I, Gamer

Ellen Hedin
I, Gamer

A qualitative study of the institutionalizing, cultivating, and socially constructing processes of computer game usage

Ellen Hedin
Media- and Communicational Studies
Master’s thesis, autumn term 2009 advanced level 91-120p
Halmstad University

Examiner: Ulrika Sjöberg
Tutor: Ingegerd Rydin
Acknowledgments

To the people who made this paper possible


And a special thank you to

Bruno
Daska
Crakling
Naga
Abstract

Author:
Ellen Hedin

Tutor:
Ingegerd Rydin

Title:
Computer Games as Culture – A qualitative study of the institutionalizing, cultivating, and socially constructing elements of computer game usage

Subject:
Media and Communication Studies

Year:
2009

Purpose:
The purpose of the study is to explore the creation of identities related to the interaction mediated through the use of computer games. By perceiving computer game playing as a form of social interaction, searching for the relations between actors and their function, I hope to find that the social features of computer game playing can nurture a self-confident, healthy identity as well as enhancing the players’ quality of life.

Method:
The methods used are interview, narrative interview and observation.

Conclusions:
The study concludes that there is a visible culture surrounding computer games that enrich the players’ quality of life as well as enriching their personas through institutionalizing, cultivating and socializing processes.

Keywords:
Computer, computer game, usage, online culture, communication, gaming, play, dota, gamer, popular culture, reception, young adults, new medium, modern technology, every-day-life.
# Table of Contents

Acknowledgments

Abstract 4

1. Introduction 9
   1.1 Formulating the Research-question 10
   1.2 The Purpose of the Study 11
   1.3 The Field 11

2 Background 12
   2.1 The Game 12
   2.2 Voice-chat 13
   2.3 Platforms – Local Area Networks 14
   2.4 DreamHack 14
   2.5 The Players 15

3 Previous Research 17
   3.1 Interaction 17
   3.2 Evolving Identity and Defining the “Role” 18
   3.3 Setting 21
   3.4 The Community 22
   3.5 The Team 23
   3.6 The Competition 25
   3.7 Morality, Values and Traditions 25
   3.8 Capital 26
   3.9 Structuring Society 28
   3.10 Language 29
   3.11 Acts of Institution 30
   3.12 Conclusions Drawn from Previous Studies 30

4. Theory 32

Cultural and Media 32
4.1 Bordieu
  4.1.1 Habitus
  4.1.2 Field and Capital
  4.1.3 Language and Linguistic Capital
  4.1.4 Symbolic Power
  4.1.5 Acts of Institution
  4.1.6 Applying Bourdieu

Social Theory
  4.2 Social Constructionism and Institutionalization
  4.3 Goffman
    4.3.1 Setting
    4.3.2 Individual
    4.3.3 Team
    4.3.4 Individual versus Team
    4.3.5 Team versus Team
    4.3.6 Individual versus Individual
    4.3.7 Applying Goffman

5. Method

Qualitative Studies
  5.1 Qualitative Method
    5.1.1 Induction, Deduction and Abduction
    5.1.2 Observation
    5.1.3 Interview
      5.1.3.1 Meaning Concentration
      5.1.3.2 Narrative Interviewing
      5.1.3.3 Research Ethics
      5.1.3.4 Interview Guide
      5.1.3.5 Handing the Interviews
    5.1.4 Coding Survey Results
    5.1.5 Methods of Analyzing
    5.1.6 Reflexive Methodology
      5.1.6.1 Insight, Emancipation and Polyphony
    5.1.7 Criteria for Qualitative Studies

5.2 Hermeneutics
5.2.1 Aletic Hermeneutic 56
5.2.2 Methodological Principalities 57
5.2.3 Text 57

6. The Explorative Study 58
6.1 Method 58
   6.1.1 Survey 58
   6.1.2 Interview 59
6.2 Results 60
   6.2.1 Survey 60
   6.2.2 Interview 61
      6.2.2.1 Bruno 61
      6.2.2.2 Daska 62
      6.2.2.3 Crakling 62
      6.2.2.4 Naga 63

