into a great number of non-human actants (Latour 1992). Taking Foucault's description of the École Militaire as an example, a number of disparate objects work in an array to impose surveillance and self-discipline upon the institution's students. Sleeping quarters had open doorways and were arrayed in such a manner that they would always face at least one officers' room. Teaching took place in lecture theatres with each student placed in a tiny, single-windowed compartment preventing them communicating with one another, and from looking at anything other than the lecturer. Lavatory doors were cut so as to ensure display of a person's head and feet, to deny anonymity. The first two examples enforce a permanent visibility and necessitate self-regulation, whilst the latter is intended to deny privacy and isolation. It is arguable however, that these furnishings merely serve as a channel for power, serving only to extend the power of human authority. This perspective conflicts with concepts from ANT which I will discuss later in this chapter, however. Regardless, it remains that the fixtures within a panopticon do extenuate the local, immediate, and personalised power human guards possess. Inmates do not self-regulate out of fear of the furnishings, but due to fear of reprisal from authorities for conduct made visible to them by the furnishings. It stands then, that there must always

be a human agent within the hierarchical network. Panoptic actants are endowed with the ability to ensure permanency of this power, and extend its reach beyond the means of any single human actor.

Human action here is typified by Foucault in a manner as structured as his description of the Panopticon itself. Concentrating particularly upon the methods by which power is exercised and extended, the 'instruments of disciplinary power' describe specific empirical practices of discipline and surveillance typical within the boundaries of a panoptic institution. These instruments, 'Hierarchical Observation', 'Gaze', 'Normalising Judgement', and the 'Examination' are used to describe methods by which discipline and regulation are exercised hierarchically, among peers, directly, and diffused and automated through panoptic structures (Jones, Porter, 1994: 81). The goal of the panoptic institution, Foucault believes, is to create 'docile bodies' - disciplined, efficient, and self-regulating individuals who will further reinforce the disciplinary structure of the Panopticon. 'Hierarchical Observation' is the automatic control exercised by a guard, tutor or officer over the action of subservient actors under their auspice with the 'Gaze' – the evaluation and regulation of activity (Ritzer, Goodman 2003:589-592). Both function through the power embodied within human authority figures. Such forms of power are legitimised, and thus their exercise is unquestioned. The human, hierarchical exercise of power is aided by the physical construction of the panoptic institution, which renders resistances and subversion difficult for those oppressed.

'Normalising judgement' is any measured regulation of an individual's activity. Using systems of minor punishment or gratification, individuals are socialised into following the institution's 'correct' modes of behaviour, and over time normalising judgement also reinforces these by repetition (Foucault 1977:180). The 'examination' is a normalising

judgement which allows the recording of an individual's actions over time through assessment and testing, permitting overseers to quantify, codify and stringently monitor an individual's 'performance' within the Panopticon. The examination also converts, quantifies, records, and stores an individual's conduct, such as through academic grades, used to evaluate an individual independently of immediate presence or action of authority, and retain judgement of them in a permanent manner. It creates 'individuality' in a documentary form, and also allows for distanced comparative evaluation and peer regulation of inmates (Foucault:1977:189).

Strict use of the Panopticon as a frame of reference for this study poses a number of difficulties, however. It is opposed to the other theoretical elements I have adopted in that its discursive elements are rigidly structured. The ontology in Foucault's conceptualisation of 'power' as it appears in 'Discipline and Punish' is not easily translated to Bourdieu's schema of capital, field, and position, nor the overriding emphasis on unstructured agency in Actor-Network Theory. The strict permanency of the relationship between 'guard' and 'inmate' in the panopticon is also a self-sustaining structure with an implied durability ANT is opposed to, and further reifies 'power' as a resource in itself.

For similar reasons, Bourdieu's concept of the field is also problematic to integrate with Foucault. Compared to the panopticon, fields are loose and shifting structures, their appearance determined through the generation and competition for positions defined by agents within them. Fields are also 'porous', allowing a flow of capital and agents through heteronomy; as stated, capital and agents must be translatable between fields for them to be defined as such. A field is theoretically capable of drastic change in

function; the Panopticon is by comparison a structured, localised, and closed space with determinate relations between the agents it contains. For this reason, I intend to temper Foucault's overly-determinate work here by combining it with more flexible concepts contained in his later work relating to government and governmentality, which is more readily capable of bridging the ontological gap between Foucault's work and that of the other theorists I utilise here.

'Government', in the Foucauldian sense, may be brusquely described as the 'conduct of conduct' (Haggerty 2006). This does not refer to any hierarchical structures of control, nor the unilateral exercise of power which the term may otherwise suggest. 'Government' for Foucault is rather a complex, stratified concept which works on several levels of analysis, and can refer equally to governance by the mechanisms of the nation-state', as it can to individual, internalised, self-regulation. Governance here is, in other words, 'rhizomatic' (Dean 1999:3) - a multivariate dialectic without a fixed analytical origin or conclusion.

The 'conduct of conduct' is a common shorthand for encapsulating the concept, but it is a vague and unsatisfying description. Government as utilised by Foucault is entirely separate from modern etymology which unilaterally identifies it with the nation-state and the mechanisms by which it exercises power. A more careful extrapolation of the meaning of Foucault's 'government' is presented by Dean;

> "any more or less calculated and rational activity, undertaken by a multiplicity of authorities and agencies, employing a variety of techniques and forms of knowledge, that seeks to shape conduct by working through our desires, aspirations, interests, and beliefs, for definite but shifting ends and with

> a diverse set of relatively unpredictable consequences, effects, and outcomes" (1999:11).

This passage contains a number of key concepts linked to Foucault's construction of government. 'Government' is the use of 'calculated and rational' for a specific, conscious goal, or *telos*. Rationality is essential to government for Foucault, as rational action necessarily involves conscious reasoning for a definitive end - a union of 'thought' and 'action'. Like the concept of 'government' it builds into, Foucault's 'rationality' is both a simplification and expansion of the term, identified as any "specific form of reasoning...which defines the *telos* of action or the adequate means to achieve it" (Lemke 2002:5). This is crucial to the concept of government; in assigning intentionality to the agent by bestowing subjective, self-determined 'purpose' on them, the human individual is viewed as always at least nominally autonomous. The epistemological breadth of this concept and of government allow for the analysis of all conduct which has a human component. Thus, a government of subjects as diverse as "populations, industries, souls, domestic architecture, bathrooms..." (1999:11) becomes possible. This was Foucault's intent for government - to create a discursive tool capable of analysing a broad range of human relationships.

The establishment and imposition of rationalities which agents govern with, and are governed by, are further subject to systems of 'morality'. Moralities are sets of rationalities which further predispose other rationalities as 'right' or 'wrong', which in turn influence governing action. Morality too, links to the idea of individual autonomy which interests government, and further disrupts any establishment of a unilateral, uncontested dispensation of power, as moral systems always function to contest (or

benefit) some governing rationalities over others. The subjectivity of moralities mean that they themselves (and in turn the rationalities they support) may be contested. Even in a relationship of 'domination', Foucault describes the agency of the dominated as 'limited', rather than negligible (Patton 1998). Morality is further significant to government as it tacitly internalises the capacity of an individual to distinguish 'right' and 'wrong' governing rationalities. This empowers the individual's capacity for self-determination, but also extends the analytical reach of governance to 'within' human agents, and not just in relation to them.

To distinguish 'external' from 'internal' moral rationality, Foucault referred to the term 'ethics'. The concept of ethics refers to individual self-governance through self-application of morality to their own conduct. This posits the capacity for both 'governor' and 'governed' to reside within a single individual in a given dialectic (1999:12). The difference between morality and ethics, and the autonomy of the self they rely upon, also form the resistance to government. Contingencies of "acting and thinking" are always at the disposal of the individual. This in itself forms the basis of Foucault's subsequent development of the concept of 'governmentality'.

Governmentality broaches the cognitive gap between 'thought' and 'action' that produce and enact governing rationalities, forming a 'thinking mechanism of power' (Lemke 2002:2). Where government is flexible and refers to governing action at any analytical level, governmentality rather posits rationalities that are shared by a given population. Governmentalities are widespread, axiomatic, taken-for-granted knowledge and dispositions, and as such, are not questioned by populations in possession of them. They function as a substrate upon which discourses of governance that population and individuals within it produce, orienting their morality and ethics, and the subsequent

rationalities which form governing action. Thus, in the example Dean provides, the governmentality of the modern nation-state is preoccupied with the sets and subsets of rationalities which combined govern its economic performance (1999:16). The properties of governmentality endow it with a more durable character than relationships described through the rhizomatic uncertainty of government. It is therefore a useful analytical tool for describing relationships which compose macro-level social structures, and was used by Foucault to discuss the concurrent, co-dependent emergence of autonomous individual and the sovereign nation-state (Lemke 2002:3).

2.2.a - Critique of the panopticon, and problems of its contemporary use

Direct, uncritical application of Foucault's panopticon to any modern study is problematic. The most immediately significant difficulty is the context in which his discourse is situated. The limited relevance imposed upon the panopticon by its anachronistic setting cannot be accounted for by labelling it 'historical'. As noted by Haggerty (2006:32-33), Foucault's "historical preoccupations were part of a project to write the history of the present as a means to detail contemporary power relations" - the weaknesses of the panopticon cannot be dismissed by recasting Foucault as a historian. Bearing this in mind, there are many different critiques of the panopticon, but I will limit discussion here to those most relevant to this study; the impact of technology upon the panoptic discourse of surveillance, and the resulting implications this has upon human agency within the panoptic structure.

The transformative effect of recent technological developments means that contemporary forms of surveillance and control cannot merely be referred to as

extending the reach of human hierarchical power and visibility. Discussion of digitalised and computerised surveillance technology is sorely missing in Foucault's work, despite the fact that it was extant in his own time (Lyon 2006:4). Further, his construction of the panopticon in 'Discipline and Punish' concentrates specific discourses of surveillance and discipline within closed brick-and-mortar pedagogic and disciplinary institutions such the École Militaire. This perspective is largely obsolete. Technology has 'deterritorialized' surveillance, freeing it from any specific locale (2006:12-13). More damaging is the disappearance of the 'dangerous classes' that were the chosen subjects of panoptic institutions to be socialised into 'docile bodies'. Today, these have been replaced by a "fashion-conscious, intelligent, educated, and well-behaved populace (Poster 1990:91).

Regardless, as modern surveillance practices are all-encompassing and dispersed throughout society in a vast number of forms and functions, their subjects are not limited solely to any particular aspect of humans or their behaviour (Haggerty 2006:33). Digital surveillance technologies have destroyed (or decentralised) the guardhouse in place of rendering human agents their own self-regulating gaolers. In doing so, hierarchies of visibility are marginalised, allowing an 'omnidirectional practice of surveillance' (2006:29). This is counterpoised to the hierarchical flow of power in the traditional panopticon, and exponentially increases both the empirical and conceptual means by which its contemporary equivalents may operate.

Given the discrepancies between modern practices of surveillances and those outlined in Foucault's concepts, an unsurprisingly large body of theory has been produced which critiques his work and attempts to update it. Often however, such efforts often remain close to Foucault's original schema, an adhesion betrayed simply by the nomenclature

theorists employ, remaining rooted in his rhetoric and analyses he employed. Thus, as Haggerty (2006: 26) notes, the 'omnicon', 'ban-opticon', 'superpanopticon', 'panspectron', 'myoptic panopticon', and many other revised iterations of panopticon signify the vast number of approaches by which modern (post-) panoptic discourse may be framed. In this thesis I intend to adopt the perspective of 'participatory surveillance' conceived by Poster (1990) and more recently developed for analysis of social networking websites by Albrechtslund (2008), as of the possible approaches, it is the most directly applicable to the context of MMOGs. However, I do argue that the presence of so many different strands of Foucauldian thought regarding the modern discourse of surveillance is evidence in itself of the enduring influence of his work, and the lack of satisfactory alternatives that have emerged.

As the empirical setting for my research is the digital gameworlds of Eve and WoW, the significance of nonhuman agents in mediating forms of surveillance and control is the most important aspect of contemporary surveillance I wish to dwell on. These gameworlds bear significant apparatuses of surveillance and regulation, and these are far enough removed from the architecture of Bentham's panopticon to require a newly-informed approach. The role of modern nonhuman agents in digital surveillance technologies has been to distance human agents from the hierarchies of power and visibility within the panoptic structure. Here, the role of human 'guards' is reduced, as humans now monitor the machines which conduct surveillance, rather than the subjects of this surveillance directly. This reduces the control human agency exerts, as a whole, over surveillance practices (2006:32). With regard to Foucault, it has the additional consequence of removing the 'three tools' of discipline from the panoptic environment, or embodying the authority these represent within autonomous nonhuman actants.

Humans' abstraction from mechanisms of surveillance or discipline also weakens those where human authority is present, as do the effects of technology-mediated deterritorialization. However, while digital surveillance technologies - security cameras, databases, satellite imaging and so forth - can monitor and store an enormous amount of information, Lyon (2006:12) argues this ultimately weakens the regulatory capability of panoptic structures. This volume of information, and the omnidirectional gaze these technologies allow for result in a rhizomatic network of power that "resists exclusionary control strategies". While Lyon retains the argument that such networks may be harnessed to impose more traditional panoptic hierarchies, his concern is that such arguments presuppose a myopic perspective that surveillance is necessarily negative. Thus, in the example he provides, Lyon argues that webcams are empowering, as they allow the individual an unprecedented l control in identity-construction and self-expression.

Albrechtslund's study of social networking websites (2008) supports a similarly positive view of surveillance technologies through the analytical lens of participatory surveillance he adopts. Participatory surveillance is a perspective which argues that panoptic hierarchies of visibility are 'flattened' in modern practices of surveillance. The negative perspective portrays this as an increased contingency of the observed to resist the gaze; the positive as 'exhibitionistic empowerment' (2008:10). In either case, participatory surveillance collapses the hierarchical structure of the panopticon, transforming surveillance within it into a mutual, transparent act that is no longer concurrent with the linear exercise of power. The deterritorialization this entails also works to 'de-institutionalise' surveillance;

> Lateral surveillance, or peer-to-peer monitoring, understood as the use of surveillance tools by individuals, rather than by agents of institutions public or private, to keep track of

> one another, covers (but is not limited to) three main categories: romantic interests, family, and friends or acquaintances."
> (Andrejevic 2005:488)

So, while the panopticon as a hierarchical, pedagogic structure is dismantled by the perspective of participatory surveillance, it is conversely true that surveillance itself is more widespread and its exercise is negotiated in complicated rhizomatic networks, for goals more disparate than the tangible, pedagogic ambitions of the institutions presented by Foucault. Albrechtslund utilises participatory surveillance in a positive manner, like Lyon, to illustrate how social networking websites allow individuals to engage in mutual observation and construction of identities in a controlled manner (2008:11). I adopt the concept of participatory surveillance in a similar vein in order to describe practices of surveillance and control in MMOGs, where Foucault's original theory panoptic of structures cannot adequately describe these.

To append the foregoing argument however, it is important to note that the weaknesses inherent in Foucault's discourse of surveillance and discipline told through the panopticon are accounted for by his later work on government and governmentality discussed above. 'Government' can be utilised for much of the same set of analyses that concern the panopticon, but as it avoids being so stringently structured, lacking a definitive empirical setting and taking more careful ontological approach to agency and power, it is more ontologically flexible. I consider the imagery and rich descriptive language inherent in the panopticon still useful. By integrating elements from Foucault's work on government, as well as the critique and improvement to panoptic theory discussed above, I argue that the panopticon can be a useful and relevant concept. However Foucauldian approach to the role of technology - as evinced in his description

of the architecture and furnishings of the panopticon - remains an area I feel Foucauldian discourse specifically lacks in, however. His focus upon rational actors works to describe objects as a medium for human agency, which limits its usefulness in this study. It is for this reason that I also integrate elements of Actor-Network in the theoretical framework here.

2.3 - Actor-Network Theory

To perceive MMOGs solely as digital environments individuals can 'visit', or to describe them as fields negotiated by agents' competition is to forget that they are also constructed and built by human designers with specific intentions. It would further be erroneous to view MMOG as 'societies' in their own merit, because of their designed orientation as 'games', and thus we must question (the telos of) designers intentions, both explicit implicit. Designers may directly engineer the purposes of a MMOG by defining the parameters of interaction players may undertake in their world, or more subtly, such as by its accompanying aesthetic themes or narratives that determine the physical and cultural environment setting of the MMOG. Thus, we must account for the uncomfortable duality of MMOGs as both artificial constructs with embedded meaning, and as virtual 'places' that act as intermediaries for social interaction. Latour's Actor-Network Theory is of use in our effort to grapple with this challenge.

Actor-Network Theory is a distinctly constructivist-orientated body of theory whose most prominent characteristic is the postulation that (Law and Hassard:1999:3). Actors are dependent not on other actors for their form *per* se, but on mutual association by which they may locate themselves relative to one another in a network. This is not to imply structure. In Actor-Network Theory (hereafter ANT), structuralist paradigms are not grand frameworks which underwrite social phenomena we may co-opt to render our

theoretical agents subservient, but are merely illusions cast as a by-product of countless social and non-social ties between individual actors in many heterogeneous networks. ANT considers social ties as inherently volatile needing renewal by the involved parties and must be subjectively valuable or necessary enough to be reinforced, or, maintained autonomously through non-human actors. Conversely, ANT argues that any consistency in attributes an entity may possess is a result of their 'performativity'. Agents are shaped as a result of their associations with other agents. However, in the process of bearing the attributes these relationships assign to them, actors are also 'performed' by them, and continue to do so for as long as they possess said attributes. It is the concept of performativity "which (sometimes) makes durability and fixity" (Law 1999:4) out of the otherwise ephemeral, rhizomatic network. Performativity accounts for the appearance of structure inherent in the enduring semiotic expression of certain people, places, and things.

Nevertheless, ANT rails against the existence of anything inherently or irreducibly 'social', as doing so is to paradoxically use the problem to provide the answer, Latour argues (2005:3). With this in mind, social phenomena are denied the privilege granted to them by 'traditional' sociology via a domain of reality in which they are supported by self-constructed and sustained laws alien to those of the material-physical world. Rather, ANT sees there may be no distinction between the two simply because it is from the material-physical world that our valued constituents of the 'social' must stem (Latour 2005:75).

The crucial element of ANT I wish to apply specifically in this study is its account of the agency of non-human actors – 'actants', for all but those endowed with a literally

human figure (Latour 1992:259). While an object will ever possess human rationality, this is not enough to deny agency. Relations, specifically human, face-to-face relations, are short-lived and require constant renewal. The fact that a modern and complex society can exist suggests that this work is maintained. ANT argues large social networks, at a societal level, are too complex to be supported by purely human relationships. However, non-human associations make such a task feasible, through agency of non-human actors from "power exerted through entities that don't sleep and associations that don't break down" (2005:70), to account for what Latour terms the 'missing mass' of social relations in positivist human-driven conceptions of society. The alternative, he warns, is to argue that the "tautological force of society is enough to hold *every thing* with, literally, no thing" (2005:71).

ANT considers the process to determine whether an object possesses agency quite simple. Does it influence another entity in any way? If so, one must consider the object an actor itself. Through fulfilling their purpose (inherent in their design), acting in a way redefined through interaction with humans or other objects, or failing to do so through disrepair or manipulation, objects will influence human agency. It is undeniable that "rails 'keep' kids from falling, locks 'close' rooms against uninvited visitors, soap 'takes' the dirt away, schedules 'list' class sessions" (2005:71) and so on. This is not to invest full causality in non-human actors – ANT concedes an object will always lack human 'intentionality', as we have mentioned - but rather to illustrate that they will always affect human actors' range of possible actions to varying extents. A person may traverse a bridge without rails, bar entry to a room by standing in the doorway, wash without soap, and attend classes where and when they please – but it is far easier to co-opt, or be co-opted by the object's agency in each instance.

It is possible to conditionally accept Latour's argument here and maintain the perspective that non-human agents function as intermediaries underwritten by conscious human action. However, this is to ignore the network of human and non-human actors involved in the design, construction, implementation, and use of every man made object. The 'social world' is not a natural occurrence, nor are the characteristics of any given object the result of chance. Designers attempt to determine the 'use' and 'user' of their creations, what ANT terms 'pre-inscription', while negotiation of actual use is either 'subscription' where pre-inscription succeeds, or 'de-inscription' where the prescribed use or characteristics of the object are rejected and redesignated (Latour 1992:261). To argue that actants are simply a backdrop for human causality is to ignore this hidden dialectic. Objects in empirical time and space will be rendered distant from designers or separated through reinscription, but an actant in a given network will still directly affect human agents regardless of who or what mediates this. ANT permits Non-human actors to occupy “shades between full causality and sheer inexistance. In addition to 'determining' and serving as a 'backdrop for human action', things might authorise, allow, afford, encounter, influence, block...” (2005:72).

In his reference to the resolution of a 'struggle' between Parisian drivers and the city's authorities we can see Latour's (1992:246) analysis of a cycle of pre-inscription, negotiation and de-scription at work. Whilst the city's motorists would not “respect a sign (for instance, a white or yellow line forbidding parking), nor even a sidewalk (that is a yellow line plus a fifteen centimetre curb)”, addition of bollards to the sidewalks prevents all reasonable attempts to flout parking regulations. The prescribed instruction of a 'no parking' signpost is easily rejected by the motion of a car, a solid block of concrete less so. Moreover, embedded in each of the objects in this instance are the

moral and authoritive power of the network of legal entities responsible for Parisian traffic law. In its rejection of distinction of 'social' from 'material', ANT does not see the agency of objects limited solely to 'physical' attributes, but the emergence of the former depending solely on the latter.

The painted line markings, the curb's demarcation between 'road' and 'sidewalk', and the bollards enforcement of this demarcation work in conjunction with an assumption that the actors they will encounter will possess the knowledge to comprehend their instruction. This is a process termed 'incorporation' (1992:246). Incorporation allows designers to delegate functions or particular agencies pertaining to an object use from within the object itself to other actors. In this instance, incorporation is achieved through the procedures a person must follow in order to be legally entitled to drive a car. It is indicative of a network involving a multitude of human and non-human actors whose associations may be traced, albeit distantly, to our current scenario involving errant Parisian drivers, bringing us to our next point. Delegation does not assume compliance. The greater the part of an object's inscription left open, the greater power an actor has to reorient its purpose from that engineered by its designers (1992:230). The specific network of associations between human motorists, human authorities, and non-human delegates of these authorities is why a single yellow line painted parallel to a curb suffices in the place of the painted slogan of 'do not park here' written a multitude of times along the length of a street in the same position.

Actants are passive in the sense that they are inanimate, but this does not prevent the inscription of moral authoritative power as permanent fixtures of the law at their place of construction in absence of its human proponents. The semiotic inscription of signposts and painted symbols carry a delegated moral authority to them by law while

in contrast the bollards serve to enforce the distinction between 'road' and 'path', through physical presence. Both are actors, both fulfil vaguely similar functions, but their respective agencies are very different.

Finally, given the inherent instability of social characteristics in the view of ANT, it is also possible for a non-human actor to lose its agency, which measured at the point at which it is rendered incommensurable with other actors – its value to other actors through which we can trace its associations (2005:77). If a given object lacks commensurability, then it possesses no associations, cannot be traced or 'translated' (Law 1999:8), and ceases to be 'social' in any way. To continue Latour's above example, signposts and painted lines carry the moral authority of the law only so long as they are obeyed by Parisian motorists and upheld by the human agents of the city's authority. Should the bulk of these motorists cease to adhere to their silent, codified demands (and should the human authorities mysteriously refrain from acting upon the ensuing crisis) they will no longer carry this authority or possess any social relevance whatsoever. If forced to give a fixed description, Latour would declare ANT a 'science of tracing associations' and in doing so it is the norm to produce large expanses of work, extracting convoluted networks from the de-scription (2005:146-148) of even simple objects, as we have discussed above. In unearthing ties embedded within objects, he discusses a number of 'tricks', which are of use in mapping the network of an object. These tricks, “invented to *make them talk*, that is, to offer descriptions of themselves, to produce *scripts* of what they are making others – humans or non-humans – do” (2005:79) are necessary to analyse otherwise silent actors.

2.3.a - Madeline Akrich and 'De-Scription of Technical Objects'

MMOGs fulfil a dual nature as digital spaces occupied by human 'players', and in doing so are also technologically complex constructs inherently made to regulate interaction within these spaces. I include Madeline Akrich's work here as it is of immense utility in untangling the mass of relationships virtual worlds weave and are woven by, through their designers, users, and other objects – the internet, in particular, as it is essential to the operation of the virtual worlds of interest to this study. Akrich's work on 'The De-Scription of Technical Objects' explores the concept of the script in great detail.

Akrich's first distinction from Latour's more general analysis on the agency of objects is her specific designation of those which are 'technical' in nature. Technical objects are created, in short, through conscious human action, and designed with clear purpose in mind. “Although they [technical objects] point to an end, a use for which they have been conceived, they also form part of a long chain of people, products, tools, machines, money, and so forth” (Akrich 1992:205). This is the hallmark of a technical object – a wealth of social associations begotten through mechanical complexity. To unveil the difference between the apparent use and the predetermined assumptions inherent within a technical object is the process of 'de-scription' which Akrich presents. A 'script' is a generalised term used to describe the relationship and range of interaction between designer, technical object, and user, which we may define as a written description of the text of how these interact with one another in a given scenario. The concept may be further defined: 'prescription' is the range of competencies a technical object enables or prohibits to actors, while 'pre-*in*scription' describes the range of competencies that an object expects of actors before its implementation in a given setting. Subscription or alternatively de-inscription are actors' acquiescence to a pre-inscription, or rejection and

negotiation of the prescription (Akrich, Latour 1992:259-61).

The practice of de-scription is necessary to trace a technical object's associations in their entirety. We go about this by recalling the relationship between the 'inner' material composition and mechanical functions of the object, and its 'outer' appearance, use, and social agencies (Akrich 1992:206). From this process, the analyst should uncover a dialectic. Contrast between mechanical function and social use of an object should enable one to see how much of the object's agency is pre-inscribed, and how much is delegated to its users. Either the object will constrain its users, or they will reassert their own agency over the object by re-inscribing its social or mechanical purpose. This is observed through the material division between 'inside' and 'outside' of the object – which parts an actor may access, and which are sealed from tampering. This serves as the negotiation between object, designer, and user over the range of affordances prescribed to each. Once the empirical form of a technical object is understood as a negotiation, rather than a calculated, one-sided predetermination, a dissection of its social network becomes possible. Put simply, “technical objects define a framework of action together with the actors and the space in which they are supposed to act” (Akrich 1992:209).

Technical objects are not created with the 'perfect' user in mind. Designers create with their own particular vision of a 'user' for their product, but this rarely matches the 'end user' who eventually co-opts the object in its empirical setting, nor does this necessarily have to be a designer's goal. Analysis of technical objects in their nascent setting – in laboratories, workshops, factories and so forth, is considered optimal for a de-scription (Latour 2005:80). This enables the researcher to view the inscription of an object in its

original environment free from the tangle of social ties it will develop once placed in its setting, and through contrast between the two, aids identification of the range of agencies, delegation, and constraint built into the object. Once placed in the pre-inscribed setting, a technical object inevitably becomes an amalgamation of 'technical' and 'social' attributes (Akrich 1992: 209). Even when an object's inscription is subscribed to perfectly, the lack of end users' contingency to negotiate its boundaries does not preclude the object's agency in the setting it has been placed in. Only total rejection of a technical object by its end users may nullify its agency in a given setting.

'Black-boxed' technology, that which is stable mechanically and possesses social ties with strong performativity is different, however. Here, the original designers are absent from the empirical setting, and the end users subscribe perfectly to the object's inscription (Akrich 1992:211). To glimpse the demarcation between the 'inner' and 'outer' functions of a technical object in these instances, the researcher must observe the links between it and its end users in cases of disrepair or at sites culturally or physically distant from the original scenario in an effort to 'break' the black box.

The outline of ANT provided here allows the conception of objects as agents and makes an effort to avoid segregation of 'social' phenomena from strictly 'material' entities. ANT can tell us, rather simply, how we may define an object as an actant. It is less clear, however, in defining an *object*. Agency is subjective, and localised singularly to the network it originates in. A given object may possess certain associations in one time and place, but wholly different ones in another, or no agency at all. It is easy enough for an ANT theorist to analyse the physical parameters of an object and the connotations it carries. Its other functions – semantic attributes not easily reducible to the object's set of pre-inscribed characteristics - are harder to pin down as ANT states that these

attributes, where they fulfil any 'social' function, are tied directly to agents associated with the object, rather than the object itself. Most problematic of all, however, is that any non-technical, non-performative attributes of an object are scattered through time and space, rendering its social values null in an ANT network. In this study, gaining even a rough idea of the topology of relations of any one MMOG as either a technical object or a 'place' is an enormous task, given the varied social, technological, cultural, and 'spatial' associations they integrate. Obtaining access to a MMOG in its nascent, unpublished state prior to being placed in the field is even more difficult, and in the two specific cases I undertake here, impossible. .

The post-panoptic relevance of technical objects in modern Foucauldian theory meshes well with ANT's advocacy of non-human agency, as does the rhizomatic approach to relationships Foucault's government entails. So long as the most structural, deterministic aspects of Foucault's work are avoided, and the above critique is maintained, contradictions inherent between the Foucauldian and ANT approaches may be avoided. Careful adherence to the concept of Bourdieu's field as structured by agents, rather than it structuring them, also minimises theoretical clashes toward this end. What the concepts taken from Bourdieu and Foucault here lack is the frame of analysis provided by Akrich's focus on technical objects - acknowledging technical objects as agents, and constructing the theoretical framework around this fact is absolutely essential, given the topic and setting of this study.

2.4 - Conclusion

In this chapter I have outlined the theoretical framework through which data collected will be analysed. Adopting the work of Bourdieu, Foucault, and ANT I intend to conduct an analysis which accounts for the difficulties of applying traditional social theory to the context of MMOGs, and through the use of multiple perspectives this entails, to mitigate the shortcomings of each individual approach to this end. I cannot argue that these are integrated perfectly, or that every ontological contradiction produced in combining these theories can be accounted for. I do argue, however, that the construction of MMOGs as games inscribed with a sense of 'place' individuals may act within, and their status as technical objects prescribed to arrange sets of rules and affordances to such individuals raises many novel social questions with regard to how people interact with contemporary digital media technologies, and the ways in which sociology may understand this. The idiosyncrasies MMOGs force upon social theory through their duality of 'place' and object' demands a multifaceted perspective. To this end, I will discuss how studies of MMOGs have been undertaken by other researchers, and the methodology I myself adopt, in the forthcoming chapter.

3.0 – Defining a ‘MMOG’ - introduction

MMOGs - ‘Massively Multiplayer Online Games’ - are a particular genre of digital game. Most games which may be categorised as such share a number of characteristics, allowing the construction of a definitive typology which defines a ‘MMOG’ as the subject of interest for this study. In this chapter I will both clarify what the game and game play pertaining to MMOGs entails, and detail characteristics typical to them in order to situate comparative study of Eve and WoW.

3.1 – Defining a 'MMOG'

MMOGs are first defined as ‘digital games’ which refers to any game "produced, distributed, and exhibited using digital technologies and are composed of what Lev Manovich calls "numerical representations" (Kerr 2006:4). Thus, as Kerr states, 'digital' games are those composed through numerical representations that are found on a wide range of technological objects. Digital games are thus situated on a wide range of digital media platforms including "arcade cabinets, on PC or MAC, on consoles like the Playstation 2, the Gamecube and the Xbox, on mobile devices like mobile phones or over the internet" (ibid.).

MMOGs are a specific genre of digital game that are distinguished through both their design as games, but also their technical attributes involved in the process of their design and placement in their field setting. MMOGs are games in the sense that each has rules and objectives delineated by the code of the game that human players negotiate in the course of game play. However, the objectives of many MMOGs are also

vaguely defined or deliberately left open-ended by their designers. In addition, most MMOGs cannot be decisively ‘won’ or ‘lost’, as most games can be. For example, completing or failing a quest in WoW does not end the game for the player. It is confusing to present such a definition of a MMOG as a ‘game’ to a person unfamiliar with them; MMOGs may more easily be described as games that are composed of many mini-games.

The possibility for different kinds of games to exist within the space of the MMOG refers to their next defining preinscribed attribute. All MMOGs create a digital, facsimile of physical space. Most contemporary examples provide visual, three-dimensional environments. There are two-dimensional and text-based MMOGs, however, such that the provision of a three-dimensional space is not a defining characteristic in and of itself. Rather, the 'space' provided must allow humans to act in a range of manners, that are preconfigured by the rules and structures which delineate it as a game. I refer to this space in the study as the ‘gameworld’. The gameworld must allow for interaction between human players, and it must allow for a (admittedly subjective) large number of players to interact within it simultaneously – the ‘massively’ portion of the ‘MMOG’ acronym. The internet and its related CMC technologies are the only feasible means by which this has been achieved to date, such that this is also a prerequisite in the definition: every MMOG takes place ‘online’ as a matter of practicality. The emphasis on the scale of interaction in MMOGs is a by-product of the set of technologies and game play design which otherwise define them, rather than a characteristic in its own right, but it is one that has become inimical to the genre through repetition. The following are advertising slogans taken from the retail boxes of a number of MMOGs which emphasise both their scale, and their orientation as games;

"You And Thousands Of Other Internet Explorers Are About To Join Forces In The World Of Meridian 59."
(Meridan 59, 1996)

"A living, growing world where thousands of real people discover fantasy and adventure 24 hours a day, every day of the year."
(Ultima Online, 1997)

"Adventure online in a world that can be populated by more than 1000 other players"
(Everquest, 1999)

"Conspire with thousands of others to bring the galaxy to its knees, or go it alone and share the glory with no one."
(Eve-Online, 2003)

"Descend into the World of Warcraft® and join thousands of mighty heroes in an online world of myth, magic and limitless adventure[1] (World of Warcraft, 2004)

Human agents act – 'play' - within the gameworld of each MMOG through avatars. An 'avatar' is the digital embodiment of the player. The range and form of the avatar's agencies are pre-inscribed by the coded design of the MMOG itself. In WoW, players create an avatar appearing as one of several prototypical humanoid high-fantasy races, while in Eve, players create an avatar derived from one of four fictional human societies. The appearance of the avatar is aesthetic; their coded game play agencies are dependent upon their class profession (in WoW) and skills (in Eve). These will be discussed in their respective sections.

A MMOG must be 'persistent'. That is, it must exist independently of any single one of its users, and may be 'switched off' at will by them – this distinguishes MMOGs from 'ordinary' digital games. This is incorporated by technical construction of a MMOG's gameworld. The software delineating the gameworld of a MMOG is hosted upon a computer or several computers – the 'server', which players' own computers connect to

using a ‘client’ program in conjunction with the internet. Thus, the persistence of the gameworld is not contingent upon players, but rather the developer or publisher who maintains its servers. This ‘persistence’ is managed in different ways: the publishers of a given MMOG will often host multiple copies of the gameworld on different servers, to serve players from different geographic regions. In WoW, each copy of the gameworld is termed a 'realm' in, and accommodates several thousand avatars (the actual number is unpublished (Blizzard-Activision 2009). Eve hosts a single aggregated server 'farm' creating a single coherent gameworld that has hosted upwards of fifty thousand concurrent avatars at a time (Guerin 2009).

