

The Rise and Fall of CTS: Kenneth Burke Identifying with the World of Warcraft

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ABSTRACT

Guilds in online games often have a tumultuous life. In this essay we examine the rise and fall of the Cardboard Tube Samurai, a World of Warcraft guild, and explain three key phases in the guild's existence using the ideas of Kenneth Burke. We argue that rhetorical theory can offer substantive insights into the events of online games, in this case focusing on the roles of identification, division, and consubstantiality in explaining how a guild can build for two years to their greatest triumph and fall apart two weeks later.

Author Keywords

Guilds, raiding, WoW, rhetoric, identification, Burke

INTRODUCTION

Cardboard Tube Samurai (CTS) was a World of Warcraft (WoW) guild that grew from a handful of people talking in an online forum to become an aggregation of over 200 different user accounts and the third ranked raiding guild on the Muradin server. Within weeks of its greatest success, and almost two years after it was founded, the guild went from exultation to dissolution. Christopher, as the human mage Alruna, went from being one of CTS's first members on WoW's launch day to an officer of the guild to guild leader to guildless when CTS dissolved. The rise and fall of CTS is an all too common tale for guilds that demonstrates the relevance of rhetorical analysis as a tool for understanding online gaming behavior.

Kenneth Burke argued that identification and consubstantiality are keys to bringing people together to overcome their inherent differences. For Burke, identification was the central appeal of rhetoric; the key reason why people chose to work together and the primary determinant of the success of rhetorical appeals. Because of the innovations and social interaction promoted by games like WoW, scholars can find a fertile set of texts to analyze in online gaming spaces, as massively multiplayer online games (MMOGs) make interaction with others a central component of playing the game, rather than privileging the insular and solitary experiences that can typify single-player gaming. The intensely social aspects of MMOG design require different ways of understanding

events in video games, in this case opening the door for the application of Burke's theories. Recognizing the role rhetorical analysis can play in explaining the phenomena occurring in online games require three steps. First, we will explain key dynamics of MMOGs, with an emphasis on WoW. Second, we will explain the theories and holdings of Burke as it pertains to identification, division, and consubstantiality. Finally, we will chart the rise and fall of CTS with a focus on how Burke's theories help explain key events in the guild's history and provide suggestions for how gamers and game designers can benefit from Burke's theories.

ONLINE GAMING AND WORLD OF WARCRAFT

The primary distinction between MMOGs and other genres of games is that the other people playing are an integral part of the game, bringing questions about identification to the table. This fully integrated interaction with others means that the other people playing become a tremendously important element of the game. As T. L. Taylor notes, "shared action becomes a basis for social interaction, which in turn shapes the play" [12]. Edward Castronova argues that "the shared nature of synthetic worlds is a critical part of the technology of place, because perceptions of how things are have to be shared and agreed upon by many people before they acquire the flavor of Reality" [3]. The presumption of human interaction ensures that MMOG game play can be seen as a fundamentally rhetorical process, one which invites a discussion of how players identify within the game.

Although WoW enables people to successfully play by themselves, unlike many other MMOGs, there are a number of places where group interaction is necessary. Certain elements of the game, often called "dungeons" or "instances," are reserved for groups of people. Instances generally require groups that range from five to forty people, all of whom work together to accomplish a common goal, generally to kill computer-controlled monsters. Players can group together at any point in the game, but it is in these instances where the structure of the game encourages group interaction, rather than solo game play [7]. Instances, especially those designated as raid instances, are where the best equipment, or "loot," in the game can be

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acquired and where the most powerful and dangerous monsters can be fought. However, succeeding in those dungeons requires assembling a large group of people that meet online at the same time and then getting those people to work together for a common goal. Furthermore, as Torill Mortensen notes, “in order to keep raiding, you have to believe you do the only thing worthwhile, as raiding excludes most other game activities” [8]. Raiding is the ultimate experience for many WoW players, an activity that displaces the many other things they could do in the game or outside of it and a pursuit that could easily exceed the hours most people spend at a traditional job in a week [5].