7. Main study – Analyzis 64
7.1 Method 65

7.2 Training 65
   7.2.1 Getting to Know Each Other 65
7.3 DreamHack 66
   7.3.1 My Story 66
   7.3.2 Daska’s Story 68
   7.3.3 Bruno’s Story 70
   7.3.4 Crakling’s Story 70
   7.3.5 Naga’s Story 71
   7.3.6 Results from the Stories 72

7.4 Values, Morals and Rules 73
7.5 Interaction 74
7.6 The role 77
7.7 The Team 82
7.8 Setting 90
7.9 The Subculture 95
7.10 Habitus 98
7.11 Capital 99
7.12 Acts of Institution 104
8. Conclusions 106
  8.1 Socialization, Cultivation and Institutionalization 106
  8.2 Reflection 108

9. Appendix 110

  9.1 Terminology 110
    9.1.1 Team Terminology 110
    9.1.2 Skill Terminology 111
    9.1.3 Programming Terminology 112
    9.1.4 Rules, Cheats and Moral Codes 112

10. Literature 114
1. Introduction

Play as an activity has been around for thousands of years. Playing among children is viewed as an important part of their experience growing up. Children play with sounds to learn language; they use tools to symbolize ordinary things in order to live out a made-up version of adult life. Play prepares us for what to come. Even animals play to learn the terms of life and prepare for the real game; that is living. How is it then that the act of play when becoming virtual is viewed as something entirely different? Is it not just the tools that have changed while the play stays the same?

In 1952, A.S. Douglas created the first graphical computer game as part of his PhD degree in Human-Computer interaction at the University of Cambridge. In 1967, Ralph Baer created the first video game to be played on a television set, and in 2002, Blizzard Entertainment released Warcraft 3. Today, computer games have been around for almost 60 years but they are still considered a fairly new phenomenon. There are still parts of the field that are uncharted by research, unspoiled ground where no scientist has thread. One such place is the game Defense of the Ancients, Dota, a player created modification of Warcraft 3, a highly social, strategic online game where processes of socialization, institutionalization and cultivation are continuously taking place, generating an environment where identities are created and nurtured. I have taken upon me to venture these grounds and place them on the map.

Performing this study I regard myself as having a unique access and understanding of the field. First, because I am myself a user of computer games which is enabling me to have an inside perspective that can of course be both problematic as well as advantageous. Second, because I found myself to be quite the opposite of the stereotypic computer game player in more than one sense, not only that I am female. Thirdly, my education enables me to view the field with more critical eyes than the other natives of the field.

When I became an active computer game player, I viewed computer games simply as a way to pass time and meet likeminded people. While integrating myself into the world of computer games, I have found that there is much more to it. Reflecting, it strikes me that I have only recently begun introducing myself as a gamer. Explaining how this came to be, I must begin by defining what a gamer actually is.

The common view of a gamer is often based upon a negative perspective. The stereotype of the gamer is a lonely teenage boy who locks himself in his room playing computer games for long periods of time. He has no interest in sports or taking part in social real-life events and he drinks large quantities of coca-cola. Viewing a gamer from this perspective, I cannot describe myself as a gamer since I do not fit with the description. Furthermore, this view of gamers makes me ashamed of being a gamer.

The turning point, where my view of what it means to be “a gamer” changed came while writing *Through the Looking Glass into the World of Computer Games*. The study is an introduction to computer games as a form of communication and will be used in this research project as a foundation to build on. During the study, I found evidence that the stereotypic way we tend to think
of gamers is actually nothing like the truth of what a gamer really is. The players I have met have all been very social, healthy and aware. To most participants in the study, being a gamer is nothing more than a hobby: to be really good at something and being appreciated for it.

1.1 Formulating the Research-question
To formulate a researchable fruitful problem might be one of the hardest parts of the research process (Ekström & Larsson 2000:41).

One of the criteria of a good research-question is that it has to be well grounded in theory (Ekström & Larsson 2000:41). Since this study will be using a cultural and sociological perspective based on theorists such as Bourdieu and Goffman, my research question must naturally be closely linked to the social and cultural impact that games have on the daily lives of their users.