Finally, these attributes that define a MMOG – an online digital space that is persistent and which many human agents act within, that is preconfigured as a game – are shared by similar technical objects named ‘virtual worlds’. It is important to distinguish these from MMOGs, as while they are extremely similar, virtual worlds do not possess the same explicit structures, rules, and goals which define a MMOG (though users may define these within virtual worlds themselves), instead providing an emphasis on creating a space for interaction between humans. ‘Second Life’ and ‘Activeworlds’ are examples.

3.1.a – Establishing the boundaries of a MMOG

If one is to examine only the technical inscription of a MMOG, a boundary of interest is easily established. The gameworld sets a clear, coded limit on action in the MMOG: avatars cannot act outside it. The gameworld itself is a meta-space between the client program used by players to access the MMOG’s servers and interrelated CMC technologies which connect the two together. These are almost always blackboxed, and

in any case the prescripted code which defines the gameworld cannot act outside it; a player cannot, for example, take their avatar from one MMOG and use it in another.

However, the coded boundary of a MMOG does not account for the agencies of human players; tracing the expression and constraint of capital which relate to (but may not entirely be within a) MMOG is a far more difficult task. Human agency naturally persists outside the gameworld, and may be mobilised to influence human or nonhuman agencies within it. Possibilities to this end however, are limited by what the coded design of the gameworld can allow. The publisher and designers similarly (as human or incorporated entities) act outside the gameworld, also influence it directly, for example by designing and implementing updates and alterations to the game code. The relevant field of the MMOG is also extended past the gameworld through technical objects such as websites, messageboards, merchandise, legal contracts, third-party tools and software which all relate directly to it. These may direct action in the gameworld by preconfiguring the scripts designers create, or influence players' action within it through uncoded means. The End User License Agreement (EULA) for example, is a document produced in relation to most commercially-published MMOGs which attempts to govern players' behaviour in the game through legal contract. Thus, what determines the 'MMOG' as the object of study for this thesis accounts for many forms of action which extend past the gameworld.

3.1.b – A genealogy of MMOGs

The construction of a MMOG thus far defines it as a term referring to a set of heterogeneous technical objects. This argument is more plausible when given context by

tracing the development of MMOGs over the last three decades, described by Taylor's work (2006:21-32). The lineage left by the prototypical virtual world, 'MUD 1' (Multi-User Dungeon 1), created in 1979, is clearly visible in the earliest commercially-successful MMOGs such as 'Meridan 59' or 'Ultima Online', which in turn influenced successive games such as Everquest and WoW. Each of these built upon and varied the original formula of MUD1, yet it still remains that most commercially successful virtual worlds to date have featured the same identikit design. Features of this include Tolkien-esque fantasy themed worlds, similar rules of play, and the emphasis on avatar progression as a central aspect to game play that can be traced back to MUD1 (Woodcock 2008) itself heavily inspired by the pen-and-paper roleplaying game 'Dungeons and Dragons' (Taylor 2006:21).

MUD1 cannot claim to be the sole blueprint for all successive MMOGs, however. Virtual worlds, which emphasise social interaction and have little in the way of codified 'game' rules emerged in the mid-eighties, and can equally be said to have informed the design of current MMOGs, despite a possessing a different goal in design. Examples include Habitat (1985), which "provided a broad palette of possible activities from which the player could choose, driven by their own internal inclinations" (2006:25), and MOO (1990) which is notable for permitting users to script new functions, objects and environments into the world, essentially placing them as its co-designers. Similarly, virtual worlds have a developmental history of their own, leading to contemporary examples such as 'There.com' (2003), 'A Tale in the Desert', (2003) and 'Second Life' (2003).

Both MMOGs undertaken as case studies here are of the former genealogy I have described However, the comparatively free reign granted to human inhabitants of

'social-oriented' worlds such as Second Life (in which users can create and modify coded scripts almost without restraint) serves as a valuable contrast illustrating how structuring the rules and game-oriented design of MMOGs are. Constraint arising from rules and boundaries games develop forms the basis for the research question.

3.2 - Key issues in Computer Mediated Communication research

The study of MMOGs raises a number of problems for the researcher. Some of these refer directly to the particular design of MMOGs themselves, whereas others are more generated to research of computer mediated communications (CMC; Hine 2000:8) technologies. I will begin by discussing challenges related to research in a CMC setting, as these are a pretext for a more specific set of problems raised by conducting research in MMOGs in particular.

The most significant issue in CMC-based research that pertains to this study is the way in which the researcher frames their subject with regard to establishing a setting. Any study related to the internet as its topic, which can focus on websites, chatrooms, forums, MMOGs and other technologies may be equally framed both as 'things' and (digital) 'places'. As Williams notes, prior studies (Rheingold 1993; Markham 1998) show how the notion of internet as a 'place' is derived from individuals' use of it for social interaction on a daily basis (2007:7). The sociotechnical aggregation of social interaction and the technical characteristics of websites or programs forms a sense of 'virtual community' which in enduring, also becomes 'place' that is not singularly reducible to either its human or nonhuman components. Contrary to this, Markham also describes how some individuals' use of CMC can be instrumental, using the internet as an intermediary tool for interaction solely between human agents. Thus, a problem

arises in how the researcher is to conduct their fieldwork, as their approach will be informed by their conception of the subject matter as either a setting, or an object.
I consider it impossible to disentangle these two perspectives. The capacity of particular sets of CMC-related technical agents (websites, chatrooms, e-mail clients, and so on) to appear as conceptual 'places' is the product of human social interaction they enable, and the meanings and end use produced as a result. However, it is undeniable that the parameters of such action will always first be prescribed and anticipated by the technology itself. CMC is a misnomer in this regard; communications technology does more than just mediate human communication - it shapes it. This is visible in simple examples: the manner and telos of human interaction in blogs, chatrooms, and social networking sites differ starkly. The inscription of 'place' is something technical objects cannot achieve themselves; however, they will influence how and for what purpose human agents do so.

A related problem to this is the 'disembodiment' CMC entails (Taylor 1999:4). The lack of direct contact with human informants in the field means the CMC researcher cannot verify their identities with any certainty, as a single individual may create any number of online personas (Turkle 1995). This in itself raises a problem of validity, in that the researcher can never be sure of the data they gather in qualitative CMC studies. Trust and a wealth of visual and physical forms of qualitative data are lost in the transfer from real-life, face-to-face setting. Even in the context of a MMOG, this remains an issue, despite the digital embodiment and spatial environment a MMOG's gameworld game provides. There is less meaning observable in an avatar's appearance and demeanour (as these are limited by what code allows) than there ever can be of the human player controlling them.

Similarly, defining the boundaries of the setting is difficult. In most CMC-related technologies, users may freely enter and leave the setting without observable notice; the population the ethnographer encounters when they enter the field may be very different from the population that exists when they leave it, and the findings they develop may not even reflect the setting for the fleeting window of time in which they encounter it. Perceiving websites, e-mail listings, bulletin boards, and so on as 'places' is unavoidable, but doing so is also to forget the fluidity and ease in which users can move between such places. Similarly, the relative lack of boundedness virtual spaces experience results in rapidly shifting end use and semantic inscription by their users of these spaces. Subsequently, the embedded norms and values users take and leave with from one digital context to the next are additionally untraceable except where they are explicitly retold to the researcher.

While MMOGs are more easily structured in this sense and possess a durability through their explicit construction as games, it remains that human agents and their exact influence on (or agency to form) a virtual setting are volatile. The durable characteristics of MMOGs then, are performative, reinforced by technical agents which define these spaces, rather than humans themselves. Ethnographic studies must, I argue, take this into consideration. Similarly, without any obvious boundary which defines the field (the gameworld cannot describe all action pertaining to a MMOG), the process of naturalisation becomes difficult for the researcher. The very same characteristics of CMC research which often make access easy - the public and, anonymous configuration of settings it takes place in - make it difficult to identify unitary norms and values of inhabitants which define the setting.

The first issue to consider prior to conducting ethnographic study of MMOGs is simply the diversity of MMOGs themselves. There are literally hundreds of MMOGs available today; while they may be categorised as such by a number of shared characteristics (which will be discussed in forthcoming chapters) it remains that each will possess characteristics unique to it alone. Establishing generalisability across MMOG studies therefore becomes difficult, as they must be conducted with regard to the technical differences in each. Related to this is the status of MMOGs as 'games'. Human action observed by a researcher within the gameworld of a MMOG will always be premeditated by its status as a game, and of individuals as players, even if game play is not their explicit objective. Extrapolating relevant observations or abstracted findings about human action from what people say or do within the gameworld is a problem, as it may only reflect them in their capacity as a 'player'.

An additional issue with ethnographic studies of MMOGs, particularly participant observation, is one of 'transparency'. The publisher of a given MMOG wields considerable power to police action within the gameworld (Humphreys 2008:150) such that as a setting, it can only ever be negotiated in part by players. Without explicit cooperation from the developer, many relevant aspects of the MMOG pertaining to ethnography will not be observable. Blackboxed technologies form a large part of these - software such as the client program, or hardware, like server architecture, whose functions are not visible beyond what is essential for a player to interact with in order to access the gameworld. The human governance of a gameworld is also often obscured from players; actions of company representatives tasked with policing it (such as 'game masters in WoW or 'customer service representatives' in Eve) are rarely public and are not necessarily acted through in the gameworld. Without compliance from the publisher then, it is extremely difficult for an ethnographer to observe and collect data from a

number of significant sources within the field.

Finally, the 'sharded' nature of most MMOGs is an additional challenge the ethnographer must cope with. Most MMOGs are sharded: that is, multiple copies of the gameworld exist, and are dispersed along geographic or ruleset divisions, or both. For instance, WoW is split across hundreds of servers which serve tightly controlled service regions, and within each, they are divided by language and game rules. Each server represents an individual gameworld, with its own unique and separate population of users. Ethnographic data collected from a particular server may be relevant only to it, as other servers that host otherwise identical gameworlds may operate under different rules or be situated in an entirely different geographic region. A researcher conducting an ethnography of a MMOG that is 'sharded' must bear this in mind when making specific claims from their findings.

3.3 - Technology, capital, and governance in MMOGs

There has been a surprisingly large body of work produced relating to MMOGs, even pre-dating their initial surge in popularity during the mid-nineties. In this section I review relevant works which are most pertinent to themes of governance and surveillance, and those which engage in field-construction or utilise Bourdieu's work on capital. Governance in MMOGs may be exercised in a variety of means - by code, players, publishers, and legal contracts. Studies discussed here highlight some of these forms of governance, and in studying a number of different MMOGs with different rules, they present a variety of different analytical and methodological approaches used in order to tackle the challenges of researching MMOGs.

3.3.a - The role of non-human agency in MMOGs

Akrich's concept of scripts addresses the relationship between the intended design of a technology and its actual use. Her work has seen broad use, and in the context of digital software, can be applied in concurrent study of non-technical agents, as in Rommes' (2002) study of virtual communities, and Kerr's (2002) research on Irish videogame developers. Scripts are defined as “technical objects [that] define a framework of action together with the actors and space in which they are supposed to act”. They are more simply embedded assumptions about the purpose and context a technical object will be used in. This is effectively an attempt to premeditate 'who' will use the object, and for what purpose, a set of practices inevitable in the process of designing and creating a technical object. In the context of computer software, Hoffman (1999:224-228) examined a number of pioneering word-processing programs used in 1980's, illustrating how these were built upon the preconception that their end users were expected to be technologically incompetent secretaries. In all but one case however, the programmed safeguards designed to account for such incompetence actually did nothing more than constrain and hinder the work of their end users.

This is an obvious example of the causality a poorly designed script enacts. Scripts can, however, also emerge after the designers completion of the original object, or after it is placed within its setting. Kerr's study (2002) can illustrate this point. The contingency of the designers in this case - software developers - is hindered by constraints set by their publisher, resulting in a technical object (videogame) that does not contain the scripts desired by its designer, such that the resultant prescribed attributes it possesses can be considered the result of co-authorship. In this particular instance, the scripts inherent in the videogame assume a purely male market of long-standing gamers. This is

representative of a common bias within the digital games industry (Kerr 2002:284), but more relevantly illustrates a performative, widespread set of associations which further affect the scripts designers produce. Through a reciprocal tradition between designers and the end users they design for, the game industry comes to represent the production of games predominantly by and for males. The technical object in this case both reflects and perpetuates this set of associations.

Similarly, the failure of 'De Digitale Stad' (DDS), a virtual, terminal-operated representation of Amsterdam, to capture broad patronage of the city's inhabitants is exemplary of how poorly conceived scripts can act against their designers' intent. Though created ostensibly to appeal to as wide a range of people as possible, an unconscious male-oriented bias on behalf of DDS' designers left it organised in such a way as to require a great deal of fumbling and exploration before any prospective user would acclimatise to its use (Rommes 2002:52). This trial-by-error approach is considered a method of learning that oriented predominantly toward male aptitudes (Rommes 2002:62). The end result was that despite the goal of the DDS project, only one third of its participants were those who had never used a computer before, and a paltry nine percent were female.

The anticipated and actual use of the DDS reflect a discrepancy in the conceptualisation of a technical object between those who design it, the agents whom it is intended for, and those which actually use it. Innovators construct with an image in mind of who their 'ideal user' will be, and this is too often simply a self-representation. Kerr (2002:282) presents this concept, termed the 'I' methodology. In the context of virtual worlds, the biases or unconscious assumptions coded scripts bear may explicitly or implicitly

influence the held norms and values of participants, given these occur on an immersive and interactive medium. This is a direct result of their status as self-contained producers of cultural 'text' – or, definers of social 'meaning'. A virtual world may never be truly 'finished', given they rely upon continuous interaction between players, designers and with the worlds themselves.

The meaning and value of scripts are in constant redefinition, in a process reminiscent of Kerr's analysis (2002:290) of 'beta testers'. These are players who try out new and untested software or functions thereof, and work in tandem with developers to refine these, resulting in a co-produced product. However, given virtual worlds' larger scale and economic imperatives to maintain authorial control over the scripts a MMOG contains (which are not necessarily concurrent with those players wish to implement) given that they are in constant production, negotiation between players and publishers in MMOGs is more likely to conflicting, rather than cooperative in nature.

3.3.b - MMOGs and capital

Bourdieu's concept of human social capital has been taken and reapplied to the context of MMOGs by a number of authors, and in a number of ways. The approach taken by Malaby (2006) is one of the most comprehensive of these. Malaby fully adopts Bourdieu's schema of human agency as capital, and establishes a typology of it in specific reference to MMOGs. Thus, he describes four kinds of capital derived from Bourdieu's practice, but framed in the context of MMOGs. Economic capital becomes concentrated and objectified to form 'commodities' – any subjectively valuable item which can be exchanged for currency in the gameworld. 'Currency' in MMOGs is simply that – market capital in its most impersonal, transferable form. This is

indistinguishable from that of the real world (2006:152); it fulfils the same role in commodity exchange and is just as liquid. The use value of virtual commodities is restricted to the gameworlds they are based in, given that they simply cannot exist outside them, but their economic value and semantic worth as objectified cultural and symbolic capital is fully transient, given users' agency to determine market value outside of any given MMOG. The existence of a number of MMOGs which integrate real money trading (RMT), as a basic tenet of their design, such as Entropia Universe or Second Life, stand testament to this, as do the presence of vendors selling virtual currencies and commodities for real-world capital, such as IGE.com. The presence of both is indicative of practices and mentalities which delineate virtual commodities as economically valuable.

Cultural capital in Malaby's adaptation of Bourdieu is employed in MMOGs as 'competencies', 'credentials', or 'artefacts'. Competencies are embodied in an individual as a direct result of their learning, and form a basic resource for action (Malaby 2006:155). Competencies in a gameworld can be as simple as skill in controlling an avatar, or knowledge of the terrain and resources. They can also be more complex and stratified, such as the set of competencies needed to manage a 'guild' or similar player-run organisation most MMOGs allow players to create. It is important to note that competencies refer to players, not the avatars they control. The avatar acts as a medium for the competencies of a player (Malaby 2006:156). This is not to unilaterally claim avatars cannot act as agents themselves, but it is nonetheless important to establish in order to differentiate human from non-human agencies here, given that the research question here focuses on the expression and constraint of human agency in MMOGs.

Credentials are cultural capital formalised into 'offices' and 'licenses' by an institution which achieves primacy in any field it acts in. Credentials authorise their agents to carry out certain activities that the providing institution has the agency to control, or which are otherwise forbidden through exterior agencies. Credentials also imply the transfer of certain legitimated competencies, regardless of actual ability inherent in the agent. Credentials in MMOGs are alternatively coded and bound to game play, or uncoded and produced by players' interactions with the environment and one another. Credentials which influence the gameworld of a MMOG need not be directly derived or situated within it, either. An example is the credential of 'Game Master' in World of Warcraft (WoW). This is a credential applied only to certain employees of Blizzard-Activision, and bestows very specific coded and uncoded legitimacy to regulate players' activities in the gameworld. Credentials may exist along hierarchical organisations predetermined by the world's code. Conversely, 'guild master' is a formal title attainable by any avatar with the necessary currency and signatories required by WoW's rules to found a guild. It bestows the formal office of 'guild master' upon the founding avatar, but the office, duties, and agencies required to act in such a role are uncoded, variable, and dependent upon the capital of the player.

This is an example of how credentials in a MMOG may be a composite of 'human' and 'coded' capital, rather than simply one or the other. Human players negotiate the semantic inscription and social 'worth' of coded credentials in a MMOG. Thus, while the code denoting these acts only in the gameworld, they may be relevant outside it. The status of a 'guild master' in WoW for example, may be relevant in their interaction with other players outside the gameworld, such as in communication in guild or game-related websites, offline meet-ups, and so on.

'Artefacts' are objectified cultural capital (Malaby 2006:158) that carry contextualised meaning – in essence, any object which carries a subjective significance beyond its physical attributes. For example, literature is a form of artefact, as are works of art. Almost any object within the gameworld of a MMOG can be regarded as an artefact in the strictest sense - players merely need to interact with and assign a specific contextual inscription to an object that is not reducible to its technical characteristics. As MMOGs are games, and the objects players utilise in the course of game play will develop specific uses and worth through game play, the emergence of artefacts is an almost automatic process. In WoW for example, 'epics' – rare and expensive equipment denoted by purple lettering - function as visible markers of an status and venerability in addition to and partly derived from their use value, usually superior to 'lesser' colour-coded grades of equipment. In addition, avatars themselves are artefacts, given they accumulate their own histories, experiences, credentials, and subjective worth, negotiated through both their creator's use of them, and through interaction with other players an avatar develops through game play (Malaby 2006:156).

Social capital is composed of social 'connections' created and maintained through reciprocal bonds. 'Reciprocity' in this context is the exchange of any resource or service that implies later moral imperative on the receiving party to offer similar exchange at an undefined time later (specified, this act becomes a contract). Reciprocal bonds initiated in this manner are never 'settled', but instead form stable social 'connections' that allow for and imply future exchange. If both individuals value what they receive from the other, both will grant more of their own services, providing incentives for the other to increase their supply and to avoid becoming indebted to them (Blau 1964:89). An example; purchasing milk in a shop is not a reciprocal exchange, as the economic and

quantifiably equal nature of the exchange omits moral obligation from either party. Borrowing milk from a neighbour in contrast would be. 'Connections' are 'mature' reciprocal bonds that may be considered resources in their own right, and can be leveraged in exchange for other forms of capital. A strong example of a social network of connections within MMOGs are 'private' guilds composed of family units, close friends, or co-workers (Willliams et al. 2006:346). Scripts and formal rules may influence the emergence of reciprocal bonds in MMOGs through game play rules which generate practices that predispose players toward cooperation, but so too will players' individual ideas as to the subjective worth of commodities and social capital leveraged within or relating to the gameworld. Similarly, reciprocal bonds can be invoked in practices of governance by players, or by the publisher, by designing game rules in such a way as to foster their development between players.

It is important to note Malaby does not adopt Bourdieu's concept of the 'field' in his argument. Instead, he constructs the spaces of MMOGs as 'domains' as means to illustrate the attributes which render them distinct areas which are yet subject to outside influence. Malaby defines a 'domain' as a "semibounded arena for action where certain conventional expectations apply and certain resources may be available" (2006:144). Thus, in expressing MMOGs as such, he attempts to account for their structural and social idiosyncrasies. In my view, this is still too deterministic and structured, and does not describe the multifarious design of MMOGs well enough.

Mia Consalvo (2007) has also taken Bourdieu's concept of capital and redeveloped it for the subject of digital games. Like Malaby, she refrains from fully engaging in Bourdieu's discourse of field, position, and capital. Instead, Consalvo takes the basic idea of capital as a resource for, or product of, action agents may employ, and

reconstructs it in a very specific form for use in the context of digital games, which she terms 'gaming capital'. For Consalvo, gaming capital represents a "central element to serious game play" (2007:3) that emphasises capital as produced through individuals' interaction with games, information about games, or any discourses which directly or indirectly refer to games in some manner. As such, gaming capital is not intended to simply refer to 'games' or 'game play', but Consalvo has rather crafted it to "capture how being a member of game culture is about more than playing games, or even playing them well...It's being knowledgeable about game releases and secrets, and passing that information on to others" (Consalvo 2007:18).

The emphasis of gaming capital as generated through knowledge and works derived from particular games, rather than simply being the games themselves or subjective skill in playing them is explained through Consalvo's construction of the 'paratexts' produced through gaming capital in relation to a given game. A term Consalvo adopts from Genette, a paratext is any text derivative of an original text which frames it (2007:8-9). Thus, the paratext in relation to digital games explicitly does not describe games themselves, but any and all works produced by any agents in relation to them. Discourses of game play negotiated by players in the game world fall into this jurisdiction. While paratexts may be commodified - merchandise, cheat books, and so on - and controlled (such as by the producers of the aforementioned items) it is players, who interact with the primary text, that ultimately judge what 'counts' as gaming capital (2007:184).

Consalvo's concept, and its particular integration of the idea of the paratext, is of immense use in constructing the field of a MMOG. The concept of gaming capital is

immediately useful in that it enables exploration of capital and agency related to games that is not directly reducible to them. Moreover, it provides both a language and through the paratext, a means to correlate action within the gameworld of a MMOG to exterior action which relates to it. Social, cultural, and economic capital and agents relevant to the fields composing a MMOG can be connected to it through these concepts.

3.3.c - Governance in MMOGs

'From Treehouse to Barracks: The Social Life of Guilds in World of Warcraft' is an exhaustive study of guilds in WoW employing participant observation, interviews, and data mined from automated avatars ('bots') WoW. While the focus of Williams et al. (2006) is upon the social dynamics of guilds, with a particular emphasis on social capital, the rich volume of data their research has generated and the conclusions they come to are of great use in discussing governance in the context of WoW's gameworld. The most notable conclusion is that "game mechanics and social architectures have an immense impact on the resulting social formations within these spaces" (Williams et al 2006:340). This is reminiscent of how Rommes illustrates the agency of the scripts underpinning the DDS, and is important, as it directly posits the influence of non-human agency upon human players - in this case, in directing the social formations they can form within WoW's gameworld.

From a more human perspective, the typology Williams et al. fashion regarding the composition of guilds also yields interesting results. They arrange guilds in order of size, manner of organisation, and objective. Each of these variables - which are collectively determined by player-negotiation, not coded rules - have a significant impact on players' empirical game play. However, it is equally important to note that

regardless of size or orientation of the guild studied, interviewees almost always stressed the importance of their group as a ‘social’ guild. This holds true in conflict focused player-versus-player (PvP) guilds (Williams et al. 2006:345). Conversely, no interviewees considered their guild wholly dedicated toward ‘player-versus-player’ conflict. The common emphasis on the placed upon the ‘social' here stresses the importance of human interaction, rather than game play objectives. It may be the empirical forms of such interaction which are more significant than the code in negotiating government in the gameworld.

Taylor's account of playing on a WoW PvP server (2006) can inform this question. Taylor details her experiences from a perspective of governance, discussing themes of surveillance and control, and alternately deals with both human and coded forms of such. As a result, her study forms an invaluable resource for my own research on these topics, at least in regard to WoW. Using the innocuous example of a dispute over language conventions, Taylor illustrates how governance in WoW is alternately exercised by its administrators, players, and the technical objects which define the gameworld.

Taylor recalls how she and her group are rebuffed by another player for conversing in Danish on one of the server's public chat channels (2006:320). This individual argues that the server's rules state players may only speak in English. This was incorrect, but nonetheless, they acted to enforce (what they thought were) prescribed regulations of conduct in the game. This scenario may be constructed as an instance of government that is either player-to-player, or publisher-to-player, as the individual chiding Taylor's group cites WoW's formal rules established by Blizzard-Activision as the reason for

their intervention. Such rules relating to language, found in WoW's Terms of Use (ToU) are not enforced by code, and are more open to negotiation within the gameworld by players as a result. Further, this distinguishes the separate and distinct agencies of the technical objects which define WoW - in this case, the legal governing agency of WoW's contractual documents, and the coded, automated authority prescribed to the client. They are individual, and seek to govern individual arenas of human action. In this scenario, were the client designed to regulate players' use of particular languages, there would be no chance for players to regulate the conduct of one another, as the client would work to prevent messages being sent in forbidden languages (assuming the correct anticipation and prescribed end use of such a script).

Taylor's study also illustrates player-negotiated discourses of governance that directly relate to game play in WoW. In describing a session where she was part of a 'raid' - a group activity often requiring cooperation of more than twenty players, several examples of surveillance and control of human agency emerge in the course of players' negotiation of game play. Most significantly, it is players' use of 'CTMod' (CT) and 'CTRaidAssist (CTRA) that enhance the quantification and visibility of game-play related data to the player that effect the surveillance practices Taylor describes. CT and CTRA are user-interface (UI) modifications that replace the 'normal' functionality of WoW's interface, and in reorganising the data provided to the player by the client, allows them to make more informed game play decisions, or automate simple tasks. More importantly, CTRA's own data can be output and shared by each player in a group, such that the information each individual instance of the mod provides to a player is more accurate.

It naturally follows that the output CTRA is designed for can also be utilised for

surveillance and evaluation of an individual's performance. In particular, the mod provides explicit functionality for the leader of a group to observe and quantify the performance of any individual within it through the information they themselves will have made public by their own complicit use of it (2006:329). Taylor makes clear the contrast in visibility afforded by this mod and that of WoW's basic UI ;

> "Without the "view target's target" function, figuring out who may be in error in such a situation is much less precise, possibly unknowable in any concrete way. But this tool was allowing our leader to watch, at a very micro level, each of our performances" (2006:330)

Neither the mods themselves, nor their emergent role in mediating participatory surveillance between players is prescribed by the client nor informal game play rules. This example is effectively a demonstration of players' leverage of the non-human agencies endowed within CT and CTRA to enhance their own game play practices. These are player-devised scripts that alter the basic text of WoW directly, even though by code this only takes the form of reorganising data already available. Taylor shows the significance such scripts possess in conjunction with human, social discourses of governance in WoW;

> "Once we had killed off the creature and gotten back in formation, the raid leader said, somewhat severely on our Ventrillo voice chat channel, "I am going to be watching his [the next monster's] target and if I see one of you agro him you are getting minus DKP [dragon kill points, a cumulative reward system guilds often use]" (2006:330)

Thus, while Taylor's analysis of mods illustrates how they can directly effect practices of surveillance through their own agencies, they also serve to extend or alter players' own practices of game play. Similarly, mods may be used in conjunction with, or even effect changes to players' governmentalities of game play in WoW (2006:328). 'Damage

meters', another form of UI mod, are exemplary of this. These quantify, and graphically or numerically display the damage each avatar in a group deals to a given target. While this can be used as a means to foster competition between players, and thus encourage better performance, the visible, graphical impetus and progress damage meters imply create a governmentality of 'raiding' as 'conduct and methods pertaining to 'doing as much damage to the 'boss' as possible'. This is implicitly encouraged regardless, as 'doing damage' is ultimately how raids are completed, but the action of damage meters to assert the entire *telos* of a raid as such works to de-value other necessary actions in the practice of raiding such as 'healing', 'pulling' and 'tanking', as these are not as easily quantified by mods. (2006:328). Examples of governance such as this show how Taylor provides concentrated analysis on a small number of significant events in order to establish a rough guide to the broad intersection of human and nonhuman means of conducting surveillance in WoW, and the effects this entails. This contrasts with the broader work on governance by Humphreys which discusses similar issues.

Humphrey's broader study on governance (2008) is a useful framework incorporating a Foucauldian analysis of MMOGs. To this end, Humphreys has taken Dean's deconstruction (1999) of Foucault's 'regimes of practice'. Dean identifies four sites of governance which generate regimes of practices. Humphreys takes this deconstruction, and applies it in the context of a MMOG. Thus, each aspect of Dean's typology, consisting of 'fields of visibility', 'technologies and techniques', the formation of government-centric identities, and forms of knowledge that stem from and inform governance (Humphreys 2008:152) is transformed and applied specifically to the study of governance within MMOGs.

In this regard, four sites from which practices of governance are generated emerge in

relation to MMOGs. These are ‘code and rules’, the relationship between players and publishers, interaction between players, (and practices of identity construction and self-regulation this entails), and encoded legal constraints mediated by EULAs (2008:153-155). Individual instances of governance will intersect at least two of these sites. For example, the action of a publisher to enforce the terms of its EULA refers to the site of legal constraint, but also necessarily publisher-player interaction, and depending on the type of infraction the publisher acts against (one that occurs within the gameworld) possibly code and rules.

Like Williams et al, Humphreys emphasises code and rules as significant in shaping human agency in a MMOG. However, her analysis here makes the important distinction that these are explicitly controlled – mostly – by a MMOG's publisher (2008:150). This is interesting in that it supports the argument of Williams et al. and situates control over code with the publisher, though the caveat of ‘mostly’ does leave room for negotiation by players. The site of code and rules is also important, as forms of governance it produces naturally result in the generation of surveillance practices through autonomous monitoring by the client, and its automatic enforcement of rules (2008:155). Specifically, it is the technologies inherent in the MMOG allowing it to “quantify, measure, differentiate, and compare players’ actions” (2008:154) that allow Humphreys to make a direct comparison to Foucault’s tools of disciplinary power.

Humphreys identifies the role of the MMOG itself in the exercise of surveillance, and the related regulation of players’ actions in the gameworld. However, she correlates this with the agency of the MMOG as an intermediary for the agency of the publisher, rather than of the MMOG as an agent, or network of agents, unto itself. This is appropriate as

per a Foucauldian approach, which views relationship as a set of structured hierarchical relations of power. This is appropriate in places; particularly in her reference to Foucault where she examines the socialising influence the code exerts upon players through the stimulus of reward and punishment its rules entail (2008:155), describing the gameworld as disconcertingly panoptic. However, it is problematic to compare the array of complex technical objects which form a MMOG, to the architecture of the Panopticon. 'Complexity' in itself is the issue; the publisher cannot hope to perfectly control the end use of the client. Some level of contingency must be left in the code by which players may negotiate the pre-inscriptions which define it as a game.

Where players directly contest constraints imposed by code and rules, for example by exploiting flaws in the rules, this discrepancy is exposed. It is similarly present where any of the technical components of the MMOG malfunction; they resist the control of both player and publisher. However, the negative perception of surveillance Humphreys' Foucauldian approach implies is moderated by her statement that publisher-mediated control is the basis for enforcement of rules, which are essential to maintain the ‘gameness’ of the MMOG (2008:154).

In discussing the site of the relationship between players and publishers, Humphreys' argument is clear in illustrating the disproportionate power publishers wield. This is no surprise, given their control over governance generated through the sites of code, regulation, and legal constraint - and the ensuing influence these can have even where control is nominally yielded to players. For example, actual practices concerning player-versus-player combat are negotiated by players, but these remain preconfigured by the publishers' implementation of the rules (2008:155) and the parameters of available action they entail. Despite this disparity in power, governing practices are not dictated

entirely by the publisher, nor can the relationship here be described as one of domination. Publishers themselves are constrained by the burdens of 'community management', and issues regarding co-authorship of 'play' (2008:151) within the space of the MMOG which necessarily involves leaving a certain amount of control to players. Thus, the production of MMOGs cannot be closed off to players, as their participation through playing unavoidably results in co-authorship of what the MMOG's rules entail through their interaction with them.

Thus, Humphreys takes a dim view of publishers' motivations in this regard, as they do not necessarily correlate with players' goals. She constructs the governmentality of community management by the publisher as the art of granting just enough contingency to players through each of the four sites of governance in order to maximise profits, whilst still retaining authorial control over these (2008:158). The limits of players' agencies to this end can be witnessed through cheating and hacking they take which the publisher dictates are against coded or formal rules. These alter the incumbent code and rules of the game, and thus challenge publisher's authorial legitimacy. In simultaneously breaching the EULA, this also disputes the publisher's ideal of a 'good' player. More importantly, such instances of resistance to forms of control also work to delineate the enforceable boundaries of governance the publisher can establish; a 'spatial' domain of governance relating to each of the four sites can be developed as a result.

Humphreys' approach to governance is useful in that while it directly covers what I argue is the primary site of governance in MMOGs - code and rules - she also describes in detail governing practices exterior to (action in) the gameworld, and their relationship to it through a schema of 'sites'. I approach I adopt in describing practices of governance

(participatory surveillance) not well suited to discussing governing practices that take place outside it, or the relationships between these. Humphreys' work is useful in this regard. Moreover, the sites of code and rules and player-to-publisher relations in particular generate, as she demonstrates, practices of surveillance and governance which are clearly hierarchical in nature. How Humphreys frames the role of technology in this regard is arguable, however. The frame she presents here allows the description of a MMOG both with agency of its own, and equally as an intermediary for the power of the designers and publishers which create it.

A study by Jakobsson and Pargman (2005) can further highlight the struggle for control contested between publishers and players within MMOGs, and also show how an ANT perspective can be integrated into such a discussion by referencing the concept of 'blackboxed' technologies. The setting for their research is the MMOG named 'Entropia Universe' with a novel game play design that demands a gameworld economy which stems from the direct conversion of 'real' currency into that of its own, the 'Project Entropia Dollar' (PED). Most MMOGs possess a real-money-trade (RMT) economy of some sort where players buy and sell in-game commodities for real currency. This is usually expressly forbidden and acted against by publishers. Entropia Universe (hereafter 'Entropia') is novel in that RMT is not only permitted, but directly integrated into the rules of the game. PED fuels most game play activities players can partake in, such as the tools needed to mine ores or hunt monsters. Many of these also generate PED through producing commodities and resources which can be exchanged. Often however, the cost incurred by 'playing' exceeds the profit it generates (Jakobsson, Pargman 2005:3). PED can also be reconverted back to 'real' money. However, Entropia's rules similarly make participating in game play without PED extremely difficult, and compounding this, PED-generating activities are risk based; there is no

guaranteed return. Compounding the risk this entails is the fact that Entropia's publishers, Mindark, have fixed the rate of exchange at one USD for ten PED. Unsurprisingly, this has resulted in an ongoing struggle between players and Mindark where players seek to minimise the costs they incur playing Entropia, and Mindark seek to maximise them. Jakobsson and Pargman describe a number of interesting governing practices in this regard.