In addition to raids, one of the other key social aggregations in WoW is the formation of guilds [13]. Guilds are a place for players to gather together and talk within the game, as well as a prime indicator of social status. One advantage of joining a guild is that it gives players a dedicated chat channel in which to talk. Guilds can be formed for virtually any purpose. Most join together through some overarching common interest, whether it be raiding; a common web site members frequent, like Penny Arcade (PA);¹ or the simple desire to talk with other people in the game. Guilds can range in size from a small group of three or four friends to large entities with hundreds of different members. Player’s guild affiliations are also broadcast to others encountered within the game. A high status, successful guild is a clear social symbol, akin to hanging out with the cool kids in a High School cafeteria, while belonging to a loathed guild can contribute to a player being shunned.

MMOGs are predicated on social interaction and are designed to reward players for joining together with others. Raiding and guilds are two means by which people come together, but more important for this paper, they are sites where WoW’s game design structures the identifications that happen within the game.

KENNETH BURKE AND IDENTIFICATION

Central to Burke’s writings on identification is a belief that identification is the means by which appeals unify the interests of different people [2]. Burke held that people are inherently divided from each other and, to deal with the feelings of loss stemming from our inherent divisions, we seek to identify with others. Effectively, identification is about “finding a shared element between the speaker’s point of view and the audience’s, or finding the audience’s point of view and the speaker’s convincing them that they share a common element” [10]. However, Burkean scholars have articulated how Burke’s concept of identification applies beyond speaking and listening, as

¹ PA is a web comic with a substantial and dedicated following. Measures of its popularity range from their ability to host the largest consumer focused video game conference, PAX, to their ability to raise millions for their charity, Child’s Play.

“identification, in short, becomes as much a process and structure as a discrete perlocutionary act” [6].

Identification is more than making a message more persuasive, and can be viewed as “the dynamic social process by which identities are constructed, through which they guide us, and by which they order our world” [11]. What people identify with shapes how they encounter the world and the structures surrounding appeals shape how identification develops. Gaming, with overt design goals and clear rule sets, offers clear structures for analyzing how identifications are formed.

An initial relationship between identification and game design can be seen in how people seek to overcome division in WoW. One way the impact of design can be analyzed is by studying how “progression” is conceptualized by end-game characters and how the number of people required for high-level raids shapes the terms for raiding game play. If the most desirable ends could be obtained by a means other than raiding, it is unlikely that as many people would seek to come together with other players to raid. If Blizzard dictated a different number of players were permitted in raid groups, players would adjust to match those expectations.² The design of WoW by Blizzard programmers encourages people to come together to accomplish things in specific ways, shaping the terms on which players encounter each other.³

The notion of progression within WoW is straightforward until a character reaches the highest level in the game, as there is a linear movement from level to level. At the highest level, the game changes fundamentally, as players no longer have levels to gain and are faced with a choice to quit the game, start a new character, or seek to improve some aspect of their character not related to level. In this case, many players find their achievement in the game marked by “getting better stuff” [9] and the best stuff is most likely acquired by working with groups of people, rather than by one’s self. Blizzard made a meaningful decision to make the highest level relatively easy to obtain, but by doing so, the introduction of a “much more intensely social game” that replaces “earlier stages of the game where

² This was borne out in the expansion to World of Warcraft, World of Warcraft: The Burning Crusade, where the largest raid group was dropped from 40 to 25. This had a substantial impact on many guilds and on the raid experience at large. Some of the reaction from players can be found at: <http://elitistjerks.com/f15/t11708-raid-sizes-future-wow-raiding/>.

³ Players can choose to identify with something other than raiding or notions of gear progression, as Torill Mortensen discusses in an analysis of ‘deviant’ play within WoW [7]. However, all of these players are still choosing to identify with certain aspects of the game, like role playing or exploring.

a large majority of time is spent alone” [5] can be striking for players. Players have an open choice of whether or not to pursue “better stuff,” but, should they do so, they are not only identifying with a desire for better equipment for their character, but also a requirement to navigate the complicated waters that emerge in a suddenly social game.

