"LUCKY"

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"Lucky:" An ethnographic study by David Crusoe, for the ANTH-1699 Life Online course at the Faculty of Arts and Science, Harvard University.

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"LUCKY"

> [ToE]Player: "I had fun…[with the interview] it made me think a little of how lucky I am to be in ToE."
>
> Akira[plt] – "Hey, thanks. I think I'll name the essay 'Lucky,' Almost every respondent has mentioned that."
>
> [ToE]Player: "Yeah… it has changed my life, really. Actually, I don't know how my life would be without ToE… Without ToE, I wouldn't be someone you would want to talk to."
>
>   -- Conversation with [ToE] Clan player

Introduction

In the early 90s, this author assumed the online identity of akira[plt], founder of the online collaborative graphics team called "Platoon;" we focused on crafting ansi block graphics for the "elite" pirated-software bulletin board system (BBS) community ("scene"). The group became my social world; I made and lost friends, and before age 16, I learned how to organize and perpetuate an online entity. I did not learn, however, how to explain my experience to those outside my social realm; my parents and friends, I'm afraid, thought me quite incomprehensible. *Why, they asked, did we spend so much time online with virtual friends? What did we create, and where did it go? Why waste all the effort in the virtual world?*

With the disappearance of the Ansi graphics scene, so disappeared the opportunity to explore the nature of relationships built by the hundreds of participants – leaders and contributors - who spent countless hours carefully contributing to a finely-crafted online identity.

Yet, the notions of digital community embraced by the "scene" are all but lost. New modal forms of digital communication and interplay have heightened the strength and intensity – the digital presence – of online societies. Traits that find their origins in the cyber stone ages – including the "elite" culture of maverick graphics artists and software pirates - have spread widely. Elements of leadership, communication styles (for instance, moderation, resolution and supplication) and interaction have been adsorbed into an unbelievably diverse population of online communities and contexts.

Tenacious online gamers compose one such community; gaming enthusiasts whose social interactions have transcended physical space into the online context. These gamers have forged tightly-knit competitive groups - "gaming clans" – complete with social hierarchies, mechanisms for the enforcement of ethics, morals, teaching and learning, and the ongoing revision of cyberdrama narrative.

One gaming clan, the Termination of Evolution, is the subject for this essay. However, the multiplicities of all gaming clans simply can not be reflected through exploring a single player group. Therefore, in its exploration of digital playing groups, this essay reaches into the vastness of the Internet for its examples and counterexamples. This way, it's hoped that the reader can come away with a deeper understanding of what it is to be part of an online society. Readers should shift from asking "what's to be benefited from joining such a group?" to instead, wondering what can be learned through these powerful, intricate online cultures.

This is the ulterior motive for this exploration. In the online learning space, collaborative communities have emerged to suit the needs of a new generation; entire universities now offer distance-learning-based degrees. Yet, their methods and modes for online communication often lag behind the more naturally-occurring "self-organized" communities of the digital space.

I hypothesize that gaming communities arise more naturally than many e-learning communities. By growing from an egalitarian base, gaming clan members elect leadership and establish norms and practices based upon previous experiences. One might suggest that the most efficient practices endure, while others fade; one theme that reoccurs throughout discussions with clanners is that survival necessitates evolution.

And so clan structures evolve, it seems, to coincide with the affordances of the newest and most popular digital technologies. Therefore, I posit that more traditional online learning venues could gain through understanding the successful structures that naturally arise from human interaction, online. Thus, in addition to describing the gaming clan experience, this essay will culminate with a synthesis of lessons-learned for application in more "traditional" learning spaces.

Methods and Initial Contact

Methods

Participants were the members of a competitive gaming clan, Termination of Existence (ToE) who vary in age, gender and location. This clan was selected as a representative from among many gaming clans for its openness and warmth in answering the initial call for participation.

Five other clans were contacted; responses I received from many clan leaders was tepid at best, extraordinarily wary and insulting at worst. Open discussion within one gaming clan focused on exploring if I was indeed a real person; the consensus was that I was not, despite my providing exact, verifiable contact information. An example call for participation can be found in Appendix 1.

All subjects were made aware of their rights through an informed consent form; this essay reflects pseudonyms to preserve participants' anonymity; genders, ages and other identifying information have all been changed were applicable, and identifying

information has been removed from quotes; yet syntactically, quotes have not been edited for spelling or grammar.

Contacting Clanmembers

Initial contact was extended to the clan leader, the figure (or figures) who oversee clan activities. The leader of ToE sent back an enthusiastic response to my query:

> Thanks for stopping by... I'd be glad to help you out in anyway I can. There are a couple other leaders that would be willing to help with any questions you may have also. I'm sure you have already looked around the site but if you haven't yet sign up on the forums or you can find us on mIRC.
>
> Just let me know what you need...
>
> - [ToE]Firebolt

Contact to clan members was established through a public message forum post, subsequent to receiving approval from one clan leader. Two methods for participation were made available: direct interview, and survey questionnaire. An interview form can be found in Appendix 2; the survey questionnaire is available in Appendix 3.

Of all clan members, four consented to one-hour direct, Voice-over-IP interviews conducted over the clan's TeamSpeak server. All four members were members of the clan leadership, and of the four, one was female. Within this report, these four members are identified as [ToE]Fox, [ToE]Manowar, [ToE]Snipah and [ToE]LightningStrike. Detailed demographic information has been withheld, as it could be used to easily discover their identity. Thirteen subjects completed the anonymous online survey; surveys were collected through PHPSurveyor, which is open-source survey software. Results captured no identifying information, and have been scrubbed to ensure complete anonymity.

Study Limitations

In retrospect, this overview is very, very broad: it is an attempt to piece together the entire clan existence, and so perhaps loses focus of the more fine points of clan play. Additional research could flesh out individual aspects mentioned herein; for example, gender relations or the mechanisms for education within the clanning space. Moreover, through my extended contact with the ToE clan, my objective distance has closed considerably. Subjects within ToE have been very kind, very open and tremendously enthusiastic. Therefore, results may reflect my bias.

So: What is a battleclan?

A General Look at Virtual History and Narrative

In her book Hamlet on the Holodeck, Janet Murray describe virtual realities as affording users an open-ended narrative experience; that is, cyber-readers exploit the "shape-

shifting" digital medium to extend old narratives, and to create new forms of active entertainment (p.162, Murray). Clan play is no different; the ever-shifting social structures abound with stories and personal narratives.

If the digital realm lends itself to assisting individuals in constructing open-ended narratives, the clan structure offers one particular scaffold for such story construction. The ToE clan did not materialize out of thin air; instead,

> "ToE took over from a clan prior to what it is now… My friend left because he disagreed with the leader, and I followed. At the time, a lot of us wanted to start a new clan, but nothing had happened. Meanwhile, our current clan faded away as it lost financial backing… and ToE was created. It's evolved from there…" -[ToE]Fox

> "This was not our first split, either; this clan to date has had three splits – of… people not liking what it was, and position in power were moving and loyalties were changing. So the next clan formed what ToE was born from." –[ToE]LightningStrike

This particular gaming clan possesses what some might call a virtual heritage: a real-life link to historical facts and fictions, yet grounded in a digital, ephemeral world (Refsland et al, 2000). As Refsland et al. explain, "Virtual heritage has become increasingly important in the conservation, preservation, and interpretation of our cultural and natural history" (Refsland et al, 2000. p. 20). Situated folklore and learned lessons contribute directly to the evolution of clan-based activities at present and for the future.

Yet, a gaming clan is formed from much more than a group of players who share a common historical social narrative; it is a group of players who gravitate first toward tangibles. Magnetic personalities – "nebula" who drive the construction of a clan - include those who possess leadership qualities, including the commitment to maintaining extensive clan websites, and importantly, the financial freedom for retaining a game server. In addition, clans exist within a strong moral and social foundation, guided by a hierarchical social structure that acts to both enforce written and unwritten cultural norms, and to monitor selective clan member recruitment.

George Orwell wrote, "All animals are equal. Some are just more equal than others." In gaming organizations, this could similarly be the case. The social structure of a clan is indeed stratified into a hierarchical system; leaders explicitly "on the top," players on the bottom. Kollock and Smith (1999) point out that for many online communities, the leaders serve not only as gatekeepers, but as institutional mediators. While their writing is focused on Multi-User Dungeon (MUD) based play, the mediation styles are transferable across communities. These styles are: exercising power, reconciling interests, and adjudicating rights. These will be discussed to more detail in later sections; for now, it's important to simply understand that clan leaders of ToE have demonstrated all three of these mediation typologies.