Aspers suggest a strategy of “looking at the opposite”. He explains that it might be more interesting to look at why things remain rather than why they change, to look at the normal rather than the abnormal, to look at the unintended consequences of actions rather than the intended, to look at what people do rather than what they say (Aspers 2007:69).

Looking at computer game usage from this “opposite perspective” I search to find the status quo, the things that remain unchanged, which can mainly be found in the traditions and values specific to the field. I look for the normal behavior of a player, rather than searching for abnormalities. Since Dota is a game of action, unintended consequences are often more common than the intended: there is no perfect play where every action plays out exclusively to what was intended. Every action has a counteraction that cannot be foreseen, to which the player must adjust. As a result, the players often have to face unintended consequences. What is of interest is how players adjust to these unintended consequences, how fast they gather to solve these problems and the rules of conduct that prepare them to face these situations through the use of knowledge gained under similar circumstances, the team effort that could only be taught through continuous social interaction and the parts of habitus that is common to all members of a team, which enables them to create systematic and universal applications in similar environments (Bourdieu 1993:298).

The research-question should be formulated not only in relation to theory but also in relation to the field to be studied. A researcher who integrates him/herself into the field may gain help from its natives in finding what might be of scientific value in relation to the specific field in question (Aspers 2007:69). Since I am myself a native to the field, using an aletic hermeneutic perspective, my question should aim to view the field in terms I have not viewed it before thereby finding the hidden meanings I was not previously aware of.

Using the theories of Bourdieu and Goffman, who speak of socialization, cultivation and institutionalization as processes taking place in every environment I created my research question based on that assumption. “Assuming that processes of socialization, institutionalization and cultivation is at play within the field of computer game playing, specifically in the field of Dota, what function does these processes have and how do they influence the play and the players?”
1.2 The Purpose of the Study
This study puts focus on the social features of computer game playing using the social theories of Bourdieu and Goffman. The purpose of the study is to explore the creation of identities related to the interaction mediated through the use of computer games. I aim to map out how processes of socialization, institutionalization and cultivation function and affect the player and the play.

By perceiving computer game playing as a form of social interaction, searching for the connections between actors and functions in the roles they play, I hope to test the theory that the social features of computer game playing can nurture a self-confident, healthy identity.

Although this text is at its core an academic text, I believe it can be used by parents to gain understanding of their children’s hobbies as well as be used by other theorists to gain knowledge about the culture that is increasingly growing among the younger generation. Furthermore, gamers themselves can use this paper to acquire understanding, insight and confidence about themselves by knowing that their hobby, although often condemned by the media, is of value for their evolution as human beings, as well as achieving awareness about the “dangers” surrounding their hobby in a preventive effort to help them avoid these.

1.3 The Field
When meeting the field it is important that the researcher reflects on the part he or she plays in the field without letting this reflection get in the way of the research-question. The difficulty occurs in the relationship between the expectations of the researcher and the expectations of the subjects to be studied.

A requirement for the research to go smoothly is to gain approval from the field. There must be consent between the researcher and the individuals who are to be studied. Before entering the field the researcher must consider the ethical questions it presents. The researcher must consider how the anonymity of the subjects is to be preserved and to consider the consequences his or her presence may cause. As such, entering the field can be both psychologically and scientifically challenging (Aspers 2007:62). The researcher must always work to maintain the capital of trust that the scientific society possesses (Aspers 2007:63).

To preserve anonymity I have chosen to only use the screen names of the players and not their real names. I try to restrict from using specific facts, which can be used to identify the subject and any information published has been acquired with the consent of the person in question.

Even the picture on the front page has been chosen with preserving anonymity in mind since it does not reveal any faces; although Bruno, sleeping peacefully, is in the picture.

Defining the field in itself can sometimes prove to be a challenge. I have chosen to look at a small community of Dota players whom I have gained access to through Dotaforum.se – a forum for Swedish Dota enthusiasts. I narrowed the field down to a team of players that I put together myself out of the ten players I interviewed during the explorative study. The four players chosen for the study were selected strategically based on age, demographics, and background. My aim
was to put not just four different personas in the team but also four personas with different relation to each other previous to the study. By putting them together, I wish to explore how they work together through the one thing that unites them: Dota.