Firstly, the act of fixing Entropia's exchange rate is clearly in itself an act of control, one enforced by the client that Entropia's players cannot challenge. Players' economic activity cannot significantly affect Entropia's PED economy in any meaningful way without cheating or hacking, as the code does not prescribe any rules or contingency to negotiate the exchange rate. To date players have not found a method to exploit the client to do so, either. However, many practices have developed to challenge the incumbent governmentality of play in Entropia to reassert its prescriptions which dictate the expenditure of real money to participate. Without PED, a player's avatar can do little more than wander about and chat with other avatars. Some do this intentionally (2005:6), forming the simplest of resistance practices here; nonparticipation.

More significantly however, Entropia players have established methods to exploit flaws in the scripts which govern monster AI. This practice generates a free source of income in which players effectively mobilise the MMOG itself against the prescribed intent and conduct of play. Jakobsson and Pargman explain this as the phenomenon of 'sweat farming'. At two towns within Entropia, players goad roaming monsters into attacking their avatars, whereupon they run to the safety of the settlement. The towns contain automated defences which protect players from any unintended incursions monsters

make. Under normal circumstances, monsters give up the chase after a predetermined distance, but here, players run in such a way that the monsters trap themselves in the terrain, and are slaughtered by the town's defences. Monsters 'sweat' when killed; this can be harvested and sold as a basic craft resource, generating PED.

This is significant in a dialectic of governance for a number of reasons. First, as stated, it is an example which illustrates how the MMOG possesses agency in its own right, and its construction is not reducible to the furnishings of the panopticon as a channel for the hierarchical exercise of power. Secondly, by leveraging Entropia against Mindark, an example of how players contest the governmentality of play in a MMOG is formed - 'sweat farming' allows players to profit at no personal expense whatsoever. Finally, Mindark's response to sweat farming demonstrates both the unfinished, continuing production of a MMOG, and inimical to this, the ongoing, negotiated discourses of governance they produce through the struggle for authorial control between publisher, players, and the MMOG itself.

In response to sweat farming, the designers of Entropia saw fit to place a coded limit upon how much sweat a single avatar could gather. This nominally prevents free accumulation of sweat. In practice however, players simply created extra accounts (which are free of charge) and continued farming sweat before trading back the profit to their 'main' account without penalty. The challenge to publishers this entails, who must continuously produce additional scripts to maintain control over their vision of game play for Entropia, illustrates how players can contest meaningful control over design, and challenge publishers' legitimacy.

However, like players' leverage of mods in Taylor's study, and Humphreys' study which

shows how governing practices affecting a gameworld extend beyond it, Entropia players create means to influence the gameworld and contest pre-inscribed game play practices through external agencies. A player-created tool named the 'Ultimate Weapon Chart and Hunt Simulator' is the example Jakobsson and Pargman provide here (2005:5). This software uses collective data provided players' game logs. The program collates this data into a database, allowing simulation of game activities, and the profit or loss these are likely to entail. Thus, players can estimate how much PED playing is likely to cost, opening what is otherwise a blackboxed game play structure. Players are empowered through the exterior agency of the simulator, despite the fact that their coded agencies in the gameworld remain unchanged.

In this chapter I have outlined a broad typology of what a MMOG is, presented a number of issues with regard to conducting social research of MMOGs and within their gameworlds, and reviewed a number of studies which both discuss MMOGs in regard to the research question. I identify several forms of governance within the MMOGs I study here, which are generated by the social, cultural, and symbolic capital agents leverage. In the following chapter I examine these with regard to the methodological approaches their authors take, outline my own methodology, and discuss in greater detail my fieldwork within the gameworlds of WoW and Eve.

4.0 - Methodology, and the construction of ethnographic participant observation within the gameworlds of WoW and Eve - Introduction

In this chapter I outline methodology for this study. First, a statement of the research question is issued in which I outline the goals of the study, and the theoretical perspective taken - I adopt an inductive, constructivist-informed approach. I discuss methodologies that have been applied in existing studies of MMOGs, and then present the methods I adopt myself. Actual data collection and analysis is then presented, as well as ethical and practical concerns these raise. Finally, I establish a descriptive framework for the forthcoming findings chapters by introducing the gameworlds and game play practices of WoW and Eve which are relevant to findings, based upon my own fieldwork.

4.1 - Statement of the research question

In this study, I explore the means by which human agency within MMOGs is expressed and constrained, and how human agents negotiate these. I also examine the problems of differentiating 'human' from 'nonhuman' agency in identifying the 'governed' and governing' toward this end.

Data is collected through ethnographic participant observation, and documentary sources which support empirical data. I have designed the research question to be an open-ended and exploratory study of MMOGs. To this end, I adopt an inductive approach to data collection and analysis. I do not posit a specific hypotheses detailing how and by whom human agency in MMOGs is shaped, as literature on this subject is still developing, and there is no extant academic consensus on which to build upon or contest. Rather, I seek to inform and add to the basic premise of the research question,

and develop an account of the forms of expression and constraint of human agency which emerge in the data, and allow such findings to shape the arguments I subsequently make.

I adopt a constructivist approach to analysing data gathered through participant observation. Just as the field in Bourdieu's theory is determined by relationships between agents within it, arguments I construct that relate to themes such as government and surveillance, or resistance to these, must represent the experiential reality of the agents in the field setting. As I will discuss in the forthcoming chapter, the field setting of this study - the gameworld of two MMOGs - contains a vast number of disparate human and nonhuman agents. No individual study could hope to integrate the perspective of every one of these. Thus, a constructivist perspective represents not only beneficial to the ends of the research question, but is also necessary. For constructivism, 'knowledge' developed from data collected in the field setting need not represent any universal, objective truth of that setting, but instead must adhere to the relativistic reality constructed through the lived experiences of the agents within the setting from which the researcher obtains their data (Flick 2009:70). In other words, the researcher's findings do not have to represent objective reality; they must only be honest and accurate to the constructed realities of the agents they represent.

In this regard, my fieldwork conducted in the gameworlds of WoW and Eve aims to present the empirical manner in which human agents I observe and interact with experience and negotiate forms of government, and my own experiences of these. This approach also allows me to observe, at a micro-level, the role of nonhuman agents, such as the coded rules that delineate the structure of each game, toward this end. Finally,

through direct observation and participation in informants' practices in the field setting, develop findings that are directed by, and endowed, with the meanings they themselves derive from the setting.

4.2 - Methodologies utilised in existing MMOG research

In this section I re-examine the MMOG studies outlined in the literature review, discuss the methods their authors have used to conduct their own research, and critique these in relation to the goals of my own. The first of these I wish to discuss is the research of Williams et al. carried out in WoW (2006). It merits discussion because the authors here successfully apply several different methodological approaches to a unitary theme of social interaction in player-run guilds in WoW, resulting in varied findings which can be easily reapplied to other research. These are based on what Williams et al. detail as a stratified approach adopted in 'steps' consisting of participant observation, the creation of a sampling frame through a census of players conducted autonomously by 'bots', and a series of guided interviews with informants online within the gameworld.

In reference to my above point, Williams notes Blizzard did not aid the group's study, resulting in an unavoidable problem of identity: "We were not able to separate real-life players from the multiple characters they played. Thus, the characters in our sample were certainly each only some percentage of the total time online for any one player" (2006:344). This was accounted for by interviewing players who had confirmed the avatar they were using to communicate with the interviewer was their 'main' (primary,

most used) avatar; as Williams et al. would have been able to correlate interview data against census data their bots had collected, this forms a useful safeguard against the problem of multiplicity.

From the quantitative and qualitative data produced by these combined methods, Williams et al. are able to produce both a generalised typology of guild organisation and structure, and an ethnographic account to contextualise and situate this empirically. A methodology such as this is far beyond the remit of this study; nevertheless, its discrete elements and their combined use as Williams et al. discuss establish a set of useful guidelines by which MMOG ethnography can be conducted.

In contrast, Malaby's reorientation of Bourdieu's human social capital for application to an online context (2006:147) is of greater merit in the process of coding and interpreting data than in establishing methods of its collection. With the exception of analysis of cultural artefacts within the world of 'Second Life' (2006: 141-144), his study is not empirically based, nor does he explicitly account for the role of nonhuman agency, which is essential to the theoretical framework of this study. Malaby's methodology is useful however, in the sense that the classification of sub-types of capital (artefacts, commodities, credentials, for example) he presents is empirically defined and situated in his analysis of 'Second Life'. That each of these sub-types of capital are defined often only through a single example means this classification is not the most robust of constructs; however, as it is a re-imagining and application of Bourdieu's work, I consider Malaby's work here a useful interpretive on which to build.

Conversely, research published by Jakobsson and Pargman (2005), Taylor (2006), and

Rommes (2002) illustrate varying methods of how the concept of non-human agency is integrated into ethnographic study. While technical, nonhuman agents obviously cannot be interviewed, to paraphrase Latour (1992), they can be 'made to talk' through other qualitative methods which deconstruct their pre-inscriptions, allowing the researcher to account for their influence upon the research setting, and thus permitting analysis which can account for empirical negotiation between human and nonhuman agents. Rommes (2002:51-61) retraces the developmental steps of the DDS as told by its various designers, and contrasts their perceptions of it against those of its 'ordinary' users. The narratives this produces are cast against a backdrop of DDS' usage in Amsterdam as a whole. This combination of approaches allows a 'triangulation' of qualitative data that exposes the agencies of the DDS itself, through the misconceived pre-inscription by its designers and poor reception by its end users, de-scribing it as an overcomplicated program with an implicit male bias far removed from the universal appeal and intuitive functioning its designers had intended. Rommes' thorough analysis of the DDS here and its agencies is only possible in this instance through her broad methodology which examines the DDS both at the site of its conception, and its actual use. Examining an object in its nascent setting is the most desirable approach to an ANT-oriented study - but what of instances where such fieldwork is impossible to conduct?

In contrast to Rommes, Jakobsson and Pargman are unable to attempt a technical de-construction of the scripts inherent in Entropia prior to its release from empirical work, as the game had been published two years prior to their study. In addition, they do not conduct interviews with the game's designers or conduct any similar research which would shed light on Entropia in its unfinished state. Rather, in pointing to its blackboxed design, their analysis shows the agency of Entropia is only clear at sites where players try to 'break' blackboxed aspects of the game's rules, such as the

algorithms which govern players' success in hunting and mining activities (2005:4). Players' action toward this end, the collation of individual data into the 'ultimate weapon chart and hunt simulator' discussed in the previous chapter exposes where and how, from players' own perspectives, Entropia itself most significantly governs human agency. Jakobsson and Pargman's account of 'sweat farming' similarly presents a functional basis through which players contest poorly conceived pre-inscriptions through game play. The examples the authors present are only examined in a cursory fashion, however. Unlike the two previous works discussed, findings here are not reinforced by ethnographic accounts nor quantitative data; the analysis here exposes how users are governed in Entropia, but cannot distinguish the causality of this governance as from the designer, or the autonomous function of Entropia itself produced through both player-interaction and unanticipated end use, as is the case with the DDS.

Kerr's methodology (2002) shows a similarly ANT-informed approach, but one that is distinct from that of Jakobsson and Pargman. The subject of her study is the production of digital games in an Irish start-up company, and the networks which influence design and production, rather than the technical objects produced themselves. This is still useful in the process of how to undertake qualitative analysis of nonhuman agencies. Kerr adopts a broad analytical range in her methodology which avoids tackling the game *in situ* as the subject of analysis - its characteristics are discussed only in passing, or where they relate to other themes she discusses. However, pre-inscriptions of the game are extrapolated through interviews conducted with the game's designers (2002: 285-291), analysis of it in its beta (unfinished) and published state (2002:290) and a contextualisation of the game's production by situating it in the cultural and economic

conditions it was published in.

As a result, the pre-inscribed intent and end use of the game become clear, as does its own agency produced through negotiation of these. Thus, the exact form of governance the game here exerts by prescribing its end user becomes clear, through inherent male-oriented biases in its design, which both reinforce and reflect extant design predispositions of the digital games industry. Methodologically, this is again useful, as Kerr's approach illustrates de-scribing a game in order to assess its capacity to act upon human users in a given setting need not rely upon direct analysis of the game itself.

Taylor's study on co-regulation and surveillance among users in WoW (2006) is situated directly within the gameworld and focuses heavily upon issues within it related to governance, and frames these in a Foucauldian, rather than ANT perspective. The resulting methodology in the text Taylor adapts is to discuss examples of governance she encounters first-hand in WoW through her own participant observation, and relate these to other players' perspectives through interviews which broaden the analytical scope of her findings. However the intensely micro-level qualitative focus of this study limits its broader applicability, as Taylor herself points out, in discussing problems regarding ethnographic study of MMOGs (2006:318-319).

Primary and most relevant among these is her warning that ethnographers run the risk of over-generalising their findings or not establishing a proper context prior to presenting them. Taylor herself notes the surprising difference in the mode of social interaction she experienced in switching from playing on a US-centric, PvE (player-versus-environment) server in 'Everquest', to a European, PvP (player-versus-player) server in World of Warcraft. The intrusion of the 'local' - the geographic location of a server and

who may play on it - will predetermine the range of possible social interactions the ethnographer will experience. In this manner, two shards each hosting an identically-coded copy of the gameworld and rules may exhibit vastly different player-developed cultures and game play. In this sense, Taylor's work indicates risks inherent in the analysis of how human agency in the gameworld of a MMOG is constrained; an approach purely from the standpoint of the MMOG as a technical object ignores the influence of human agency on the scripts it produces.

Thus, generalising findings based on one sharded instance of a given gameworld, despite the reasonable, appealing logic that all gameworlds are identically coded, is a fallacy. My own study is similarly limited in this regard, and this must be accounted for in discussion: the practices of governance that are directly or indirectly reducible to human agency would have differed had I conducted my study on a WoW server in a different region or with different rules. The same would hold true had I conducted my Eve ethnography on CCP's Shanghai-based server cluster.

Like Taylor, Humphreys' work on governance in MMOGs (2008) also uses participant observation in combination with interviewing as a chosen approach to data collection. In addition however, Humphreys also adopts a documentary approach, conducting textual analysis of MMOG bulletin boards and fansites (2008:153). Like Kerr's attention to the broader digital game industry in her study, Humphreys integrates sources external to the gameworld as an aid to explaining practices of governance which influence action within it, giving her work a greater analytical scope.

This is of clear use in developing her construction of the sites of governance in

MMOGs. Significant events such as players' responses to a mass-banning (2008:157), control exercised through the quasi-legal convention of the EULA (2008:162), and an attempt by a publisher to encourage players to conduct surveillance of one another (2008:158) are all hugely important events that indicate governing practices, but their sites of negotiation are not always visible at the analytical scale of ethnographic work. Integration of documentary sources such as these is also extremely useful in delineating the forms and boundaries of governance practised in relation to a MMOG for the same reasons. With regard to my own study, Humphreys' methodology here serves to illustrate significant forms of governance relevant to the research question here that will not be captured through participant observation alone.

4.3 - Ethnographic approach, data collection, and ethical considerations

For this research, I take a mixed methods approach to data collection. Firstly, I have constructed two case studies. Each case represents a month-long participant observation conducted within the 'Frostmane' server in WoW, and Eve's 'tranquillity' server cluster. These case studies are analysed in a comparative mode. A comparative case study is developed here as it is useful to "produce limited generalizations concerning the causes of theoretically-defined categories of empirical phenomena...common to a set of cases" (Ragin 1989:35). Thus, participant observation analysed in comparative study allows the parallel analysis of distinctions between WoW and Eve in the manner in which players' agencies are shaped within the gameworld. Secondly, findings produced through participant observation are informed by documentary sources where they are relevant to empirical data. Examples include discussion of an event staged within the gameworld by the Privateers termed the 'pew-pew palooza' on Eve's messageboards, which is relevant to the study, but occurred prior to the ethnography, and an article taken

from a 'wiki' dedicated to WoW introduced to debate the emergence of particular game play practices I observe in the gameworld.

The goal in adopting this mixed-method approach is to utilise ethnographic study in order to gain an understanding of the important of differing rule structures and game play practices in each MMOG. This aspect of study concentrates on the gameworld of each case, and is supported by introducing documents which refer to empirical events (messageboards). This is necessarily contrasted with use of sources which are exterior to action within the gameworld, yet still relevant to it in ways which are not directly observable - such as the legal contracts for WoW and Eve. I further use these in comparison to examine the methods the publishers of these MMOGs - CCP and Blizzard-Activision use to attempt to regulate the activities of players.

I further argue participant observation is more desirable than other forms of ethnography in the context of MMOGs, simply because it is possible, with a minimal amount of experience, for the ethnographer to acclimatise themselves as a 'player' capable of integrating with 'normal' users of a given MMOG. Thus, a researcher is readily capable of experiencing the game from the same perspective as their informants. Moreover, in addition to ethical issues they raise, passive or covert forms of ethnography are undesirable for the same reason; avatars are expected, by default, to participate in game play activities, given the nature of the setting: it is more unusual (and thus disruptive) for the ethnographer not to participate at all, than it is for them to do so amateurishly. This is in contrast with prior discourses of CMC research: it is much more difficult for the ethnographer to safely take a passive, unobtrusive approach here than it is in text-based CMC such as messageboards or chatrooms.

During the observation period in each case, I acted as a 'normal' player as much as possible. In WoW, my avatar joined the PvP-oriented guild I will label '<BM>', whilst in Eve I joined the 'International Brotherhood of Gravediggers' (or 'MBALM') , a member corporation of the 'Privateer Alliance. My initial intent was to focus upon a single player who would act as a gatekeeper for the study, and provide a focus for my observation. This view was soon expanded to account for all action which occurred in relation to both organisations; too many important events emerged that could not be integrated into the study had I limited myself to a single individual in each case. To this end, the members of both organisations were made fully aware of my presence and intent.

Consent to conduct the study was obtained informally in both cases. I secured access to both organisations by applying in conventional manner by creating a thread seeking recruitment in the 'Alliance and Corporation Recruitment Center' sub-section of Eve's official forums, and in WoW, through the forum dedicated to the 'Frostmane' server I situated the ethnography upon. In each thread seeking participants for the study, I outlined the goal of my research, how I would collect and use data, a statement of confidentiality regarding privacy of information, my own credentials as a 'player' - I felt this was important for a participant observation to potential candidates. I was contacted by both 'P' and 'F', players who served as gatekeepers in each case in this manner. I followed up initial contact through messageboards with discussion within the gameworld with each player to finalise their participation.

Both gatekeepers took steps within their respective organisations to ensure their members were aware that I was conducting research in the instance not all members in <BM> or the Privateers were knowledgeable of this. 'F' set a 'message of the day'

function on the <BM> guild's chat channel within the gameworld to inform guild members of my identity after I had joined. I also supplemented this with a discussion topic on <BM>'s own website. 'P' similarly sent a permanent corporation-wide 'evemail' message to the inbox of all MBALM members. I also used the 'bio' of my avatar in Eve (a publically visible written description of the avatar players can edit[2]) to outline my status, the research question, the methods of data collection in detail.

After I had opted to expand my study in Eve from just MBALM to all of the Privateer alliance I composed and sent an alliance-wide message again informing its players of my study[3], which also offered an opt-out to players who did not wish to be recorded by contacting me privately (as an MBALM member, I had automatically secured alliance membership too). I expanded my focus on data collection from MBALM to all of the alliance because MBALM members frequently participated with players from other Privateer corporations. separating it would have been extremely difficult to write coherently about MBALM whilst omitting the Privateers entirely. Thankfully, only a single individual explicitly asked to be excluded from the study. The methods in both cases I used to inform players of the study utilised the most frequently used chat and mail communications used by players within each gameworld. I consider that individuals in the setting were sufficiently informed as a result.

It is further important to note that the gatekeepers I identify here as 'F' in the WoW case, and 'P' in the Eve case are both important in the analysis I construct, as both are leadership figures in their respective organisations. F was an acting 'guildmaster' (in lieu of the 'real' guildmaster's absence) for <BM> and one of its founding members, whilst 'P' created MBALM by himself, and handled much of the Privateers' administrative

tasks in addition. The position of centrality both players held resultantly endowed them with considerable social capital. I was introduced to, and able to interact with other players through their connections. Indeed, In the case of the WoW study, without leveraging the social and symbolic capital possessed by 'F', I would not have been admitted to <BM> at all. <BM> demanded certain competencies and credentials in both the player and their avatar as a prerequisite to membership. If I had attempted to apply 'normally' (through a covert participant observation, for example) I would have not been able to meet either criteria.

Finally, a number of steps have been taken to ensure the ethical integrity of the study, and the confidentiality of the individuals within the setting. Firstly, as detailed above, I tried to be as overt as possible in notifying players within the two organisations I join during the participant observation of my presence and intent. Secondly, information in logs from any other players than those in the Privateers or <BM> has not been utilised except in instances where it directly relates to my informants in these organisations. I also try to maintain confidentiality by assigning pseudonyms to every player, obscure avatar names in screenshots, and refrain from construing events in such a way as to make the identity of individuals involved obvious. However, in the case of Eve, it is impossible for me to maintain the confidentiality of the Privateers as an organisation. The Privateers occupy an operational niche which is unique in Eve's gameworld (as I will later discuss). This alone makes it readily identifiable: Eve's single-server design amplifies this: there are no other 'shards' with similar organisations with which to confuse the identity of the Privateers. Finally, the data I have collected consisting of logs, screenshots, and completed codes is stored locally: upon my own personal computer, and on a usb flash disk, kept within a password-protected folder. No data has been published on the internet, in print, or otherwise been made available to the public

in any manner.

4.4 - Coding and analysis

Data was collected through chatlogs collected automatically in each channel my avatar was present in during a given session, written fieldnotes, and in the case of Eve, screenshots captured once every minute. Video was initially adopted as a method of data collection during the WoW study; this was soon dropped as the files produced were unmanageably large, and as a means of recalling information, I found retracing events through recorded video more unwieldy than using chatlogs or screenshots. A grounded theory approach utilising open coding (Flick 2005:180) was taken as the method of coding the data collected through these means. This was chosen in order to preserve the inductive and informant-directed orientation of the study. Thus, excerpts are chosen from block text, which are informed by an initial code and memo. The goal of this process is to keep the coding process as close to the original text as possible. With a minimal level of abstraction between the data and the codes produced, I more easily develop findings according to the constructivist paradigm.

However, from the block text recorded in the course of each participant observation session in WoW and Eve, it proved necessary to select groups of excerpts according to significance to the research question. This was unavoidable simply due to the great volume of logs produced, as these capture all public and private conversation my avatar in both games is privy to. I have also recorded written fieldnotes in addition to the logs. Fieldnotes and log excerpts are tabulated in according to chronological order and broken up by source (different chat channels and field notes). Thus, each table I develop

is intended to represent a rough sequence of significant events which occur in a given session from which an inductive process of open coding can develop. An example is as follows;

2nd December Alliance Chat

page/line	description	code	notes
34-41	E: we just needed damage and we could had a few of them b4 B: our bs boogied out B: we were beating his tank when he left, too B: :/ R: sudden disconnect? B: no he logged R: you're kidding B: no :P	6,A,2,ii	unvalued/not enough social cap, panoptic limit/taboo, preinscribed allowance

'Page/line' refers to the location of the excerpt in the chatlog it is lifted from, and 'description' is the excerpt itself. Extraneous information, such as combat logs, error messages, game logs, or public conversation involving players unrelated to the study I do not code for ethical purposes. The code is a system of letters and numerals denoting broad concepts that refer to the theoretical framework, such as 'nonhuman agency', 'cultural capital', 'surveillance', 'panopticism' and so forth. These have purposely been left open in order to emphasise the inductive, grounded approach to coding here. Codes are placed in the data field in order of significance. Thus, in the above example, I consider this text most useful in discussing 'field' (6) and the panopticon (A), social capital (2), and coded scripts (ii), in descending order of importance. The 'notes' field refers to interpretation of the data developed by the code. Screenshots and video were not coded in a similar manner, relying instead upon textual data for analysis. In practice, I used visual data only in a few instances where a sequence of events was not clear in

text, or where they could not be conveyed fully by it alone.

Findings were developed through a reading of the completed coding, and grouping of recurring codes and notes into thematic 'findings' prompted by continuity, or more rarely, events appearing significant enough in themselves to warrant development. Additionally, coding of data from WoW and Eve were conducted separately, and only findings are compared. Findings are developed first from excerpts, rather than fieldnotes, as they more closely represent events from my informants' point of view, which are rather more useful in correlate my own perspective of certain events. This is important, as an ethnographer conducting a participant observation must account for their own presence.

It must be noted however, that is a discrepancy in the data and coding accomplished between cases. This is simply due to the fact that both participant observation and coding of WoW data was conducted prior to that of Eve: I refined my method after experience gained conducting the first study. Where possible I account for this discrepancy through documentary sources which support findings derived from the coding process, as I will illustrate in the forthcoming chapters.

Finally, my method, fieldwork, and analysis will have been influenced by my own status in relation to each MMOG studied, as I possess very different competencies and credentials for each. I have played Eve extensively between 2004 and 2007, while my prior experience of WoW is through only a 'trial' account played for a few weeks. Thus, there is a broad discrepancy in the embodied (in the avatar) and personal cultural, social, and symbolic capital possess upon entering the field setting in each case. This influences the data I collect in terms of my relationship with other players, the game

play practices I have knowledge of and those my avatar may partake in, and the general substantive knowledge of 'where to go and what to do' imparted through experience. On the other hand, novelty experienced by unfamiliar researcher (as is the case in WoW) may enable them to articulate the significance of the basic design elements of digital games with greater clarity. I intend to address the relevance of these in the forthcoming chapter in the course of constructing the field.

4.5 – World of Warcraft – introduction

World of Warcraft (WoW) is a MMOG published in 2004 by Blizzard-Activision, and is significant simply because it is the most commercially successful subscription-based virtual world of its kind to date, and possesses the largest playerbase by far (Woodcock 2008). WoW is an archetypical MMOG, with a medieval-fantasy themed world and coded game play objectives which a place strong emphasis on progression of the player's avatar by increasing its wealth and power (measured in levels). This is contrasted with the narrative underpinning the gameworld, which splits players into two warring factions, depending on the 'race' of avatar they choose. Each gameworld is set upon a single server ('realm'). WoW has been chosen as a case study here simply because of its massive popularity in comparison to other subscription-based MMOGs. and the derivative nature of its design which borrowed heavily from the worlds which preceded it, and likely due to said popularity, has had many of its own design elements mimicked by more recent worlds.

4.5.a World of Warcraft – accessing the gameworld

A user must have a copy of the software client on their personal computer, obtained either through physical media or downloaded freely through the publisher's website. The client itself is of no use in accessing the gameworld without a paid account. The client is a computer program which holds most of the prescripted content in WoW – its physical world, avatar models, coded game rules and conventions, and so on. It is also the intermediary between the user's computer and the servers[4] which host and monitor all online aspects of WoW - the client does not allow for offline access. A paid subscription is also necessary, costing €12.99 per month (Activision-Blizzard 2008). A subscription account is created through an official WoW website. There are several of these, segregated by region. The user registers their account on one of these websites, which includes providing personal and billing information. This is a one-sided, and automated process that cannot be negotiated: aside from subscription interval, the terms presented cannot be negotiated

The gameworld is accessed through the client program, using account details specified upon registration. On the first occasion launching the client and after every content update, a series of pop-up boxes appear, displaying documents containing WoW's legal contracts users are bound by, including the EULA and ToS (Terms of Service). These cannot be bypassed without clicking an 'I agree' button at the bottom of each document. This button remains inactive until the user scrolls to the bottom of each document (ostensibly signifying they have read it). It is impossible to bypass this process without resorting to hacks, cheats, or third-party programs which breach the terms of the EULA.

Once logged in, a new user is automatically taken to a screen which suggests a realm for them to create an avatar upon. The realms available to the user are contingent upon the service region their account is tied to (Asia, Europe, America, and so on) and differ through rules of play. Player-Versus-Environment (PvE) realms do not allow for non-consensual combat between players, whilst Player-Versus-Player (PvP) realms do, within limits. Roleplaying (RP) realms require players to play-act in the guise of their own avatar, and Role-Playing Player Versus Player servers (RPPVP) are the same, with PvP combat rules. Thus, the first choice a player makes prior to entering the gameworld or creating a character works to shape the agencies available to them and the rules they will be bound by in the course of play.

The player is taken to the character creation screen once a realm is chosen. Here they specify the name, race, class, and physical appearance of their avatar. On-screen text provides the narrative and functional role of each of these choices. Faction has the most far-reaching effect, as it immediately segregates players through their avatars' allegiance. The two factions in WoW - 'Alliance' and 'Horde' - are ostensibly at war, such that such that users from opposing factions cannot cooperate and cannot communicate with one another within the gameworld. The relationship between players on either side in this sense on a given is deliberately preinscribed to be antagonistic. On PvE servers, a player can circumvent this prescription simply by creating an additional avatar of the opposite faction. On PvP servers however, this is prohibited by code: the player is restricted to a single faction.

4.5.b – World of Warcraft - User Interface

The player may enter the gameworld once they have created an avatar. Overlaid on the

'physical' depiction of the player's avatar and environment is the user interface (UI), shown in Figure 1[5]. Primary control (locomotion) is achieved through a mouse and keyboard by default, while the UI establishes the player's control over secondary, more abstracted functions such as managing their equipment or abilities. It is also a conduit between avatar and user, conveying information that is produced from events that are not physically recreated or observable. This is the most direct means in which the designer preinscribes the agencies available to the player in the gameworld - through the functional possibilities the UI allows for.

Blizzard-Activision permits players to redesign the UI. This expands players' contingencies to manipulate their avatars and the gameworld, but there are limits to the functionality they can impose through this. Modifying the client itself is strictly forbidden, as doing so can be directly used to produce effects akin to cheating ('Caireann 2006). Within the parameters allowed, UI modifications can grant significant advantages over the default interface, and are even relevant in discussing governance (Taylor 2006). The player meaningfully interacts with the gameworld through the UI; it stands to reason that the scripts inherent in its design work greatly to influence how they may act within it. To this end, players' modifications ('mods') can and have been used to challenge incumbent game play rules and structures of WoW directly. Examples include mods which eliminate the challenge and guesswork of quests by providing an in-game knowledge base, map annotation, and on-screen guidance, and a tool labelled 'Auctioneer' which can be used to mine a wealth of economic information by scanning and collating publically available data in player markets called 'auction houses'.

In my fieldwork, I utilised both of these. These mods are notable in that they are

generative of cultural (knowledge and competencies) and economic (currency) through the range of agencies they prescribe to the player. Thus, my position as a 'newbie' was hidden in great part through knowledge of where do go and what to do by following guidelines and annotations overlaid on the default quest log and map screens, and through data mined by Auctioneer I was able to profit far more in trading than I would otherwise.

The chatbox is at the lower-left of figure 1 and merits discussion as it houses all synchronous, text-based communication players engage in within the gameworld. It thus forms the basis for social interaction and generation of social capital between players within the gameworld. The player can directly control who, how, and where any message they input will be received. For example, to send a 'private' message (only visible to one avatar), the player may prefix their message with '/tell', followed by the avatar's name, or conversely broadcast a message to a broad area with the prefix of '/shout'. Further, in the pre-set functionality of the chatbox, messages in WoW are colour-coded. Through this, the client attempts to preconfigure the information that is subjectively important to a player. More 'personal' messages: those sent in private, or those avatar's guild or group are coded to appear more prominently.

4.5.c – WoW: participant observation

The participant observation for WoW was conducted on the European PvP realm of ‘Frostmane’, in the guild I give the name <BM> to. The fieldwork lasted approximately four weeks between October – November 2008. The majority of the observation period was spent undertaking quests in a group paired solely with F. As a rough guide, I had created my avatar roughly a month prior to beginning to arrange the participant

observation.

I began the participant observation with my avatar at level, 35, and upon conclusion it had reached level 44. This is indicative of the fact that I did not observe or interact with much of the prescribed content of WoW - the current possible level in WoW is 80. Thus, my research cannot be considered an exhaustive account of WoW in its entirety in any way. My findings which relate to governance do not reflect all the possible means of interaction in the game. I have, however, participated in a broad range of activities the game does offer, including quests, dungeon raids, and ‘battlegrounds'.

At early levels, the avatar is largely restricted to PvE activities, predominantly questing. By code, the first dungeon available to the avatar is designed for level 12 and up; 'battlegrounds' cannot be entered prior to level 10, and arena PvP combat, an 'end-game' activity, is restricted to avatars of the maximum level (80). The content provided in the initial areas I played through features relatively harmless mobs and simple quests that serve as a tutorial, directing the player in simple game play practices like attacking, using abilities, and equipping items. Thus, in tandem with increasing the coded cultural capital of the avatar (their competencies in the form of level), the player also generates a nominal cultural capital through the act of learning to play in this manner.

Quests are pre-scripted tasks assigned to the avatar. They undertaken by clicking the relevant object or NPC, bringing up a text box describing the quest, which the player can then accept or decline. Upon completion the avatar receives a prescripted award; this is usually an item, ‘experience points’ counted toward the avatar’s next level, or both. Quests were the primary activity I participated in both prior to and during the

participant observation. They are the medium by which the plot underwriting the narrative design of WoW's gameworld is told to the player on a local and personal (but scripted) basis. The rewards they garner also render them the most attractive method of gaining levels.

Quests often involve simple, repetitive tasks, usually either killing a certain number of a given mob, recovering a number of a specific item from mobs. More notable are 'breadcrumb quests' ('Eyonix' 2007). These are preinscribed to guide a player's movements in the gameworld by setting objectives that reward them for simply travelling from place to place. The designer's intent here is to alert the user to new quest 'hubs', a subtle indication of the progressive and structured nature of game play in WoW.

It is important to emphasise the 'consumption' of content here. This is an intentional by-product of the design of WoW. Once an avatar has completed the prescripted quests in a given hub, there is no coded, game-play based incentive for them to remain. After a certain level, roughly between 20-25, the number of quest hubs and zones available to the player increase significantly. I still found myself heavily reliant on a preplanned route written by another player – 'Braxis' Horde Levelling Guide' - which determined in great part my actions prior to beginning the participant observation. In this manner, accumulated knowledge of 'which' quests to take and in what order maximise the avatar's efficiency in levelling (this is the coded goal prescribed to them), and become a form valued cultural capital in and of itself that is distinct from the simple knowledge of 'how' to undertake quests. Players negotiate can implicitly coded 'pace' set for them by WoW's game play structures through 'maximising' strategies such as this as a result.