As well, the hierarchical structure is often guised in a moral structure. Many clans explicitly state codes of ethics and laws, including moral interventions such as "No cursing," "No cheating," and "No spamming." Morris (2005) writes that this is a widespread phenomenon: "Players have developed intricate rules and etiquette governing gameplay and social behavior, based upon fundamental principals of fair play and general social cooperation. Clans in particular tend to have stringent rules governing members' behavior… and members may be suspended for transgressions…" (Morris, 2005 p. 2).

A widely-practiced process vets players for these moral improprieties: applicants to the clan structure most post their personal resume to a public forum for consideration, where all can view their acceptance or rejection. In many clans, applicants are required to list their strengths and weaknesses, and sign up for a "try out."

"Try-outs" are conducted in two senses: social and skill-based. As one strength of a clan is within its social structure, new members ("newbs") are required to sign into the clan chat channels; either text-based (IRC) or voice-over-IP-based (Teamspeak, X-Fire) to meet and greet potential clanmates.

In addition, applicants are required to demonstrate their skill to a captain, or other leadership member. A typical application (Appendix 4) and rejection sequence (Appendix 5) are included with this report. Rejections are not infrequent, and some clans are much more restrictive than others. As a comparison, the clan Second Airbone Gaming Community (http://www.airborne-clan.com) requires applicants to agree to a lengthy set of guidelines (See Appendix 5).

Once applicants are "approved" for membership, frequently they are subject to a "probation" period in which they must be active in message forums, IRC chat channels and of course, in-game. It is at this point that we will join the ToE clan, and explore in more detail the structures that comprise clan play.

Results: The Termination of Existence Clan

Imagine yourself as a new clanner; you are likely a teen male, but there's an increasing possibility you are female. The bastion of competitive first-person-shooter (FPS) gaming is slowly unraveling its gender bias, and it is within this perhaps disruptive context that you enter the Termination of Existence clan. As well, it's likely that you aren't the stereotypical "computer geek" of not long ago; those who participate in gaming clans don't necessarily have years of computer experience, either.

Clan-As-Narrative

Broadly, your first experiences are of narrative and history. You are out of place, and might not understand the terminology or history to certain forum posts, but agree that the enthusiasm is something you'd like to share. For example, one such post reads:

"CONGRATULATIONS goes out to the AOW Renegade division who WON ALL THREE MATCHES this evening!

First, starting off on [board] Field - taking the field early enough to keep them at their entrance, on a few off occasions they came back at us but other than that we owned the field 80% of the game. Secondly [board] Under, getting units out early enough to start hitting on their air strip, and then onto medium tanks. Pushing forward constantly we took out the Ob and destroyed buildings one by one. Finally [board] Volcano. They hit us quick and hard taking out the Lan and weapons first. We honestly thought we were gonna lose this game. But we came from behind and won the game. DoA put up a good fight and I would like to thank them for the game we had with then. On another note, I would like to thank [Clanner] and [Clanner] for their outstanding performance as clanners tonight. They showed that teamwork can achieve many things, and winning is one of them" (Anonymous)

Clearly, there is something to be excited about. You read onward – a second reply is equally enthusiastic...

"Man, that rocked! That is why I joined the clan… TEAMWORK… I've been in four big clan battles and that was the best we've played yet! Most memorable moment: On [board] Under I was healing four Meds outside of their bases as Hottie while you covered as sniper… and I hear.. MOVE IN, MOVE IN! All four meds and me on FOOT (repairing last med) RUSH the Ob…. Done! I kept three Meds alive in the process! Big WOOT! To [name removed] for leading the charge!"

One take on the situation is presented by Sorensen (2003; Online Games: Scenario) ; she suggests that a community of competitive gamers gathers to construct, express and defend its joint masculinity (Sorenson, 2003; p. 156). Yet, one of the players who expressed such wild exuberance is a female!

I suggest that the gaming experience you have just joined is not one of explicit masculinity; instead it is one that defines a narrative, co-authored cyberdrama (Murray, p.271) and digital community. Yet, this statement raises an ongoing argument between narrativists, who believe that games can be understood by the drama that unfolds as part of their playing and ludologists, who believe that games can be understood in the context of rules and internal mechanisms.

The clan experience highlights this narrativist approach to thinking about games, gameplay and social gaming. Among the evidence that supports gaming clans as structures for cyberdrama, the following three will be explored:

• Norms and practices identified with clan play

- Hierarchical structure for social play, including institutionalized morals, ethics, rewards and punishments
- "Situated learning;" cognitive apprenticeship

Norms and Practices

The first of structures associated with understanding clan play is that of culture; not only players' norms and practices, but those practices associated with the structure of the clan itself.

The first and most broad structure is that of family; that players come to fit themselves not within a "collaborative online game playing group," but identify their group very specifically as a family, is important.

Fam·i·ly (făm'ə-lē, făm'lē)

n., pl. -lies.

    a.   A fundamental social group in society typically consisting of one or two parents and their children.

    b.   Two or more people who share goals and values, have long-term commitments to one another, and reside usually in the same dwelling place.

    [answers.com]

There are many words one could use to describe the social structure of gaming clans; competition, online communities, or electronic friendships, for example. The most popular term, community, describes some (but not all) online entities (Papadakis, 2003). Key characteristics of a community include shared norms, values, sanctions, identity and reciprocal relationships, and a sense of affiliation (Papadakis, 2003). While some might believe clans to be a "community," this was not the term used by ToE'ers to describe their experience.

Instead, the most popular word used by clan members to describe their activities was "family." As one dictionary definition provides, a family is a fundamental group in society; or alternatively two or more people who have long-term commitments to one another. This institution is recognizable by the more broad community; the term "family" conveys meaning to many cultures and socities, just as "clan" conveys meaning to others. In the case gaming clans however, much of the meaning is in the name. One player put it thus:

> "I guess what makes us a clan is the fact that we choose to stand behind one name, and that's those three letters, T-O-E, and then we stand behind a motto and a belief, almost like our own personal constitution; but our inner working is a community… we all have an opinion and a say, and we voice it." He continues, "It's a feeling of oneness outside of the family

outside of the house… it's like an extended version of the family…"
[ToE]Manowar

"Family" is a powerful term with meaningful implications, chosen not by accident to explain a difficult and deep feeling players embody for their clan, and to describe relationships between clan members.

As one members explains,

> "It's like a gigantic family – just a bunch of lonely people from everywhere getting together, having a lot of fun, and getting to know one another. You learn a lot of stuff… it's really like a gigantic family."

> "…it goes through all the same problems as a family. There are always those people that get out of hand, so the leaders have to straighten them out. Everybody knows everybody… and we all have fun. It seems like a family."

> --[ToE]Snipah

Some key phrases within that statement are that it's "a gigantic family;" it could be a "bunch of lonely people," and that intimate relationships are interwoven amongst members. And, there is strong evidence for the intimacy of members' relationships.

During my experience observing the clan, a particular key member left for a weeks' vacation. This particular member – a leader – has served, in some members' words, as "the Queen of the Clan." Her absence was dearly missed; for example, members changed their signatures to read [ToE]Hardrock^Misses^Fox or in IRC, members' away messages read [ToE]_Paul_AFK_Missing_Fox. An example of a message thread illustrates this point more clearly:

Initial Post: Topic: Jane/Fox

MISS HERRRRRRRRRRRRR!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
OMG….COME BACK ALREADY GURLFRIEND

Reply:

---

1 week and 3? days to go ….. I WONT MAKE IT !!! COME BACK FOXXY !!!!!

Leader's reply:

---

hahaha n00000bs

Reply:

I KNOW...I WONT MAKE IT EITHA'.......
I FELL UR PAIN BUDDY...
I MISSED HER THA' MIN...B4 SHE TOLD ME SHE WAZ OUT THA' DOOR!!!!
GRRRRRR.........

And finally, [ToE]Fox returns

Awwwwwwwwww how sweet. Well im back now.

Indeed, to my great surprise, activity in the clan showed marked decrease in volume while ToE[Fox] was away on vacation. As [ToE]LightningStrike mentioned, "We've been dying with out her! Thank goodness she comes back in two days…" So, much the same as a family might ensure a depressed period with a particular member away, the clan community expressed emphatic sadness that their valued friend was absent. So then, how do such powerful friendships develop in this online context? At the core of these friendships are trust structures, or methods for verifying each new entrant into the clan community.