Coming together as a guild or raid group offers a reason for unity, but allocation of loot, a scarce resource, can also pull the group apart. Burke argues that the complement to identification is our inherent division from others, writing

In pure identification there would be no strife. Likewise, there would be no strife in absolute separateness, since opponents can join battle only through a mediatory ground that makes their communication possible, thus providing the first condition necessary for the interchange of blows. But put identification and division ambiguously together, so that you cannot know for certain just where one ends and the other begins, and you have the characteristic invitation to rhetoric. [2]

As players consolidate into guilds, they implicitly divide themselves from others, as “identification always suggests a ‘we’ and a ‘they’” [4]. Further, within individual guilds players may have different motivations and interests, subdividing them into smaller groups. Often, for raiding guilds, identification is re-established through the successful act of raiding. The common cause and drive of players gives them something with which to identify. When identification is successfully established, it “allows us to cope with the demands the organization [or guild] places on us and, on the other hand, pushes us to act in the best interests of the organization” [1]. If players cease to identify with their guild, they may stop acting in the group’s best interest or seek a group with whom they identify more strongly.

In a Burkean sense, to come together within the game players need to find consubstantiality in the act of playing together. Players join together and when success is found, the high from the common accomplishment reinforces the bonds among members. As Burke notes,

A doctrine of *consubstantiality*, either explicit or implicit, may be necessary to any way of life. For substance, in the old philosophies, was an *act*; and a way of life is an *acting-together*; and in acting together, men [sic] have common sensations, concepts, images, ideas, attitudes that make them *consubstantial*. [2]

Through a process of identification, players connect with each other and become “substantially one” with players other than themselves. However, this connection only lasts as long as fellow players believe, or are persuaded to believe, that they share common interests. If guilds are unified in a common desire for things, whether that is new gear, talking, completing tasks, or something different,

consubstantiality helps keep the group together. Yet, when interests diverge or members feel they are not able to accomplish what they want, players will no longer have the common bond that helps them feel consubstantial.

Given Burke’s drive to identify how people are pulled apart and drawn together, WoW guilds and raiding offer a means by which to see the connection between game studies and rhetorical theory. To see those connections at we offer the Cardboard Tube Samurai as a case study.

CTS: A HISTORY

Like many other guilds, CTS started out by forming around a common interest. Originally started by a group of PA forum members, to gain an invitation to the guild, all one needed to do was post on a forum thread and send a message to a designated person in-game. Some members were active posters on the forums, others, like Christopher, occasionally lurked, but sought a group of people who shared a common sense of humor as a starting point toward identifying in WoW.

Started on the same day WoW launched, CTS had a core of members with two clear things in common: an affinity for PA and a desire to play WoW. However, as we moved into the game, things changed for many people as subgroups developed within the guild. Because people played for different amounts of time and with different aims, the guild began to separate out by level. The persistent world further complicated working with others, as it was necessary to find common times to play, which is made more difficult by differences in time zones and schedules outside of the game. These factors led to division within the group, as people found friends who played in a manner like their own. Repetition of these patterns meant that cliques formed, something that persisted until most members had something else in common: achievement of level 60, the maximum level at the time.

At level 60 many of the structural issues that separated guild members remained, but we were now in the same level range. As a result, more of the group could work together to accomplish tasks. No longer seeking a higher level, players pursued alternate goals, many of which were centered on improving their equipment and upgrading the kinds of things their character could accomplish. Some of these tasks could be accomplished in groups of no more than 15; many could be done in groups as small as 5. Members of CTS enjoyed the new challenges, but quickly became tired of the limited options available to us as a small group. However, to accomplish more, CTS needed to add people, as the number of people required for raiding was 40, more than twice as many as required for previous tasks.