'Dungeon raids' are an alternative to questing, though as stated, players are equally limited to those they can access according to their avatar's level. Dungeons are difficult to complete and require a coordinated group, which is the crux of their design - a coordinated team-based activity requiring up to forty players. Like quests, dungeons are entirely pre-scripted, but may be repeated. I partook in a number of dungeon raids prior to and during the participant observation. They are of note in that they require significantly more social interaction and cooperation between players, and in my experiences appear simultaneously more generative of social, cultural, and symbolic capital than questing is because of the close interaction between players they require, and a range of uncoded skills which are required to complete them. An example is the knowledge of negotiated roles players must perform such as the 'healer', 'tanker', 'DPS-dealer' ('damage per second), and so on. Completion of a raid is contingent upon players performing in these roles properly; this also forms a significant form of participatory surveillance within the gameworld. I discuss this in greater detail in chapter 5.

‘Battlegrounds’ are another activity available to players I partook in prior to the study. These are pit avatars against one another in competition, rather than mobs. Two teams compete to complete an objective, such as ‘capture the flag’. As battlegrounds are stratified by level in ranges (10-19, 20-29, and so forth), thus, in placing avatars with similar coded competencies together, human skill is rather emphasised. Like dungeons, battlegrounds also demand cooperation that is to the generation of social capital through reciprocal bonds. There is an interesting additional coded barrier to be overcome by a novice user - ‘twinking’ (Glas 2007). This practice entails outfitting an avatar with prohibitively rare or expensive equipment to gain an advantage in coded competencies. In this manner, players' practice of twinking reinscribes the coded function of

battlegrounds as a segregated arena for competition between roughly matched avatars: players' practice of twinking makes competition difficult for those who do not, regardless of a player's competencies. During the course of the study F declined to use them entirely.

The game play I participated predominantly consisted of quests undertaken while grouped with a low-level alt (‘alternate’) avatar of F. The discrepancy in cultural capital (my avatar, its level and equipment) formed a coded barrier restricting the meaningful game play practices I could partake in. Further, as a 'newbie' player I had little social and symbolic capital signified by subjective 'skill' as a player, and connections formed through participation with other players. Capital inherent in the avatar does not necessarily correlate with that of the player: the practice of creating 'alt' avatars confuses the distinction between the experience of the player, and the experience of the avatar. This is especially true in the case of <BM>, as the guild's members were aware of other players' alt and main avatars. In my case however, disclosing my status as a player was concurrent with disclosing my status as a researcher: the guild was aware of my relative lack of competencies. I was able to interact with other <BM> members through F's influence, however. Despite this, this gap is notable as an additional social barrier reinforcing the coded segregation between me (both as a 'newbie' and outsider) and the rest of the guild, and highlighting the distinction between human and non-human generation of capital.

4.6 - Eve-Online - Introduction

Eve is a MMOG released in 2003 and self-published by the Icelandic developer Crowd Control Productions (CCP). Eve's gameworld is set in outer space, a galaxy populated by four warring empires. Like WoW, much of the content and activities available revolve around the pursuit of war, though Eve's environment is less bounded through combination of the absence of a level based measure of power, and forms of game play that emerge through interaction between players, rather than prescripted design. Thus, an individual's game play in Eve can wholly involve otherwise 'secondary' activities such as industry, trade, or politics. Indeed, the economy of Eve is apparently complex enough for CCP employ an economist dedicated to the task of analysing it (Fahey 2007).

All players in Eve-Online are coded as 'pod pilots', which serves both a narrative function and distances them from NPC characters. In the gameworld, every avatar is literally ensconced in an egg-shaped capsule; thus, the player's functional avatar in Eve is the ship they happen to be piloting at a given time. The 'real' avatar created by the player simply forms a portrait, and is never 'physically' observed in the gameworld. This distinction is also means of accounting for two dovetailing narratives which have been produced in Eve. One of these is the history and ongoing current affairs of Eve that concern its four factions, referring to the (written, rather than experienced) events which occur between the NPC entities of Eve: these may be reflected in changes to the code (such as political tension precipitating new 'factional warfare' modes of game play), but are rarely acted out empirically, where players would otherwise be able to influence them. In contrast, the other narrative in Eve is the result of player-interaction,

particularly between large corporations and alliances - user-run organisations equivalent to 'guilds' in WoW - which can shape the gameworld through game play mechanics that allow them to claim sovereignty over parts of it. As players possess the agency to influence the gameworld of Eve, writing of a ‘beginner’s experiences past the basic coded tutorials the game offers difficult through the agency players possess to inscribe the gameworld.

4.6.a – Eve-Online – accessing the gameworld

The process of accessing Eve is similar to that of WoW. A user must purchase a subscription (at €15 per month), register their details on the Eve-Online website, and create an account before they can gain access to Eve. The registration process can only be completed online. As in WoW, there is no scope for negotiation in this process, though it is notable that there are no legal notices, terms of use, or similar prescripted contracts which must be 'ticked' by the user to progress. Again, the user must possess a copy of the client in order to access Eve. This is freely available for download and may also be obtained on physical media through retail purchase. The user cannot bypass the initial login screen without complying to the terms of the EULA presented to them by scrolling to the bottom and clicking ‘accept’. A user will be prompted to create an avatar first time they connect to Eve's servers. There is no selection of realm or ruleset, and there is no geographic segregation of players, as Eve exists upon a single cluster of servers.

The player is guided through character creation next. The tools provided to customise

the appearance of the avatar are powerful in comparison to those in WoW, allowing the player to craft their avatar's facial features, expression, and clothing, as well as lighting, and background, but these serve only an aesthetic function and do not impact game play. The more significant aspects of avatar design players control refer to their 'race', 'bloodline', and 'profession', which determine their character attributes (labelled 'memory', 'intelligence', 'charisma', and so on) and starting skills.

4.6.b - Eve-Online - User Interface

As in WoW, UI overlays the player's image of the gameworld, and is their primary means of controlling their avatar's actions within it. Unlike WoW, modifying or adding extra functionality to the base UI is explicitly forbidden (CCP 2008). The image of Eve's UI illustrated in Figure 2[6] therefore represents the interface all Eve players must use. The ship is controlled by a combination of mouse-clicking (for the immediate vicinity) and drop-down menus (for long distance 'warp' travel). Objects and points of interest are listed and manipulated on the 'overview' menu on the right. The avatar's characteristics and various secondary game functions are accessed through the long column of icons on the left side of the screen. Too much space would be required to explain each of these in detail (or even list every menu and button in the interface). In summary, the niche cultural capital inherent in the production and publishing of Eve is visible here in the daunting construction of its interface - every minor facet of the game possesses its own automated tutorial.

The 'system information' panel listed in the top-left shows 'security status', and this is an

important enough facet of Eve to warrant mention. The gameworld consists of solar systems, and these are connected by 'stargates'. Avatars act in these through ships. Every system is assigned a 'security status' , ranging from '1.0' (safe) to '0.5' (minimal security) to '0.0' (lawless). This determines the rules avatars are subject to. In narrative significance, '1.0' systems represent the sovereign territory of Eve's four nations - and are thus policed and orderly - whilst '0.0' refers to lawless space. Any act of aggression carried out in a system rated '0.5' or over is dealt with by overwhelming force by an automated NPC 'police' which are coded to destroy the aggressor's ship without fail. Eve's rules do not prohibit the *act* of aggression is not prohibited, however: this is a practice colloquially referred to (from my own experience) as 'suicide ganking[7]'. It is indicative of how Eve players negotiate Eve's rules to produce unanticipated results.

In '0.4' systems, only stargates and stations offer automated defences, and at '0.3' and under, aggressive acts may committed with reprisal. As a result, in systems rated '0.4' systems and under[8], players must exercise caution. Eve's automated tutorial recommends the beginner to steer clear of unsafe systems, and a pop-up box appears on the first occasion a player tries to enter one, warning them of potential dangers. This is again a product of players' inscription of the gameworld. These areas are not inimically dangerous, as hostile NPC 'pirates' they otherwise contain are secluded in areas players must elicit to travel to. In fact, the resources available and missions (equivalent to quests in WoW) accessible in frontier regions make their preinscribed state more appealing than empire regions. It is players' assertion and competition over such systems, decided through warfare, that low security systems have become codified as unsafe. Eve itself only prescribes a lack of automated defences, not actual danger.

The tools Eve provides to players to communicate differ to those in WoW. Only chat

channels marked 'constellation' and 'local' tie players' capacity to converse to particular parts of the gameworld. Nor are there any coded 'language barriers' to segregate avatars by race or faction. As a result, channels with hundreds or thousands of players are not uncommon. The '3501' listed next to the 'rookie help' channel is an example. The 'Local' chat tab in the diagram bears mention in particular, as it is also a significant example of players' reinscription of coded functions, and has a fundamental influence on PvP-related game play practices.. Every solar system has its own 'local' channel. Avatars automatically join and leave these as they enter and exit a system. The primary end use of this is not to chat. As it publically displays every avatar, it rather serves as an infallible observation tool. Using local, players can gauge a system for potential threats accordingly. The 'genuine' means by which this is to be done - the overview on the UI or ship scanner - require more time, competency, and are limited by distance. This example shows how simple practices (which are player-generated cultural capital, as they are not prescribed by the client) can circumscribe the nascent function of Eve's rules inscribed in its client, without breaking the technical blackbox governing them. More pointedly, the use of 'local' is basic and near-universal practice engaged in by players, including the Privateers - it is thus directly relevant to the study.

The modules panel at the bottom-centre of the screen allows the player to gauge and control their ship's status. 'Modules', shown as the circular icons on the right hand side of the gauge are analogous to arms and armour in WoW, allow players to determine the functions of their ship, and each requires skills in order for an avatar to utilise these.

Eve's UI requires the player to define which objects in the gameworld are relevant and

why through modifying the overview. This contrasts to WoW's prescripted visual cues and predefined colour codes to designate what is important and why. Further, given the space-themed setting, objects or avatars the player interacts with may be several (simulated) kilometres apart. As a result, the player must disproportionately rely upon the UI to interact with the gameworld (instead of primary control via mouse and keyboard) in comparison to WoW.

4.6.c - Eve-Online - Participant observation

The participant observation in the gameworld of Eve was conducted during December 2008 and lasted approximately four weeks. This duration was spent as a member of the MBALM corporation within the Privateers, and I acted as 'normal' a player as possible, participating in the organisation's game play practices. As discussed earlier, my ethnography here differs from that in WoW in that I entered the field possessing vastly different capital and position. Whereas I was a 'newbie' upon beginning the ethnography in WoW, I have roughly three years' worth of experience playing Eve. This influences the data I collect through the participant observation. Whereas actions I take in WoW are precipitated by the whim of 'F' (as I lacked the cultural and symbolic capital denoting authority to question his decisions on where to go or what do to), I acted more autonomously during the ethnography in Eve. For better or worse, (this raises ethical issues of deliberately 'prompting' issues of governance and control) I coordinate and on one occasion, lead members' game play during the participant observation.

However, it is also the case that the Privateers' setting in the gameworld, operational niche, and practices were initially unknown to me. I was 'new' in the regard that I had to adopt the range of cultural tastes pertaining to game play generated by the Privateers'

actions. Thus, in addition to my overt status as a researcher I could also be considered an 'outsider' (as opposed to a beginner) through a lack of social and cultural in the early stages of the study. This process was eased by P, whose connections (as an officer of both MBALM and the Privateers in general) allowed me access to the group activities the Privateers partook in during the study.

It is difficult to write a prototypical example of a new user's experiences in Eve as its design means there is no single path a person is likely to take. However, as stated the self-determined goals of the Privateers are specific and easily conceptualised, and as such I can summarise them here. During the participant observation the objective of game play as a privateer was to participate in PvP combat in the alliance's chosen area of empire space against other players and organisations designated through Eve's formal system of declaring war. This is a one-sided acknowledgement by which one organisation purchases the right to attack another inside secure space, without reprimand from automated police. Thus, in this manner the loosely-designated goals of the Privateers become stratified and directed by coded rules, in the sense that its individual members cannot safely attack any players other than those against whom the rules permit them to do so.

The goal of this, stated by P, is the pursuit of the subjective 'fun and profit' of individual members. The methods used to locate and attack avatars belonging to hostile organisations (referred to as 'war targets or 'wts' in logs) also tacitly encourage cooperation between Privateer members. Thus, the (unstated) objective of participation during most sessions for privateers was to roam empire space looking for war targets, report the whereabouts of war targets, and form groups ('fleets') of players to attack

these where necessary.

Thus, the particular place, practice, and negotiated rules I acted under to this end inscribe an additional strata of 'setting' in the specific context. I had to learn how the Privateers organise themselves into groups (I had been used to a strict hierarchy when I played Eve myself), how its disparate member corporations work together, and the emic terms they used to describe their practices. The knowledge this entails forms of acquired cultural capital pertaining to active membership of the privateers. For example, I had to understand and use terms such as '4-4' - a shorthand for a particular space station which is also a black spot for conflict -, and what was meant by 'the pipe' - a specific chain of systems used as a trade route by an alliance the Privateers frequently fought.

Finally the manner in which the Privateers' game play practices stem from prescribed game rules merits discussion. In Eve, all ships and modules, and to an extent, the avatar itself, are perishable, and cost time, money, resources, or all of these in order to be replaced. This allows the production of lasting consequence of PvP combat in Eve, and allows players, Privateers included, to directly shape the gameworld by controlling the ability of other players to act in it - game play in this sense becomes a significant mediator of governance. The Privateers' practices also take on a 'political' relevance, as they directly and significantly impede the action of other player-run organisations. Cultural and symbolic capital are generated and held within the organisation as incorporated actor in its own right in this manner.

Related to this, players must sustain themselves with a source of income from activities other than combat. During the study I wished to avoid action separate from the primary function of the Privateers. Thus, I funded my avatar through RMT (real-money-trade) of

'game time cards' bought with Euros, exchanged for in-game currency. Unlike most MMOGs, which prohibit RMT, CCP explicitly allow it, and host a sub-forum on their website for this purpose - but this permission only to the sale of timecards[9], for which they are the sole vendor.

This account very broadly describes the game play practices I partook in during the participant observation in Eve, and their relevance to the research question. In the following chapter, I discuss Eve and WoW in more detail and with greater sociological breadth in the course of constructing the field.

5.0 – Constructing the field - introduction

This chapter aims to present an analysis of the fields and sub-fields which compose WoW and Eve, using the framework of Bourdieu's concepts of the field and capital outlined in chapter 2, and also Malaby's reworking of the concept of capital (2006) discussed in chapter 3. The goal of this process is to highlight the complex and numerous relationships that are relevant to the constraint of human agency within the gameworlds of Eve and WoW. By doing so, this will provide a context for examination of practices of governance in chapter 6.

Field analysis here is stratified according to 'macro', 'meso', and 'micro' levels. I begin with the macro-level, focusing on CCP and Blizzard-Activision as actors in the position of 'publisher', in the macro-level fields composing the broader 'society' they act in. Here I focus specifically upon their position and capital in the fields of the economy and legal governance, which have subsequent impact upon meso and micro levels of analysis. Meso analysis frames Eve and WoW as agents in the sub-field of the digital games industry situated in the broader field of cultural industries. Here the capital which defines each as a 'MMOG' is examined as the basis for competition between agents in the sub-field. The capital which define Eve and WoW at a meso level in turn shapes their micro-level construction. Finally, the dimensions of analysis I apply to the micro-level field emphasises each case as a composite of sub-fields unto themselves. Human agents, as 'players' become visible at this level, and construction of the micro-level field in each case is referenced by data from the participant observation where possible.

This chapter primarily focuses upon the micro-level field, and the meso and macro-level fields are constructed to regard to their relevance to the micro-level. This is inescapably due in part to the fact that fieldwork was carried out at the micro level, and thus most of

the data I have collected pertains to it, but also because even in isolation from this fact, the comparative data I will present points to action within the micro level field, particularly within the gameworld itself, as the most significant site where human agency is negotiated. Thus, I broaden the analysis at the micro-level, and construct it with reference to three axes which describe agencies within it. These form three micro-level sub-fields, of game play, legal governance, and the production and mobilisation of paratexts. In this chapter I construct and examine the fields of game play and paratexts; the micro-level field of legal governance is discussed in detail in chapter 6.

'Habitus' in the analysis here is notably absent. Translating the action of the habitus, and its functional use in describing the basis upon which agents act and strategies they form in the field to the gameworld of a MMOG is problematic. Bourdieu uses the concept of the habitus to account for the influence of social class, education, upraising and other 'background' variables have upon the strategies an agent forms (Bourdieu 1995:78). The methodology I have adopted here focuses upon the gameworld in isolation, and thus I cannot account for informants' real-life identities, social class, or other characteristics from which their habitus may be constructed. Further, none of these characteristics are visible nor can they be validated within in the gameworld of a MMOG. Further, the nature of WoW and Eve as games, and also as digital environments, inherently works to translate human agency in such a manner that it obscures the work of the habitus. In the gameworld, the researcher can observe informants only through the avatars they use. The actions the avatar can undertake prescribed by the rules of the game, influences the strategies formed by the player before their capital, position, and habitus can be taken into account.

This is not to argue that habitus is irrelevant, or a casualty of the properties of the 'magic circle' digital games erect - their capacity to do so is questionable (Nieuwdorp 2005; Consalvo 2007). However, the above two criteria do still hide the function of the habitus from view, as it must necessarily be translated to game play, and in the case of digital games, the contingencies inherent in the player's avatar. This, combined with my own limited perspective as a 'player', works to obfuscate the exact function of the habitus, such that I refrain from directly referring to it.

5.1 - Macro-level field context, and publishers

At a macro-level, the 'field' refers to complex systems of fields which form 'society'. I limit construction of the field at this level of analysis to the two fields I consider are most relevant to this study and both MMOGs in question - the macroeconomic field, and field of power controlled by the nation-state the publisher of each MMOG here is subject to. In addition, a vast sociotechnical network of human and nonhuman agents is involved in the design, production, maintenance, and consumption of Eve and WoW in their positions as 'products' in a macro level sub-field of the field cultural industries. The construction of WoW and Eve at this level, and the position of Blizzard-Activision and CCP in the macro and meso levels of analysis is accounted for using documentary sources - self-reported financial data published by both companies.

This sub-field is the digital games industry, which generates commodified cultural capital. The digital games industry is relatively autonomous (though still heteronomous to the economic field) from the broader field of cultural industries through the niche commodities it produces, catering to specific tastes. The MMOG genre, which produces a very specific, restricted category of digital game, is therefore a niche within a niche.

This is easily illustrated. WoW is the most widely played MMOG, with near 11.5 million active players ('Cyberwiz' 2010). In same sub-field of digital games, 'Farmville', a game released in 2009 (five years after WoW), and linked to the social networking site 'Facebook' possesses more than 65 million players (Caoili 2010). This is greater than the number of players of subscription-based MMOGs in their entirety ('Cyberwiz' 2010). Farmville's prescribed end use as a simple, accessible cultural product is visible in its technical design: unlike WoW (or most other MMOGs) Farmville does not require a subscription, access does not require purchase of a client program or account, and its simple graphical interface requires little processing power in comparison to WoW and Eve, and thus, can be played on inexpensive computers, broadening its potential appeal.

Comparing the MMOG genre to the digital games industry, almost 380 million units of digital games software were sold globally in 2009 (Terdiman 2010) - and this figure speaks only of retail sales, ignoring digital distribution, free-to-play games, freeware games, and games which operate on a 'micro-transaction' basis. Thus, MMOGs not only occupy a cultural niche with regard to the macro-level fields of popular culture and mass media, but also within the more restricted sub-field of the digital games industry.

At a macro-economic level, WoW and Eve are 'products' and cultural capital of the agents which own them through the macro-level legal and economic fields - CCP and Blizzard-Activision - and mobilised by them to accrue economic capital and position within the economic field. The position of each company at this level bears a huge influence on the construction and position of each MMOG at a meso level, as a function of how profitable they are. This in turn is a function of the economic and cultural capital

invested in and produced by each MMOG in the meso-level subfield of the digital games industry.

The disparity in position between WoW and Eve, or rather between CCP and Activision-Blizzard, is most apparent at the macro-economic level. Crowd Control Productions (CCP) is an Icelandic corporation founded in 1997: Eve, released in 2003, is their only significant release to date. The game launched with 25,000 subscribers (Wood 2009), but has steadily grown to more than 300,000 active accounts (Egan 2009). Eve is primarily published through digital distribution, its client program, and a free trial is widely available to download. CCP have licensed retail publishing rights to Simon and Schuster, and more recently Atari (2009).

A monthly pay-for subscription model and tertiary sales such as merchandise earned CCP $28 million in revenue and $6.5 million in profit in the period from January-June 2009. Their assets during the same period are valued at $52 million (CCP 2009). Eve as a franchise is the only source of income to date for CCP, but it is an economically successful one. Further, the company has established offices in Reykjavik, Atlanta, and Shanghai (ibid.), and recently acquired another company, White Wolf Publishing (White Wolf Online 2006), with a view to producing a new MMOG using their franchises.

In contrast, Blizzard-Activision's 'MMORPG' department reports revenue of $301 million - primarily through WoW subscriptions and tertiary sales - in a three month period ending September 2009(Activision-Blizzard 2009). The company as a whole reports $1,039 million for the third quarter of 2009, making it the most currently successful agent in the sub-field of the digital games industry. Further, Blizzard-Activision have offices in more than twenty countries, and either own or license

publishing rights to a large number of prominent franchises such as 'Call of Duty', 'X-men', and 'Guitar Hero'. It is clear that on a purely economic basis, the two companies are an order of magnitude apart. Considering WoW in isolation does little to change this relationship. WoW garnered half a million subscribers within a year upon release in 2004, and has grown consistently since to a current peak of roughly 11.5 million accounts.

Additionally, Blizzard has enjoyed a favourable position within the macro-level economic field and the meso-level field of the games industry as a critically-acclaimed developer and publisher prior to the release of WoW and its merger with Activision. Conversely, this highlights CCP's own success in the economic field as a relatively new agent with no previous acclaim. CCP has through Eve, and Eve's meso and micro level attributes, defined its own niche position. This has shielded CCP from cultural and economic position-taking in the macro and meso fields.

The relationship between the two cases here is better placed into context by comparing them to other agents in the field. This can be easily established by comparing other extant MMOGs along parameters already discussed. Charts from 'MMOdata.net' measure most MMOGs currently available along axes of their market share or subscriber base, and time ('Cyberwiz' 2010). I consider these more easily describe the macro and meso level relationship between the two cases than graphically depicting the field. The most successful MMOGs by these measures generate revenue through subscriptions excepting 'Dofus' and 'Runescape' - these rely on composite free and pay-for systems which inflate their relative status. Nevertheless, this comparison serves to illustrate the diametric opposition of WoW and Eve-Online within the macro-level field.

Both Eve and WoW are anomalous to the 'normal' economic trajectory of a MMOG. Look at the 150k-1m and 1m-12m subscription ranges: most MMOGs sharply rise in subscription upon release, before sharply declining and stabilising at a low number, becoming defunct. WoW's meteoric rise is well documented by comparison, but Eve is also subtly notable. It has experienced a very slow but stable increase in players since its release, without any dramatic growth or decline typical of the industry. Both are exceptions to established trends, and reflect their respectively unique positions. These can be framed in terms applied by Bourdieu in his construction of the field of cultural production in eighteenth century France (1993).

Through its heteronomy with the macro-level economic field and appeal to broad cultural tastes (in the context of the digital games industry), WoW comes to occupy a hegemonic position in the MMOG sub-genre, just as producers of 'bourgeois' art enjoyed economic success through aligning their production with the tastes of the dominant fraction in the field of cultural production (1993:166). Eve's design rather contrasts with that of WoW such that within the MMOG genre, it represents restricted (in the context of cultural production in the digital games industry) cultural capital that appeals to niche tastes. Again framing this in the context of Bourdieu's analysis, Eve is more comparable to agents who produce art for 'art's sake', in "occupy a central but structurally ambiguous position in the field" (1993:167). In other words, both are firmly established within the field (by creating products that are undeniably 'games' or 'art' respectively) and secure autonomy by opposing their cultural production to tastes represented by mass-produced culture. This comparison is not absolute however, and it is important to remember that as a commodified product it is still linked to the economic field, and competes with WoW at a meso and macro level in this capacity.

The macro-level discrepancy in position between CCP and Blizzard-Activision is further visible through the scale and form of paratexts produced by both companies in relation to Eve and WoW. Advertising is the most prominent of these. It is a practice that is macro-level economic competition, and also reflects the cultural tastes the CCP and Blizzard-Activision appeal to in their production of Eve and WoW. Both MMOGs here are advertised extensively online through banners and animated ads; it also points to a typification of the end user of these as those already nominally identifiable as 'gamers'. Blizzard-Activision's vast economic advantage allows it a far greater reach and scope in this regard; extensive advertising is less of an economic risk, and the company thus has greater agency to appeal to people outside of the expected end user of a MMOG. This is visible in its mobilisation of several forms of media to this end; traditional print media, television campaigns, and even celebrity endorsement (Wilson 2007). CCP's advertising is by contrast more limited. However, Eve has often found its way into traditional media through other avenues. Players' in-game acts have proved newsworthy on a number of occasions; this is a product of Eve's micro-level construction as a 'game', which have allowed for events such as a record theft reported on the BBC (2009) to surface through emergent game play. The difference here is both a result of the differing economic positions of the two companies and the meso-level status of their games as 'niche' and 'hegemonic', and also works to reinforce it.

Finally, Eve and WoW, as products and intellectual property of their publishers, are subject to the field of power and legal field of governance, through the laws of the states in which their publishers are situated. This reinforces the copyright and ownership Blizzard-Activision and CCP exert over each MMOG. This is directly visible in regard

to Eve and WoW, and to players at a micro-level through the legal documents accompanying the client in both cases. In accordance with its founders and current headquarters being located in Reykjavik, the EULA (End User License Agreement) of Eve defers to the Republic of Iceland as a guarantor, or more specifically, the District Court of Reykjavík (CCP 2008). Similarly, Blizzard defers to governance of the United States, and other unspecified legislation referred to in its EULA as "international copyright treaties and conventions, and other laws"(Activision-Blizzard 2008), These presumably at least include the Digital Millennium Copyright Act of 1998, given past suits Blizzard-Activision have brought to court (Lee 2009). By itself the DMCA is enough to differentiate the position between CCP and Blizzard-Activision in the macro-level legal field; it gives far more credence to copyright holders in disputes than do comparable legislative acts in other countries.

5.2 - Meso-level field - situating Eve and WoW in the digital games industry

The macro-level analysis of the cases constructs them as 'products' leveraged for economic capital in the economic field. The meso-level perspective of WoW and Eve rather highlights their status as commodified cultural works. Commodification influences the capital and tastes inherent in cultural works (Kerr 2006: 44-46) through establishing heteronomy with the economic field. Thus, MMOGs are entrenched in the field of cultural industries, formed through this heteronomy. More specifically, MMOGs are situated in the digital games industry, a sub-field of the field of cultural industries.

Their macro role as 'products' still renders agents in this meso-level sub-field subservient to action in the macro-level economic field. Further, unlike 'offline' digital games, MMOGS require a base of players to function, and demand significant material

and administrative costs to remain functional and online. There is therefore significant and ongoing risk in developing and maintaining a MMOG, as it must leverage considerable economic and cultural capital to compete within the sub-field. MMOGs can fail even after initial success in this regard because of their 'unfinished' nature (Humphreys 2008:150). Recent examples of this include 'Auto Assault', in August 2007 and 'Tabula Rasa' in February 2009. Despite attracting 11,000 and 125,000 initial subscribers on release respectively, both were shut down after roughly a year of operation through a lack of revenue.

In the meso-level sub-field of the MMOG industry, there are a set of technical and designed characteristics which, by the current tastes of the field, relate specifically to MMOGs. These form capital that secures entry to the field, and are also credentials confirming a MMOG as such. Such characteristics include a subjectively 'massive' allowance for many simultaneous players, permanently online environments, subscription based-service instead of a single payment, and so forth. Server architecture which can host a large number of players is the most prominent MMOG-defining characteristic not inimical to game design. Further, it is one by which Eve and WoW also contrasts strongly. These differences were visible during the participant observation, in the process of initial access to Eve and WoW.

Each copy of WoW's gameworld is hosted on a server named a 'realm'. These are clustered by service region (Asia, Europe, U.S., and so on) and players may play on as many of these as they wish in their own service region. Realms are stratified by language and ruleset, allowing a modicum of choice in the rules a user will be bound by, and who they will be playing with. For reference, there are over a hundred realms for

Europe alone (Activision-Blizzard, no date). Now, while players may act in as many of these as they wish, each realm is otherwise distinct and separate from others. Aside from 'battlegroup' clustering (avatars are pooled across servers for certain multi-player activities) avatars and game play they engage in are specific to each realm. In contrast, the entirety of Eve's gameworld is situated on a single large interconnected set of servers. Thus, my choice of which server upon which to base the participant observation in WoW informs all subsequent experiences within the particular gameworld I act upon. I opted for a server with a 'PvP' (player-versus-player) ruleset, as this introduces rules in WoW which make the range of possible player-interaction more similar to that in Eve, allowing for comparison to be drawn more easily. In this manner, while my particular choice is determined by the imperatives of my research, the existence of several different service regions, realms, and rulesets allows WoW to subscribe to differing player tastes. Thus, the actions I undertake and the players I interact with upon the 'Frostmane' realm are particular to cultural tastes and practices of players who opt for 'PvP'-oriented game play.

Eve contrasts to this Instead of the agency to pick and choose realms, players instead act in a single coherent environment. A single-world design is one that has been rarely used by MMOGs, and has thus been mobilised as a unique selling point of Eve by CCP.

This is also directly relevant to the research question. The two different server architectures here take drastically different approaches to stratifying the user-population of each MMOG, and alternatively offer players more and less agency to decide how and with whom they wish to play. Conversely, the influence player-interaction at a micro-level upon designers' re-inscription of each game as a whole (assuming this is even nominally taken into consideration) inevitably differs when a designer must consider

game play practices across several hundred servers, instead of a single one. Thus, without even approaching the micro-level field of game play where human agency is most visibly expressed and influenced in each case, meso-level technical characteristics of each case here will have significantly preconfigured how this takes place.

Bourdieu argued fields may only be constructed through describing their autonomy relative to other fields (Bennett et al. 2009:12). In this manner, the technical characteristics of MMOGs inherent in both their design and the technical objects needed to maintain the gameworlds they create work to distinguish them from other works produced in digital games industry. Thus, while not autonomous enough to form a field unto themselves, MMOGs occupy a position of restricted production and niche capital within the digital games industry. At a meso-level, this is represented through the cultural capital they generate (through their design and the tastes they cater to) which distinguishes them from other digital games and works of popular culture.

The capital, positions, and strategies mobilised within the meso-level field of MMOGs occur along a shifting negotiation of cultural tastes. MMOGs compete by appealing to these or successfully defining new ones themselves, user patronage ultimately the arbiter of this process. However, as this field is subservient to the macro-economic field, powerful external agencies will exert influence within it, to the effect that the most economically successful agent may not reflect prevailing tastes at any given time. Advertising is an example of this discrepancy. This argument is not purely speculative; the history of the genre, and the market it is beholden to, provides a very clear account of both. Taylor's explanation (2006: 21:28) provides insight into this. While there is no clear progressive trend in design between earlier examples such as 'TinyMUD', 'Habitat',

and 'Meridian 59' produced in the late eighties and early nineties, the release and lasting commercial success of Ultima-Online in 1997 marks a clear beginning of a design paradigm. Elements of this have been variably inherited or dropped by successive titles and form the basis for the stratification of the meso-level field along a scale of 'orthodox' and 'heretical' design reminiscent of Bourdieu's polarisation of art and artists within his analysis of the French Literary and cultural field (1993: 40-42).

When given context against the other MMOGs discussed above, WoW and Eve are seen to occupy different ends of this scale. WoW's rules and game play practices embody many design characteristics which are either orthodox, or which have become so after taking the dominant position in the sub-field in place of Everquest. Its medieval-fantasy setting and game play focused on avatar progression through levels and equipment are the most prominent and reproduced of these. In contrast, the design and game play of Eve is visibly heretical when taken into context of the field as a whole: its sci-fi setting and consequential game play (in that player-action can have a lasting beneficial or detrimental effect) are features rarely employed by MMOGs.

5.2.a - Meso level - the MMOG genre

All MMOGs must fundamentally be scripted and structured in order to delineate themselves as games. Beyond this however, the rules inherent in a MMOG lend themselves to a dialectic of "emergence' and 'progression'. Juul (2002:324-326) codifies digital game structures on a scale of 'emergent' or 'progressive' qualities, and will be the primary means of distinguishing game play between cases here at the meso and micro levels. At the meso level, this typology can be referred to with Bourdieu's concepts as the identification of sets of particular cultural tastes that the design of a MMOG is to

appeal to. WoW is a predominantly 'progressive' MMOG, whilst Eve is predominantly 'emergent'. Thus, Juul's typology here is a means to distinguish MMOGs which appeal to broad cultural tastes, from those which appeal to a niche. At the micro level, this distinction instead refers to the specific design characteristics within a MMOG itself - most MMOGs, including both in this study, contain both emergent and progressive qualities.

Emergent games are those where "a small number of rules that combine and yield large numbers of game variations, which the players then design strategies for dealing with", whilst in progressive games "the player has to perform a predefined set of actions in order to complete the game". MMOGs are oriented as progressive or emergent as a reflection of both designers' intent and the contingency for unanticipated forms of game play through novel combination of a game's rules. In progressive MMOGs, players are often predisposed to certain practices by coded incentivisation, or simply through a lack of alternative action possible in a given scenario. The more heavily pre-inscribed game play in a MMOG is, the more a player will be provided with explicitly coded goals. In opposition to this, more emergent MMOGs allow players to negotiate their own game play objectives and the means to achieve them. These two do not form a perfect dichotomy and in practice many MMOGs will have elements of each, but most invariably lean toward one or the other.