Trust Structures

One way to explore this question is by understanding the process of an incoming clan applicant. Perhaps, by understanding how an applicant comes to be a part of this "family," we can understand how the family functions in the first place. Authors Henderson and Gilding (2004) provide four elements that form the intrapersonal trust structures for an online community: reputation, performance, pre-commitment and situational factors. In exploring the pattern of posts within the online application forums, it does indeed seem that all four structures exist. Here is one example:

Application

> "hey whats up, im TJ, i play counter strike source and my name is tj. I already signed up but i had to wait 2 weeks to sign up again because my register stuff got messed up"

Recommendation

> "this is my friend TJ. As i said before he is a really funny kid and a great guy. It would be really easy for him to get all set if you let him in because i could just go over his house and help him through it. I'm going to help him through the teamspeak and x-fire stuff so you can get to know him a little. Can i play at the tryout too or is going to be a one on one? because i havnt really played with the clan to much and it would be a good meeting session for me too."

Partial try-out

"me and tj 1 v 1 for about an hour tonight. He won 2 maps and I won 3. Hes a good player. Im just wondering if this would count as a tryout for him because he did a good job. After about an hour of 1 v 1 madmax joined for a while. It was some good games. A leader was supposed to show up so it could count for a real tryout but he disapeared. He said he had to do something about CoD. Well anyway deffinetly consider tj. Hes very active and good at CS:S too."

Here, reputation is established through a personal connection; the applicant is said to be a strong candidate for his characteristics as a "funny and great guy." Yet, performance is key. This too is readily established through the partial tryout, and reinforced with the information that other clan members witnessed the experience. Pre-commitment is implicated in the recommendation, as the friend is located in close physical proximity to a current clanner, who perhaps implicitly could ensure the applicant's success. Finally, the other situational factors are established by contributing additional information about the applicant's learning required technologies, such as Teamspeak and X-fire.

One way of thinking about the establishment of this "family" is that is required "swift-trust" (Myerson et al. cited in Powell et al., 2004), or the establishment for baseline measures to assay an applicant's potential very quickly. Therefore, the first interactions are "particularly crucial to the development and maintenance of trust." (Powell et al, p.16)

Heirarchy

hi·er·ar·chy (hī'ə-rär'kē, hī'rär'-)

n., pl. -chies.
   1. A body of persons having authority.
         a. Categorization of a group of people according to ability or status.
         b. The group so categorized.

The four trust structures could not function on their own, without guidance. As Maloney-Krichmar et al. write,

> "A community with a clearly stated goal has a good start, but people make up a community, and therefore in order to survive an online community needs active members and active moderators to keep the discussion going. The role of a moderator should be to implement and maintain policies, because without governance problems may arise and that could be the end of the community."
>
> *Maloney-Krichmar, D., Abras, C. Preece, J. (2002)*

And so, moderators perform many of the regulatory functions required to maintain an active and healthy online community. Some of the more generic functions observed within the ToE community are the maintenance of message forums (including the

removal of "spam" and "troll" messages) and monitoring the IRC chat channel for divergent behavior.

Yet, these duties alone would not fulfill all the requirements for ensuring the vitality of a gaming clan. Instead, we might think about the duties as described in Table 1:

Table 1: Major, mid-level and minor duties for members of a battleclan
(note: data received from responses to questions 9 and 10 of the General Clan Survey: see Appendix 3)
Major duties   - Maintaining the game server, web server and communications facilities   - Paying for the game server, web server, and communications facilities   - Oversight of the initial leadership appointments   - Establishment and oversight of rules and regulations   - Player recruitment and creating new member accounts   - Determine games to support through play
Mid-level duties   - Lead particular divisions   - Communications channel moderation (asynchronous, synchronous)   - Teach other players good skill in teamwork, sportsmanship and collaboration   - Plan practices   - Play the game!
Minor duties   - Play games, bring a good reputation to the clan   - Attend practices and matches   - Respect everyone and be mature   - Be active on forums   - Inform on cheaters

The breakdown of responsibilities listed in Chart 1 mirror the hierarchical structure of the Termination of Evaluation clan (Appendix 7). A strong leadership (L) has established and enforces morals and rules; Heads of Division (HoD) ensure the longevity of individual game-playing arms of the clan, with the help of Division Leaders (DLs). Together, the Heads of Division and Division Leaders oversee the players (Roster) within their individual divisions.

As one leader wrote, "It feel like the military, I guess. Leadership is a step up, it gives you more control over things, almost like a little society. It's like being in congress … having some power over people."

<div align="right">--[ToE]Snipah</div>

Leadership

Many challenging responsibilities fall upon the shoulders of those who lead ToE. In addition to the financial contribution they must make each month (approximately US $130) they are charged with perpetuating the success of the community. Kollock and Smith (1999) outline three abilities that leaders within a Cyber community must have at their disposal to resolve disputes: the ability to exercise power, mediate, and adjudicate rights. While their typologies are made with reference to MUDs, their thinking is easily extensible to Clan-based communities.

The exercise of power is a rare thing in the clan world; Kollock and Smith equate the exercise of power to a MUD programmer who changes the functionalities of the system in order to limit users' actions, and in doing so, placing restrictions upon all users. One parallel seems clear in the Clan-based world of online play: leaders hold sway over maintaining or dissolving the clan at will. If the monetary responsibility to server upkeep is theirs, the power resides within.

Yet one could presume that this is not the preferred method for maintaining a fair, equitable miniature-society; hardly does one gain a following by pulling the plug on activities. So, the primary role for leadership in resolving disputes is mediation; Appendix 10 highlights one such instance. Mediation is required for instances in which members break any of the rules (Appendix 8) that are strictly enforced in communications channels and in-game.

However, mediation is not always successful, and in those instances a player has his or her rights revoked from the server. Shortly before I began to observe the playing clan, a player obtained game cheats, and sent the cheats to others within the clan. Eventually, a player learned of this malfeasance and notified the leadership.

Cheating is, of course, a mortal sin in the game players' world: this link (http://gprime.net/video.php/dealingwithcheaters) sums up players' thinking about how cheaters should be treated.

The leadership decision was simple: those who cheated would lose their clan membership, forum posting rights, and teamspeak access. However, one player confessed to cheating and begged forgiveness; this player had some rights removed, and was placed on a probationary period for his transgressions. When and where mediation fails, the simplest form of control is the adjudication of players' rights, and removal from the clan.

Finally, interviews with leadership indicate a belief in the need for their role; as one leader described, "For the lesser-promoted, the lesser-senior, the regular members, they really and truly need the leaders and respect what the leaders say… " [ToE]Manowar Survey respondents from the rostership agree; their responses don't question authority as much as reinforce the need for authority.

Through facilitating growth and driving resolutions with power, mediation or adjudication, clan leaders are able to dictate the course for their social construct. As any

mix of people, the leadership all bring their own management styles to bear, and play off one another's strengths. [ToE]Manowar put it nicely:

> "The leaders didn't become leaders overnight. They've been selected… shown their wisdom… and it's a collective group. Each one of them is like ingredients to a dish: one of them is sweet, one of them is sour, one of them is spicy, and one of them is kinda blank. And they all have a say and a purpose, but if you didn't have any one of them it just wouldn't work."

Yet, for all their hard work and control, one might say that the bulk of all contributions to the clan are made by the general roster of non-leading players.

Roster

The role of general-roster members is somewhat unclear to the causal observer; yet, data collected through the online survey sheds some light on differences between what the leadership believes a general members' responsibilities to be, and how the "rostership" defines their own roles.

Those who are leaders define the roster to be a group of people who must show up for practices, contribute to discussions (both in forums and in synchronous chat channels), contribute financially to the clan server upkeep, and obey all laws and rules. If one theme is most prevalent in many leaders' responses, it is that the rostership should continually contribute to inter-clan dialogue.

In this, survey responses provide by the rostership agree – chiefly in that player interaction is the primary responsibility for roster members. Roster members' responses also identified devotion to the clan, to play and have fun, and to earn a good reputation for the clan – as duties and responsibilities. Yet, there is no mention contributing to the financial wellbeing of the clan.

This difference in role views may highlight a small, but perceptible mismatch between how the leadership considers responsibilities, and how members of the general roster may consider their responsibilities. One interviewee put it nicely; he explained that roster members are much more prone to thinking as an individual than thinking about the clan, as a whole. In summarizing the changes he endured when moving from a roster position to a leadership role, he explained that "You gotta be a lot more open to what people think," and that "one thing that's really hard to do is to prove to everybody in the clan [that you as a leader are correct] when they have different opinions about what they want done." --[ToE]Snipah

Rewards

While members confirmed that there were no real "symbols for good luck" that members might "carry" into game combat, they did mention the rewards system as particularly compelling. Virtual medals serve to identify those players who have contributed

something special to the clan (See Appendix 9 for a description of all medals). As one clanner put it, "In the forums we have medals. People get nominated… and that's to show what you've contributed to the clan. I'm pretty proud of those, it makes you push 110% to get the job done." –[ToE]Snipah

Therefore, rewards are public and prominent, displayed to the left of each post a member makes within the discussion forum. In addition, rewards serve to reinforce the very basic notions of clan play; loyalty, financial contribution, moderation and excellence in support of the clan.