There were two primary ways in which CTS could attract additional people: add more members to the guild or seek alliances with existing guilds so that all could achieve something they could not do on their own. Both approaches

have drawbacks. The first option stands the risk of destabilizing the guild by adding too many people who do not have the same interests as original members. Furthermore, there are rarely sufficient numbers of people without an existing guild allegiance to add as many people as CTS needed. Guilds may add people over time, but the idea of more than doubling the membership was an improbable option. As such, CTS opted to pursue alliances with other guilds so that all could raid. These endeavors were not without their faults, but the primary issue was the underlying temporariness of the agreements.

Alliances within WoW are tenuous, often with specific agreements as to how spots in the raid will be allocated to the various guilds and how the loot that “drops” will be allocated. Both dynamics can cause tensions if one guild feels another is either getting too large a share of the loot or are not fully pulling their own weight in contributing to the greater good. The first successful alliance CTS formed was composed of two other guilds, Blackwing Mercenaries (BWM) and For Khaz Modan (FKM), and lasted until anticipation of one guild breaking the alliance caused trust to disintegrate, which led to the departure of BWM. FKM and CTS stayed aligned, adding a new third guild, Stonewall Champions (SWC). As all three guilds grew, there was an increased competition for spots within the raid. This put each guild in a position where internal guild memberships were pressuring leadership to find a better option. As members became increasingly dissatisfied, problems were frequently blamed on the other guilds, effectively creating identification within the guilds by promoting division from the alliance. Increased membership made it apparent that CTS would choose one of the guilds to pursue a two-way alliance with and CTS eventually chose to align with SWC. The news struck FKM unaware, and set a curious tone for the CTS/SWC alliance.

The alliance with SWC was founded on interesting ground. Both guilds had just elected to cut out a third guild on suspicious terms, which made all aware of what division can do to groups. Further, both guilds were growing rapidly and were internally debating when they would start raiding alone. The guilds also had different aspirations, with CTS seeking to expand the amount of time spent raiding and progress to new, unfaced enemies, and SWC favoring maintenance of the schedule from the previous arrangement. Just a couple of months after the alliance began, it dissolved, as disagreements among the officers of the two guilds led to a testy exchange that split the guilds.

Within days of breaking the alliance, CTS managed to match the alliance’s raiding success. Shortly thereafter, we started actively raiding the next instance up in level of difficulty, Blackwing Lair (BWL). To have a better chance of success in BWL, CTS started recruiting additional members. Status as one of the few guilds actively recruiting led to a flood of applications, many of whom were turned down, implicitly solidifying the identifications

among those within the guild, but several applicants were added into the guild. The addition of new people enabled CTS to complete BWL in a matter of months, but also changed the makeup as the guild, as it was fundamentally shifted from PA fans and others met on the server to those who chose to apply to a raiding guild.

Shortly after completing BWL, Blizzard announced that they were enabling players to transfer off of the server we had started on, Proudmoore, to a new server. Upon transfer, CTS was suddenly a much larger fish in a substantially smaller pond. The most significant change was the raiding rank of the guild relative to our server. On Proudmoore, CTS was fairly low in the rankings, as there were many raiding guilds. On Muradin, even though two of Proudmoore’s best guilds came with us, CTS was ranked fourth overall. As the summer of 2006 approached, this higher ranking was important, as a number of people either took breaks from the game or had offline plans that cut into their raiding time. As a result, CTS needed to add even more new members. Initially, adding members on Muradin was quite easy, as many of the transfers to the server came unaffiliated. CTS invited our fair share of new members, but the extraordinarily small population of Muradin meant that, after the first recruiting burst, new recruits were hard to find.