Emergent game play is difficult to predict as it is negotiated by players and is by nature unanticipated, but a MMOG may conversely be identified as progressive by examining 'mechanical' pre-inscriptions its code entails. For example, avatar 'levels' are characteristic of a progressive MMOG. WoW in particular predisposes players to linear progression and development of their avatars, as much of the game's content is available

after the avatar reaches certain levels. This is a rule embedded in the landscape of the gameworld, and one which I observed at a very early stage during the participant observation. WoW is carefully designed to segregate the areas of the gameworld so that their content caters to different avatar levels. As a result, much of it can be 'consumed'. However, coded rules do not prevent players from reasserting the symbolic purpose of the gameworld, the rules, or of game play itself. For example;

> The area outside the city gates [of Orgrimmar - the capital city of the 'Horde'] faction appears to be some sort of a loitering area, and is crowded every time I pass. Why this is, I can't tell. it has no prominence or mechanical function aside from simply serving as the entrance to the city.
>
> (excerpted from fieldnotes, World of Warcraft, 14 August 2008)

This is an example of how players can re-inscribe progressive structures to bear emergent qualities. The inscription or association of particular cultural and symbolic capital with rules, places, or objects composing MMOGs produces negotiated end uses and meanings, altering designer's prescribed intent. It remains however, that progressive game rules direct players' agency toward the gameworld and objectives set by the designer, in place of the game and its rules as a mediator for interaction that occur between players between players. Progressive-structured games are arguably less generative of social capital as a result of this.

Conversely, a more emergent MMOG will be reliant upon the tools it provides to players to populate the world with content themselves through emergent game play produced through their interaction. The focus of agency here is 'outward', in that players' actions influence not only their own avatars, but also others, or the gameworld itself. As a result, negotiation of meaning, function, and paratexts produced in the

course of game play are yielded to users. Again, this is visible in the participant observation.

In <BM> the game play I partook in was primarily and inevitably faceted toward progressive game play such as quests: these form the primary activities by which players advance in WoW's game structures. In contrast, the Privateers' objectives and game play practices were informed by the status and objectives the organisation established for itself within the boundaries of Eve's rules; they are emergent and player-negotiated in this sense as there is no clear progression.

The production of paratexts is an additional practice which is visible at the meso level, and one which is relevant to the construction of the field here. In the context of MMOGs, this is an expression of users' micro-level agency, but on aggregate paratexts exert influence at a broader frame of analysis through widespread adaptation or re-interpretation, as they are cultural artefacts (Malaby 2006:158), or commodified works of cultural capital that are not limited to the gameworld. Examples include discussion forums, fansites and weblogs, guides, mods or tools and so forth. Their compound effect demystifies and de-scripts the function of a given MMOG. The production of paratexts makes the intent behind pre-inscribed characteristics of a MMOG transparent.

What Consalvo describes amounting to the controlled (commodified) release or retention of game ‘secrets’ by a publisher, of any kind, are today an impossibility (2007: 32), as a result of CMC possibilities of the internet. This also applies to the possibility of blackboxing game content because of the volume, complexity, and exhaustiveness of cultural paratexts which develop in relation to a given MMOG. At their most potent,

paratexts are agents which de-script, simplify, or optimise game play practices in a MMOG, altering its 'progressive' or 'emergent' properties. Neither Eve nor WoW are an exception to this, but due to differing and enforced rules in their EULAs (End User License Agreement) the paratexts which have been emerged in relation to both do functionally differ, as I will discuss in chapter 6.

While WoW and Eve occupy almost diametric positions within the MMOG sub-field itself, it is more significant that both of these positions are uniquely advantageous. WoW's hegemonic position has come to define orthodox tastes within the field. This is proven simply through its success in the macro-economic field. Moreover, this orthodoxy sets a standard other agents must compete with or distance themselves from by perfectly emulating its design attributes or changing acceptable cultural tastes by developing new ones. Eve in contrast holds a heretical position in its overbearing emphasis on emergent, player-driven game play, unusual setting, and absence of a typical 'level' system. The autonomy of this position is assured simply through a lack of competitors. Thus, while both cases are situated in the same sub-field, they do not directly compete with one another.

The design of Eve as predominantly emergent, and of WoW as predominantly progressive is fundamental to how each influences human agency at a micro-level. However, within the meso, they are still distinct in this manner through their appeal to different cultural tastes. Eve's user driven and conflict-centric mode of play demands a high individual cost of entry and demand for broad paratextual knowledge on behalf of the player. This arguably both preserves its current position and denies it from directly competing against WoW for the same playerbase. On the other hand, the paratextual knowledge which players apply in acting out WoW's scripted play (questing or creating

and developing avatars) equate more to other agents in the sub-field which it directly competes with, such as 'Aion' or 'Everquest II'. This lowers the cost of entry and exit for an individual and is possibly reflected in the volatility in subscriber numbers many MMOGs aside from WoW itself ('Cyberwiz' 2009) experience. It is reasonable to argue therefore that the cultural capital inherent in WoW and Eve in their design as games reflects and is a reflection of the cultural tastes of the players who patronise them. This in turn may influence emergent practices of game play, and thus of governance which develop at a micro-level.

5.3 - Outlining micro-level fields of WoW and Eve

The micro-level fields are framed by agencies expressed in the gameworld of a MMOG, or any paratext which influences it. Further sub-fields emerge at this level: the field of game play, the paratextual field, and the micro-level field of governance. Here I focus upon constructing the game play and paratextual fields: governance will be discussed in detail in chapter 6. Eve and WoW equally possess these, but their empirical composition varies through differing capital and agents within them. Agents at a micro-level are also greatly multiplied and disparate; the field is no longer a space of competition between companies or MMOGs as holistic agents, but amongst various fractions of competing users, administrators, the client and server architecture forming the gameworld, and the paratexts produced in relation to it.

The pre-inscribed nature of MMOGs, and the plurality of human agents within them

complicate the dialectic of a field as a relational structure. It is extremely difficult for users to contest the pre-inscribed design of a MMOG in its own coded terms: modding, cheating, and hacking are methods of doing this, but each is limited. The capacity to mod a MMOG is dependent upon the designer deliberately providing the contingency for users to do so. Cheating or exploiting flaws in coded rules allows players to break inscribed functions of the code and re-assert them, but are reactive - they must be discovered rather than made. An excerpt from a discussion in Eve exemplifies this point;

```
V1: And in my Tempest [a battleship] i run 2 TD ['tracking disruptors].. it
seemns TD is the best ewar ['electronic warfare'] if u not Jamming
V1: Tracking Speed Disruption [in-game link to item]
V1: They dont stack nerf
V1: odd huh
R: they don't stack? Sounds like a bug, better keep quiet about
it
```

(excerpted from 'Alliance' chat chatlogs, Eve-Online, 16 December 2008)

For players, manipulating flaws in the code can yield an advantage in game play. However, as such actions contravene the EULA of both cases, players risk punitive action taken by the publisher. Hacking conversely actively contests technical pre-inscriptions but requires technical skills that most players will not possess. Players' agency to contest and re-inscribe the rules of a MMOG is therefore greatly limited, and expressed mostly through the contingency emergent game play affords through novel rule-combination. As a result of this, the structure of the field of game play is, with particular regard to progressive modes of play, quite durable and resistant to change.

Nonhuman agents in this regard work to reduce the contingency for position-taking human agents can engage in, and govern emergent forms of play simply because they denote all possible permutations for what 'game play' entails. In this manner, the rule

structures of WoW and Eve influence the capital and strategies players can use to shape the gameworld. Players may not redesign the gameworld, alter rules, or how their avatar's abilities work, and so on. Enforcement of basic fundamental rules in both WoW and Eve is automatically and irreconcilably complete where it is not explicitly disrupted by hacking or cheating. However, the plurality of human embodiment in a MMOG means portraying human negotiation of coded rules only through agency these afford to them as 'players' in the gameworld is problematic. Human agency is not restricted to the gameworld as the coded rules and technical agents which compose it are. Leveraging paratexts is one means by which users may act upon or within the micro-level field of a MMOG whilst remaining outside it. Further, meso-level heteronomy between MMOGs ensures the cultural and symbolic capital defined by players' subjective tastes, competencies, and knowledge relevant to MMOGs transfers easily. Social capital, as it is not reducible to code but rather is an expression of reciprocal human, social relationships is affected only where it is leveraged to generate other forms of capital in the gameworld. Large-scale raids in WoW are an example. These demand a large number of strong connections between players, given their coded design is to be difficult and time consuming to complete, in exchange for cultural artefacts, (rewards) symbolic capital (completion as 'achievement' indicating status of players involved), and further generation of social capital (through cooperation).

The paratextual micro-level sub-field bridges this gap, to an extent. Similarly, publishers also utilise paratexts to govern human agency outside the field of game play, where governance in this regard cannot be delegated to the client or server architecture. The restrictive quasi-legal terms found within the EULA and ToS of both cases are

examples. The capital embedded in these is traceable to the macro-level field of governance, far removed from users' experiences of them as long-winding text impeding access to the game proper.

So, the micro-level field is that which pertains directly to a given MMOG, but it is one not necessarily restricted to actions occurring directly within it. However, most action, and the most significant practices which pertain to governance are situated in the micro-level field of game play and involve participatory regulation or surveillance (Albrechtslund 2008) in their execution. As such, discourses of 'play' are the starting point in constructing the field here. This may seem facetious, but it is important to establish the influence preinscribed code possesses in an arena where the contingency for humans to negotiate it is often very limited. Negotiation of end use is typically afforded only through the emergence the rules allow, as well as the semantic, uncoded meaning players inscribe into the game. These are the means players possess to compete against nonhuman agents in the micro-level field, but in both cases here this agency does not in most cases extend to direct reinscription of them.

The field of game play in each case is ordered as variously 'progressive' or 'emergent' as a function of how much game play practices are negotiated primarily by players or the client. Empirically, this is visible in the disparate forms of play that rule combination in each case allows for. Scripts in both cases allow for the emulation of cultural, political, and economic activity, framed as game play, such as Eve's market economy or WoW's forced organisation of players into two competing factions. The end use of progressive rule structures which define these may be negotiated by players, however.

5.3.a - The Micro-Level Field of Game Play in WoW

WoW's micro-level field is composed of the sub-fields of game play, legal governance, and paratexts. In the following sections, the sub-fields of game play and paratexts will be discussed, whilst the sub-field of legal governance will be covered in chapter 6. My construction of the field of game play is drawn from data collected through fieldnotes and chatlogs recorded during the participant observation, and a number of documentary sources which concern game play, such as the 'wiki' guide for a certain raid. Thus, the sub-field of game play is defined through the negotiation between coded rules and players' end use of these, whilst the paratextual field is constructed in relation to the field of game play, through my own use of paratexts (including UI mods and guides) and that of my informants I observe.

The gameworld is the boundary dividing the field of game play from the paratextual field: paratexts can act directly within the gameworld (through cheats or mods for example) but are predominantly produced and leveraged from outside it. In a similar manner, I distinguish human agents in their varying positions as 'users' and 'players' in regard to the construction of these fields. Within the field of game play, humans are 'players', and regulated by the client. However, in acting outside the field of game play, as 'users' (of CMC technologies and the agencies this entails) human users have the potential to position the client as a 'subject' in paratextual field through their production and consumption of paratexts. This is a single example of how position and capital within the field at this level of analysis is fluid and multivariate for many actors within it. This makes constructing the field a complex affair, and also ensures that tracing the exercise of practices of governance and control within it is similarly difficult.

The field of game-play refers directly to the gameworld of WoW and will be the first

sub-field discussed. Juul's typology discussed here will be referred to again, but in contrast to the meso field will be used to discuss specific game structures. Thus, Juul presents the MMOG 'Everquest' (2002: 324) as the example in his work, describing its game play as emergent, but with structuring, progressive qualities. Like Taylor, (2006: 324-329) Juul qualifies this, identifying players' social interaction as the primary site of emergence within MMOGs, as opposed to the brute number of mechanical permutations its rules allow for.

Through emergent play, the construction of the field of game play becomes distinct from what can be immediately derived from its rules. Conversely, emergent games can be redefined as progressive if players' rule-interaction results in structured forms of game play, a practice cautioned by Taylor (2006) and visible in Williams et al. discussion of the 'barracks' culture of dedicated raiding guilds in WoW (2006:350). Juul describes the game play of Everquest as a 'double structure' of emergence that is derived from embedded progressive structures. He argues that it remains emergent in orientation because the manner in which a player navigates through the progressive elements of the game is predictable, yet not explicitly prescribed to them. Raiding is presented as a strong example of emergent play in Everquest, a social activity demanding the cooperation of a large group of players - as many as seventy-two - over an extended period of time. This cooperation is a product of what Juul terms 'rule combination', a novel or unanticipated application of the game's rules that does not breach their preinscribed intent - players are not explicitly told to form groups, but this is easily devised by them as a useful or even necessary strategy for game play.

Like Everquest, WoW is a largely progressive game - and as such its field of game play is predominantly defined by pre-inscribed game rules executed by the client. However,

based upon my experience during the participant observation, I argue that WoW's rules offer enough contingency to players to have the agency to defining the field of game play through emergent play and rule-interaction. This is most apparent in the semantic evaluation of the game rules and their resultant end use. While WoW's coded rules are intractable, they are also the bedrock for emergent player culture which defines the micro-level field of game play. The negotiated end use of the gameworld and the rules and objectives it contains by players further work to redefine the particular knowledge, competencies, and connections players need to act within it; player govern the micro-level field simply through their participation in this manner.

However, it remains that the technical objects - material and immaterial - which structure the field of game play are entirely prescribed and controlled by Blizzard-Activision. Progressive structures exhaustively stratify game play practices available to an avatar, a design that is embedded in the digital environment itself, being inextricably linked to the game play mechanic of 'level'. Each zone in WoW is designed to cater to a specific level range such that the player is subtly ferried from one locale to the next in accordance with their progress. Progressive design also ensures acting outside of prescribed ranges is penalised. If an avatar's level is too low, they will be incapable of defeating monsters they encounter, and NPCs (non-player characters) will not dispense quests. Too high, and they receive no experience from their endeavours.

In both cases, the goal of such game play - levelling the player's avatar - is greatly hindered. The agency of the client to enforce rules in this manner, as practices of play it defines, become symbolic violence. The client defines the cultural capital inherent in 'how' players should play when interacting with progressive game play structures, and

through positive feedback (levels and rewards) reinforces the generation of this capital. This was visible at an early stage during my experience playing WoW prior to conducting the participant observation;

> Regarding my experiences in Stranglethorn Vale thus far: I am only in this zone on the instruction of Braxis' guide. The zone appears above my avatar's level, and mobs are staggeringly aggressive. This problem is compounded by a number of alliance players hanging around certain hotspots. Frustrating.
>
> (excerpted from fieldnotes, World of Warcraft, 19 September 2008)

> I've finished a few initial quests in the 'Shimmering Flats' area of 'Thousand Needles' zone, having travelled here in accordance with the guide. These quests are completely unconcealed grinding, directly asking me to kill/collect x, items from re-skinned versions of mobs I've seen before. Is the game designed explicitly with this intent?

(excerpted from fieldnotes, World of Warcraft, 20 September 2008)

A player's cultural capital that is reducible to code (their avatar's level, equipment, and abilities) is tied to the cultural and symbolic capital of the player themselves through their skills and status reflected through the capital embodied in the avatar. Thus, players' contingency to define the field of game play through leverage of such capital is limited, because the value and purpose of these is first defined by the game itself.

Thus, if we are to assume players genuinely wish to participate in game play stratified WoW's designers define as the 'game' here, there is little scope for emergence. Further, the progressive structures of WoW are predominantly oriented toward PvE (Player versus Environment) modes of play. Quests and raiding, which both define clear objectives and methods of their completion, are examples. These shift the focus of players' action toward the inflexible prescriptions of the client software rather than other

players, stymieing the contingency for emergent play. The fact that I was able to obtain and use a written walkthrough for quests - 'Braxis' Horde Levelling Guide ('Braxis', no date) - is testament to WoW's heavily progressive, scripted game play design. This is also an example of how cultural capital exterior to the gameworld (the guide) can be translated into cultural capital within it (competencies). Emergent game play, in comparison, is not so easily anticipated and optimised that it may be condensed into a guide. This is significant, as the key quality of progressive games is their structuring which "yields strong control to the game designer" (Juul 2002:324). Accordingly, the most structured and progressive game play practices are those where players are least capable of negotiating its game play as Blizzard-Activision has inscribed it.

Players are free to form cooperative parties when undertaking most of WoW's activities, or simply for the sake of sociability. This allowance should lend itself to emergent play. However, disregarding that even within active guilds most players play alone (Ducheneaut 2006), I argue that where the objective of play remains oriented toward PvE objectives, players' cannot effectively challenge Blizzard-Activision's agency to define the field of game play positions players can occupy within it. Indeed, where the designers' 'spirit' of play is adhered to, client, position, capital, and relationships within the field of game play remain static and are dictated by the client. While not exclusive to the generation and leverage of capital, the client does possess greater agency to dictate what capital becomes valued and how players mobilise it.

This was apparent during the participant observation. At only half the level of most members of <BM>, my avatar lacked the coded credentials to play with and observe them directly without becoming a liability. I could not safely quest in the same zones as

they, nor partake in their raid, battleground, or arena groups. Thus, through lacking adequate cultural capital (in the avatar and my own competencies), the social capital I could leverage (through participating in group-based activities) was of little value. In fact, were it not for 'F' opting to use a low-level alt when we played together, I would not have been able to participate in <BM>'s game play practices at all. Thus, players' agency to define the field solely through their practices of game play is limited to the agencies WoW's progressive structures provide to them.

Both Juul and Taylor present emergent play in MMOGs as occurring through activities which invoke social interaction in the course of play. Williams et al. similarly state "social impacts of MMOG space are equally a result of the individuals and personalities involved and the coded, artificial social architectures of the game world" (2006:340). I maintain that the agency the client wields to dictate rules play endows it with the dominant position in the relationship between it and players, and also allows it contingency to preconfigure 'emergence' resulting from players' interactions. I will use raiding as an example to illustrate this point. Consider this excerpt from a walkthrough for defeating the first boss of the level 60 'Molten Core' dungeon instance in WoW;

> "Main tank will take position at the upper right side of the small spikes in the ground, with a small group of supporting casters who can decurse/dispell/heal and support the main tank till the two adds are taken care of. You should designate a mage to decurse all members of the Main Tanking party.
>
> The two adds should be pulled by two Hunters with distract shot, followed up by two Warriors pulling agro from the hunters, and off tanking them back in the very very back of the cave. Priests should be dispelling the Dominate Mind, and have everyone focus fire on one add, take it down, then the next.
>
> Once Lucifron's two adds are down the raid party should focus on Lucifron. All paladins and mages should be using the CTraid Auto-Decurse to remove the Impending Doom and Lucifron's Curse so that it does not affect the raid."
>
> (Lord Settite, no date)

Raiding parties are rewarded for the flawless application of rote knowledge. As a

progressive structure, the cultural capital this knowledge entails (and its symbolic value) are defined by the code, as opposed to competition between players. Players are free to organise however they wish and devise any number of strategies. However, so long as few of these result in success, the choice is illusory. Bosses are vastly more powerful than avatars of their equivalent level, but as the above description implies, their actions are scripted and predictable enough to be condensed into guides. The preconfiguration of players' actions this entails shows the agency of the client to preconfigure players' leverage of social capital and the empirical form and purpose it takes. Thus, the game play in conducting a raid becomes the ordering of strict roles and positions ('tank', 'healer', 'damage' and so on) that must be adhered to.

There is no coded or implied imperative to fight at 'the very very back of the cave', but it remains an essential strategy to mitigate the bosses' advantage in character attributes and abilities. The implicit coercion here remains where players willingly participate in the game play paradigm established by the client. Even the social conduct of a raid is necessarily codified through implicit feedback mechanisms which prompt users to observe practices which yield success whilst avoiding those that do not. Sub-optimal or poorly executed strategies can result in the mere waste of time or a total 'wipe' where error results in the deaths of all participants in the raid, forcing a restart - something a group of players will normally strive to avoid. We can further infer from Taylor's work;

> "...Someone happened to wander a bit too close to a nearby mob, thereby drawing them to our entire group and nearly killing us all. Once we had killed off the creature and gotten back in formation, the raid leader said, somewhat severely on our Ventrillo voice chat channel, “I am going to be watching his [the next monster’s] target and if I see one of you

> agro him you are getting minus 16 DKP [dragon kill points, a cumulative reward system guilds often use]...Even though I had not been the one to attract the last monster I immediately felt a knot in my stomach... (Taylor 2006:330)

Here a slight deviation from prescribed strategy is enough to endanger the entire group. These dangers are designed to weigh against the rewards raids garner. However, the preinscribed code which constructs this scenario also influences the worth of these rewards, and as a result the symbolic worth and semantic evaluation players will consequently inscribe upon them.

Players must mobilise their capital to generate strategies of play that the client does not prescribe in order to escape its agency to define the field of game play. Deriving novel meanings and uses from prescripted rules is a means of doing this. These become performative where players widely accept them or where they are successfully forced upon them, and resultantly become crystallised into paratexts denoting specific cultural and symbolic capital as tastes acknowledging the function and value to these practices.

Player-defined practices situated outside structured bounds of the client's rules are also outside of its regulation. Similarly, flaws in its code or unanticipated rule combinations allow players to breach pre-inscribed game play rules, and establish more durable shifts in the field of game play without any need for consensus through leverage of social or cultural capital. The practice of 'Boosting' is an example of this. It is a basic emergence through interaction with rules (Juul 2002) which produces an unanticipated result. It is recognisable as such because the relationship of 'work' and 'reward' starkly differ from similar progressive game play structures in WoW. Contrast the following excerpt to the above 'Molten Core' guide;

```
"(about 23:00)...The high level character doing the 'boost'
formed a party with all of us and led the way through the
dungeon, slaughtering everything it encountered single-handedly
with consummate ease. The rest of had simply to wait behind and
collect the spoils from the corpses of the dead NPCs. Despite
this inaction, my avatar received a great deal of
'experience'...
```

(fieldnotes, World of Warcraft, 14 August 2008)

A design to challenge a group of five low-level avatars is trivialised by a single level-70 avatar yet all participants benefit from the 'booster' just as they would from a normal raid - more so in fact, as the endeavour takes a fraction of the time. Derived strategy or any guide becomes unimportant; the advantage a level-70 holds nullifies the need for these things. Additionally, during the participant observation, it was difficult for me to participate in a 'normal' dungeon raid and boosting became the norm. The cultural and social capital players require to complete a dungeon raid therefore shift. From the knowledge, skills, and connections needed to form a group of players and complete the prescripted tasks, boosting changes players' priorities to leveraging their connections, status, or currency in order to negotiate a 'boost' from a high-level player.

Boosting is also notable as it uses rules defined by the client against themselves. The catch is, of course, that the player boosting does not gain experience from the encounter and no item they may recover from a low-level dungeon will be worth using - this is why players' social and symbolic capital are a significant factor in the emergence of the practice. I argue this further supports the practice as emergent and social, as it implies an absence of any coded incentive or coercion. Within progressive modes of play within WoW, it is only through game play that is not stratified by the client's progressive structuring of 'goals' and 'rewards' that genuine emergence, and the agency to redefine

the practices which define the sub-field of game play become possible.

This is most visible where players' actions work to 'break' WoW's game play structures. This does not necessarily entail cheating or leverage of paratexts such as mods or hacking tools, however. Players possess the greatest contingency to re-inscribe the game where flaws in the code describing its rules exist. In WoW, prior instances have included manipulating monster aggression rules to drag raid bosses to capital cities ('Andy956' 2006) and the transformation of a simple damage-over-time spell with unique contagious properties into a virtual epidemic (Reimer 2005). Re-inscription of WoW's rules in such a manner allows players to claim the position of 'designer' in a limited capacity. However, as the credentials of denoting the position of 'designer' are held in the sole authority of Blizzard-Activision (secured through the macro-level legal and economic fields) players cannot compete against its agency to universally rewrite or introduce new code to WoW. Lacking this capital means lacking access to the prerequisite software, hardware, and knowledge required in order to contest designers' agency to act "not as governments, but as gods (Bartle 2006)". As a result, the micro-level field will always be shaped first by the rule structures designers inscribe upon it, against which players' practices must be negotiated.

Unanticipated game-play which emerges through rule combination not regulated by the client avoids this problem. Where novel games emerge within WoW, they are the product of players' interaction, rather than coded script. A 'territorial' struggle I witnessed during the participant observation is exemplary of this;

> "We are killed by passing alliance a few minutes after starting [questing]. Others, a large ?? [indicating high level] group passes by without incident. This lull is a false one; they instead went to besiege Grom'Gol, the neighbouring Horde camp as we found out upon returning at 21:00. A counter

> group is formed and apparently, wipes them within seconds. Neither party is tangibly rewarded by the system, in contrast to other modes of play. I see avatars linked to three separate guilds here, but no noticeable link between them. F seems to have played a part in organising this, whispering to me *"these are my friends :)". T*he server crashes shortly after the fight ends. The world is frozen for everybody. Once restarted (21:25) the disruption is used by the alliance avatars to attack again."
>
> (fieldnotes, World of Warcraft, 14 October 2008)

This 'game' is emergent, while at the same time prompted by particular game rules, and a preconfigured setting. The zone here, 'Stranglethorn Vale' (SV), is a busy thoroughfare bordering zones of both factions, and combined with the PvP ruleset of the server this game is encountered on ('Frostmane'), non-consensual combat between avatars is rampant, and questing dangerous. Rule-interaction here has produced emergent game play which involves level-80 avatars from each faction seeking to 'gank' (initiate an unfair fight) one another. The preinscribed design of SV, a level 30-40 zone is disrupted and new rules are inscribed by players. None of the practices which entail this game are explicitly ordered by the client, though it does establish a framework predisposing it - enough so to argue that players are fulfilling anticipated design by doing so;

> ….it [Stranglethorn Vale] is sandwiched between both Horde and Alliance territories, and thus it is also often one of the most actively contested areas in the game...questing and hunting here is challenging and profitable, provided you can dodge the bullets. High level players love ganking, especially around the Bal'lal Ruins and between Booty Bay and Grom'Gol Base Camp. Stranglethorn should probably be avoided by flagged players under level 30, and even those above level 30 would be well advised to travel in groups of three or more...
>
> (WoWwiki.com, no date)

It is impossible to determine here whether the game here is emergent, but simply

produced through an easily derived set of rules, or an intended product of players' interaction with progressive rule structures.. To this end, it is difficult to establish whether it is players, code, or the publisher which wields the greatest agency to define the field through game play through practices such as this which both involve multiple human and nonhuman agents, and are repeated across multiple gameworlds.

Nevertheless, as an unscripted minigame created by players' consolidation of social, cultural, and symbolic capital into a very specific place and set of practices, STV is inscribed as a 'dangerous' place in which play is waged between groups of high-level avatars. Players are more significant in defining the field in a localised, direct manner. Players' practices of play, where they are performative, contest the end use of WoW's progressive structures. Thus, instead of the capital and position players need to compete against game play delineated by the client, a dialectic of shifting 'ownership' of the zone which emerges, fundamentally changing the field of game play, and the capital, position, and strategies players leverage to act within it.

Where such mini-games within WoW are negotiated outside the purview of the client, but are still derived from its rules, players are more free to generate and compete for position. It is within the 'social' rather than 'coded' dimension of play, of its negotiation between players and the semantic in- and de-scription of play structures that players hold the greatest contingency to define the field of game play. Even within activity defined by progressive game play structures, attention must be given to 'play' as it is negotiated between human players. Symbolic capital generated through the meaning players assign to their actions gives variable purpose to even static coded structures, even if they do not alter the end use of these. Symbolic capital endowed within particular players, objects, places or rules can in turn influence how players leverage

other forms of capital. This in turn is generative and can lead to production of player culture and paratexts which define the field. A history of politicking between <BM> and one of its rival guilds explained to me by 'F' during the participant observation illustrates this;

```
F: old security
F: is a bunch of ******* that used to play alliance when i
did
1: oh
F: the guild security still exists on alliance, which also
are a bunch of idiots most
1: that explains the rage
F: but old security is mostly the old officers and **** of
security
1: hahah
F: ****'o numero uno
F: they used to be so p****d at us
1: why's that
F: its some stuff about it in the "security secured" thread
on forum
F: simply
F: because we killed everything before them
F: despite what security might say
1: circlejerk thread
F: Omen was a "guild of the people" in some ways
F: im quite sure we weren't free of elitist idiots
F: but security really stood out as "we are better than you
cause we kill stuff faster"
1: Omen was your previous guild?
F: yes
F: and
F: omen was more like
F: "we are better than security cause they are some cocky
*******and can't kill **** before us"
```

(excerpted from 'party' chat chatlogs, Frostmane server, World of Warcraft November 2008)

The ire in this account belies an emphasis upon the competition between 'Omen' and 'Security' for which progressive, structured game play is simply an impartial means to tally 'score' - the reputation staked between both guilds. While competition between avatars is both gauged and regulated by the client (such as in battlegrounds) there is no code staging ground for cooperation or conflict between guilds in WoW. Thus, players

must inscribe their own practices which define these. The codified system of 'war declaration' in Eve - which explicitly defines varying stages alliance and animosity between player-corporations and the changes these effect on game rules - contrasts to this. Game play practices, and in turn the field of game play, alternatively differ more and less in this regard in this manner.

Social interaction through chat protocol within the field of game play is governed predominantly through the ToS and EULA. However, avatars are segregated by their division into 'Horde' or 'Alliance' factions, and this division cannot be broached. This is reinforced by game play rules which prohibit cooperation: players on one side cannot undertake quests from the other, cannot form groups or gift items, and so forth. Social capital cannot be generated or leveraged between factions as a result. However, this applies only to the gameworld, and the fact that players on either side can easily communicate with one another - outside of the game - shows the limits of the technical agency of the client to regulate players' behaviour.

These measures strongly preconfigure and regulate social interaction between players - but only within the gameworld. The social and cultural capital leveraged in relation to game play can only bind players' actions that pertain directly to their avatars. Communication which influences the field of game play is resultantly translated through the paratextual field, as players can communicate outside of WoW through any CMC technology. This why the broad and durable semantic inscription of game play structures of WoW is possible without altering its code.

This results in a differing empirical experience of playing WoW depending upon the

server and service region a given user is located upon. Though the client is identical in each of these social and cultural capital, in opinions, tastes, knowledge, and the exchange of these are far more fluid and transposable than the client and coded rules which these are produced in relation to. As Taylor has observed, "players not only bring in existing meaning systems about their and others' national context but may even develop (or at the minimum reify) opinions in relation to gameplay" (2007:321). While the participant observation took place entirely upon Frostmane, a recollection of F's 'move' from another shows how individual severs can be distinguished by their culture

```
F: in tbc
F: i got camped by some ex guildies
F: i had to start from lvl 1 as a paladin on horde
F: and they used 8 lvl 70s to try to camp my corpse
1: brokke [sic] on bad terms?
F: they got me down one time and failed the second
F: they dont like me
F: i didnt really wanna be in their guild
F: after omen disbanded i joined some friends raiding guild
F: to help them out
```

(excerpted from 'party' chat chatlogs, Frostmane server, World of Warcraft November 2008)

The cultural capital players generate is not reducible to code, but practices produced through cultural capital may still shape the field of game play. Here, this is visible in how the animosity between F and his previous guild results in a different atmosphere and playing experience between Frostmane and the server he had previously played on. The coded protocol of game play remains dictated by the client, but empirical use and evaluation of this is how players define the game for themselves. This will cause players' experience - and thus the construction of the field of game play to vary, despite the consistency and durability of coded structures. That such emergence can entail novel forms of coercion as a result of (rather than despite) players' interaction itself is not an unforeseen contingency (Taylor 2007), but rather one which is intractable to social

organisation within MMOGs. The negotiation of governing practices upon players and by players occurs in wildly varying forms, and unlike regulation through the client, these are not limited to action within the field of game play.

In summary, the micro-level field of game play in WoW is formed through practices of play in the gameworld negotiated by the client and players. Establishing a dichotomy of games in WoW by their emergent and progressive qualities serves to indicate the relative significance of players and the client in a specific practice or activity which defines the field. The client constructs the field through progressive rules it delineates within the gameworld. Players in turn define the field of game play by negotiating progressive structures, by utilising emergent qualities already inherent the rules, and by establishing semantic end use of game rules by the cultural and symbolic capital they inscribe upon these.

5.3.b - Micro-level field of game play in Eve

The micro-level field of Eve consists of the same three sub-fields as WoW: game play, paratexts, and legal governance. Negotiation of game play in the gameworld between players and the client form the sub-field of game play. The sub-field of game play may further be stratified according to 'emergent' and 'progressive' sites of game play as per Juul's classification. The sub-field of game play is supplanted by paratexts produced in relation to it, forming the micro-level paratextual sub-field. Both of these are in turn governed by agencies exerted in the micro-level field of governance, which formally enforces rules dictated by the client, and enforces the position of Eve as an intellectual property controlled by CCP in the meso and macro levels.

The micro-level field of game play is the most significant both with regard to the research question and in forming the field at this level. It essentially represents the game world and all action within it. Game play practices players engage in are categorised in this field as 'progressive' or 'emergent' contingent upon whether players or the client are the more significant agent in negotiating these in a given setting. Thus, in PvE (Player versus Environment) activities such as mining ore or running scripted NPC missions (Eve's analogue to quests), the player's actions will be governed primarily by the client, as these are prescribed by and oriented in relation to it. Leveraging the economic capital these activities yield in Eve's market with shifts the mode of play to 'emergent', as game play rules and objectives are now more controlled by player-interaction. Thus, while the means of acquiring resources in this scenario are preconfigured and cannot be challenged (asteroids yield ores, destroyed NPC ships leave scrap), the value assigned to these and their subsequent use is at least partially dependent upon other players.

As in WoW, progressive activities are those with clear rules and goals preinscribed by the client - mining and missions are two aforementioned examples, and what these entail are clear to players. Emergent game play however, is more complex, as it involves combining sets of rules in Eve to ends that may not be visibly inscribed within rules set by the client. As such, complex mini-games developed by players that can significantly alter the composition of Eve's field of game play are possible. These mini-games can be roughly typified as games of 'war', 'economy', or 'politics', and each involves the leverage of different formations of social, economic, cultural and symbolic capital.

'War' relates to participation in combat, exercised through capital embodied in avatars,

and in players' subjective competencies, credentials, and connections. There is considerable heteronomy between combative game play, and political games which emerge through player-interaction in Eve. Political games refer to the use of game play structures for non-coded objectives. These are far more social than games of war, and entail interaction between players, rather than avatars. Such games are as a result more free of the client's governing agency than other practices in the field of game play. For example, the ability for groups of corporations to formally band into 'alliances' has been part of Eve's coded rules since the 'Exodus' expansion in November 2004 ('Bagehi', 'ISD Salspan', 2009).

However, informal (that is to say, non-coded) alliances predate this ('Kalshirth' 2003), forming soon after Eve was released. The benefits of political alignment are self-evident, and rule combinations that were inherent in Eve upon its initial release allowed for the formation of such groups through mutual agreement and cooperative game play. This is immediately derivable from Eve's rules: players merely have to agree and adhere to a mutual agreement and objectives to establish an 'allied' association. The value of social capital is intuitive and its generation and leverage is not, as discussed earlier, necessarily contingent upon game rules which prompt cooperation between players.