There is a second method for recognition: promotion within the ranks. When asked about his most memorable experience as part of the clan, two of thirteen respondents cited "being promoted." As one of the two explain, "Nothing felt so good, having power over things and being able to contribute in more ways than ever!" (anonymous, from survey results) Yet, as one source (who shall remain anonymous) admits,

> "We don't like to say that you buy into a position, but those that donate…
> that is a serious contribution. Your taking money out of your own life and
> putting it into an online experience… which many will not really justify
> as really. They'll just justify as it fake, it only exists into 1's and 0's, it
> doesn't really because you know, you've actually put money into things
> like this.. it's almost like a business or company…"
> –[ToE]AnonymousSource

Therefore, rewards are based upon effort, financial contribution and loyalty, and can lead to public recognition or leadership positions within the clan.

Situated Learning and Teaching

Learning of Skills

The clan culture is much more than a social club; it's an extraordinarily intricate infrastructure for teaching, learning and sharing. When asked what they learn through their playing (See: survey results, appendix 11), leaders often cited the opportunity to teach others, the skills necessary to mediate solutions, how to anticipate other people's needs, and technology-related skills such as server maintenance. Survey respondents who were not leaders cited the need for responsibility, teamwork and about clan play in general.

David Perkins (Undated) has outlined five major levels of learning, each of which clan play engages; these levels are: incidental learning, which is learning on the fly with little effort; learning from sources, which is learning through demonstrations; learning by doing, which requires practice, discussion and reflection; transformative learning, which is learning that occurs through challenging inconsistencies of a simple idea; and autonomous learning, which is self-teaching (Perkins).

These five levels of learning are "situated" within the clan, and therefore afford the value of cognitive apprenticeship to those who engage in the learning experiences. Lave (1997) defines cognitive apprenticeship as an experience in which learners "learn to think, argue, act and increasingly knowledgeable ways, with people who do something well, by doing with them as legitimate, peripheral participants" (p.19). Neophyte clan members engage in very similar practices of learning – in effect, becoming apprentices to the more experienced players and leaders. Perkins' five levels of learning are described below, in this context.

One could theorize that incidental learning takes place while new members acclimate themselves to their new social group. Likely, they will need to learn the norms and customs associated with inter-clan communication, such as terminology ("noob") and technique. An example of incidental learning situations are those in which members (two of thirteen) cite learning social skills as part of their clanning experience. Such skills are not explicitly taught, but expected for congenial community.

While the clan requires tryouts to test the in-game mettle of potential players, continued practice does not cease after acceptance. Game divisions arrange weekly practice sessions, in which players' play style is tested and critiqued. As one interviewee mentioned, "the tactics are spelled out during practices… and the practices run quite regularly, usually before we have a clan match. We work together as a team, and usually determine what we do by what map we're on." Yet, much of the training is not skill-based, but in teaching communicative styles; "It's really about communication. [That's] really the key we have to having someone improve their game. Communication is very, very vital to play." In reflection upon how he taught another player, one leader described it this way:

> "I taught him all these things… sniping, this is what you want you when you reload, you wanna duck around the corner, you want to take advantage of the fact that Renegade has first-person and third-person built into it… so I would just teach people the different aspects of the game… if your driving a vehicle, certain tactics… tanks have a shell that's fired, but it doesn't drop it goes straight, so you need to learn how to dodge… and in defense situations, what you can do to make the situation better?" - [ToE]LightningStrike

Therefore, learning from sources is an important aspect of clan play.

Both incidental learning and learning from sources require the practice of learning by doing to reinforce new skills. Players don't simply acquire the communicative cultures and play tactics of the clan; they perfect their communication and tactics over time. Emphasis on metacognition – that is, thinking about one's experience to improve future practice – is clearly expected of players as part of their dedication to the clan. Yet implicit in part of the practice of learning is autonomous learning; that players actively seek challenges to improve their skills.

Autonomous learning might be what transpires when a player joins a game in a new server, with a different group of players; one interesting study, *coincidentally, might be to explore differences between the nature of play of a "heavy game player" and a "light game player," with specific emphasis on exploring which situations they seek most frequently: those that entertain, or those that teach.*

The leaders most often cite transformative learning as part of their play experience; for example, when asked what he or she learned through play, one anonymous leader suggested that, "Well you just got to keep everything n one piece. [You] need to realize that people have different opinions and you need to be open minded (this is really tough for a hard core conservative like me :-P) to everything and you need to be dedicated!" (Survey, Appendix 11).

Yet, this player clearly refutes an argument presented in Powell et a., (2004) who suggest that diversity hinders "effectiveness of traditional teams and their development" (p.16). Instead, it seems that diversity is the key to establishing a strong baseline for learning, and that while leaders are perhaps unaccustomed to negotiating with their diverse constituency, it does not act as a detriment. This could be due to the hierarchy; yet little is known about the diversity of clans and its relation to a strong and cohesive existence; *research might explore this question more deeply.*

Clearly, the nature of learning through clan play has many facets; what requires a deeper understanding is the precise nature of learning, rather than speculative hypothesis gain through anecdotal evidence. Future research could explore this question to greater detail; indeed, there is a need for an understanding of what so many players gain through their experience.

Empathy and Reality

> "Yet, no society consists of anonymous eccentrics bouncing off each other
> like billiard balls, and Moroccans, too, have symbolic means by which to
> sort out people from one another and form an idea of what it is to be a
> person." (Geertz, 1977 p. 488)

Clifford Geertz offers this thought to explain that as a culture, people construct meaningful identities, though the recognition of "what is identity" differs from culture to culture, society to society. Similarly, the notion of online persona has evolved to fit the online gaming market. Many note that players have assumed "tags," or virtual names (for example, see Taylor, 2003). I myself still maintain "akira[plt]," a tag that can be traced back to the very early 1990s and that, given certain communities, people recognize to this day. It's a cultural icon; a meaningful heritage in the often-ephemeral virtual world.

Clans, and players within clans, have adapted and extended this tradition. Sites now track clan names to prevent dupes; http://www.atomicwarrior.com/clubs/clubregistry/_) is one example. Yet, despite naming conventions, who and what is real in a virtual space? I

suggest that in order to decipher the truth, players are required to build strong relational empathies online.

And, it isn't only writers who ponder these questions of authenticity; the players of ToE have explicated their concern that people are "different" online than off. One explained to me that:

> "Sometimes it's like fake personalities. You can't tell who people really are. Take me for example. When I joined, I acted a lot cooler than I really was. I was scared of the reaction because I thought I would get kicked out… I was scared of what they might be thinking…"
> --[ToE]Snipah

Another was not shy in his explaining that during his interview, he wasn't "… talking to [me] face to face, eye to eye…" and that he could "…just say whatever is in [his] heart" ([ToE]Manowar). And, several players admit, it's that way with a lot of new players. "I see the people that first join, you know, be someone they're not, and as you get to know them you realize they're completely different people" ([ToE]Snipah).

This begs the question: if players are (or aren't) who they say they are, does it matter? I would posit that no, it does not always matter. Empathy, as Preece and Ghozati (2001) explain, is the "ability to identify with and understand another person's situation and feelings." (p. 233). And Gee (2003) explains that players often construct "projective identities;" that is, identities that are a combination of his or her real traits, and the traits that he or she would like to attribute to the digital construct that he or she plays.

Yet, if this projective identity is meaningful to the agent who is projecting the identity, then one might assume that the empathic relationships that he or she creates with others in the online space is similarly genuine. For instance, the contributor above who suggested that he "joined [he] acted a lot cooler than [he] really was…" did not pursue his actions out of malice or deceit; instead, he did so out of the compunction to be accepted into his new social space.

Yet, much of the learning required of clan players – with respect to empathy – must deal with sorting out the genuinely-empathic from those who are disingenuous. The recruitment process (described above) is certainly the most prominent gatekeeper, but as one leader mentioned during an interview, "you really have to take a chance on someone… it's hit or miss" ([ToE]Fox). This experience – the learning required to determine if a candidate is a successful hit or someone who could turn into a "miss," is what contributes to the formation of relational empathies online; it reinforces the first requirement, trust.

In addition, the empathies are contributed through multimodal communicative structures: for example, clan members idle in an IRC chatroom during the day, and often send short, comical expressions to one another. "Echo, echo, echo, echo!" read one message, sent despite the knowledge that most people were at school or work. The forums are equipped

with a similar "shout" feature, that allows players to post one-line messages to one another throughout the day; a sort of asynchronous IRC experience that players can use from almost anywhere.