While on Muradin, CTS encountered substantial successes. After completing BWL, CTS moved on to the next instance, The Temple of Ahn’Qiraj (AQ40). CTS experienced both highs and lows because of their progress in AQ40. Two of the best moments for CTS, passing another guild to obtain 3rd place on the guild rankings and defeating the Twin Emperors, one of the most difficult bosses in the game at the time, were highlights of our experience on Muradin. However, as summer struck and the guild leadership opted to continue focusing on AQ40, people stopped showing up for raids. Finding it increasingly difficult to fill raids, CTS was forced to increase recruiting. However, stuck on a low population server, it was almost impossible to conjure up the people the guild needed to fill raid slots. As a result, raids started getting cancelled for lack of attendance, as simply having 36 or 37 people made it difficult to succeed in challenging encounters that were designed for 40 players. Tension built within the guild and accusations were made as to who was pulling their weight and who was not. Leadership tried to motivate through offering additional bonuses for raiding or threatening punishment for skipping raids to get people to show up, but all efforts were unsuccessful. Members called to increase recruiting, but there simply were not enough people available to fill the gaps in the raid group, resulting in substantial disagreements between a handful of established members who wanted to actively raid the most difficult encounters in the game and the guild-at-large. The members who felt the tension most acutely were our guild leaders at the time, Anoria and Antinous.

In late September of 2006, less than three weeks after our triumphant victory over the Twin Emperors, Anoria and Antinous chose to leave the guild late one night. Without discussing their decision openly with the guild or establishing a timeline for their resignation, posts were made on the web site of Muradin's top-ranked guild announcing their departure for CTS and application to a new guild. Immediately after their departure, three other members left CTS. Suddenly, a guild that was already shorthanded lost 5 of the people they needed to raid. Within three weeks of the exodus, after losing additional bodies to attrition, CTS leadership announced that we would no longer make an attempt to raid. After the decision came, several others left to join guilds that were actively raiding. A new, splinter guild was formed that was almost entirely composed of ex-CTS members. Finally, less than ten days after the announcement that we would no longer raid the guild was disbanded. Guild assets were dispersed to former members and CTS was no more.

CTS is like many other guilds in WoW, but the most notable features of the guild's history are indicative of how groups can come together, thrive and fall apart. With a basic understanding of Burkean concepts of identification and consubstantiality and CTS's history it is possible to investigate why the guild initially came together and fought through the difficult process of establishing a raiding nucleus, but how the shift in purpose of the guild and changes in the context of the game ensured our demise.

CTS AND BURKE

There are many interesting aspects of WoW, however the one that may be the most interesting in a Burkean sense is the inherent division of players and how players seek to remedy division within the game. There are clear, structural elements in WoW's design that encourage players to band together; but without establishing consubstantiality and maintaining identification, relationships are bound to fall apart. The history of CTS points to three key phases in how a cycle of identification and division demonstrates the importance of consubstantiality in the life of a guild. The key phases for CTS were: the early period of the guild, as it was formed and as people leveled to 60; the early development of a raiding alliance; and the subsequent redefinition of CTS as a raiding guild, which preceded its demise. Burke's theory of identification helps explain why CTS rose and fell apart, as members lost the basis for identifying with their fellow guild mates and raiding became our sole tie.

The first phase, the early period of CTS, is common to all players in the game, as they are beset with the challenge of leveling their character to level 60. Turning to others for help, or just for someone else with whom to talk offers a foundation for building guilds within the game. CTS was initially organized around on the PA web site and based its name on a recurring character within the oeuvre of PA comics. The singular barrier to entry, a post on a forum,

offered a uniquely honed subset of World of Warcraft players to comprise the guild. Posting on a forum thread is unlikely to be a difficult task for the average WoW player, but knowing about PA, frequenting their forums, having interest in WoW, and pursuing a PA themed guild defined the early members of CTS. This gave all members multiple points of common interest and clear ways to foster identification.

Consubstantiality in the early version of CTS was predicated on the initial connection to PA. The common link to the site offered up a wealth of material that provided bases upon which to identify. Members were prescreened for a particular sense of humor and interest in gaming, which was reinforced by the fact that the guild was not advertised beyond the web site. Guild chat could be vulgar, as members were used to particular communication norms based on reading PA. Interests in gaming beyond WoW typified many members, as PA is a blog about gaming in general.