I wanted players with different education, different occupations, different relation to DreamHack and Dota, different personas and different geographical background. I have strategically chosen two friends to see what difference there is in behavior between people who know each other well and people who are new to each other. I have chosen two subjects who work for living and two who studies. I have chosen two leading personas, persons who seem natural to take on the role of leaders to see how these come to terms with who is going to lead and if the players take on the natural roles they are used to even when placed in a new environment. I have chosen two people who have been to DreamHack before and two who has not, to see if there is a difference in how they perceive the event. I have chosen player’s who live in different places in Sweden and in different types of cities, two from academic cities and two from industrial.
2. Background

Looking at computer games as a market, one of its most evident features is that it is continuously changing at frightening speed. About 1400 different games are released every year in Sweden (Ungdomsstyrelsen 2006:2:105). Some games just pass by in the commotion and are soon forgotten while others stick around to become “classics” like Dota. New releases of classics, patches, updates and various modifications are released frequently making even the classics continue to evolve.

To try to keep up with the computer game discourse sometimes seems like diving into a whirlpool of information. All you can do is to try to grab hold of as much as you can and hope it will be enough to survive in the harsh climate of the computer game discourse. Playing computer games, keeping up-to-date with the latest upgrades is vital to your ability to achieve success within the game.

With games increasingly moving to be played online we should expect an increase in Internet usage in the future. Even videogame-consoles such as Xbox, Playstation and Nintendo Wii have online capabilities.

2.1 The Game – Warcraft III and Dota

In this chapter, my aim is to introduce you to some of the software used by the players. We will take a quick look at their history and the purposes they fill. * Warcraft III, Reign of Chaos is a real time strategy computer game developed by Blizzard Entertainment. It includes races like Humans, Orchs, Undead and Night Elves. It was released on the market in 2002 and has grown very popular. It is one of the three major e-sports in the world.

The Frozen Throne is an expansion pack to the game, which includes some new features and is needed to play Dota. The games can be played online on platforms like Battle.net, provided by Blizzard and Garena, provided by Ocean Global Holdings. The game includes a “map editor” which allows players to create maps of their own. The most famous of these is the map Defense of the Ancients.

Dota was created by a player under the alias Eul in 2003. However, Eul did not update the map and the development of Dota might have ended then and there. Luckily, other players saw the potential in what Eul had fashioned and created a variety of maps based on Eul’s outline. The most popular of these maps was “Dota Allstars” created by the player Guinso. It is this map that we today refer to as “Dota”. When Guinso finally tired of updating the map, his work was taken over by Icefrog who is continuing to update the map today.

Dota is an unofficial mod to the game Warcraft III. A mod could be described as a mini game within another game. It uses the programming of the original game but the layout is different.

In Dota, the playing field holds up to ten players, divided into two teams. Both teams have a base with a center called “ancient”. The team Scourge has a

* The information in this chapter contain knowledge gained through experiencing the game, both my own and that of other players at dotaforum.se who have assisted me in collecting data for this chapter
“Frozen Throne” and the team Sentinel has a “Tree of Life”. The goal is to destroy the opposing team’s ancient. To do so every team is assisted in the fight by artificially controlled creeps. Every team member controls a hero, which can attain various skills by either leveling, which is done by killing creeps and heroes, or by buying items for the gold obtained while killing. Every round of Dota is counted in “games”. One “game” is measured from the start of the game, where heroes are picked, to the point where one team destroys the other’s ancient.

Dota was created using the map editor provided by Blizzard in the Warcraft III release. It is the most popular free mod in the world and has given way for the development of both other mods and other games. Today competitions in Dota are held all over the web and the world.

2.2 Voice-chat
Voice-chat is a form of communication made possible by the introduction of the Internet. Voice-chat is at its core not much unlike a phone call. The difference lies in that the voice-chat uses the Internet as medium and is free of charge. The voice-chat software usually contains a “buddy list” to which its users can add friends and family making communication easier. You can voice-chat with one or several friends at the same time. The most common software for voice-chat used by gamers is Ventrilo, Skype and Team chat.