Finally, a brief note about gender and empathy within ToE. Interestingly enough, none of the 13 anonymous survey respondents suggested that female players engage in a different gaming experience than the male players. If anything, the mix of gender reinforces the construction of empathy in the online space, as each gender brings its own cultural heritage to clan play. As one interviewee mentioned, "Players like having the power of a woman behind them on the field. They feel the presence there…" ([ToE]Fox) and a casual browse through the message forums illustrates that the male – female interactions are quite high.

So, why is this important?

> "I tell my friends about it and they call me names. They don't really care
> for it too much. Most of my friends, I dunno… some of them are getting
> into it, so we'll see what happens." –[ToE]Snipah

Gaming clans are a relatively new online phenomenon, despite that one could easily trace their roots to traditional "real life" team-based sports gaming. As such new entities, and perhaps linked to the stigma of heavy gamers as somehow socially-maladaptive, there is little comprehensive understanding of what clanning is, and why people partake in its experience.

This essay has outlined the clan experience, including the practices associated with membership, leadership, and learning. In reading this material, one could conclude that clans are quite complex social groups and, in my proposition, important to understand for designing future virtual learning systems. As one research describes, "playing a game (or playing together) involves ephemeral acts that apparently transcend, yet inevitably relate to, the affordances of the game-as-text." (Carr et al, 2004). In addition to complex social groups, the argument could be made that clans serve to support the reading of games as a narrative cybertext, and that through playing, players are contributing to, and building a participatory culture.

This participatory culture is important for several reasons: first, because it offers a new and diverse "family" social venue; next, because it enforces situated teaching and learning; and finally, because as a participatory culture, entrants are required to utilize fundamental skills that Levy and Murnane (2004) describe as "complex communication" and "expert thinking."

Yet, the precise mechanisms of these characteristics are not largely understood in the content of clan gaming. Some important points to consider are described below:

- Gaming clans have established self-organized regulatory hierarchies for the transmission of cultural information, including gaming-related communicative

styles, tactics, and successful collaborative techniques. What are the motivations for building a gaming clan, and what steps are most successful toward this measure? What social traits are most responsible for a successful experience?

- As (Prenskey, 2001 in Williamson and Facer, 2004) suggests, the co-authorship of digital narratives require individuals to synthesize digital information and cyber representations in ways that are largely not understood. What are the elements of this cyberdrama, and what elements live on the in minds of gamers long after their clan as faded? What are the negotiation processes associated with constructing deep cyber-narratives?
- Hierarchical structures have evolved to guide and regulate clan activities; however, the mechanisms which predict who and how members might attain these responsibilities, as well as the skills necessary to become successful in these responsibilities, are not well understood. Do these skills related to real-life group moderation, or not? Where are the crucial differences?
- Clans have established a wide range of multimodal communication structures to tighten bonds within their community. Members communicate with one another though asynchronous message forums, shouts, IRC-based chat, and voice over IP. In what ways do they uses these discussion tools to build internal empathies toward one another, and how are specific technologies used, in comparison to all other technologies?
- Take note of co-created story and narrative – how can education utilize similarly-compelling experiences to truly engage learners in situated and immersive learning experiences?

To conclude, gaming clans offer participants a powerful narrative family, complete with hierarchy, reward, punishment. At the core of these activities is an extremely strong empathy, built of trust. And, these gaming groups are here to stay. As one member explains,

> "As long as people come together… [clan play] is a natural thing, people can't always play games, it's only fun for so long. So I mean, people come and go. As long as there are more games that keep coming out and we get new people, we'll be here no matter what. I mean, I can see ToE being here years from now, as long as we keep everything going right, and get new recruits. I think that's what's keeping us alive… " -[ToE]Snipah.

Clearly, gaming clans are a part of gamers' lives; the research priority should be in coming to understand the powerfully-successful, tightly-knit communities that have developed around gaming, and learn what can be done to incorporate such compelling play into activities of learning and teaching, so that all may benefit from the experience. As one member concluded, "I'm so lucky to be a part of this clan." This luck should be spread; all learners should be afforded the experience to be so lucky.

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ClanAppendix

Appendix 1: Sample call for participation

This semester in school I'm looking for a strong clan to use as a subject for my ethnography of online gamers. I've corresponded briefly with a Leader, who suggested I post to the board to find out who might be interested.

A bit about who I am:

I'm a gamer by passion, and just so happen to be a student at the Grad school of Education at Harvard. My future focus (I think!) will be the design and production of games, and some of my current work looks at how games are played, and who plays them. So, this semester I'm trying to get a feel for how clans are structured and organized, and would like to explore a clan in-depth.

And the ethnography:

What does this mean? Well, I'd love the opportunity to speak with ToE'ers about their playing experience. This would require a short 10 - 15 minute interview at some point, and the completion of two or three very short, quick surveys. Basically, the ethnography will be composed of observational, qualitative (interview) and quantitative (survey responses) data. The final report will be available for comment before it's turned in and will be sent to all ToE members, if study participants would like. I really respect transparency and privacy in the process.

A final note about privacy: all the data I collect will be represented anonymously; that is, anything that's identifiable to a person will be removed or significantly changed. And, anyone who has initially agreed to participate can - at their own free will - back out at any time, or ask to have their data removed from the report.

If you are over the age of 18 and are interested to participate, please take the Intro Survey to inform me of your interest. I'll then contact individuals from there.

Questions? Please ask them in this thread, and I'll reply ASAP, or: see the intro survey for my complete contact info or: e-mail me at dhcrusoe [[at]] gmail // dot \\ com.

Thanks for your enthusiasm, and I hope to have a chance to document ToE!

 --dave

Appendix 2: Interview Forum

Q1: For how long have you been a part of a gaming clan?

Q2: How many clans have you been a part of, before ToE?

Q3: Could you describe why you wanted to join ToE?

Q4: What do you like most about clanning?

Q5: Could you describe how you became a leader? What was your path to leadership?

Q6: What was your most difficult moment as a leader?

Q7: Could you describe the rules within ToE?

Q8: What does it take to run ToE?

[Open-ended discussion]

Appendix 3: Survey Instrument

Q1: Are you a member of the ToE Gaming Clan?

Q2: In how many different clans have you held membership, prior to joining with ToE? (Please a clan's name change as a separate clans)

Q3: How would you describe a gaming clan, to someone who has never heard of a gaming clan before?

Q4: Would you describe ToE the same way?

Q4a: Please explain how you would describe ToE to someone who had never heard of a gaming clan

Q4b: Describe any other differences between how you understand a gaming clan to be, and ToE:

Q5: Describe your most memorable experience as part of ToE:

Q6: Describe your most difficult experience as part of ToE:

Q7: What are the three most important rules for ToE, in order of importance?

Q8: Are you in a leadership position? (DL, HoD, L)

Q9: Describe the responsibilities of those in leadership roles (e.g., L, HoD, DL)?

Q10: Describe the responsibilities of those who aren't leaders (i.e., Roster)?

Q11: Are the roles for males and females different within ToE?

[Only answer this question if you answered 'Yes' to question 'A11 ']

Q11a: Describe how the roles are different:

Q12: Has ToE evolved since you've joined? If so, how?

Q13: Describe three (or more!) things you learn by being a part of ToE:

Q14: Fill in the blank: ToE is the most awesome clan ____

Q15: Ok, that's it! Thanks for your answers & participation! If there's anything else you'd like to say, please do so in the box below. Or, simply continue to save and submit your answers.

Appendix 4: ToE Clan Application Sequence

This is the proper place to request a tryout for ToE. Please do the following when posting here.

1. Introduce yourself. In other words tell us who you are, and if you know any of our members.
2. How you heard of our clan. Did you hear about us from another forum, our servers or were if you referred by a member.
3. What game do you want to tryout for and your ingame name.
4. How old are you?

Please be patient if no one has responded to your post in what you may feel is a timely manner. All of us here have jobs or go to school and will get back to you ASAP.

Once you have been accepted the person that recruited you will approve your entry into the clan before you receive your tags or your permissions to view the private fourms.

Reading this post is compulsory and if you do not your application can be revoked at anytime.

Appendix 5: Typical clan application (and rejection)

<u>*Applicant's letter:*</u>

1) i wanna join ToE can i have a try out tommrow if my dad alows me?
2) Hi my real name is Ownah and I live in South Africa and I am a male.
3) I heard of the clan through 1 of my old felow clan members (we both left cuz it was falling apart)
4) I wanna tryout for C&C Renegade
5) turning 13 shortly and i've been playing renegade for 2 and a half years now online.

<u>*Leader's Response:*</u>

Denied - Try Again When You Feel You Are Ready. Next Time I WIll Let You Pick THe Map.

<u>*Applicant's Reply:*</u>

You're getting an ass whopin tommrow boy!