An additional way in which formation through PA aided consubstantiality in CTS was the connection to a base of source material. As new material was produced on PA, players would either talk about them in-game or use them to joke around. Words and phrases from the most recent comics were often dropped into casual conversation and it was expected that all members would be able to decode the messages and connect them to PA. The guild used the universal password of "wang," owing to its prevalence in the discourse on PA. The game became a means by which PA fans could connect with and talk to other PA fans. Even though some felt a deeper connection to the site than others, it gave all members something in common above and beyond the fact that they played Warcraft. This gave members a way to connect, while dividing them from others who played the game.

The second phase in the history of CTS, when guild members started reaching the level cap of 60 and subsequently sought raiding alliances, shifted the focus of member's game play. More than anything, game design forced players to reach beyond the bounds of CTS to connect with other people, while using the guild as a location in which to joke with like-minded individuals. The structure of WoW and the incentives to gather larger groups at 60 meant that guilds generally needed to get bigger to pursue goals in the game, even if that diluted the guild's original basis for identification. As getting new equipment required multiple other people, members regularly reached beyond the bounds of CTS to accomplish greater tasks. People sought to succeed and, because there was not a critical mass in the guild, people looked outside, to other guilds, to align with in the search for things that could not be done in CTS as it was configured. Effectively, identification was different for each member and, as more members interested in raiding entered the guild, the original identification with PA was lost. The name and some of the

references remained the same, but each individual altered how identification could be fostered within the guild.

The lack of opportunity to progress as a group of likeminded individuals placed CTS in a tenuous position. There was a desire to align with others to accomplish more, but that desire was single-minded, with a focus on actively raiding. This changed how the group related, shifting from a focus on PA and similar personalities, to one that was based on enabling CTS to raid, which would result in obtaining better equipment, additional notoriety, and new experiences within the game. These dynamics led to our series of short-lived alliances. The introduction of raiding alliances opened up new ground for identification and division, as there would frequently be multiple levels of conversation, as members followed the conversation of the raid group in one chat channel, the guild group in another, and messages to individuals in additional channels. This offered opportunities for CTS to talk openly about the shortcomings, or occasionally strengths of others, amongst themselves, furthering identification with guild mates, while fostering division from the alliance and emphasizing its impermanence.

The search for others in a position similar to ours was successful, but the very nature of the relationships precluded us from actually identifying with those in the other guilds. Although we were engaging in activities together, offering the potential to develop consubstantiality, the fact that we were separated into different guilds built division into our relationships. In one sense, George Cheney's observation that "names, labels, and titles become the foci for larger corporate identities; they carry with them other identifying 'baggage' in the form of values, interests, and the like" [4] should have indicated that the insistence on maintaining separate guild identifications was a problem. As we remained separate in at least one crucial way, we built divisions in to our relationships. In most cases, there was clear indication that people were members of their guild first and the alliance second, as our baggage was never overcome with a larger, alliance-wide identity. Further, the common interest in slaying monsters was checked by the zero-sum game that was allocation of the equipment we won. The tensions among guilds came to the fore whenever adversity was faced, from allocating how equipment and positions in the raid should be divided to the disciplining of players. As Burke observes,

Man's [sic] moral growth is organized through properties, properties in goods, in services, in position or status, in citizenship, in reputation, in acquaintanceship and love. But however ethical such an array of identifications may be when considered in itself, its relation to other entities that are likewise forming their identity in terms of property can lead to turmoil and discord. [2]

Although every member of the raiding alliances likely wanted raids to be successful, they were built on the

allocation of scarce resources that led each to "turmoil and discord." Stress points arose as guilds grew and became more self-sufficient, which problematized relations among guild members.

The problems stemming from dividing loot are basic and easy to understand. The process of allocating scarce resources can lead to tension and it certainly strained relations among those in our raiding alliances. However, allocation of blame frequently brought about scapegoating as, whenever problems were encountered they were regularly attributed to the shortcomings of those in other guilds, rather than "our" own. The lack of a clear and respected cross-guild authority meant that members would consistently complain in-guild about those out-of-guild raiding alliance members they did not feel were pulling their own weight, discourse about which further isolated CTS as we bonded together through discussion in our guild-only chat channel. These two factors contributed to an overall lack of collegiality that contributed to the demise of each alliance, as the alliances never formed a stable identity based on anything other than the acquisition of property.