In this study, we will use Skype since it is most compatible when using different operative systems (in this case Windows XP and Mac OsX). Skype also has an add-on called Skype Recorder, which allows me to record the conversations.

Skype allows us to form group-chats where all participants can speak and hear each other without using any commandos, such as the push-to-talk commando used by Ventrilo. There are both advantages and disadvantages to this. Using push-to-talk you minimize the background noise created by auditing several microphones and milieus at the same time. However, push-to-talk forces you to push a key every time you want to speak and this might interfere with the player’s focus on the game. Since we needed to use Skype for technical reasons and Skype does not have this feature, the choice was made for us.

2.3 Platforms – Local Area Network
LANs can be found in many sizes ranging from two computers to several thousands. To create a LAN you only need two or more computers, a hub, and a couple of network cables that links them together or a wireless system. The players can then connect to each other’s computers through the linkage. The LAN culture has grown much during the 21st century although we can trace its roots all the way back to the 1990s. Common to all LANs is that they do not allow drugs or alcohol and that they are usually devoted to a specific game (Ungdomsstyrelsen 2006:2:30, 32).

The LANs stimulate the organizational tendencies of the computer game culture. Many players join different gaming organizations to be allowed access to LANs. These LAN-organizations ordinarily have a strong hierarchic structure.
and are dominated by men. The organizations often get sponsorships from the state or from corporations (Ungdomsstyrelsen 2006:2: 72).

To play computer games online you need to connect to a platform that enables you to connect to other players. There are many different platforms for different games. In this study, we have used Garena and Battle.net.

Garena is an online gaming platform developed in 2005, which allows the users to connect to each other in much the same way as on a Local Area Network. The difference is that instead of using a “hub” to connect the computers together with cables, Garena instead uses Internet as a hub. Consequently, you only need to be connected to the Internet and not physically connected to the other computer. Garena hosts tournaments in Warcraft III and Dota. Using the platform is free of charge but it has an economical system through which you may buy access to more advanced features on the platform. However, these do not affect the game and are in no way necessary for playing. Garena includes a "buddy list" and a feature for instant messaging that allows the players to communicate with each other. You can also form a clan with your friends using the clan-feature. Garena has a filter for finding software used for cheating which ensures the players that they play on the same terms.

Battle.net is an online gaming platform provided by Blizzard Entertainment. Although Warcraft III was not released until 2002, battle.net’s history goes further back. It started out in the beginning of 1997 with the release of the game Diablo. Battle.net was the first of its kind by being built into the game itself. Since then, many corporations have launched similar concepts but Battle.net remains the largest, at least according to Blizzard. Battle.net is visited by millions of users every day, which makes it the leading provider of online gaming. Battle.net provides a platform for players to play various games against each other through Internet much in the same way as Garena. The major difference between them is that access to the battle.net requires a legal copy of the game, which Garena does not. Many players with legal copies still choose Garena over battle.net because of the built in cheat-detector, stability and easily used buddy system.

2.4 DreamHack
DreamHack is a cyber festival, a local area network featuring competitions, artist performances and gaming. It takes place in Jönköping in Sweden twice a year. Since its start in 1994, it has expanded and DreamHack can now be enjoyed in Stockholm and Skelefteå as well. However, Jönköping is still considered the “real” DreamHack. DreamHack holds the record as the largest LAN party and computer festival in the world, recognized by the Guinness Book of Records. The record is now 10,554 computers and 11,600 attendees. Ninety percent of the attendees are male and the age varies from elementary school to senior citizens.

People travel from all over the world to participate and to watch the competitions. This year over 30 000 people viewed, on the web, the final battle in the Counter Strike tournament and people queued for hours to watch the competition live at DreamHack. The huge aula that holds the competition was filled to the brim with computer enthusiasts.
DreamHack is made possible by a large number of volunteers, local police and guards from Securitas AB. Apart from gaming, it provides a variety of activities like bungee jumping, laser-tag and kart racing. However, most of these other activities are only available during DreamHack Summer and not during DreamHack winter where this study is conducted.