<u>*ToE Member Response:*</u>

I was there during the tryout. Me and Bin owned their team 4 vs 2 and Pwner proved to be a rather average player. To top it off, his attitude and language aren't the greatest. If it was up to me, I wouldn't let him in the clan just for the last part.

<u>*Leader's Response:*</u>

1. Like [member[said he was a very average player.
2. He had a tryout for an AOW division but was nothing but a sniper the whole game.
3. Didnt leave his basse much which is a must in AOW.
4. Attitude was not bad untill he was denied.
5. Did not work well at all with team mates.

[Member] wasnt there the whole game so it wasnt like the teams were stacked either. [Member] and i did loose a building but that is becasue the server was running the shelling mod so they got one of our buggies, and they also were running drop mod wich alowed the guy who killed our hand to have extra C4 with his gernader.

 (Could You Lock This Topice Seeing That It Has Served Its Purpose)

P.S. Ownah you dont have to swear to be cool arround here.

Appendix 6: Airborne Clan's Recruitment Application Disclaimer

So you are interested in joining the AIrBoRnE Gaming Community? Well, hooah! We are very interested in you too, if each of the following statements describes you:

• You are looking for a serious, realism unit.
• You believe that character and values are among the most important traits to look for in a unit.
• You are ready to make a real committment to this unit.
• You are ready to train, train, train - until it's automatic.
• You want real comaraderie, brotherhood and lifetime friendship.
• You are a mature individual with an excellent can-do, will-do attitude.
• You are prepared to fulfill both combat (in game) and non-combat (out of game) duties.
• You are not currently a member of any other clan/squad/unit.
• You have a microphone and a reasonably-well performing computer system.

Still interested? That's great! However, let's do one final check before you proceed further into the Enlistment Process. You need to decide right now, 100% if this is the unit that you want to join. If you aren't 100% sure, or have some questions that you want answered before you can be 100% sure, we encourage you to ask your questions here. Once you submit your Enlistment Application below, we are expecting a full, 100% committment from you - because you will have a full 100% committment from us. Now, moving forward, here is what you should expect from AIrBoRnE:

• Full range of realism, from chain of command to battlefield.
• Squad and teammates of the highest caliber of honor and integrity.
• The truest type of comaraderie that only a military organizational setting can produce.
• Unlimited advancement potential - lead a Squad, a Platoon, or opt for a Special Forces combat role.
• Recognition of your achievements and accountability as a man of honor.
• A institution of honor and a lifelong destination to connect with true friends.

If this is what you are looking for, and you believe that you are what we are looking for, then your next step is Basic Training. Basic Training is the crucible in which a AIrBoRnE Trooper is forged into a lethal instrument; where a Trooper's character is sharpened into the true grit of honor and character; where you will have to prove that you have what it takes. As a Private (PVT), you will wear the [ABN] tag and you will represent this unit. But you aren't an AIrBoRnE Trroper yet - you're learning to be one. All the Troopers will help you in achieving the goal of being in AIrBoRnE, but be advised, they will not make it easy for you. You are going to have to show your mettle to make it. Your Basic Training will last for two weeks, and here's what you can expect:

and by the way do u have msn or xfire ?

Appendix 7: Hierarchical structure of ToE Clan

Hierarchical structure of the ToE gaming clan	
Leader	Stated responsibilities: "The leaders are responsible for taking care of the servers, site and forums. Leaders will also be responsible for appointing the HoD and DL for each Division and oversee all aspects of the clan."
Head of Division (HoD)	Stated responsibilities: "HoD people are in charge of their respective division. The HoD, along with the DL will schedule practices, and be able to make judgements on who is, or isn't in their respected divisions. The HoD will also have the power to appoint their partners in running the devision (DL).
Division Leader (DL)	Stated responsibilities: "Division Leaders will help out the HoD. They will help organize the practices, matches and will help give tryouts. They will also be given their DL by the HoD.
Roster	Stated responsibilities: "The bulk of members are listed on the roster. These are the soldiers on the front line. Although not given a spcial rank each and every person in the roster is important, they are the ones who make up the teams that do battle every day and are send the most by everyone else."

Appendix 8: Clan Rules

Appendix X provides a compilation of all the clan rules stated within the TOE Website. Clan rules are posted in a prominent position within the TOE message bases, and are frequently referred to in both synchronous and asynchronous conversations.

There are a few Rules we like to abide by, pay attention to them.

1. Treat everyone the way you want to be treated. In other words, DO NOT START PROBLEMS WITH ANOTHER CLAN, or another person that is a member of this clan.
2. Be active in your division(s). In other words, get out there and clan, join in the chatting on the forums, TS, and IRC.
3. If you aren't sure where a post, or discussion should go, or if you feel that only certain people should see it, put it in the right spot. (That's why members have their own section.)
4. Have Fun!!! It's all about the games people! We all want to have fun when we play them. If you are just coming here to cause problems, you won't last long.
5. Being in more than one clan, for the same game is not permitted. It can cause many problems between members, and in some cases cause us to be removed from gaming ladders. It is strictly forbidden, and action may be taken depending on when you joined the other clan.
6. Foul language will not be tolerated. Please be respectful of other players. The use of foul language will result in swift punishment.
7. No political discussions. All these seem to do is cause problems. Each person has their own point of view, and should be respected. Yet some people would rather turn it into a flame war.
8. We have one major rule in Teamspeak and that is NOT TO CUSS. We have asked on many occasions for this to be cooled down, sometimes even resulting in having to remove these people from the channel.

   Please remember our kids come into TS and the last thing we want them to hear is your cussing. We do appreciate that the odd word will slip through now and again but to constantly do it is NOT ACCEPTABLE.

   If you feel the need to cuss then don't press the button or turn off voice activation. Sorry if this offends anyone but enough is enough really.

These rules can, and most likely will, be added to by other leaders. Be sure to review them if you have any questions regarding what you should or shouldn't be doing.

Appendix 9: Medals and Awards

Medals and Awards for excellence in ToE: arranged by "seniority"	
Medal of Highest Achievement	Awarded to those who are loyal to ToE, will sacrifice for others, strive to improve not only themselves by go far and beyond to help others. They have strong skills in combat, leadership, communications, and constantly bring new and innovative ideas and resources to ToE.
Medal of Generosity	Awarded to those who offer minimum donations to financial support the ToE website and game servers.
Medal of Loyalty	Any member that has minimum number of years of dedicated membership
Medal of Honor	Awarded to those who show themselves to have a high level of personal integrity, in combat and out of combat, are awarded this medal. It shows that they stand firm against the enemy and always strive to increase the reputation of ToE.
Medal of Savant	This medal is awarded to any member of the Leadership team who shows outstanding leadership in their division. They are successfully brining in new recruits, keeping their members trained, making sure their division is always competitive and providing scheduled practices.
Medal of the Month	Awarded to a member that has gone above and beyond the duty and is being recognized as one of ToE's great members.
Medal of Commendation	Those that are providing dedicated servers on their own accord.
Medal of Achievement	Any member who has recruited five dedicated members or more.
Medal of Communication	Awarded to those that have reached a high level of communication by having a strong presence and influence on the forums, Teamspeak and IRC. They strive to education and motivate others to improve and participate in ToE.
Medal of Justice	Awarded to those who have shown extraordinary moderator skills either in game, or on the forums, in TeamSpeak or in IRC. They are fair and non-biased toward any aspect of an issue of its protagonists. They continue to work toward a solution until a clear answer has been found.
Medal of Valor	Awarded to those who willingly face danger in order to ensure the betterment of ToE. This medal recognizes the valiant bravery shown in combat, and out of combat. It is also rewarded for outstanding success in increasing ToE ranks and reputations by whatever means wherever ToE is known.
Medal of Creativity	Any member who has shown outstanding creativity skills specific to ToE in addition to honorable and mature behavior. A member sho has gone above and beyond the creative aspects to better air Toe as a whole either by visual or creative production.

Banned for no reason??

Hello my name is c4ghity as u c. i am here to talk about me and my sister getting banned from the AOW server 1by creed3020.

 this is how it went down i was playing the aow server and i was on nod i was running down the hill in the map "field" to put timed c4 on a mammy and saw it empty i jumped in it and used it to my advantage and distroyed 3or4 vecials and returned to my base for repairs. then the next wave of ppls came out at our base and i almost lost my mammy and sent it all the way back to the ob so it wont get distroyed. Then all the sudden i got a " u have been kick or server disconnection"sign, now i have a wirless internet and so i check on the connection and it was fine. Now my sister was also in the game because i just downloaded it to her computer and she is new, so she always joins me. Well i went in to my sisters room and demanded why i was kicked and he sayed that i went out in the field and used the mammy. I replyed that is no reason and then he sayed are u playing with 2 accounts and i replyed this was my sisters. And we went back and forth with a an argument and then he banned my sister. i got a banning message saying "STFU". Now if you agree with me this was a very (i hate to use this word but) n00bish move of him and i have some eye witenissed (spelling).