Economic games in Eve refer to activity which generates or leverages in-game economic capital - 'ISK[10]' - in the gameworld. While many capital-generating activities are progressive, in that the client dictates players' objectives, the market itself is player-run and can be manipulated. These three types of games in Eve also directly correlate to one another. For this reason I do not separate the field of game play into further fields.

The field of game play in Eve is defined by players' creation and participation in these

mini-games. The self-defined goal of the Privateer Alliance is the disruption of other organisations in a specific area of 'Empire' space. This is a political game play objective, set by patrons of the alliance who reimburse the Privateers' 'war declaration' fees as payment, a relationship established through acknowledgement of the symbolic capital that infers particular credentials - notoriety generated through war games the organisation engages in. War declaration is a coded game play mechanic which allows members of two organisations to attack one another freely, without intervention by Eve's automated police.

Thus, the establishment of a 'war' between the Privateers and the targeted organisation fulfils a political objective (and reinforces their status) that also adheres to coded preinscription, as Eve's rules in this regard prescribe the rules, but not objectives or their outcome. The conflict which entails disrupts the safe conduct of economic game play practices - mining barges and trade ships become vulnerable to predation after a war is declared - inflicting economic losses which are compounded by costs inflicted directly by ships the Privateers manage to destroy.

These practices which define this game play are rarely this simple in practice, but I consider it a roughly accurate description of game play indulged in by the Privateers in the framework I have outlined. Emergent practices in the sub-field can produce any number of possible results, and empirically, its significance on forms of governance can vary wildly according to context, as I will discuss in chapter 6. Thus, emergent game play they negotiated by players in Eve is more significant in defining the field than are emergent game play practices in WoW, as the rules fundamentally provide greater agency to players to shape the gameworld through their actions. Further, there is greater

scope for construction of the field through players' semantic inscription of the code and rules through the PvP mode of play prescribed by Eve. In Eve players use their capital to generate strategies in order to directly compete with other players, rather than in the pursuit of objectives prescribed by the client. However, players' agencies are still fundamentally framed by the client where it remains as 'game play' in intent.

5.4 - The Micro-Level Paratextual Sub-fields of World of Warcraft and Eve-Online

The concept of the paratext as Consalvo develops it with regard to gaming capital (2007:18) encompasses a greater epistemological breadth than originally devised by Genette (1997:5) to describe "more than playing games, or even playing them well...It's being knowledgeable about game releases and secrets, and passing that information on to others". This is of use with regard to analysis of the micro-level field as it allows the conceptualisation of a MMOG as a field (unto itself) while simultaneously allowing relevant analysis to extend beyond the coded bounds of the gameworld. In this manner, players' agencies and capital which lack a coded component, or paratextual works not immediately derived from the gameworld (such as fansites or artwork) can yet be linked to it, and their influence with regard to expression and constraint of human agency can be analysed.

The paratextual sub-field bears direct heteronomy to the other fields in the micro-level construction of Eve. To extrapolate from Consalvo's statement above, emergent game play practices are in and of themselves paratexts, as they are derived from but not reducible to the primary text of the game. This includes games of politics, war, and economics as they are attributed to player-player and player-client interaction within the gameworld. Thus, while the paratextual field primarily refers to actions and agents

outside the sub-field of game play, paratexts themselves can and are produced directly within the gameworld.

More generally however, as with any contemporary MMOG the coded scripts which form the gameworlds of Eve and WoW have been de-scribed and disseminated through the internet for public use in their entirety. After the initial effort of de-ascription and publishing, being 'knowledgeable about game releases and secrets' is extremely easy, through CMC afforded by the internet and related technologies which allow a rapid dissemination of information. Knowledge of progressive game rules and structures is condensible and becomes cultural artefacts players can draw upon to improve their competencies within the game world. UI mods and guides are simple examples of paratexts which work in such a fashion. The possession of cultural capital (the competency to de-script the client to produce optimal strategies) or social capital (connections to players who do) become unnecessary; an individual simply requires the capacity to research existing paratexts. Thus, through players and game play, paratexts directly influence the field of game play by challenging designers' agency to black-box the code which structures it.

Eve is notable in this context in that its formal rules do not permit users the assistance of software or any user-interface modification used extensively in other MMOGs (CCP 2008), such that paratexts do not directly intervene in the game environment or a player's perception of it (Questhelper in WoW is an example of the opposite). Paratextual software related to Eve where it exists is usually exterior to the game itself, such as 'EVEmon', a program for planning avatars' skill training. Paratexts produced in the course of game play remain the most influential at the micro-level. From those

which are exterior to the field of game play and interact with it, 'killboards' such as 'Battleclinic' are most significant in influencing the field of game play.

Battlclinic's killboard service, 'Griefwatch', will be used as the example here. The site is self-described as an "award-winning independent game support site" whose members "build publisher-sanctioned tools and guides and provide these free to players" ('Battleclinic.com, no date) . Using information contained within 'killmails' avatars receive upon destroying others' or having their own ship destroyed, a public and exhaustive record of avatars' combat history is built. Griefwatch makes public information which would ordinarily not be available, and transforms it into a durable paratext available to all players. This influences war games which emerge through leverage and generation of cultural and social capital that determine corporations' fleet compositions and tactics, as these become more transparent. Thus, players' use of killboards influences players' practices of game play, and thus the construction field of game play itself.

Battleclinic and Evemon are just two examples of the heteronomy between the paratextual and game play micro-level sub-fields. Other sites provide different services to users, allowing one to supplant capital embodied within the avatar and the coded competencies it entails with capital gleaned and translated into more accessible or readily available forms. Eveinfo.com is an example, providing a database detailing information on each mission, and the characteristics of every item and resource available.

In WoW, the contingency for paratextual production to interact directly with the field of game play is greater, given Blizzard-Activision's permissive stance on UI modification.

As previously discussed, the integration of guides and tools directly into the game works to change a player's experience of it directly. My use of 'Questhelper' and 'Auctioneer' during the study provided competencies I would not have possessed otherwise. There is no direct analogue to killboards in Eve here, but it remains that the explicit coded link between the paratextual field and the field of game play in WoW endows players with a far greater contingency to control how they act in WoW through code than do Eve's rules which prohibit such paratexts.

The point to emphasise here is ultimately that paratexts form a sub-field unto themselves at the micro level of analysis, though as they are derived from the primary text of Eve and WoW, this distinction is blurred. This is worthy of note as it raises an issue of 'control' in regard to questions of ownership. MMOGs are primary, unfinished texts (Humphries 2008:151): users, absolutely necessary in their production, are co-producers of MMOGs in the act of participating in the game whilst simultaneously producing paratexts. The distinction between the two forms of text is especially problematic. If we are to follow Humphries' argument, the very act of 'playing' is to become explicitly involved in the production of the text which used both to generate position and capital. Prominent documentary examples support this the most. A record theft performed by the 'Guiding Hand Social Club' corporation in 2008 (Francis 2008) garnered widespread media attention. The media attention the act brought upon Eve will undoubtedly have been beneficial for CCP's business.

The 'heist' as a game play act took place within the game world using Eve's rules, but as a paratext, produced by human players, could not have been created without them. It is an issue of co-authorship, but one that is not acknowledged as such through the EULAs

produced by CCP in relation to Eve (or those by Blizzard-Activision for WoW). These are paratexts situated within the micro-level field of legal governance, and simultaneously work to protect the publisher as the sole owner of the MMOG and all works that are produced within and related to it.

I have outlined the construction of the field in regard to Eve and WoW at a macro, meso and micro level of analysis in this chapter, and I progressively broaden this analysis as discussion moves toward the micro level from which data collected through the participant observation is drawn. The most significant findings here relate to this level, though the meso and macro construction of the field are important as the position Eve and WoW (and their publishers) occupy in fields at this level inform the expression and constraint of human agency at the micro. At the micro level, the field is divisible into sub-fields of game play, paratexts, and legal governance. The most significant of these is the field of game play, as it relates to all human action within the gameworld. This field is shaped in part by the code and rules which define the prescribed structure of the game, and in part by players' negotiated end use of this code. This negotiation is further influenced by the micro-level paratextual field, leveraged by players who utilise paratexts to further their own capital and position in the field of game play; these can be both coded and act directly within the world (UI mods in WoW), or knowledge-based and work to de-script coded rules and structures (killboards in Eve).

Finally, the micro-level field of governance is the last component in this framework. I construct this sub-field in the forthcoming chapter, and use the field as I define it here in its entirety to contextualise the analysis of governance negotiated by players, publishers, and code I observed during the participant observation.

6.0 – Micro-level governance in WoW and Eve - introduction

Interpreting players' agencies in the gameworld through an analytical lens of government may appear to be an ill-fitting, even contradictory approach. However, to refer back to the discussion of Foucault's work in chapter 2, it is important to remember that while 'government' is concerned with agents' formation and mobilisation of telos (rational and calculated objectives), this is not inherently negative. Government is essential to define and maintain the rules and boundaries of any game, regardless of context. In the course of discussing the constraint of human agency here it must be remembered that mechanisms of surveillance and discipline are not unconditionally 'bad', nor is any form of resistance to these automatically and irrefutably 'good' (Lyon 2006: 5, 11). Thus, the findings I present here which examine the expression and constraint of human agency in a framework of governance work to include practices of play negotiated between players, and thus should not be understood as coercive in isolation.

The most significant findings arising from this study highlight that in each case, the most significant means by which human agency in MMOGs is shaped occurs within the sub-field of game play, and by code and rules. I do however discuss a number of dimensions of micro-level governance in this chapter. In addition to governance through code, peer regulation and participatory surveillance is also negotiated between players: forms of this are often, but not always, undertaken in pursuit of game play. Paratexts, in a number of forms, are also important in negotiating governance of players. These are leveraged by players in the form of mods, tools and CMC external to the gameworld, whilst apart from WoW's 'Warden' software, CCP and Blizzard-Activision primarily use EULAs and similar legal contracts to govern players through paratext.

Discussion in this chapter will therefore focus upon these dimensions of governance, but maintain an emphasis upon code and rules where analysis is situated within the sub-field of game play. This is necessary, as in acting as players, humans interface with a heterogeneous network of non-human agents prescribed by the gameworld. The range of actions humans can take within it are thus also prescribed. As a result, analysing the telos and governmentalities that inform players' actions presents a problem of causality. This will be discussed in tandem with analysis of government in the game play field. Similarly, comparison between cases leads me to argue that human agency within the gameworld is more distinguishable and less influenced by code and rules where players' actions are not directly oriented toward game play. I discuss this in relation to the hierarchical organisation (or lack thereof) in <BM> and the Privateers.

6.1 - Negotiation of human agency through code

Williams et al. state in their work on guilds in WoW that "the governing computer codes were ultimately foundational rather than entirely imposing", but also "the locus of control is shared by producer and the consumer-socializers" (2006: 357). Humphries argues "authorial control in an MMOG is present in the basic platform code of the game", and that in MMOGs "'consumers' have become productive users, authorial control is dissipated and the text is never finished, the institutions associated with linear production models struggle to maintain control" (2008: 151-152).

While this 'authorial control' - is a negotiated process, players' control over this negotiation is limited by their inability to introduce new coded scripts in the same

manner as publishers can. My construction of the field in chapter 5 outlines the field of game play in WoW as predominantly 'progressive' and that in Eve as predominantly 'emergent'. However, regardless of how far removed players' negotiated mini-games are from the basic preinscriptions of game rules, they lack the self-reproducing performativity of coded script to effect durable change.

The game of territoriality in 'Stranglethorn Vale' in WoW is a product of the social, cultural, and symbolic capital players involved instil into the area, practices, and players which compose it. It is durable only so long as each of these remain a constant and are performed. Again, the conflict between players in Stranglethorn Vale which produces this game (but not its actual practice or rules) is a product of the zone's design which anticipates these. The performativity of this mini-game may expire through change in the worth of maintaining this mini-game or the capital inherent in its participants, or the structure of the zone itself. Players may wrest control over scripts that are introduced; any potential change to Stranglethorn Vale could produce any number of new emergent mini-games. It remains however, that players' capacity to negotiate changes the publisher makes to the gameworld are possible only after their entry into the field. This contingency, renders the end use of each MMOG a negotiated, ongoing process, and thus the agency of the game code to influence players changes over time too. Only instances where practices of hacking or exploiting flaws may be leveraged that new scripts can be contested: I did not observe these in either participant observation.

```
P: after an event we staged called pew pew palooza
P: 250+ war targets
R: what's that?
P: well before we could basically war dec at like 20 mil per dec
```

```
P: now its 50 mil for first dec
P: 100 for second 150 for third
R: hmm it used to scale down for smaller corps, didn't it?
P: yeah
P: but alliances is different .. corps need to vote .. alliances
can make them instant dec .. just the 24hour cool off
```

(excerpted from 'corp' chat chatlogs, Eve-Online, 16 November 2008)

On March 13 2007 a member of 'the Privateers' alliance named 'Sorted' posted a discussion thread on the official Eve-Online forum triumphantly announcing their plan to stage an event they christened the 'Pew-Pew-Palooza. This event took a simple rule combination of Eve and pushed it to a rational extreme. By simultaneously declaring war on over a hundred corporations and alliances for a week, the Privateers maximised the number of 'war targets' they could attain. Empire space - the area of the gameworld where this took place - was forcefully reinscribed to be a warzone for the majority of its inhabitants, whereas the system of declaring war usually entails combat between two organisations. In this manner, the Privateers utilised the code itself to contest coded rules, and challenge the governmentality of Empire - held by other players and CCP - that 'war' should be a localised and purposeful affair, rather than the Privateers' 'scattered' approach.

While remaining the coded possibilities of Eve's rules, the 'pew-pew palooza' contested the extant end use of these, and this is visible in opposition to the Privateers' event voiced by other players in Sorted's discussion thread. This also exemplifies the problem of the heterogeneous network. Governance through this event can be interpreted as the agency of both the code the Privateers' leverage of it, and it can similarly be argued as governance of players and CCP.

The pew-pew palooza prompted a reaction from Eve's designers. Within a month after

the event was staged, a patch was introduced to Eve, changing the coded rules in the manner described by P in the above excerpt. Declaring many concurrent wars is now prohibitively expensive, and it is unfeasible for the Privateers to stage a similar event. While the rationality governing the script for this change was not attributed to the Privateers, a hypothetical example posited by a CCP designer to explain the changes leaves little room for doubt;

"**example:** Alliance **P** has ten wars in progress. They will have to pay 500M/war/week to keep the war machine running... If they now declare war on the eleventh corporation or alliance that war will cost 550M to start and the upkeep cost will be 550M/war/week for all the wars until any of the wars is cancelled ('Nonni' 2007).

The governmentality of the Privateers game play practices, as I observed during the participant observation, remain aligned to the rationalities which prompted the pew-pew palooza. The cultural, social, symbolic capital which form the Privateers as an organisation remain constant to the telos of game play practices that produce as many 'war targets' for their members as possible at a given time. The only aspect of this dialectic which has changed is the coded rule which governs war-declaration costs, but this in itself has the agency to prohibit the Privateers' repetition of the practice, and further govern the game play practices they develop to maintain their self-defined position in the field of game play.

In this manner, I argue that coded scripts are more significant than human, negotiated end use in that not only do they anticipate players' end use of the game, but also influence the contingencies which they derive from rules. Thus, 'emergent' play can be governed as well as 'progressive' play. The Privateers resisted the code in that their

game play practices remain the same. However, the manner in which they conduct these is altered. To ameliorate cost of war-declarations, alliance leaders seek financial contributions from members on a voluntary basis. Similarly, corporations and alliances with many players are most often chosen as war targets. Finally, the symbolic capital of the organisation inherent in its 'reputation' is leveraged for the same purpose;

```
Te: Hmm I need to alliance fees. Is it worth it to kill Goons &
BoB?
D2: if you like to join a fleet going to jita.....
D2: Fleet Invitation (Alliance)
Bh: doesn't matter they were paid for by private donors
```

(excerpted from 'Alliance chat' chatlogs, Eve-Online, 6 December 2008)

Without examining the pew-pew palooza and the patch it prompted Eve's designers to create, the practices inherent in running an organisation like the Privateers are interpretable solely as forms of participatory surveillance and government of members conduct. Social capital is generated in tandem with in-game economic currency as alliance leaders request aid; members are encouraged, publically, to discuss whom the alliance should war against, suggesting war-declarations are decided upon by consensus. As the alliance is increasingly dependent upon contributions to maintain the governmentality it operates under - upon which their position in the field is also dependent - individual members come to hold a greater stake in the affairs of the organisation. This works to consolidate social and economic capital in the organisation, as being a 'Privateer' gains greater symbolic worth through this additional capital.

However, the Privateers' practices appear an expression of human agencies only when viewed in isolation. If we consider the steps the Privateers take to negotiate the scripts imposed by the patch, it rather highlights the agency of the code to preconfigure the Privateers' organisational practices. This argument can be correlated with a similar

example taken from game play in WoW:

```
1: healers are useless?
F: yes
F: at the moment
F1: at this state yes
F1: current
F: people do too much dmg
J: i pwned at healing on Q
1: I've not heard that in any MMO ever
F: the last patch ****** things up

F: everyone does so much damage you don't have time to keep them
up
1: the spellpower thing?
F: one stun or silence and things die
F: not the spellpower thing

F: but
F: people recently recieved level 80 based damage talents
F: new abilities
F: new talents
1: and no healing counterparts?
E1: ppl just ****** all the healers in the ass
F: yes
```

(excerpted from 'Guild chat' chatlogs, World of Warcraft, 11 November 2008)

This is a discussion amongst <BM> members regarding changes introduced by a patch. The changes they disparage here are not the direct result of imposition through coded script: the patch actually grants new possibilities to avatar classes. However, it is in players' exploration and end use of these that their agency to govern players' conduct arises. This directly pertains to PvP combat, thus, demonstrates governing practices occurring in both the site of code and rules, and of player-to-player interaction. New contingencies embodied in avatars - 'level 80 damage-based talents' - forces a revaluation of the cultural capital embodied within players' avatars that is underwritten by code, despite being ultimately negotiated by players themselves.

Players possessing avatars who specialise in healing suffer a loss in capital and

symbolic capital (through coded competency and personal status) as a result of new governmentalities governing play that encourage a damage-based paradigm. <BM> members in this excerpt state 'everyone' (who participates in battlegrounds or arenas) as subject to these changes. Where all players game play practices are equally governed by the objective of 'winning' in these activities, healers unavoidably are left at a disadvantage. I argue that this again, is reducible to the governing agency of the code itself, despite the fact that players are responsible for negotiating its end use. Through the symbolic violence of WoW's progressive structure and objective-based play, an alternative (such as an 'outlaw' of the subjectively unfair abilities) is more unusual than their use.

I argue that coded scripts which compose each MMOG here are the most significant agent in shaping human agency within the gameworlds of MMOGs. However, it is also arguable that authorial control of this code can itself be subject to contest. While the agency to govern code which defines game rules in both cases is predominantly controlled by the publisher, these remain two different agents. Humphreys (2008) identifies the 'publisher' and the 'code' as two separate entities, and does not automatically correlate the site of governance pertaining to the 'player-to-publisher relationship' with the site of 'code and rules'.

A documented example from Eve can shed insight on this distinction. In 2005, an Eve corporation titled '4S corporation' had its name changed following a petition by an anonymous user, on mistaken grounds. After the corporation's own petition to CCP to have its name restored was rejected, a member of the corporation utilised the code of the game itself to protest against this decision. Similar to the other excerpts I have discussed, the contingencies offered by a patch to the game were the means by which

this was achieved, using a newly-introduced freighter class of ship. Freighters are capable of transporting enormous volumes of cargo: a 4S player loaded one such ship with thousands of transport shuttles and jettisoned them in Jita, Eve's busiest system. Normally, when jettisoned, cargo deposited in a single container is automatically created and placed in the gameworld, but not ships, which are placed individually. As nothing had been capable of transporting objects of the shuttles' size prior to this, the code and the hardware creating the gameworld were not prepared for the strain on the servers this produced. The particular server hosting Jita crashed entirely, forcefully logging off all users in it ('So'kar' 2005). The controversy this act produced forced CCP's attention upon the grievance of the 4S' corporation: the symbolic capital generated (in the form of notoriety) as a completely unprecedented event left CCP unable to simply ignore them, and the corporation's original name was restored ('CCP Oveur' 2005).

Similarly, a game-play practice termed 'corpse camping' in WoW highlights the agency of the code to govern the game play practices players devise. Two examples are instructive;

```
Q: lol i pwned a druid over and over. now he called for help and
i have 4 level 70s corpsecamping me :)
F: najz!
1: well
1: you reap what you sow ~
Q: yeah haha
```

(excerpted from 'Guild chat' chatlogs', World of Warcraft, 11 November 2008)

...

```
F: in tbc [the burning crusade; a content expansion for WoW]
F: i got camped by some ex guildies
F: i had to start from lvl 1 as a paladin on horde
F: and they used 8 lvl 70s to try to camp my corpse
1: broke on bad terms?
F: they got me down one time and failed the second
F: they dont like me
```

(excerpted from 'party chat' chatlogs', World of Warcraft, 4 November 2008)

Corpse camping is significant as a practice as its emergence denotes a specific lack of player agency in WoW through code. Corpse camping is a practice whereby a player or group of avatars guard the corpse of another, such that when they are resurrected, they can instantly be attacked and killed again. The goal here is to prevent the avatar from taking any action so long as the player remains logged on. WoW's rules do not incentivise or rule upon this action: there is no reward or purpose in its coded scripts which justify corpse camping. I therefore argue its purpose is as a practice effected by players to punish others. This is especially clear in comparison to Eve. In WoW, the rules prescribed by the code offer no means to take lasting punitive action against other players, even in PvP activities, whilst in Eve, players may significantly impact the position and capital possessed by other players' avatars through game play, as losses inflicted through warfare are permanent and must be replaced. Though I did observe analogues to 'corpse camping' in the Eve study, these were a means to a greater end: the 'punishment' is the consequence entailed by destroying the ships of other avatars, rather than 'camping' in and of itself.

Thus, corpse camping emerges as an inefficient practice (note the ratio of 'campers' needed for the victim in each example) to circumvent WoW's rules, which dictate avatars may not inflict lasting harm upon others. Players may not do so through prescribed game play, as the rules are constructed under a governmentality that players may not inflict lasting harm to another. In this manner, despite the fact that corpse

camping is an emergent, player-negotiated practice representing certain capital and tastes generated by players, comparison to the rules and game play in Eve rather define it as an example of how coded rules in WoW govern players through a specific lack of contingency its rules allow for. While I do not question corpse camping in either of these examples as a coercive act in and of itself, in the context in which I explain it here, it is a practice generated to negotiate a governmentality imposed upon players through an absence of scripts which restrains players' desire to punish one another.

It is further worth noting that Blizzard-Activision permit players to corpse-camp one another, despite its intent as a player-developed act of punishment. Consent is explicitly written in WoW's Terms of Use (ToU):

> "Note that Blizzard Entertainment considers all valid play styles in World of Warcraft to be part of the game, and not harassment, so player-killing the enemies of your race and/or alliance, including gravestone and/or corpse camping, is considered a part of the game."
>
> (Activision-Blizzard 2009)

Blizzard-Activision does not govern players' practice of corpse camping: this agency is delegated to the client. Players cannot inflict any lasting harm to others' avatars through this practice. Furthermore, corpse camping both requires much effort on behalf of the campers (who, like their victim, are unable to do anything else but maintain the 'camp' for so long as it is in effect), and can be instantly ended by the victim by simply logging off their avatar. Thus, the code of WoW, even though it does not predict the emergence of this practice, still governs it within reason of Blizzard-Activision's prescriptions because the rules entailed by the code fundamentally structure players' agencies that are

situated within the gameworld.

Thus, in the findings I have presented here, I posit code as the most significant agent in governing human agency within the field of game play, and it does so in a manner which informs all capital players generate in a fundamental manner - though not the game play practices they create. Prescriptions the code entails are predominantly controlled and inscribed within the gameworld by the publisher, but players do negotiate these. As each example presented here, save for corpse camping indicates, patches to the code or additional content form a singular site by which both players and publishers contest for authorial control over code. The result of this negotiation producing the rules which govern players.

The introduction of freighters allows 4S to resist governing action taken against them by CCP. The Privateers 'event' becomes an impossibility and their self-government as an organisation is subtly changed. The introduction of new abilities in WoW causes players to re-evaluate the cultural capital they embody in their avatars in PvP-related activities. The introduction of 'new' code is how both publishers here exert control over players, and also how, through flaws or unanticipated contingencies, players resist this - but it remains that the code and rules, regardless of which agents secure authorial control it, is the most significant means by which players' agencies are governed. In this manner, my findings here also ascribe to the stance of ANT that users of a technology possess the most agency to negotiate it where flaws in its prescriptions are exposed, and also that the relationships entailed in a technical object's construction are visible in its nascent setting - in this case, new and untested patches.

6.2 - Player-to-player governance within the gameworld

The code governs players' agencies within the gameworld by prescribing the range of possible actions available to them. It also preconfigures emergent game play practices its rules do not predict, as human agency is circumscribed by its interface with the network of heterogeneous agents which define the MMOG; players may only negotiate government by code by the same means of action it endows to them.

However, it remains that as players are the end users of the code's prescriptions, the agency to act these out (or decline to do so) is still dependent upon them. The rationalities players devise in negotiating game rules endows the prescriptions that inform these with human telos. In this manner, governance within the gameworld is stratified: from the fundamental agency of the code to govern players through its prescriptions, players negotiate the end use of these prescriptions, and leverage them to govern each other through game play. This process abstracts governance through code from governance by players through the social, cultural, and symbolic capital which inform players' actions within the gameworld.

Lastowka more elegantly describes this; "In a game like chess, the basic rules can give rise to an incredible amount of freedom within the rules, within which expert players can demonstrate their superior skill." (2009: 387). Coded rules do govern how players act, but in both cases players are prescribed a broad range of possible actions, this alone does not diminish the agency of players to govern one another through game play. In both WoW and Eve, rules prescribe action pertaining to the lateral negotiation of governance, and participatory surveillance, both in a cooperative (within the

membership of <BM> and the Privateers) and conflicting mode (competition between factions in WoW, and between the Privateers and their 'war targets' in Eve).

```
F: good thing F [referring to 'main'] needs a good 3min to come here
1: hahah
F: maybe less
1: hahah there goes another one [an avatar killed by a hostile player]
F: lol
[system message] F has died.
F: F incoming [F logs in his main avatar]
F: ******* ******
1: running east
F: portal to outside an instance
F: oh
[system message] 1 has died.
1: into the camp
1: I'll respawn as bait
F: oh **** this
F: brb [with alternate character]
F: mother******
1: hahaha
[system] F [alternate] has died.
[system] Your group has been disbanded.
[system] F has gone offline.
[system] F [main] has come online.
[system] F [main] has invited you to join a group.
```

(excerpted from 'party chat' chatlogs, World of Warcraft, 11 November 2008)

This exchange is a typical example of emergent play I took part in while conducting the participant observation with <BM> in WoW. A governmentality of play has developed on the 'Frostmane' dictating that, in order for a player to be able to participate in progressive game play (namely quests) safely, they require prerequisite cultural or social capital in the form of a fully-levelled avatar, and competencies in PvP combat, or (in my case) connections denoting these. This emerges from simple rule combination within PvP-ruleset realms like Frostmane. Players can engage in combat almost anywhere they wish: as competitive game play, it follows that they do so with the greatest advantage possible. WoW's rules ensure that 'levels' provide significant coded advantages to the avatar, and that these accumulate rapidly.

Thus, the level 45 avatars of F are easily slain by a level 70 assailant, and F is forced to

log in his 'main' avatar in order to reciprocate. Through player-negotiated, and emergent game play such as this, players innately define, and evaluate what constitutes 'good' game play through their interaction. When conducted in a PvP mode, the capital and strategies leveraged by players which denote 'good' or 'skilful' game play automatically regulate 'lesser' ones through competitive PvP interaction. This forms a dialectic of participatory surveillance, as the gaze here is mutual and between players: 'ownership' of good game play is deterritorialised, and underwritten only by coded rules.

The description of the above incident is easily anticipated through WoW's rules. However, the manipulation and execution of game play through these rules is the product of players' interactions. Human agents who direct how the code governs players (with particular regard to PvP game play) who combine the rationalities inscribed into the code with their own, forming a heterogeneous network of human and non-human telos produced through rule interaction. The responses of myself and F above illustrate the empirical significance human agency bears upon the gameworld.

The above example is situated in 'Lost Rigger Cove', a portion of the gameworld with a large concentration of quests available to both alliance and horde avatars in a small area. Like the description of 'boosting' in chapter 5, level 70 avatars have no coded stake here; quests yield no experience and equipment is worthless. However, the negotiated practice of game play on Frostmane demands players maintain access to and use these avatars simply to be able to participate in the (low level) quests the zone offers with 'alt' avatars.

The prescribed level for quests in Lost Rigger Cove is fixed as part of WoW's

progressive game design, and is information easily accessed through direct experience, or paratexts. In addition, avatars' levels are publically visible. Thus, players from one faction can easily anticipate, surveil, and regulate the activities of players of the other faction within the area. Like Stranglethorn Vale, the rules of Lost Rigger Cove are transformed by player interaction. The intersection of PvP rules with progressive activities is most common in heavily populated areas of the gameworld like this zone, but is not restricted to these and occurs throughout the entire gameworld. Thus, the cultural and social capital required as a cost of entry to Frostmane (and possibly other PvP servers in WoW) is thus higher than it would be on PvE servers which do not permit free combat between avatars.

Again, this is not reducible to coded preinscription, which would be an inadequate description of the empirical significance and impact of human agency governing such practices. This argument can be expanded by an example taken from Eve;

```
P: myrm night vaga onyx [abbreviations of names of ships identified as 'war targets']
Hx: omw ['on my way']
Mm: omw
S1: omw
Tc: omw
Hx: warping to sarum gate
Mm: primary? [primary target; first to be attacked]
Tc: warping to sarum (amarr side)
S1: point night get the vaga?
Mm: I'll neut vaga
S1: myrm and onyx dont hit as hard as those
S1: onyx would be last because of its tank [durability]
B: coming heh
S1: so Vaga-Nh-Myrm-Onyx, just keep points on secondary while
taking the primary
```

(excerpted from 'Alliance chat' chatlogs, Eve-Online, 25th November 2008)

This exchange represents typical game play for the Privateers. The jargon and staccato

messaging between members is a product of their rush to coordinate an attack on a newly-discovered group of war-targets. The goal in this scenario is simply to attack and destroy the ships of these players as per the organisational goals of the Privateers. Unlike the game play in Lost Rigger Cove, this game play is governed by objectives set by the Privateers, not an overhanging progressive game play structure of the client. I argue the game play and forms of governance this entails are more emergent than equivalent action in WoW, and thus, are shaped more by human governance, of human agency, and through game play.

In both cases, players' actions are fundamentally shaped by code. The Privateers operate the way they do for a number of reasons that are determined by Eve's rules. The scarcity of Eve's gameworld and the punishment of permanent loss having a ship destroyed entails strongly prompt the formation of certain game play. This entails practices which share the task of conducting surveillance within the gameworld (to increase the chance of finding war targets) and cooperation toward the end of destroying these (to increase the chance of destroying them). However, the act of designating specific corporations as 'war targets' for a specific end is the product of players' rationalities, as there is no coded incentive to do so. Thus, the Privateers' game play practices become more significant as acts of human-mediated governance against other human players as they are created by the capital and position held by players who compete within the field of game play under these conditions, rather than of the code itself.

This discrepancy is a product of a difference in design between WoW and Eve. As Eve is explicitly designed as a more emergent game than WoW, the subjective value of players' social and cultural capital and the manner in which they apply it are less

circumscribed by coded rules than are players' capital in WoW, whose actions in many cases may be oriented in regard to the progressive structure of the game. I present this finding as thus; humans are more free to govern one another through the site of player-to-player interaction in the field of game play in MMOGs that are designed as emergent.

Authorial power to govern may still remain with the publisher, or the autonomy of the code through its deterritorialization produced by negotiated end use that is not reducible to the agency of the publisher or players in either case. However, if the possible rule combinations allow freedom for players to define their own mini-games, then forms of government and surveillance produced in enacting and maintaining these become governing practices that are more of human than coded agency. This is because players themselves define the rules of these mini-games they create by interacting with existing scripts - but as they remain situated within the gameworld, players' mini-games are never governed solely by human agency.

Lyon argues (2006:4) that the process of producing the desired docile body' of the panoptic institution is accomplished more easily and with less resistance the more 'soft and subtle' the strategies employed by the jailors or tutors of such an institution. This accounts for the relationship between the code, and emergent mini-games which players develop - the mini-games I discuss here, despite their emergent traits, still relate to basic game structures. The game of 'territoriality', for instance, is contingent upon players' desire to complete quests. Lost Rigger Cove otherwise has no implicit significance as the setting for emergent play.

However, as I observed, players within the gameworld in both <BM> and the Privateers were mostly interested in the pursuit of game play-based objectives. To this end, the

game play they develop inevitably comes to contain practices of player-to-player surveillance and government, regardless of the orientation of the game as 'progressive' or 'emergent'.

Notably, 'P' and 'F' did not frame game play as such apart from issues regarding the management of their respective guild and corporation. This is perhaps due to the authorial control they possess over their organisations, and the cognitive closeness to these organisations as aggregations of cultural and social capital they hold a stake in. Governance framed through 'play' accounts for a significant portion of the interactions I observed in each case. As detailed in the examples presented thus far, even in undertaking quests in WoW, player-interaction was both unavoidable and consequential. Acting as a privateer was less ambiguous; the entirety of the observation period was spent in pursuit of the alliance's PvP-related goals. Further discussion necessitates a typical example of routine play.

The underlying reason for this is, I argue, that the code of both WoW and Eve place a great emphasis upon the monitoring and evaluation of individual, game-related performance as an ends to 'good' game play. Their orientation as alternatively progressive or emergent here is less consequential; in Eve, this rather works to alter the capital, and strategies that define desirable game play which players surveil in a participatory mode. This applies equally to player-interaction which is both cooperative and conflicting.

```
S1: which 4-4 station exactly?
Tv: he didn't follow i guess
R: x
Tv: one you're at
```

```
Tv: he aggressed in soba and chased me into jita, was hoping to
lead him ti you guys
```

(excerpted from Privateer Alliance 'alliance' channel chatlogs, Eve-Online, 23 November 2008)

```
...
```

```
Fg:  oenoros = primary
S1: ecm or more dps on him
H2: we need ecm on oneiros
Tv: I got popped [avatar's escape pod destroyed] i was jamming him
S1: ok i cant neut the baddon anymore
S1: out of cap
H2: we need more ecm
V: im omw to jita in a geddon
```

(excerpted from Privateer Alliance 'alliance' channel chatlogs, Eve-Online, 23 November 2008)

```
...
```

```
Mm: yeh, uber G00d fellas  blob from tmp [read: incoming large enemy fleet]
S1: how many?
B: a lot
B: lol
Gv: what types
Gv: ship types
B: bs ['battleship']
S1: none in amarr
B: i didnt see them all
B: saw a mega at the top of the list
Tc: they are now in romi
R: I just got the **** out
Mm: 2 raven, 2 domi, widow, sabre, rook, [these are the ship types given]
Tc: think 13 in all
Mm: plus about another 4 ufo
```

(excerpted from Privateer Alliance 'alliance' channel chatlogs, Eve-Online, 25 November 2008)

These exchanges are emblematic of the participatory surveillance practices observed by most privateers. Again, the conversation here is set in the alliance's chat channel where

all online players are situated, and where 'intel' regarding the whereabouts and composition of war targets are sought, reported and discussed by individual or groups of members who roam through empire space. It is in short the 'guard tower' for the Privateers' activities, and is important as it is generative of social, cultural, and symbolic capital. Reciprocal bonds are formed between players through this cooperation, the knowledge and competencies which denote 'privateering' are reinforced, and, as it furthers 'good' (what code denotes as most likely to be successful) game play, maintains the organisations' reputation.