Martin Öjes, the leading force in making DreamHack possible, hopes that DreamHack will become a center for e-sports in the future (Ungdomsstyrelsen 2006:2: 77, 78). Since the interview in 2006, I am expecting to find that Öjes dream has come true.

2.5 The Players
In the beginning, the term “gamer” referred to someone who played role-playing games and war games. Nowadays the term has come to include players of both video and computer games as well. In fact the way the term is being associated today is mainly as referring to a computer- or video game player. The term includes both those who refer to themselves as gamers and those who are only perceived to be gamers by others.

There are many communities for gamers around the world. A large quantity of them exists only on the web. The most famous community for Dota players is probably Dota League. In Sweden, many players also join the community at dotaforum.se where I turned to find subjects for this study.

The term “gamer” is often given negative connotations, referring to a person that spends too much time by his/her computer and too little time attending to his/her health. The stereotypic view of the gamer is often that of male, although the large number of women who publicly present themselves as gamers is increasingly challenging this view.

Gaming is like any other hobby. There are stereotypic views of golfers as well as of gamers. However, with media’s attention drawn to every event that can reflect badly on gaming, the hobby has to face much more critique than other hobbies. As a result of the negative assumptions made about gamers, the gaming community has grown into a subculture, excluding it from “ordinary” society.

In my study, the age range lies between 17 years old and 21 years old. My first approach was to pick people from ages around twenty but while integrating myself into the community I noticed that the age of a player is not given much attention among the players as long as they act mature and does not use foul language. Hence, I reason that if age is of no value to the players, I should not apply value to age in my study because doing so would contradict the approach to investigate the players’ “world” as one of them. I cannot put substantial value into things the players do not put value to if I wish to present myself as one of them. Instead, I looked for players that were respected and recognized by other players as “good players”. Being a good player means more than just being skilled at the game. Searching for players I came up with four names: Crakling, Bruno, Daska and Naga.

**Crakling** is a 21-year-old boy from a small town called Vetlanda. He works as a CNC-operator. His favorite hero is Weaver but he picks his character depending
on his mood at the present. His interests are games, music, web-design, anime and what he describes as “various other geek interests”.

As a project in school, he once made a clock with a World of Warcraft motive, which he proudly presents to us. Today he describes himself as “currently in the business of finding myself”. Much of his time is spent on computer games, movies and sketches of designs. He likes creating wallpapers and homepages. Both Crakling and Naga have been to DreamHack several times and know the routines like the back of their palm. “It has become a tradition”, he says.

**Bruno** is a 20-year-old boy from Kalmar a city with much history and a well-renowned school for higher education. He studies economy and his interests are games and music. His favorite heroes are Tide, Lich, Puck, Necro and Warlock. His proudest creation in reference to gaming is the site www.dotaguiden.se, which he made as a project in school. His dream is to work with an ordinary everyman job and “winning the Dota tournament at DreamHack”, he says with a smirk. Bruno has not been playing much lately because he has been busy with school but he estimates that he has played about 5000 games of Dota since he begun playing the game. He used to have a successful clan named Potw that regularly competed. However, the clan eventually died out for various reasons. Bruno still plays at least one game a week.

**Daska** is a 17-year-old boy who lives in Uppsala, a large town outside of Stockholm: the capital of Sweden. Uppsala is the home of Sweden’s oldest University and a large part of the population is made up of academics. Daska studies Graphical Communication at the gymnasium. His interests are exercising, computers and design. He can play every role in the team but he usually plays carry. His favorite hero is Invoker. Daska considers himself a computer damaged 17-year-old who plays most things that you can play on a computer. He likes Dota because of its dept. He loves the feeling of being hunted by three opponents, then doing a quick turn and hide in the shadows of the trees and teleport himself home an inch from death’s grip. Daska has not played in any successful clan but he thinks the reason is the fact that he only plays for the fun of it. He often plays as a stand-in to other teams and he likes the role of captain. He has not been to DreamHack before although he has participated in other LAN parties.