 I wrote this is becaus i am a mod on other servers and know that u must test someone before kicking or have a good reason for kicking someone off and if you agree with me i would that was not a good reason i am also typing this is because i would not like this happening in the future.

 thanks for your time
 c4ghity, and c4girl101

[BBF]Armando

Hi ToE,

 I was there too. Thats pretty much what happened.

 But also:
 C4ghity and C4girl are friends of mine so I asked creed about why c4ghity got kicked. Creed then told me that it was because c4ghity didn't listen to him about not taking the mammy into the field. I said to creed that c4ghity stole if from the other team and he should be allowed to fight with it if he wants. Creed then said, more or less, "oh ya, well, too bad for him." and then also started talking c4ghity down, saying he didn't know how to follow the simplest commands or anything.

In my opinion a mod should not be allowed to tell the players what style of play they are allowed or not allowed to use. If there is a rule stating this, my sincerest apologies.

Thank you
Armindilo

MCP

just letting you guys know i am looking into it.

[ToE]Fox

Thank you for bringing this to our attention. This will be looked into asap.

One thing i will say though is that i dont personally like my members being called 'noobish'. Creed is a very experienced player and calling him that is far from the truth.

Update as im writing this. C4ghity was qkicked, which meant you could have rejoined. Yes C4girl101 was kicked-banned, im guessing for continuely arguing with a moderator. What i suggest in the future is that if you are kicked from the server, try and rejoin instantly, if unable too then bring it to the forums, please dont try and argue in game, it ruins it for other people.

Ban will be lifted on this occasion.

[BBF]Armando

Ok, thanks for looking into this so quickly!

C4ghity went to his sisters room and confronted creed about it, but I wouldn't say it was arguementative, and it wasn't dirupting the game.

Even though there was only 200 points difference, isn't it all about having fun? The points don't mean anything anyway, seeing as the WOL ladder doesn't work properly anyway. And if C4ghity was having fun with his mammy in the field, and not really being maliscious towards his team, I don't really see how it is fair that a mod kicks him because of a disagreeance in the playing style used.

C4ghity wasn't breaking any rules by using a tank that HE stole from the enemy.

As far as the noobish comment goes, it may be a little harsh (*slaps c4ghity*), but I must say I agree. Creed's playing was not noobish, it was his attitude. People getting kicked for not conforming to the mods style of play usually happens on small non-dedicated servers where its just some kid trying to be cool.

The kicker to me was creed's response to me when I asked him about, and I was in no way offensive about it. He just brushed it off, like "oh ya, well too bad" or something like that.

Anyway, your server is still great, had a hickup, we'll all get over. But it really does tarnis your reputation a bit when something like this comes up.

Thank you for taking the time to deal with this properly. It is much appreciated.

[BBF]Armindilo

MCP

for the record, [BBF]Armindilo:

1. Dont come into the server and have a fit about not getting an apology.
2. You were helped, very fast.
3. Sorry you/your friend was kicked. But dont be a whiner about it, please.
4. I could have just taken our members word for it and left it at a ban, but no, i wanted to be fair.
5. If you cant see that, then you have the problem, not us.

It ends right here. No more coming in the server to discuss it. Any thing else you have to say, PM me.

-Thanks
Adam

Edit: Generally in a game, when it is so close and almost ending you dont want to lose the game because some people cant follow a decent instruction. We have alot of noobs come in, and do something just like that, get killed, and it gives the other team enough points to get on top. Sure, we allow anyone to play on our server, but when people act stupid, they get kicked.

In your case, you were doing this and your team figured you were basically a liability to that particular game. instead of you telling them you knew what you were doing, you constantly said 'why'. You were kicked because creed figured you were just another noob (not that you are, but that is what was thought) going to lose the game, and you were being stubborn when being asked to bring the mammy back.

Next time, i suggest you let them know what is going on, when a mammy can count for so much at a time like that. atleast they will be aware that you have some skill, and youre not just 'shotting the moon' with the mammy.

Lets leave it where it is. Its a bump in the road, but its behind us now. leave it at that. We obviously want some decent players in the server, to out number all the people who like to drive circles on the strip with a buggy.

Creed

Wow, I am not even going to start.

I am not going to start to explain myself because there is a lot missing from the story posted by any of you above.

I may have been rash, I'll give you that.

IMHO don't let me see that happen again, plase think of your team.

I request this topic locked.

Appendix 11: Survey results

These results were collected with the understanding that they would be made public. Results are not comparable across responses, as the order of some responses has been mixed to ensure anonymity.

Q1: How would you describe a gaming clan, to someone who has never heard of a gaming clan before?

Its a fun community thats like a family. You play games with other people around the world and these people eventually become your friends. Its nice to talk to people that have the same interest as you do.
A Family :)
A group of friends who you team up with to play on line games
It is an awesome Experience. Especialy if you dont have many freinds. ToE was so nice and welcomed me nicely... Eventhough i had to tryout seven times i think (4 in FoD 3 in ToE). I have made so many freinds because of online gaming... I am even going to play paintball with one of them this summer, and hopfuly skating with another.
A gaming clan\'s are groups of people who come togethor under one \"tag\" or \"name\" to play as a team consistently in compotion in ladders ect much like a sports team does. These groups usually do not stay around long, but the ones who do usually become very close, almost like a second family. A clan can play one or multiple games and usually has an \"leader ship\" structure of people who keep matchs ect organized.
A family experience, just online with people that you will go through good and bad times together with. Also a way to increase your involvement in online gaming and to have more fun!
A gaming clan is basically a team for a game or a group of games. There are leaders and people with more power then other people. You play against other clans too get ranked higher. It\'s all about community though. It\'s a bunch of people that enjoy playing games together.
A group of people that play the same game and decided to organize and stick together.
A Community built around Gaming to have fun and seriously compete to be the Best Clan.
well a gaming clan is like a family you always look out for each other and tell each other what to do and help them out and watch there back while playing a game.
I view it as a group of people who get together and play games competitively.
Aplace to habg out with friends, and play organized games
that it is a family with the same interest in playing games and getting to know eachother. Participate in teamwork and to better our skills.

Q2: Would you descibe ToE the same way? [Explanations provided by those who answered "No" to this question]

Please explain how you would describe ToE to someone who had never heard of a gaming clan
ToE is more than just a gaming clan, it is like a family. Being part of the clan involves more interaction than most clans
A gaming clan

Q3: Describe your most memorable experience as part of ToE:

The most memorable moment is when i get recorginize for something by the Leaders of the clan and fellow clan mates

Beign promoted. Nothing felt so good, having power over things and being able to contribute in more ways than ever!

Winning the first clan match I played with ToE, the teamwork that night was apparently a change over what had been going on, we all got much closer.

Ofcourse the most memerable part of my ToE experience was when I was accepted for the clan.

Ah so many. Being 2nd place and having multiple copy cat clans on WOL in the winter of 03 - 04 was pretty cool. Being promoted to CS Div hod and all of the big TS meetings :)

My most memorable experience would be that I have had the oppurtunity to put into different leadership positions throughout the clan and been able to help ToE grow as a whole. I have hundreds of moments of online gaming history that I would love to share as my most memorable moment.

My most memorable expirience is when I first joined. Being a part of the ToE community was really cool. The people are really cool.

Plenty of good games, interesting conversations. Nothing exceptionally exciting, but a good memory overall.

Being Promoted.

well that would have to be being able to join the clan with out having a try out and meeting new people :)

Getting to know people and becoming friends with them.

na

my first clan war with TOE was a great experience and getting to know others, socializing, joking and having fun.

Q4: Describe your most difficult experience as part of ToE:

when People leave the clan without a reason

When people leave. There will always be more but when people that have been in it for so long leave, its hard to come out of.

Friends leaving

When we had discovered some of our members were utelizing cheats, and we had to get rid of them, but that is also tied with Creed3020 who is a leader resigning from Renegade {HoD} witch cut back on his playing time of Renegaade.

Deciding when its time to leave or not. Every few months it comes a time when intrest dwindles and you have to make the decision if your into it or not anymore. After you\'ve known a group of people for almost 4 years its not just leaving a clan, its leaving a second family. Quite a few have been there and helped me when i need it most and i\'ll always be thankful for that.

My most difficult experience would be having to deal with members and ex-members as they come and go. The position I am in tends to led to stress at times, even though this is a sureal environment. My position has repsonsibilities that affects others and I am very aware of this.