As it is almost universally observed, sharing information in alliance chat becomes subject to a unilateral gaze exercised by privateers participating in the channel. Players often identify multiple war targets and places: the symbolic worth of these as 'intelligence' is subject to evaluation based upon how well the information is qualified by the player(s) reporting it. Definitive 'what', 'where', and 'who' generates a stronger reaction from the collective membership of the Privateers. In this manner, the actions of both privateers and the players they surveil becomes a negotiated practice toward the end of good game play, as cooperative action allows each individual involved to benefit more than any would individually. Thus, regulation of the self and between players becomes concurrent with successful game play strategies, and the practice becomes generative of social and symbolic capital unto itself.

This practice is significant as an example of governance negotiated between competing fractions of players (privateers and the corporations they war against). War in Eve is thus a lateral and participatory evaluation of players' cultural, social, and economic capital leveraged in pursuit of game play objectives that players define through

competition. Players' telos here are not reducible to code - 'the fun and profit of our members', P states of the Privateers' goals is an example - though the actions they will take to fulfil these will be.

Conversely government of human agency through game play is also possible in the progressive aspects of WoW's design. games; Most of my time during the participant observation in WoW was spent questing in a two-man group with F, a progressive, PvE activity. Player agency here is primarily negotiated with the client rather than other players. However, players may govern the interactions of other players with such progressive structures;

```
F: and i dont do that much pve anymore
1: hahaha typical
F: if i will raid as retri though ['retribution': referring to a set of abilities for his avatar's class]
F: ill use it [a damage meter]
F: nice tool to find out how to get better dps
F: like in our sunwell raids
F: on one boss, which is a very static encounter and a good test of your max dps ['damage per second', a measure of the avatar's power]
1: oh right
F: i increased my dps from 2115 to 2400ish by getting abit more hit and changing my dps rotation
```

(excerpted from 'party chat' chatlogs, World of Warcraft 4 November 2008)

...

```
F: dont touch them [on my running to the aid of an embattled avatar]
F:or do it
F: ok:p
1: my heart was in the right place
F: haha
F: being a chicken works
F: you did
F: if it was 3 mobs
F: or maybe 4, i'd understand
F:when its 10?
F: you let that son of a ***** die :p
```

(excerpted from 'party chat' chatlogs, World of Warcraft 4 November 2008)

Group-based activities in WoW such as these demand a nominal level of participatory surveillance on behalf of players, as a means toward their completion. Performance here is governed by the prescriptions of the client, and WoW is distinct from Eve in that this game play is ultimately hierarchical as a result. However, it remains true that, as part of this prescription, lateral regulation of players' action by players is essential - self-governance of conduct in raids as discussed in chapter 5 is a good example of this.

The specific finding I posit here from these observations is that players' actions in MMOGs, where they are oriented toward game play, operate under an imperative that demands the regulation of the self and of other players as inimical to the negotiation of game play. The governmentality this imperative represents can be produced by code, players, and publishers. These each produce qualitatively different dimensions of governance, with differing empirical significance to players. Nevertheless, surveillance practices are equally present in the progressive and PvE game play of WoW as they are in the emergent and PvP-oriented game play of Eve.

This apparent contradiction may be accounted for by reference to Caillois' (2006) classification of games. The game play in both WoW and Eve fits into Caillois' scheme as games constructed around the principle of '*agôn*' - *games* made in pursuit of pure competition. *Agôn* games desire a clear evaluation of players' qualities "within defined limits and without outside assistance, in such a way that the winner appears to be better than the loser in a certain category of exploits" (2006:14). This is equally permissible in play that is progressive and PvE oriented in WoW, and play that is emergent and PvP-oriented in Eve: in both cases, clear goals and boundaries of competition are negotiated (by the client, publisher, or players) by which players compete within the gameworld.

Players' telos, opponent(s) and methods of competition differ, but in both cases their actions are tied to cultural tastes denoting 'skill' and subjective ability relevant to the generation and leverage of cultural capital and taste. These define the position of 'player' that individuals occupy in both games.

6.3 - Governance of players through player-run organisations and publishers

Outside of code and game play, there are two additional sites of governance which pertain to the gameworld. These sites are within the organisation of <BM> and the Privateers, and the uncoded intervention of CCP or Blizzard-Activision within the gameworld. Governing practices which relate to these are distinct from rules as they are more often hierarchical, and less informed by game play.

'Guilds' and 'corporations' are coded game play structures. However, their purpose (in regard to specific game play practices) and orientation ('hardcore' or casual, PvP or PvE focused, and so on) are negotiated solely by the members of these organisations. These are social, negotiated characteristics which denote specific capital and tastes of the members of such organisations, and must be performed and maintained. Thus, governance practised in both <BM> and the Privateers here is qualitatively different from governance mediated by code in that it is oriented toward governing players in their capacity as 'members' of these organisations. 'Membership' is a position denoting specific capital, and tastes, and responsibilities that is defined by players themselves rather than the code.

Within the coded organisational structure of both <BM> and the Privateers, a durable authority to govern players' is endowed to F and P, enshrined in the office each game

recognises they hold through code. However, while the position of 'CEO 'or' officer' is prescribed and grants specific coded agencies allowing F and P to govern their organisations, these are in addition to the cultural, symbolic, and social capital both players possess that gives these positions legitimacy.

The hierarchical positions F and P occupy are more fragile than they appear, despite the fact that they are legitimated by code. Officers in either game cannot use their coded position to take direct control over another player's avatar. Further, all players in WoW and Eve are free to leave a guild or corporation without any coded penalty. Thus, players must be willing participants in any organisation in both games, and governance mediated within them must be both participatory and willing on behalf of members. Hierarchical organisation and negotiation of the 'purpose' of both <BM> and the Privateers is thus a negotiated process: for the position of both P and F to remain stable, and for each to retain players to actually command, each organisation must be generative of social, cultural, and symbolic capital acceptable to members' tastes.

The government of a guild or corporation is a heterogeneous construct of coded and player-negotiated practices as a result. Players' interaction and negotiation of rules produce the 'character' from which the practices which define each organisation - the Privateers' operational niche and <BM>'s 'hardcore PvP' status - emerge and are performed. The coded structure and agencies necessary to form and delineate positions within a guild or corporation rather enforce and make formal any incumbent social and organisational that is already present and agreed upon by members.

This distinction between coded and human government is visible in both cases. Both

<BM> and P's corporation in the Privateers, ('MBALM') a coded hierarchical structure was present. However, despite being the CEO and sole authoritative figure within MBALM, P rarely acted to govern members. It was his stated goal of founding MBALM to run the corporation with as little oversight as possible in order to leave members free to act as they pleased. His authority to govern MBALM was used, ironically, only to maintain this ideology. <BM> was, in contrast, more structured in that it had a guildmaster and several officers. By F's account however, the guild was dormant pending the release of an upcoming content expansion to WoW. Despite the coded visible hierarchical stratification of the guild, (it is possible to see a full list of members and the positions in <BM> through the UI) there was little formal organisation by players themselves to reflect this stratification.

I did observe both F and P exercising the hierarchical authority of their position for the purpose of maintaining the cultural and social capital of their respective organisations. Government within <BM> and MBALM is in this sense, more an expression of 'human' than 'nonhuman' agencies. This is visible in the value both placed upon good behaviour. The only rule that was notably enforced in both organisations were that members be 'respectful' to others;

```
P: R we only really have one major rule
P: respect alliance members
P: you dont have to like everyone but you have to be respectful
P: otherwise we encourage people to play the game how they see
fit
```

(excerpted from MBALM 'corp' chat chatlogs, Eve-Online, 16 November 2008)

```
F: whispers: we had a bg premade [a group to participate in the battlegrounds]
1: why?
F: whispers: with some guildies of my brother
F: whispers: and one of the guild members in <BM> said some s***
to one of them in rbg chat
```

```
F: whispers: and thats kinda against our policy
1: how bad?
F: whispers: and since he is just a friend char and i actually
saw what he wrote(unprovoked) and saw the reaction it was bye
bye
```

(excerpted from private chatlogs, World of Warcraft, 30 October 2008)

However, the negotiation of governance mediated by players, upon players, is itself structured by the basic rules of each game where the rationality of government by players occupying positions such as 'CEO', 'officer', 'raid leaders', and so on intersect with the rationalities of governing game play. This is highlighted by describing the common emergent game play practice of espionage in Eve and WoW:

```
P: the only people i tend to turn down are down right spies
P: ie .. 1 day old noobs

...

P: there really is no real intel to be had
P: cuz the alliance flies by the seat of thier pants
```

(excerpted from MBALM corporation channel chatlogs, Eve-Online, December 2 2008)

The lack of organisation here is cited as the Privateers' defence against spying - there is nothing to report and nothing to take. P's statement here is not to indicate a flippant attitude about the threat or efficacy of the practice, but rather reflects the Privateers' unusual form of defence against it. Contrast this to Williams' et al. assessment of it in WoW;

```
"Less common were intraguild intrigues such as spies placed
inside another organization, the poaching of top players, shared
chat channels between guilds, and the occasional rivalry—but
```

> because the game mechanics do not allow for much intra-faction conflict, these rivalries rarely mattered."
> (2006:350)

Thus, coded rules interface with human government of human conduct at a basic level where game play is concerned, as they prescribe the capital, position, and practices that officers in guilds and corporations have an interest in governing. In addition, the agencies prescribed to officers through code do not necessarily match the desired player-negotiated functions of these positions. This indicates a discrepancy in governmentality between players within the hierarchical structure of a guild or corporation, in that they are simultaneously governed by coded rules, and officers of these guilds or corporations. The strict recruitment policy <BM> operated under is exemplary of this; the guild only admitted players who possessed certain prerequisite competencies and credentials embodied in their avatar, and their achievements as a player - there is no coded oversight to this process.

The human and hierarchical negotiation of government is further characterised (and this distinguishes it further from governance of game play, and through code) where publishers directly act to govern players within the gameworld. Such practices have been examined by Humphreys (2008:156);

> "Many account closures come as the direct results of tips reported to our GMs in game or emailed to our Hacks Team by legitimate World of Warcraft players. If you suspect that a World of Warcraft player is using an illegal third-party program to farm gold or items, or is otherwise violating our Terms of Use, please report the suspected infraction."

This is from a press release posted to the WoW website by a Blizzard-Activision employee. The effort behind this is to encourage participatory surveillance between

players for objectives defined by the publisher. As Blizzard-Activision acts here in an informal manner (this news post is not accompanied by the introduction of any coded script) the site for this negotiation is within the site of the player-to-publisher relationship. This also characterises it as hierarchical, given the discrepancy in position occupied by players and Blizzard-Activision, and the fact that players have no stake in this goal. Neither the definition of cheating or the action to be taken against it are left to interpretation; players are merely to extend the vision of the publisher to the ends of a (stated) mutual interest.

CCP observe similar practices to govern players directly, without leveraging their authorial control over code. However, through this authorial control, and by leveraging their favourable position in the macro-level legal field, they assert a particular practice (in this case real-money-trading) as 'wrong'. CCP mobilise players to govern one another in the gameworld to amend a RMT-related problem under the governmentality that self-regulation and lateral regulation toward their stated end improve the state of Eve for all 'good' players'

> "...this will not be possible without help from you, the players. The demand for ISK is what keeps the RMT element alive. They'll keep coming back as long as players are willing to do business with them"
>
> ('GM Grimmi' 2009)

As in WoW, Eve players are kept from direct involvement in deciding what the 'problem' actually is, as well as the means to fix it. Interestingly, CCP does not call for players to co-opt themselves in the process of eliminating RMT as do Blizzard-Activision. Rather, players willingly engage in the practice of lateral surveillance of

each other towards an end amenable to CCP. Eve's rules mean that it is possible for players to directly govern the conduct of avatars which engage in RMT - called 'farmers' or 'macrominers' - by destroying their ships and other perishable assets. Through their enfranchisement by Eve's fundamental coded rules, players 'naturally' adopt CCP's desired perspective on RMT trade: WoW players are in comparison unable to directly govern cheaters, and thus must defer to Blizzard-Activision.

6.3.a - micro-level government of human agency through paratexts

Paratexts facilitate government in the gameworld by bridging agencies external to the gameworld to those within it. Publishers and players both govern and are governed by paratexts. The code that defines the rules and gameworld that define WoW and Eve orient paratextual production, as they are the primary texts which inform it. Conversely, paratexts themselves may also be coded - such as exploits, hacks, modifications, and tools are examples. Taylor's examination of the CTRA mod for WoW (2006: 331-333) is strong example of this. The uncoded authority officers wield through their uncoded position in a guild is reinforced by the extra-ordinary agency granted by the CTRA, allowing for a powerful one-way gaze of the players subject to it. In this subheading I focus the most notable uses of paratexts I observed which relate to governance. These include official and player-run discussion boards, killboards, and UI mods.

The use of mods in Eve is limited by CCP's prohibition of any kind of alteration to the client or user interface. During the observation no individual in the Privateers that I was aware of used or made mention of third-party mods or tools which interface with Eve directly, nor did I use any such paratexts myself. My experience in WoW does allow for

brief contrast with Taylor's work however. The impact of paratexts in the government of human agency in <BM> was, insofar as I could observe, minimal. The 'damage meter' mentioned by F in the above excerpt applies solely to the government of his own performance. CTRA or similar tools were not used, to the best of my knowledge. This infers that cultural tastes regarding the use of modifications as a means to governing the conduct of good game play are not universally applicable. In both cases then, while mods and tools directly link the field of game play to the paratextual field, as coded paratexts, I observe they have little discernible influence in the negotiation of human government within the gameworld. Paratexts produced by the publisher - in particular WoW's 'Warden' software, and the legal contracts accompanying both games - are significant examples of paratexts that in the former instance do not interact with the gameworld directly and are not coded on the latter, and yet have a significant influence on human agency outside their position as 'players'.

My own use of mods during the WoW study contrasts this slightly. 'Questhelper' and 'Auctioneer', as discussed in constructing the paratextual field in chapter 5, are cultural artefacts which allow the player to negotiate WoW's progressive game play structures simply by increasing the visibility of the information available to players. Thus, by changing WoW's UI to fully de-script the method to completing quests (through annotating WoW's default maps and a 'compass' which points to objectives), the prescripted manner in which players are intended to complete these is exposed, and thus subject to negotiation and optimisation by players.

Paratexts do not have to directly interact with the field of game play to govern human agency within it: <BM>'s (now unfortunately defunct) website is indicative of this. As

stated, the website's messageboard was the channel through which potential members posted applications and was also used to schedule raid or battleground groups. The creation of <BM>'s website is notable in that it is generative of social and cultural capital through providing a durable medium of communication specifically for guild members outside of the gameworld. Messages sent through WoW's chatbox are in comparison fleeting, as messages are not stored unless players opt to log them to their computers. <BM>'s website also allows for organisation and governance of players outside of the

remit of the client and publisher. Unlike the field of game play, players' conduct through this form of CMC are not oriented by code and rules as in the gameworld. However, as <BM>'s website is produced by WoW players for the purpose of organising their activities in WoW, code and rules still influence how its members govern themselves here. However, players' participation in the CMC offered by the guild's website is contingent upon members' willing obedience and participation. Thus, its use as a tool as a means for government of players in the gameworld is limited and participatory, despite the hierarchical orientation of <BM> itself.

The Privateers in contrast lacked an 'official' website of their own, despite being a considerably larger group than <BM>. The closest comparison to be found here lies in P's actions on Eve's official forum, regularly orchestrating recruitment and campaign advertisements through its messageboard to maintain symbolic capital inherent in the Privateers' reputation. In contrast to the observed use of <BM>'s website, CCP's forums here are not used by the Privateers in government of their organisation through paratext. Rather, as these actions are situated upon CCP's website (and thus the ensuing heteronomy to the legal field of governance), they, in contrast to <BM> , remain subject to any governing action CCP may take to control their conduct.

Killboards are the final notable paratext which I observed members of the Privateers leverage in the negotiation of government in the field of game play. Killmails generated by players and supplied to killboard websites are aggregated and used to construct exhaustive profiles illustrating the competency of avatars and corporations alike. This allows for public surveillance and evaluation of the coded and symbolic cultural capital inherent in avatars as a measure of their competencies and achievements, or lack thereof. This is contingent however, upon information supplied being correct: the heteronomy between action in the field of game play and its reproduction through killboards is far from total. Players may fake killmails or simply not submit information. As all killboards are hosted by third-party entities, players are not subject to government by CCP to participate in this practice.

Privateer members commonly posted both their kills and losses to killboards[11] .This was a popular and widely held practice. This produces government that is both participatory and hierarchical. Corporations may use killboards to evaluate the performance of individual members. In this manner, the cultural and symbolic capital inherent in a player's profile on a killboard website can be leveraged in the government of their conduct in relation to good game play. Thus, the scope of corporations who engage in such practices is extended. In the Privateers this was not a mandated practice though there was a widespread enthusiasm for it. Killmails were utilised by players to establish the particulars of a battle, or simply to show off: by recording players' actions in this manner, the symbolic and cultural capital inherent in a players' competencies is crystallised into a cultural artefact.

Government by or through leveraging paratexts is minimal here. In great part this is due to the methodology of this study, as data has primarily been collected from the field of game play, which is largely self-referencing. I observe users in each organisation only through their role as players; it is entirely possible paratexts players governed with or were governed by were simply not visible to me. Outside of the field of game play, paratexts with the greatest agency to govern it are those employed by publishers, and those formed in the micro-level field of legal governance. These utilise capital, positions, and strategies that are difficult for players to negotiate as they largely cannot act in the field these paratexts are mobilised in. This is the final component of government in MMOGs, the micro-level legal field.

6.4 - The micro-level legal field of governance in WoW and Eve

The micro-level legal field of governance is distant to the other micro-level sub-fields which compose Eve and WoW, as capital and agencies mobilised within it do not readily translate to the gameworld. Considerable agency is exerted upon users through this sub-field however, through paratextual works produced in it that are endowed with authority through the macro-level field of governance. Government within the legal field is thus distinctly hierarchical and exercised predominantly by the publisher in each case to govern both players conduct, and any authorial control players negotiate over the code of each game. Analysis here will focus upon the quasi-legal contracts written by CCP and Blizzard-Activision, as these directly pertain to the research question in that they work to govern the behaviour of players, in establishing the publisher's formal legitimacy to govern the gameworld. The EULA, (End User License Agreement) ToS in Eve (Terms of Service), and ToU (in WoW) seek to govern and outline the

punishments particular actions and practices will incur. These include clauses regarding behaviour, reverse-engineering, or copyright infringement. Thus, discussion of the micro-level field of governance is as necessary as the sub-fields of game play or paratexts, in order to fully understand the means by which human agency (here users are governed in more than their capacity as 'players') is subject to control at this level of analysis.

Construction of the micro-level field of governance here aims to present the macro-level governance and practices of law as they are relevant directly to the two cases at a micro-level, rather than a description of this field in its absolute entirety. As such, I limit positions visible in the micro-level field of governance to 'licensor', held by the publisher, players as 'licensees', and the position of the 'game' in each case as owned by, and intellectual property of, their respective publisher. CCP's dominant position as licensor of Eve is secured by Icelandic law, the District Court of Reykjavik (2008). in particular - and so legal matters relevant to the formation of Eve's sub-field of governance lie almost entirely with the CCP. Similarly, Blizzard-Activision's ownership of WoW is secured by Delaware state law in the U.S. (2009). As a result, the EULA presented to players via 'click-through' agreement prior to accessing the game becomes a useful tool in constructing the field of governance (this is explained in greater detail in the 'accessing the gameworld section of chapter 4) .

The only contingency users possess to negotiate the click-through EULA presented to them on their first time logging into Eve or WoW is to refuse, and consequently be barred access to the gameworld. The terms presented to the user also enormously favour the publisher in each case. Both Eve's and WoW's EULAs are 'contracts of adhesion'

(Halbert 2009), presenting a 'take it or leave it' agreement in which the licensee has no bargaining power. While this arguably makes them unconscionable - and thus of limited validity in court - it remains extremely unlikely an individual will ever formally contest a MMOG EULA, given the low economic value of a 'license' through subscription in comparison to the legal fees incurred in such a challenge (Humphreys 2008:162).

Further, actions and capital pertaining to legal agencies do not translate between the sub-field of governance and the sub-field of game play, to the end that the coercive terms contained in EULAs have little visible impact upon players' experiences. Indeed, it is doubtful whether many players even read them (Magid, no date). Empirically, the EULA bears significance in both cases as it is linked to the client; if a user does not click the 'accept' button, they cannot play. The client itself reinforces the EULA as a contract of adhesion.

Acceptance of the EULA secures an individual's position of 'licensee' within the sub-field of governance and permits access to the gameworld, albeit on terms formally established by CCP or Blizzard-Activision. Contingent terms in the EULA further expose a player to regulation through additional documents secondary to it, which in Eve's case are not presented in the game itself. CCP claim acceptance of the EULA automatically engenders acceptance of the most significant of these, the Terms of Service (ToS);

> "...You agree to observe and abide by the Rules of Conduct as may be amended by CCP from time to time. The current version of the Rules of Conduct may be viewed at http://www.eve-online.com/pnp/terms.asp, and are incorporated in the EULA by reference."
> (Eve-Online End User License Agreement, CCP 2008)

The actual legal validity of EULAs and similar documents have been questioned through their ineligibility as genuine contracts negotiated between two equal parties (Schley 2010). However, they remain of great use in constructing the micro-level sub-field of governance, as they secure the publisher's dominant position allowing them to define the field. Analysis of the EULAs, ToS, and ToU provide a de-scriptive reading of the field here almost in its entirety. To this end, the most noteworthy role of the sub-field of governance lies in its (self-evident) mobilisation by CCP and Blizzard-Activision to preconfigure and govern the end user. As such, analysis of the legal field in conjunction with all others at a micro level is required in order to fully describe relationships between agents within the field.

> "...22.You may not share your account password with anyone. Infraction of this rule is done at your own risk. Further information on account transfers can be found in the EULA.
>
> 23.You may not exploit any bug in EVE Online to gain an unfair advantage over other players. You may not communicate the existence of any exploitable bug to others directly or through a public forum. Bugs should be reported through the bug reporting tool on our website.
>
> 24.You will use the CCP bug reporting tools in accordance with their policy and will not intentionally submit misinformation or hide information required by the bug report forms..." (Eve-Online Terms of Service, CCP 2008)
>
> ...
>
> 4. ... Your Password is to be kept confidential at all times and you are solely responsible for the security of your Password. You may not disclose your Password to anyone, or allow your Password to be used by anyone other than yourself and/or your one (1) minor child...
>
> ...Nonetheless, certain acts go beyond what is "fair" and are considered serious violations of these Terms of Use. Those acts include, but are not necessarily limited to...(1) Using or exploiting errors in design, features which have not been documented, and/or "program bugs" to gain access that is otherwise not available, or to obtain a competitive advantage over other players.
>
> (World of Warcraft Europe, Terms of Use, Activision-Blizzard 2008)

This is a cursory example of how EULAs attempt to preconfigure the end user. Neither the client nor servers screen for or control this practice in either MMOG. As a result it remains unregulated in practice, and is thus open to players. Additionally, terms which demand self-censure or discipline, such as the latter part of clause 23 above, are untenable and is not enforceable by any practical means. The relative efficacy of these documents is moot as regards the publisher's agency to govern the gameworld, however. As the sole legitimate owner of the code, the client, and the servers which host the game. Activision-Blizzard are able to undertake any regulatory or disciplinary action against players within the gameworld with impunity, without need to refer to legal or governing authority external to it (Bartle 2006). Rather, the value of a EULA lies in its mere *referral* to an exterior legal authority, as this lends legitimacy to publishers' practices of governance.

Construction of the field of governance here does not produce practices which entail direct or incontestable control of the user, however. Many terms in the EULA, ToS, and ToU are not enforced by the client or server in each case, and thus are easily subverted. A player may ignore clause 23 and exploit a bug regardless of the ToS, as by their nature 'bugs' are unanticipated flaws in the client. Legal documents are significant however, in that they move discourse regarding acceptability of actions or behaviour in the game play and paratextual sub-fields to the field of legal governance. In doing so, players' capacity to negotiate the classification this entails is greatly restricted, given a prohibitive cost of time and capital - cultural and economic - required to legally contest any aspect of the EULA or ToS. A notable difference between the EULA of Eve and that of WoW works well to illustrate this;

> "...21.You will not attempt to decipher, hack into or interfere with any transmissions to or from the EVE Online servers, nor

> will you try to create or use any third party add-ons, extras or tools for the game..." (Eve-Online Terms of Service, CCP 2008)

> "...(1) modify or cause to be modified any files that are a part of a World of Warcraft installation;
> (2) create or use cheats, "mods", and/or hacks, or any other third-party software designed to modify the World of Warcraft experience;
> (3) use any third-party software that intercepts, "mines", or otherwise collects information from or through World of Warcraft..." (World of Warcraft Terms of Use, Blizzard-Activision 2009)

These excerpts are similar. Both explicitly prohibit altering the game client or manipulating data it sends or receives in any way. However, whilst Eve's ToS lists any "third party add-ons, extras, or tools" as prohibited, WoW's Terms of Use (ToU) limits its interest to modifications which intercept data and more vaguely, those which alter the 'experience'. The leeway permitted through this distinction is amplified by explicit allowances programmed into the WoW API (Application Programming Interface) granting easy manipulation of select parts of WoW's interface, whilst preventing access to others. As a Blizzard representative has clarified;

> "...Since the early days of Beta, our developers have chosen to offer fans of interface modifications some freedom to create. However, this "creative space" is supervised by what is called the API (Application Programming Interface): some doors are left open, while others are shut closed.
>
> What must be known is that these interface modifications are entirely integrated within the games repertory and are a part of the World of Warcraft application, as you may note while looking at your task manager, AddOns do not require other applications to function and do not modify the client's files..."
>
> ('Daghorn', no date)

This combined legal and technical space forms a heterogeneous network that human users may interact with and reinscribe in WoW, which is by contrast blackboxed in Eve. The vast collective of user-created, published, and maintained modifications which

enrich the paratextual field of WoW are absent within Eve. With the exception of limited organising tools such as 'Evemon' (which cannot be embedded within the client in the same manner as UI modifications to WoW without breaching the ToS) mods for Eve are scarce. Regardless of their actual legal validity, the difference a legal clause may affect here is apparent.

Prohibition of client modifications is one of the more prominent examples of how the sub-field of governance can interact with the paratextual sub-field, but it is not the only one, nor the most significant. The EULA entitles CCP to claim every paratext produced by players as intellectual property it bears the sole interest to (CCP 2008). However, the company has to date taken no action to govern the production of reviews, guides, artwork, criticism or other paratexts commonly produced by users. Nevertheless, the EULA and ToS allow CCP to maintain a stake in production of these and act to control or censure their production through legal agency. The micro-level legal sub-field of governance may be conducted here to allow CCP to act outside the gameworld of Eve and its website.

Interest in paratextual works of Eve occupies only a single section of the EULA. The EULA is however more significant as a formal means to govern players' agency in the sub-field of game play. Conversely, the remit of CCP's interest, and thus the boundaries of Eve's field of governance, are seen to halt at governing behaviours which either are more readily dealt with through local and immediate authorities, or those which do not render the company itself liable.

> "3.You may not organize nor be a member of any corporation or group within EVE Online that is based on or advocates any anti-ethnic, anti-gay, anti-religious, racist, sexist or other hate-mongering philosophies

> 4.You may not use "role-playing" as an excuse to violate these rules. While EVE Online is a persistent world, fantasy role-playing game, the claim of role-playing is not an acceptable defence for anti-social behavior. Role-playing is encouraged, but not at the expense of other player. You may not create or participate in a corporation or group that habitually violates this policy."
>
> "5.You will report out-of-game issues regarding harassment, such as threatening phone calls or correspondence, to your local law enforcement officials or Internet provider...We are not responsible for actions taken by our subscribers that occur outside the jurisdiction of our game servers or web site." (Eve-Online Terms of Service, CCP 2008)

The distinction in interest between these clauses is clear enough. The activity of 'hate mongering' groups, if taking place within the game play or paratextual fields, are detrimental to it if left unchecked. The latter clause concerns issues which may be delineated as occurring between individuals with some reference to Eve, but in demanding the intervention of civil authority are rendered utterly outside the remit of CCP in governing it. This is the declared limit of the company's interest in regulating the behaviour of Eve's players, and thus delimits the legal field of governance with regard to its regulation of players' agencies.

Formally prohibiting a practice or behaviour does not entail its absolute observation without enforcement. While negotiation of the clauses within the EULA may be impossible for users, their subversion is often simple, given that many of its written rules are just that - written, and ungoverned by scripted code or human or nonhuman surveillance. The EULA, ToS, and similar documents utilise the legal field to establish the validity of action taken by CCP in acting to enforce them, yet in lacking an equivalent of the Warden software employed by Blizzard-Activision and thus the ability to autonomously monitor and regulate prohibited practices, there is greater contingency available to users in acting outside of their 'contracts'.

This is at least in part pre-empted by CCP, through for example clause 22 cited above. Users are forbidden from account sharing, yet pre-emptive further caution is added, noting that "Infraction of this rule is done at your own risk". It is, however often regarded as a necessary and useful practice. A discussion thread found in Eve-related website on the topic helps to show this point;

> "Every single BoB director would need to be banned, but so would remedial and I'm assuming the majority of the HCs in game. Hell my main would have to be banned, my girlfriend switched a couple skills for me."
>
> "...No idea if it's true mind you. Also, Dian has been known to log into Galavets account when they are low on Carriers."
>
> "Lallante and Ghost are also known to log on Chowdown's Titan."
>
> "...All in all I never agreed with Kugutsumen's expose on BoB cynonets as they are necessary to any large capital fleet, and until CCP give us a better option we have to share accounts..."
>
> ('Kugutsumen', 'User Name', 'John Doe', and 'Alt' 2007)

Account sharing is argued here to be a necessary strategy. Eve is always 'on', even though individual players are not. Access to key avatars within a corporation or alliance possessing certain skills, office, or assets is essential in maintaining the complex bureaucracy which can emerge at an alliance level. Where inter-alliance war and politicking are concerned, accounts containing avatars possessing 'Carriers' or 'Titans' - extremely powerful capital ships which demand the pooled resources and cooperation of many avatars to construct - too important for an alliance not to possess access on demand. This is a conflict between the EULA and players' de-scriptive reading of Eve's preinscribed rules. Here, account sharing is an emergent game play practice which alleviates a perceived shortcoming in the rules and allows player-organisations to function more smoothly. In absence of a game play mechanic allowing avatars to be shared, players opt to breach the EULA. Thus, a contradiction is established between

what Eve's rules allow for and players' negotiation of these, and the terms stated in the EULA. I did not observe account sharing to be regarded with the same necessity in WoW, though this may be the case for high-level raiding and similar activities which demand avatars with specific capital, similar to capital ships in Eve. Rather, despite WoW's ToU, 'F' mentioned making use of his brother's account without any hint of concern ;

```
F:: i remember when i deleted my alliance chars lol
F:: transfered my brothers mage to frostmane
F: and played abit on him
```

(excerpted from 'party' chat chatlogs, World of Warcraft, 4 November 2008)

Contingency deliberately coded into the game rules and client pre-inscription allow leverage of the nonhuman agency of the client itself against formal, contractual rules governing players. That the publisher, EULA, and client function as individual agents is a fact not lost upon either CCP or Blizzard-Activision, though only CCP's legal document signify a pre-emptive effort to control contradictions the client permits to this end. Naming policy is an example of this - a clause stating the client accepts a name does not infer the EULA's compliance is present;

"...You are encouraged to use a pseudonym, but you may not choose a name that violates anyone's trademarks, publicity rights or other rights. Acceptance of a pseudonym by the System does not mean that your chosen pseudonym does not violate anyone's rights." (Eve Online User and Character Name Policy, CCP 2008)

Where a legal clause attempts to govern in absence of coded, automatic enforcement, two useful conclusions may be drawn. Firstly, it is a distinction made by the publisher to separate governance that is legal and formal, from that which is nonhuman, and

delegated by to the code. Thus, an qualitatively different modes of governance are established and made clear.

Secondly, this same distinction means that the preinscriptions of Eve are more visible, as the EULA governs areas where the client does not or cannot (such as players' behaviour, or hacking the client, for example). Players' negotiation of the code is more easily observed and distinguished as a result: the EULA performs as a 'schematic' for areas in which the agency of the code to regulate players is limited or absent.

> In my last corp, we were threatened with the boot for even posting in these threads at all...so appreciate this liberty :)
>
> ...
>
> LOL...We often encourage it...it gets us free wars...just dont get a forum ban doing it :-)
>
> (excerpted from Privateer Alliance, 'Alliance Mail', 'Re:Why Did no one tell ME!!!', 3 December 2008)

Here, one of Privateers' leaders advocates a breach of Eve's code of conduct for meaningful advantage in-game. He suggests 'trolling' - subtle harassment or baiting in order to provoke heated argument - in order to incense other corporations into starting in-game wars with the Privateers. This demonstrates an awareness of Eve's formal rules, a willingness to break them, and knowledge of the resultant gain. However, it must be stated that this was also the sole instance of deliberate subversion of Eve's formal rules I witnessed during the participant observation. I did not observe any other direct negotiation of Eve's EULA by the Privateers' during the study.

However, I do still argue that the legal sub-field of governance can directly influence players' empirical negotiation of game play. Paratextual knowledge is translatable

between games (Consalvo 2009:410). The MMOG genre occupies a semi-autonomous position within the meso and macro level fields the digital games industry is situated in, and as such, it is unsurprising that MMOGs possess shared legal conventions as well as game play design. As a result, a 'new' player to Eve who possesses prior knowledge of MMOGs will be aware of what Eve's contractual documents entail. Where an individual purposely seeks to participate in game play (as opposed to deliberate cheating, or any behaviour which disrupts the 'game' or other players) they are unlikely to breach any of the more obvious clauses through their actions in the gameworld. Curiously, in contrast to Eve, WoW has no corresponding clause in its EULA, ToU, or Naming Policy which attempts to rectify the discrepancy between the naming conventions delineated by the publisher, and what the client can actually be preinscribed to enforce.