The final phase of consubstantiality within CTS was our existence as a solo raiding guild. This is where the multiple tensions within raiding guilds is most readily apparent. As we moved into our own, status as a raiding guild became our sole identity. We would still let people from the PA forums into the guild, but they were demarcated with a specific rank indicating they were not raiding members. Existing members were eventually split into groups based on how often, and how well, they raided. We marketed ourselves to newer members as a raiding guild seeking additional raiding members. Instead of looking primarily for social attributes indicating whether or not a person would fit in with our group, the singular identifying feature of the guild became that it was a raiding guild. This was a huge stress point, as those who joined later had a high expectation of raiding and a positive social dynamic was generally more important to older members.

As environmental factors impacted the guild and fewer people were available, the guild suffered an identity crisis. As long as we were able to raid, and raid successfully, something kept us together. Quite simply, we shifted from identification based on commonality in personality and interests beyond WoW, which are relatively stable, to attempting to establish identification through the common action of raiding, which depends on the guild being successful. However, when the raiding became less successful and more frustrating, banking on that singular characteristic became problematic. No longer the social guild predicated on a common sense of humor and no longer capable of the raiding we defined ourselves by, there was no means by which to build consubstantial relationships. Because we reduced our identification to a singular consubstantial action, raiding, the moment raiding vanished as a possibility was the moment the guild fell apart.

CONCLUSIONS

CTS is far from the only guild to change over the course of its lifetime in an online game and other raiding guilds have fallen apart after encountering setbacks or in the face of summer attendance issues and waning interest in advance of gear resets promised in an impending expansion, but it is in large part that CTS moved through all of these phases that makes it a quality text to look at when applying rhetorical theory to online gaming. Understanding why these events have become a relatively standard and predictable part of guild life offers substantial insight that can help gamers, guild leaders, and game designers.

Gamers and guild leaders can likely draw similar lessons from paying attention to ideas of identification, division, and consubstantiality in their game time, although they likely have differential influence within their guilds. First and foremost, they need to be aware of the changing dynamics in the guild and how new or modified goals can have a substantial impact on the long-term viability of the guild. Raid guilds in particular should work to develop ways of achieving identification beyond success in raiding or they will face substantial issues overcoming inherent division, which is a prerequisite for raiding success, in the long-run. As there can be only one top raid guild on a server and the members that constitute a guild have relatively free movement from guild to guild and server to server, an identity based solely on being an 'elite' guild will likely lead to dissolution if adversity is faced. Guild leaders can work with members to develop other bonds and ways of identifying that are less contingent on a sole connection or at the least, recognize that the sole connection can be an issue and work to minimize the problems that arise.

Designers face other issues, as the dissolution of a guild is less detrimental, but the departure of a player from a game, particularly if it marks a large exodus from the game, can be quite problematic. As a result, designers should pay attention to more macro-levels of identification and consubstantiality. This is likely most important at a game's launch, finding ways to bind players to the game quickly and then maintaining a hold on them throughout the game's lifecycle. There are many recent developments in online games demonstrating the role of identification in game design, from the multiple difficulty levels now implemented into WoW's raids to the difficulty new MMOGs have had in retaining subscribers in the face of WoW, as a game with many more years of live time simply has a larger, richer world within which to find ways to experience consubstantiality with other players and the game itself. Integrating sophisticated communication tools that let people communicate and aggregate easily, as well as including wide variety of activities for players to pursue increases the odds that they will identify with the game and keep playing.

In the case of CTS, Burkean theories help explain why the guild grew, thrived, the fell apart. In light of this analysis we hope that more academics look to their home disciplines

as a way of explaining the fascinating dynamics of online games.

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