Sence it is a community you have too mostly get along with everyone. This can be hard because sometimes peoples personalities clash and this can result in difficulties. The most difficult expirience that I had was involving this.

If I had one, I\'d leave.

Dealing with the Arguing of younger members.

htat would be trying to help someone out when they were disappointed and trying to stay on top of grades otherwise they jump on you and remove your tagss for a little bit.. see as a family we complament some and we also help and punish some see for example if i don\'t keep up with my grades and school work i am in trouble with some of the leaders but if i do i am ok.

Making hard decisions and kicking people out of the clan.

na

learning to be patient and understanding eachothers need and be respectful to eachother.

Q5: What are the three most important rules for ToE, in order of importance?

1. Respect others 2. Have fun (whats the point of being in a clan if its not fun? 3. Stay commited (make it to practices or clan matches I guess in other words \"stay active\"

respect, kindness and FUN

Don\'t really have an answer for this one

I hold all rules at the same level so I can not answer this question.

1. No cheating 2. Respect 3. No cheating.

1. Loyalty, we want members that are in ToE only, not multi clanning 2. No cheating, we don\'t want members taking the easy low road, we have talented players among use and strive to train better. 3. Have Fun!!!

1-respect other members 2-give it your all on and off the battlefield 3-dont cause problems

1) Treat people well 2) Be active 3) Have fun

No Cheating, Show Respect to Each other, No Swearing.

well sorry can\'t help ya with that one don\'t really now that one sorry

Most of what I write aren\'t in writing as far as the clan goes... 1)Have fun overall 2)Be respectful to other members and to other gamers 3)Remember rules 1 & 2 and all will be fine.

Don\'t be a whiner

no cheating must have renguard no team hampering or fighting among eachother

Q6: Describe the responsibilities of those in leadership roles (e.g., L, HoD, DL)?

1. Keep your division active 2. Control your roster people 3. Expand your division 4. Have practices 5. Teach players how to use Teamwork AND good sportsmanship

Well you just got to keep everything n one piece. Need to realize that people have different opinions and you need to be open minded (really hard for a hard core conservative like me :-P) to everything and you need to be dedicated!

Lead the different divisions, make sure everyone is treated fairly

Currently the Halo 2 division is on probation so right now I am to help recruit more members so we can get off probation by May 14, but i also help out in the Renegade by recruiting people helping run practices. Plus Roster Responsiblities

- Making sure everyone is around, keeping track of your divsion and making sure they have the info they need to succeeed.   - Being there when a member needs help, not just in yoru divison but all of them. If your a HoD your to me a role model for other m

-Taking care of the forums -Setting up new members\' accounts -Taking care of our main server -Helping pay for our server -Taking care of our TS servers -Giving advice to HoD\'s and DL\'s -Act as a fire figther when people flame each other and disagreemen

They have too keep the clan going and informed. It is there duty too tell the other members whats going on. They should schedule practices and be on good terms with all members. They also have to understand all the complicated computer skills required to run all of the applications that the clan uses.

Recruiting, organizing.

L-Keep us going and Together on issues. HoD- Make sure divisions are running properly. DL- Make sure Division members are active and Trained.

well they have to bascillaly keep us members in line and if we get out of line it is another thing that ties in with being a family.

It\'s very hard to describe everything involved in being a leader. Leaders must watch everything going on as best they can and handle problems with game servers and make appropriate rules for other members to follow and decide what games we want to pursue as a clan and what games that we should drop because of lack of support or lack of activity. That\'s a brief summary, but other issues such as disputes between clan mates must be handled as well.

To deal with all the costs, the headaches etc.

To help further TOE in the rengade communit by recruiting good people and helping them become better. Training, practice are just some of the tools used to accomplish this task. ensure no one cheats, and uses renguard, teamspeak when playing renegade.

Q7: Describe the responsibilities of those who arenít leaders (i.e., Roster)?

1. follow orders 2. maintain good sportsmanship 3. be truthful 4. Go to practices 5. Go to matches 6. Respect yourselfs, your clanmates, and your oppenents

Just to play, respect everyone, have fun and enjoy.

Interact with other members

Attend practices/matches, moderate games Via IRC, be active on Forums,and use teamspeak.

PLAY THE GAMES !!!! BE ACTIVE ON FORUMS / TS / IRC, GET INVOLVED. BE A EXAMPLE AND SHOW OTHERS HOW GOOD WE CAN BE   PLAY WITH MATURITY These are the core members, with out them it woudlnt\' be a clan. Thanks guys.

To play their hardest, give their all, participate ingame, on the forums, in TS and in IRC.

The people that arent leaders (like me) have to be devoted to the clan. They have to enjoy playing the game and have respect for there elders. They also are too fun with the other members in and out of games.

Play, have fun, give a good reputation to the clan.

Participate in everything the Division does, Hopefully.

well that is like me and i am just sopposed to keep in touch which i do sometimes and it is cool

Show up for practices, post in the forums, chat with other members on TS and Irc. Show up for matches above all.

Have fun and be cool

To play fair and use renguard, teamspeak while playing renegade. Inform TOE leadership if some one is cheating and teamhampering.

Q8: Has ToE evolved since youíve joined? If so, how?

Yes, People are learning from their mistakes and by doing this they do not repeat the same mistake twice and make the clan better

Yes, It has changed in many ways. Going from being small and knowing everyone in the clan to it getting huge with lots of people not knowing everyone. It has gotten much bigger and leadership has changed a bit.

No

Not to be rude but since i have joined It has slightly devolved (If thats a word). The Renegade division has not shrunk much if at all, but as for Call of Duty, Counterstrike, and Halo divisions have all greatly decreesed in members/activity.

Well, this is a hard one. I must say ToE is not what it once was. In the begining it was much more close knit and compeditive. More about the skill level and higher expectations yet we still had fun. In the beinging of the clan all divisons had regular practice played in leauges and were VERY well kept. In about the fall of 2004 however several leaders and hods ect left, core members which is were i put the downhill slope of TOE. We have gone up and down quite a bit since then, our skill level in games such as Renegade and the respect we once had because of our skill has gone down derasticly, but thats not a shocker considering how old Renegade now is and how many people have moved on to other games. However we are still alive and kickin, and couldn\'t be happier about that.

Yes ToE has evolved, it has changed by which games we support and how many play those games that we still do support. Our leadership goes through cycles as different people take to reigns.

ToE has evolved sense I joined. We have progressed as a community. Everyone knows each other really well and mostly gets along. We have also been commited to paying the checks too keep are servers running which is very good.

No, I wouldn\'t say it did. Many people left, though some joined. Some things dissapeared, though others appeared. Overall it stayed about the same imo.

Yes, I think we show more care and are more polite to each other.

no not realy i mean we have had some more practices and talks and chats but there are still alot of fights.

I helped start ToE therefore I think it evolved for a while but now it has stalled out because of our lack of time to put into it and lack of participation from a lot of members.

nope

no, because there are still issues that need to be address and set straight to all clan members.

communication is an important part of the clan and it is not reaching all the right people

Q9: Describe three (or more!) things you learn by being a part of ToE:

1. Have fun, If your to strict then things in the clan become sour and it becomes no fun. 2. maintain good sportsmanship, \"what comes around goes around\" 3. Respect other opions, We all have our different opions, you DON\'T HAVE TO like someone opion but atleast respect it

How to teach, to be pationt, much better social skills with people i completely disagree with and every about a computer upside down!

Don\'t really have an answer

I have learned how to properly set up and maintain a C&C Renegade dedicated server. My people skills have greatly increesed since joining the clan. I have also learned how to use other programs like IRC, TeamSpeak, and photoshop.

Just because your good does not mean your above others, don\'t shuv it in peoples faces.   Don\'t order people, if you ask nicely people are more willing to do what you ask of them.

How to run servers better, deal with people through online means, how it must be like to manage a company.

1-have a good time 2-clans arent all filled with complete geeks who only play games. What i mean is that everyday people are part of clans that play sports and do other things besides game. 3- keep trying good things will happen

1) Some people are too obsessed about clans. 2) It\'s both a virtual and often a real family. 3) Such people are what keeps games like Renegade going.

1. Respect 2. Teamwork 3. oranization processes increase. (Better Planning)

1.responsiblity 2.honesty 3.. to listen well :)

I\'ve learned a lot about irc, ts, gaming in general and about what really matters for a clan to survive.

nothing

teamwork made new friends learn how to understand other people needs

Q10: Fill in the blank: ToE is the most awesome clan ____

 ever
 BITCh lol I dono
 I really enjoy it
 I have ever seen.
 , we have always and will always own you.
 ever
 sense the beggining of time
 For lazy bums like me.
 And I love it!!!
 In The UNIVERSE
 ever
 Not
 family base i\'ve ever joined