Further still, some clauses and limitations of the EULA and ToS merely formalise boundaries that should be readily known as part of a paratextual capital pertaining to 'common sense' in game play. Clauses which could be readily summarised as 'do not hack or modify the client', or 'do not harass other users' are axiomatic. The formalisation of such practices into a legal contract does not make them less so, but is rather significant because the provision this allows for in providing 'consequence' to such action. As stated, the EULA works to reinforce the governing or regulatory action taken by the publisher as legally 'correct', and thus non-negotiable, and also extends their agency to do so into the paratextual sub-field where methods of direct governance (such as suspending or closing accounts) are not possible. It is through this agency that the micro-level field of legal governance is most significant outside the field of game play, and is the means how it is directly linked to the paratextual sub-field. This composite 'coded' and 'legal' authority CCP and Blizzard-Activision have established with regard to ownership of their respective games is significant in the empirical negotiation of

practices of governance in the field of game play.

Finally, the micro-level legal field of governance is significant in that both publishers utilise it to establish boundaries of their MMOG. Thus, WoW and Eve are distinguished as 'gameworlds' within the micro-level field of game play, 'products' in the field of cultural industries, and at each level of analysis, as 'intellectual property' through the legal field of governance which ensures the publisher's ownership of Eve and WoW in both of these respects.

In this regard, I conclude by stating that this action by CCP and Blizzard-Activision at the meso and macro levels to define the positions of Eve and WoW also structure them at the micro-level. Eve and WoW as 'games' and the action that occurs in their gameworld is abstracted from their positions as products or intellectual property. Thus, the field of game play is rendered autonomous from agencies and capital at either of these levels by their publishers. Capital generated by players in the field of game play does not translate to market capital or legal ownership, and thus, their actions have no stake in WoW or Eve in these fields, leaving players' actions in the field of game play relevant only to it.

7.0 - Conclusion

The objective of my research over the course of this study was to take an exploratory approach to understanding how human agency within MMOGs is governed. Through framing my analysis to this end, I have adopted Bourdieu's theories of field and capital, contemporary iterations of Foucault's work on the panopticon and governance, and taken an ANT-informed approach to understanding non-human agency and the heterogeneous network. The goal of this combined theoretical approach was to construct a theoretical framework that could cope with the idiosyncrasies MMOGs present as a setting for sociological research.

7.1 - Theoretical discussion and findings

The ontological challenges posed by using a combined approach to the integration of multiple theoretical perspectives proved the most difficult aspect of this study to develop, and is the one which bears the most reflection. In moving from Bourdieu, to Foucault, to Latour and Akrich, we can see a paradigmatic shift from theory emphasising 'structure' to theory emphasising 'agency'. It is impossible to perfectly reconcile each of these to construct a unified approach. Thus, the goal here has been to selectively adopt concepts from each of these perspectives which are the most useful for the research question I have constructed, and develop these in such a way as to not conflict with one another. To this end, the goal of the theoretical framework is to account for the structured appearance of the gameworld in each MMOG, while at the same time allowing for the 'agency' side to emerge.

Thus through the multiple perspectives I have adopted and data I have collected, I have

identified several dimensions of governance of human agency within MMOGs. Governance in both WoW and Eve is structured and negotiated by game rules, players, publishers, paratexts, and through legal contract. With the exception of governance mediated through paratexts, these dimensions correlate with those discussed in extant studies (Williams et al. 2006; Humphreys 2008). The analysis from which these findings are produced also recursively bear implications for the theoretical framework I have constructed: there are a number of points to be discussed in this regard as to the rationale behind the theoretical concepts I have used, and their applicability.

While Bourdieu himself utilised the field as very much a structured concept, I rather try to borrow the least structured definition he presented of it as “social network of relations among objective 'positions' held by 'agents'" (Bourdieu, Waquant 1992:97) that avoids the concept as a durable, independent entity. I have also tried to develop this perspective as a means to maintain the ontological compatibility of the field with ANT's definition of structure as the product of performative networks. There remain issues to be resolved in this approach however, particularly with regard to how Bourdieu's schema of field and capital relate to non-human agents. In the context of this study I consider them to generally possess agency in the gameworld exceeding that of human players. However, it is also true that players succeed in wresting authorial control over the gameworld by leveraging the code itself - effectively disenfranchising the code of its agency. As capital (particularly social capital) strongly pertains to human agency, it is difficult to reconcile these two concepts - this is an area of the study in which literature could be further developed.

Regardless of its conflict with the domain of ANT in considering technical objects, I have found Bourdieu's concept of the field and capital to be incredibly useful in

defining the spaces humans act in with regard to each case. In chapter 4 I discuss the problem of conceptualising settings in a CMC context as they are simultaneously perceptible as technical objects and as 'places' which, in either instance, facilitate human interaction. The concept of the field allows me to sidestep this issue, and when used in conjunction with ANT (despite possible conflict) account for the interface of human and non-human agencies that action in MMOGs entails.

My research is primarily based within the gameworlds of WoW and Eve, and focuses on interaction between micro-level agents. As a result, it is difficult to link the significance of MMOGs in their broader capacity as cultural works, products, and intellectual property through ethnographic data alone. Thus the concepts of the field, 'position', and 'capital' provide a means to identify and frame action within the gameworld of each case to broader agencies and practices of governance at a meso and macro level which are not observable solely through analysis based upon micro-level data.

Nevertheless, the focus of my research upon the government negotiated between micro-level actors is a deliberate decision. I argue (and for the most part, findings have collaborated) that government of human agency relating to MMOGs is situated primarily within the gameworld. However, there is potential for follow-up research focusing on the meso and macro levels of government in or relating to MMOGs. The analysis of agencies external to the gameworld I conduct in each case at a meso and macro level highlight possibilities for useful research on governance in MMOGs at these levels, such as through the negotiation of cultural and economic capital and tastes that govern humans as consumers of commodified cultural works.

Even disregarding the issues of integrating Foucault's work with the other perspectives I adopt, there are challenges to using his concepts in a digital context, as I have outlined in chapter 2. The critique of Foucault offered by theorists such as Dean (1999), Lemke (2002), or Haggerty (2006) discourages the attempt to fit his work into the context of modern, digital technologies. However, in practice I find the panopticon a surprisingly applicable model for conceptualising players in MMOGs as 'prisoners', with the gameworld and its rules as the panoptic institution. Naturally, there are problems with this - players are free to enter and leave the gameworld as they wish, for example.

However, the imagery of the panopticon can be directly invoked in that MMOGs produce a certain type of individual (the 'player') through pedagogic or punitive instruction (game rules) to a specific end (game play), and governance to this end is exercised both laterally (between players) and hierarchically (by the code and publisher). MMOGs have significant entry costs, in requiring software and a paid subscription. This works to distinguish them from more accessible forms of CMC.

In my analysis, I predominantly refer to Foucault's concepts of government and governmentality in discussing governance of human agency. These concepts are more epistemologically flexible, do not bear the same negative connotations as does Foucault's account of the panopticon, and place less of an emphasis on structure. Government has proved useful during the study as a tool to broadly discuss interactions between the code, publishers, and players. Reading particular scenarios as expressions of government allows me to bring out human rationalities and objectives from the heterogeneous tangle of human and nonhuman agencies within the gameworld. For example, the patch inscribed to Eve which through code prohibited a repetition of the 'pew-pew' palooza is visible as an effort by CCP's designers to govern how the

Privateers conduct their game play. While the code can and does act autonomously here, through a de-scriptive reading it is clearly visible as an effort by designers to alter players' actions.

The concept of governmentality accompanies government, and in analysis is a useful discursive tool for addressing the question of 'why' behind practices of governance. In this study, government is concerned with the rationalities which shape agents' actions. Through governmentality I rather seek to examine broader, rationalities shared or imposed upon agents that that influence their own practices of government. My discussion of 'corpse camping' in chapter 6 distinguishes this. Players utilise corpse camping as a practice to govern the actions of other players' avatars. However, the difficulty of executing this practice reveals that players do this because there is no agency prescribed in WoW's rules which allows them to exert punishment upon one another. This points to a governmentality of WoW's design, visible through the prescriptions of its rules, that players may not inflict consequential harm on one another. Governmentality thus in this instance is useful in addition to government alone in that it allows the researcher to de-script human telos behind coded scripts.

However, it is also notable that of all Foucault's concepts utilised here, I consider the panopticon to have a surprising applicability to the specific context of the gameworld of the MMOG, despite my critique of it in chapter 2. The enduring relevance of the panopticon to this context may merit a revisionist approach to Foucault's theory in studies covering surveillance and control relating to digital media and surveillance technologies.

7.2 - Methodological conclusions

In a similar manner, a number of issues are raised by the approach I took to methodology, coding and analysis which have potential for further research. The methods of data collection required a surprising deal of refinement before they were useful for gathering meaningful data. Echoing Haggerty's discussion of 'dataveillance' (2006), my initial attempt to record all action I observed in the gameworld WoW in their entirety by recording every single second of every playing session I partook in was in retrospect short-sighted.

Aside from the common-sense problems of the digital storage space this method required, video capturing as a means to collect data results in the problem, I found, that there is simply too much data to code in even short excerpts. Thus, even without dealing with the above logistical issue, the researcher is forced to either be selective and capture only what they consider as relevant or important, or relegate video data as a secondary source informing other forms of data, and limit themselves to what actually gets coded. This bias of significance poses a problem itself: video has to be recorded in 'the moment', and the researcher may record events which appear important at first, but which later have no use in analysis, and vice-versa.

For this reason I used a program named 'fraps' to take a screenshot of the state of the game once every minute. It is far from exhaustive, but I found it worked well to inform coding through texts, as I could refer to screenshots as reminders of the visual and spatial elements of events I try to reconstruct through coding. It is worth noting however, that I was surprised how much I found myself reliant upon fieldnotes during

the coding process. The contingency afforded by CMC technologies to perfectly capture all data leads to the tempting fallacy of not needing to manually take notes: fieldnotes encapsulate emic meaning in the events the researcher records that is available to them only in the experience of such events. All forms of autonomous data recording are a level of abstraction from this, and based upon my experiences here I believe researchers involved in CMC-based research should be wary of this limitation.

The construction of comparative cases for this study also produced some unexpected results. I adopted a comparative method as a means to account for the influence that code and rules effect in governance of players, and to contrast dimensions of publisher-mediated governance between WoW and Eve. In this manner, I hoped the data produced in each case would allow me to identify and distinguish forms of governance that were more 'human' from those which were more 'coded'. In comparing differing rule structures and conventions between WoW and Eve, I had also hoped the varying significance of the code and publisher in players' negotiation of game play would emerge more easily, as I could compare different instances of these between each case. This was in part successful, but also produced difficulties of its own.

It is clear that the differences in rules inform <BM> and the Privateers' actions to the end that they negotiate game play and generate different practices of governance. The contrast in stated and actual organisation and self-government of members within <BM> and the Privateers is an example of this. Despite its 'casual' orientation, players in the Privateers are organised and govern one another's' game play practices, because Eve's rules render this a necessity. In contrast, though <BM> was a 'hardcore' PvP-oriented guild, its members could conduct themselves how they wished, and the guild

did not suffer the absence of its guild master - there are no coded penalties for disorganisation or poor game play.

The significance of the code in governing the orientation of these two organisations would not have emerged had I conducted a study in only one game. Similarly, through differing perspectives CCP and Blizzard-Activision take on the issue of 'modding' the client or UI, observable in their EULAs, the agency of the publisher to influence the gameworld through legal contract emerges. However, the use of a comparative method does raise difficulties here in that the code of WoW and Eve may simply be too different. As stated in chapter 5, the tastes each game caters to positions them in diametric positions within the MMOG genre. Game play is so qualitatively different in each that describing players' actions and placing them within a single analytical frame of governance becomes difficult. I maintain that constructing a comparative study has ultimately been beneficial, but I believe that a comparative study using similar games, multiple cases from each game, or multiple cases within a single game along different axes of study (such as an ethnography within a PvP and a PvE oriented guild, for example) would be a reasonable development of applying this methodology to MMOGs.

The final methodological reflection I wish to mention here is the point I make in chapter 4 that a researcher to whom digital games are a novelty may take much more from the field setting than one to whom the game they are studying, or even games in general, are familiar. I have played digital games from an early age, such that I found myself taking a lot of the fundamental rules, UI, and spatial elements of the gameworld in both cases for granted. Often, I have had to consciously stop and consider the relevance these bear

with regard to human governance and agency. A researcher unfamiliar with games may conversely be able to describe them which much greater qualitative breadth. However, this does in itself raise an issue that such researchers will not be able to fully explore prescribed and emergent game play in a MMOG. This is an equally important concern - the limitations of my WoW ethnography through my avatar's low level and lack of social connections are clear here. Perhaps an approach involving multiple researchers of varying levels of familiarity with digital games is the most desirable method.

7.3 - conclusion and future work

My own contributions here are to posit that governance of human agency within MMOGs is primarily situated within the gameworld, and practised through code and rules. Further, the negotiation of governance by players is predominantly lateral and shaped by game play imperatives. It is also notable that authorial control over how the code governs players is dynamic and therefore can be contested through the insertion of new scripts into the game in each case, through patches and content updates. Examples I discuss in chapter 6 illustrate how this affords opportunity for both players and publishers to establish control over the end use of a MMOG; publishers, through their control over the design of scripts, and players over their mobilisation of flaws within these. This is an ongoing, negotiated process that can be captured through the ANT-informed development of the concept of 'deterritorialization' (Bogard 2006). Deterritorialization can be used to analyse these issues of control, which are significant in examining governance through digital media, and therefore merits further study.

Similarly, though I concentrate upon game play and code here, my findings in places

also point to the significance of players, publishers, paratexts, and legal contracts. As the methodological focus here has been upon micro-level analysis of practices of governance, the sub-field of game play, and the gameworld, it is perhaps unsurprising that the conclusions I have reached point to code and rules. The findings I present with regard to the meso, and macro levels could be further developed, and governance at a meso and macro level which more pertains to players as 'consumers' and 'licensees' raises issues of legal governance that merit further study. Similarly, governance within the micro-level paratextual sub-field is only briefly covered here. I only conduct a participant observation of my informants' actions within the gameworld: a more thorough ethnography which follows informants through the forms of CMC they partake in outside, but relating to the gameworld is a natural way to improve upon the limitations of this study. Finally, it should be considered that my research here only studies Eve and WoW in a very specific manner, for a very limited window of time. There is also scope for further research on the topic of governance in these MMOGs, retaining the comparative mode that simply considers these two cases in greater detail and exhaustiveness. Governance within MMOGs is an extremely broad topic; I consider my contributions here to have informed this subject of research somewhat, but in maintaining my original focus of the research question as exploratory, I consider that there are yet far more practices to be formed on the study of governance in MMOGs.

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1 Each of these slogans is sourced from mobygames.com. Full citations are included in the bibliography.

2 See appendix III.
3 See appendix III.
4 In this context, a 'server' is a specialised computer which provides services to other computers - in this instance, to receive and send data for WoW users. Blizzard refers to their servers as 'realms', and each holds a single copy of the game world, and are for most intents and purposes will operate independently of the others.
5 See Appendix I.
6 See Appendix I.
7 'ganking' is a term which roughly refers to an unfair act of aggression in a MMOG.
8 These ratings are assigned by preinscribed code; players' actions do not positively or negatively influence the security rating of a system.
9 Game time cards are an alternative to subscription and sold at a roughly equivalent price. These are physical cards upon which a keycode is printed. The player enters this code into a section of Eve's official website in exchange for a prescribed extension of their subscription - commonly 30, 60, or 90 days. Thus, it is not the cards themselves that players exchange for in-game currency, but the codes which extend subscription time.
10 'InterStellar Kredit', as opposed to 'Icelandic Króna' which it is a reference to.
11 for reference, the killboard used by the Privateers is hosted on the 'Battleclinic' website and can be seen at http://eve.battleclinic.com/killboard/index.php

Appendices

Appendix I - figures of the User Interface of Eve-Online and World of Warcraft

Illustrated below are two annotated screenshots displaying the user interface of Eve and WoW:

'World of Warcraft: Wrath of the Lich King'
Blizzard Entertainment, 2008. (cropped)

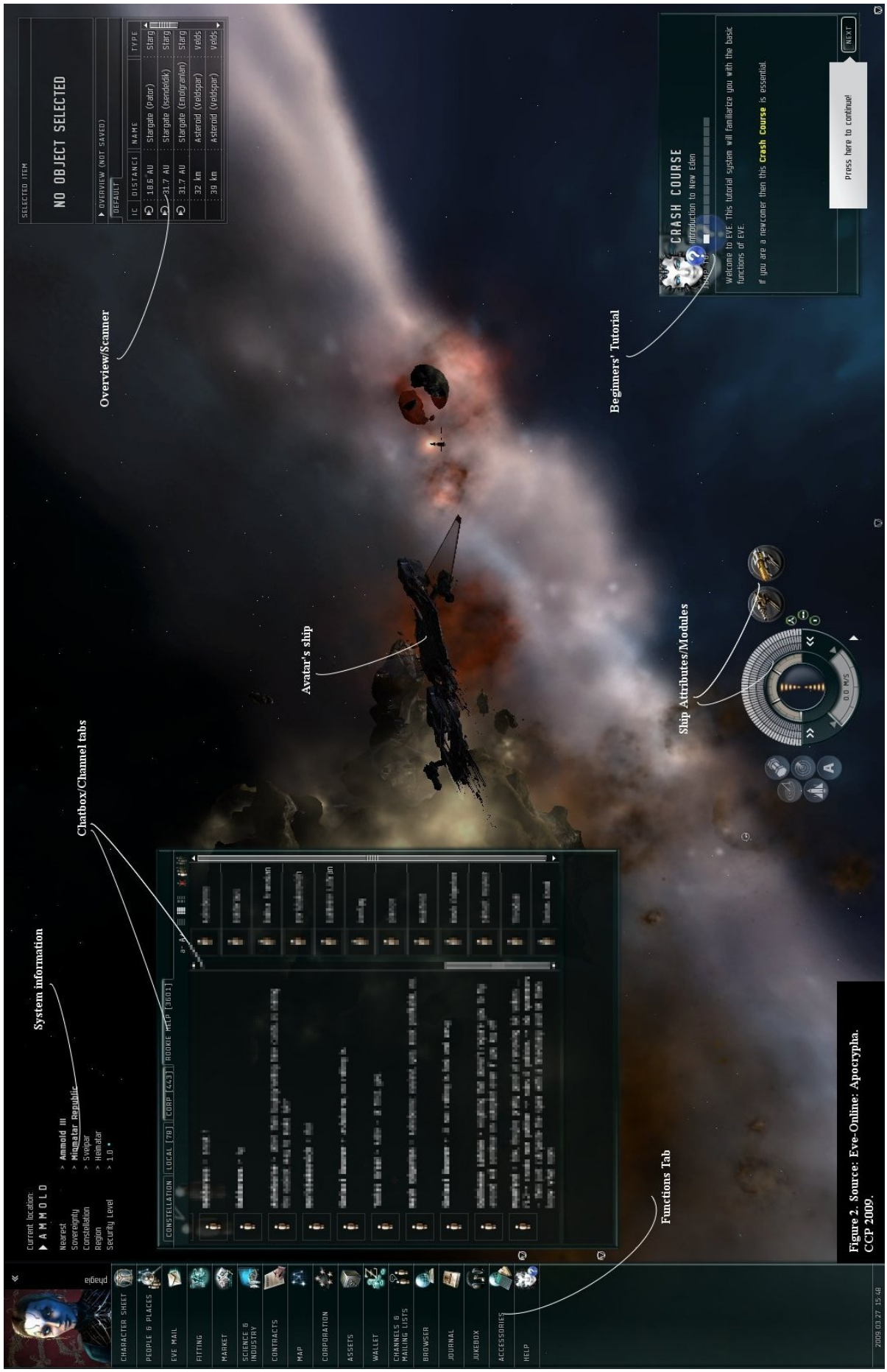

Figure 2. Source: Eve-Online: Apocrypha. CCP 2009.

Appendix II - Full text of passages from legal documents quoted in text

II. - World of Warcraft Terms of Use

Quoted in section 6.1, page 150. Section 6.4, pages 174, 175.

"3. Rules Related to Game Play. Game play is what World of Warcraft is all about. Accordingly, the rules that govern game play in World of Warcraft are taken very seriously by Blizzard Entertainment. Note that Blizzard Entertainment considers all valid play styles in World of Warcraft to be part of the game, and not harassment, so player-killing the enemies of your race and/or alliance, including gravestone and/or corpse camping, is considered a part of the game. Because World of Warcraft is a "player vs. player" game, you should always remember to protect yourself in areas where the members of hostile races can attack you, rather than contacting Blizzard Entertainment's in-game customer service representatives, referred to herein as "Game Masters," for help when you have been killed by an enemy of your race. Nonetheless, certain acts go beyond what is "fair" and are considered serious violations of these Terms of Use. Those acts include, but are not necessarily limited to, the following:

(1) Using or exploiting errors in design, features which have not been documented, and/or "program bugs" to gain access that is otherwise not available, or to obtain a competitive advantage over other players.
(2) Connecting, or creating tools that allow you to connect, to World of Warcraft's proprietary interface or interfaces, other than those explicitly provided by Blizzard Entertainment for your use.
(3) Using tools that hack or otherwise alter the World of Warcraft client or server software.
(4) Using software products that "packet sniff" or provide scripting and/or macroing to obtain information from World of Warcraft.
(5) Anything that Blizzard Entertainment considers contrary to the "essence" of World

of Warcraft."

II.2 - Eve-Online Terms of Service

Quoted in section 6.4, pages 174, 177.

"EVE Online TERMS OF SERVICE

As an Eve Online subscriber, you must observe and abide by the rules of conduct and policies outlined below, as well as the End User License Agreement. Failure to comply with these regulations can result in the immediate termination of your account and you will forfeit all unused access time to the game. No refunds will be given.

1. You may not abuse, harass or threaten another player or authorized representative of CCP, including customer service personnel and volunteers. This includes, but is not limited to: petitioning with false information in an attempt to gain from it or have someone else suffer from it; sending excessive e-mails, EVE-mails or petitions; obstructing CCP Employees from doing their jobs; refusal to follow the instructions of a CCP Employee; or implying favoritism by a CCP Employee.
2. You may not use any abusive, defamatory, ethnically or racially offensive, harassing, harmful, hateful, obscene, offensive, sexually explicit, threatening or vulgar language. (Alternate spelling or partial masking of such words will be reprimanded in the same manner as the actual use of such words.)
3. You may not organize nor be a member of any corporation or group within EVE Online that is based on or advocates any anti-ethnic, anti-gay, anti-religious, racist, sexist or other hate-mongering philosophies
4. You may not use “role-playing” as an excuse to violate these rules. While EVE Online is a persistent world, fantasy role-playing game, the claim of role-playing is not an acceptable defense for anti-social behavior. Role-playing is encouraged, but not at the expense of other player. You may not create or participate in a corporation or group that habitually violates this policy.
5. You will report out-of-game issues regarding harassment, such as threatening phone calls or correspondence, to your local law enforcement officials or Internet provider. CCP will not reveal personal information about its subscribers to unauthorized individuals. We are not responsible for actions taken by our subscribers that occur outside the jurisdiction of our game servers or web site.
6. You will follow the instructions of authorized personnel while in the EVE Online game world or using the EVE Online web site.
7. You may not violate any local, state, national or international laws or regulations.
8. You may not impersonate or present yourself to be a representative of CCP or an EVE Online volunteer.
9. You may not advertise, employ, market, or promote any form of solicitation – including pyramid schemes and chain letters – in the EVE Online game world or on the website.
10. You may not market, sell, advertise, promote, solicit or otherwise arrange for the

exchange or transfer of items in the game or other game services unless it is for in-game sales of in-game services or items.

11. The advertisement or sale of out of game goods and services not directly related to EVE online is prohibited. The only out of game goods and services which can be advertised or sold are the following: EVE forum signature creation, website and third party voice communication server hosting or EVE Time Codes.
12. You may not arrange for the exchange or transfer of any illegal or pirated software or other contraband while you are using the EVE Online client, servers or website.
13. You may not transmit or upload through the EVE Online client, server or website any copyrighted material that you do not own all rights to without the express written permission of the author or copyright holder.
14. You may not create, provide or use any server emulator or other site where EVE Online may be played. You may not post or distribute emulators, software tools or utilities related to EVE Online without the express written permission of CCP.
15. You may not attempt to play EVE Online on any server that is not controlled or authorized by CCP.
16. You may not do anything that interferes with the ability of other EVE Online subscribers to enjoy the game or web site in accordance with its rules. This includes, but is not limited to, making inappropriate use of any public channels within the game and/or intentionally creating excessive latency (lag) by dumping cargo containers, corpses or other items in the game world.
17. You may not engage in any activity that increases the difficulty and/or expense of CCP in maintaining the EVE Online client, server, web site or other services for the benefit and enjoyment of all its users.
18. You may not publish private communications from CCP, their agents or representatives or EVE Online volunteers without authorization.
19. You may not communicate, post or publicize any subscriber's personal information within the EVE Online game world or website.
20. You may not give false information or intentionally hide or withhold any information, including billing and contact information, when registering your EVE Online account subscription. You are responsible for keeping this information accurate and current.
21. You will not attempt to decipher, hack into or interfere with any transmissions to or from the EVE Online servers, nor will you try to create or use any third party add-ons, extras or tools for the game.
22. You may not share your account password with anyone. Infraction of this rule is done at your own risk. Further information on account transfers can be found in the EULA.
23. You may not exploit any bug in EVE Online to gain an unfair advantage over other players. You may not communicate the existence of any exploitable bug to others directly or through a public forum. Bugs should be reported through the bug reporting tool on our website.

24. You will use the CCP bug reporting tools in accordance with their policy and will not intentionally submit misinformation or hide information required by the bug report forms.
25. CCP reserves the right to close, temporarily or permanently, any user's account without advance notice as we deem necessary. Furthermore, we reserve the right to delete all user accounts or inventory of characters as warranted.
26. We reserve the right to ban any user from the game without refund or compensation.
27. If you are between 13 and 18 years of age, you must have the permission of your parent or guardian to before providing the personal information required to create an EVE Online game or website account.
28. In compliance with The Children's Online Privacy Act of April, 2000, we cannot provide subscriptions to individuals under the age of 13. If you are under the age of 13, you may not create an EVE Online account and you are not eligible to enter contests or promotions.
29. You will not encourage others to break these rules or any rules set forth in relation to EVE Online's game service or web site."

II.3 - Eve-Online End User License Agreement

Quoted in section 6.4, page 173.

"**CONDUCT**

A. Specifically Restricted Conduct

Your continued access to the System and license to play the Game is subject to proper conduct. Without limiting CCP's rights to control the Game environment, and the conduct of the players within that environment, CCP prohibits the following practices that CCP has determined detract from the overall user experience of the users playing the Game:

1. You may not take any action that imposes an unreasonable or disproportionately large load on the System.
2. You may not use your own or third-party software to modify any content appearing within the Game environment or change how the Game is played.
3. You may not use macros or other stored rapid keystrokes or other patterns of play that facilitate acquisition of items, currency, objects, character attributes, rank or status at an accelerated rate when compared with ordinary Game play. You may not rewrite or modify the user interface or otherwise manipulate data in any way to acquire items, currency, objects, character attributes or beneficial actions not actually acquired or achieved in the Game.
4. You may not use the Software, or any information accessible through the System, to bypass the System login architecture or create or provide any other means through which the System may be accessed and/or the Game may be played by others, as, for example, through server emulators.
5. You may not engage in any conduct that results in an Account containing items, objects, currency, character attributes, rank, or status that are inappropriate for

the level or rank of the character contained in the Account, including without limitation arranging, making or accepting transfers of items to a character without adequate consideration, thereby augmenting or aggregating items in an Account and increasing its value for an Account sale.

B. Selling Items and Objects
You may not transfer, sell or auction, or buy or accept any offer to transfer, sell or auction (or offer to do any of the foregoing), any content appearing within the Game environment, including without limitation characters, character attributes, items, currency, and objects, other than via a permitted Character Transfer as described in section 3 above. You may not encourage or induce any other person to participate in such a prohibited transaction. The buying, selling or auctioning (or any attempt at doing so) of characters, character attributes, items, currency, or objects, whether through online auctions (such as ebay), newsgroups, postings on message boards or any other means is prohibited by the EULA and a violation of CCP's proprietary rights in the Game.

C. Compliance with Rules of Conduct
You agree to observe and abide by the Rules of Conduct as may be amended by CCP from time to time. The current version of the Rules of Conduct may be viewed at http://www.eveonline.com/pnp/terms.asp, and are incorporated in the EULA by reference."

Appendix III - Player consent

III.1 - Eve-Online

The following is a screenshot containing a publically-visible statement written in the 'bio' section of my avatar's status in Eve-Online declaring status and intent as a researcher, and also public e-mail sent to all Privateer alliance members informing them of the participant observation.

CHARACTER SHEET
Name RedWyvern
Race Gallente
Gender Male
Bloodline Gallente
Corporation Interstellar Brotherhood of Gravediggers
School Federal Navy Academy
Career Military
Ancestry Miners
Specialization Special Forces
Alliance Privateer Alliance
Security Status 5.01
Date Of Birth 2004.06.28 23:06:00
Skillpoints 29,907,446
Clone Clone Grade X (32,800,000)
Skills
Certificates
Decorations
Attributes
Augmentations
Jump Clones
Bio
Employment History
Standings
Security Status
Kill Rights
Combat Log
TL;DR: I RECORD PRETTY MUCH EVERYTHING AS I PLAY FOR A COLLEGE THING, LEMME KNOW IF YOU WANT ME TO NOT RECORD ANYTHING CONCERNING YOURSELF
please read the below wall of text this
I'm conducting a study in Eve as part of a sociology thesis, and I collect a lot of information as part of this. The chatlogs Eve automatically records, written notes on ingame events and conversations, and screenshots are retained by myself and may be used for later analysis.
what I am studying are the rules of Eve: those strictly coded into the game, deliniated on a less technical basis by players or CCP staff, and legally, mandated by the EULA/ToS. I'm basically hoping to observe from a first-person perspective as it happens, is how these rules are variously obeyed, renegotiated, bent, broken, or subverted.
I'm doubtlessly going to come into contact directly or indirectly with hundreds, if not thousands, of players during the course of this study, so contacting and getting clearance from every single one of you would take a very long time. I intend to take steps to maintain confidentiality during the writeup, such asuse of pseudonyms for players and corps and avoiding directly quoting blocks of text (for fear of individuals being identified by content, even if names are changed)
NEW MASS MESSAGE TO 'ALLIANCE'
SUBJECT IMPORTANT - college study - warning/confidentiality info
I might be heading out to 0.0 within the next week or two, so I want to forewarn anyone who's unaware of the college study I'm conducting in Eve before I move on. I'll probably be playing until mid January or so, but it's best if I make this clear now for neatness' sake.
Full details are in my bio, but the long and short of the concern is as follows: I keep chatlogs, scribble notes, and have fraps set to one screenshot a minute while I play. I do not record TS/Vent sessions, but I do write down notes on them. I'll take steps to anonymise people, but this is all for a later thesis which may or may not be pubished, so it's important to be aware events I've witnessed might show up if a journal or conference paper.
if you want to be rendered effectively invisible from my nasty prying eyes and have all mention of yourself expunged, please let me know via mail/convo. I'll probably forget if you just yell in alliance. Same goes for any other queries anyone has. Ta
SEND MESSAGE
AGENTS
OFFICES

III.2 - World of Warcraft

The discussion thread I created to search for informants has been deleted, and <BM>'s website on which I outlined my status and intent as an ethnographic researcher is unfortunately defunct. Instead, I present a number of chat excerpts from <BM>'s guild channel where members query me regarding the study, displaying that members of <BM> were aware and accepting of my presence. My own avatar is labelled as '1' here.

```
member A: what was it you were studying? :>
F: hehe yea
member A: or are studying
F: btw
1: sociology
F: dunno if it matters to you
F: but
member A: ok
1: or did you mean the exact question?
F: member A is the brother of a guild member
member B: hes studying why weirdo's like F roleplay as a girl in
online games
member A: the exact question
member A: :p
F: hence his guild rank is friend
1: I did that three years ago actually
member B: really? lol
member A: lol
F: but other than that our ranks dont really have a difference
1: regulation and discipline in MMOGs, by system, document or
player
F: its just friends, members (loads of different names on the
member ranks in this guild) and some ranks that got the officer
chat
member A: ah
1: explore how they affect players, to what extent, and how they
can be resisted or renegotiated
1: ah I see
member A: sounds interesting
1: yeah
```

(excerpted from 'guild chat' chatlogs, World of Warcraft, 28 October 2008)

...

```
member 3: 1, what level is F?
1: F or his alt?
member 3: his alt ;D
member 4: vi drar och shoppar imorgon då fredrik
1: 40
member 3: allright
1: At the moment we're playing every other day for a few hours
or so
member 5: I lol'd.
member 3: allright
```

```
member 3: might catch up then
member 4: eller så köper vi softairguns
member 3: if I can be ***** ;D
1: I'm the same mate :)
1: you know I'm the study guy, right?
member 4: eire etc
```

(excerpted from 'guild chat' chatlogs, World of Warcraft, 30 October 2008)

```
…member 6: so what are you studying

1: sociology
F: yea
member 6: writing a paper on mmos?
1: yeah, actually
1: MMOs are in vogue so interest about them right now
member 6: is there? :p
member 5: i read somewhere that vin diesel plays wow lol
F: dave chapelle too
member 6: night elf mohawks
1: heard of that yeah
member 6: they implemented night elf mohawks
member 6: why did that happen
```

(excerpted from 'guild chat' chatlogs, World of Warcraft, 4 November 2008)

```
…

F: im an advanced specimen!
1: of what we have yet to determine
1: but if you want a serious answer, basically;
1: MMOs and the internet are becoming more important as time
goes on and more and more people become literate in them.
Research into how they affect, influence, or shape peoples lives
is of interest
1: for business, government policies, potential uses and
pitfalls and such
member 7: ye, I understand, 4 years of moo certainly did
influence my life :p
F: of moo
F: lol
member 7: MMO
member 7: gad damn you
member 7: god
F: hahaha
1: hahaha
1: it seems silly now, but give it a few years, trust me
member 7: I can follow the idea
1: the big thing about MMOs, I think, is that they're much more
involving and demanding than other media
 member 7: probably, but you consider it a media like
newsletters etc? Not sure if I got it right, but thats what
media is in denmark, newsletters, tv news stations, radio etc
```

(excerpted from 'party chat' chatlogs, World of Warcraft, 11 November 2008)