**Naga** is a 21-year-old boy from Linköping, one of the larger towns in Sweden. He works as a computer technician. He does not have a favorite hero and prefers to play different heroes. His interests are music, games and spending time at the gym. Naga has played computer games a long time, “maybe too long”, according to himself. To compensate for all the playing he has begun to go to the gym. He is a huge fan of Warcraft and owns all the games and books. Today, he only plays Heroes of Newerth and Dota. Like Crakling, he is a veteran when it comes to DreamHack and he visits the event every winter with his friends.
3. Previous Research

In this chapter, my aim is to investigate how other researchers have explored my research question by studying other parts of the computer gaming field. As stated I ask the question: “Assuming that processes of socialization, institutionalization and cultivation is at play within the field of computer game playing, specifically in the field of Dota, what function does these processes have and how do they influence the play and the players?” I will use the theoretical terms provided by Goffman and Bourdieu, that will later also be used in the analyze, to form headings under which I collect what has been said by others on the topic.

3.1 Interaction

Introna, who studies virtual communities, defines virtual interaction as: “interaction between social actors that is exclusively electronically or digitally mediated” (Introna 2007:103). This notion suggests a dichotomy between interaction through electronic or digital means and face-to-face interaction. This dichotomy does not hold if we look at computer game usages as Taylor does, as interaction within dual spaces.

Offline and online life are interwoven together in complicated ways (Taylor 2006:11, 18). In nongame virtual worlds, users often find the lines between their offline and online self fairly blurry (Taylor 2006:96). We must not forget that games are not exclusively played online. Players join at cybercafés and LANs to play the games in close physical proximity to each other. Looking at computer game usage from this perspective, it is impossible to separate the online from the offline, as they are equally important to the overall experience.

What can be said is that a virtualization of human interaction promises many new possibilities such as cyber communities, virtual education, virtual friendships, organizations and much more (Introna 2007:95). It is this virtualization of human interaction that enables the existence of games like Dota. However, the possibilities are limited according to Dreyfus, quoted by Introna, who states that interaction in the online environment is morally limited and trivialized. Avatars can never “attain the thickness of flesh”; as such, the power to function as a medium, without limitations, is merely a fantasy of desire.

While the creators of Multiplayer games have actively designed for sociability, this aspect of the games does not commonly filter out into the public’s understanding of what it means to play computer games (Taylor 2006:10). Computer mediated interaction are often seen as impersonal and destructive to human interaction. Cultural objects like movies and books, conceptualize artificial intelligence as antagonistically dominating the human race (O’Riordan 2006:248). With the help of media, reinforcing this perception, computer-mediated interaction is challenged in its struggle to be accepted as valuable.

Looking at computer mediated interaction as impersonal, we again assume that computer mediated interaction is separated from face-to-face interaction, a notion I have negotiated as false. Interaction online provides a sense of community and belonging; it enables the development of significant relationships, unhindered by the computer mediation of the interaction (Gotved
Online relations often move offline and players regularly form out-of-game relationships with each other (Taylor 2006:54). Interaction does not exclusively occur between humans but also between computers and between humans and computers (Gotved 2006:171). When users interact with computer devices, they generate a different space for signification (Figueroa Sarriera 2006:101). Transmutation between human and machine produces personified computational artifacts that are given attributes through interaction (Figueroa Sarriera 2006:101). Dota is such an artifact, just as the heroes within the game also are artifacts. They are both given value through the interaction between the players. As such, we must not underestimate the value of computational artifacts or their production.

3.2 Evolving Identity and Defining the “Role”
While playing computer games, there are complex educational processes taking place in the mind of the player no matter which game is being played or how. The games demand the attention of the player, forcing him or her to make independent critical evaluations of conflicts presented by the game to achieve victory (Rambusch 2007:23, 24). These processes contribute to the creation of identities.

Identity is the product of reflexive processes of construction made by social actors (Alcántara 2007:229). Identity must be understood in the context of collective action patterns, which generate cultural codes and symbolic power (see Bourdieu page 40). The individual acts in accordance with structural conditions that provoke a collective behavior; tension in social structure produces changes in society and, consequently, produces changes in collective behavior (Alcántara 2007:230). Identity understood in this way is dependent on the presence of other social actors since collective action patterns could not be “collective” without the presence of a collective. The field of computer game playing is, as such, a collective.

Processes of socialization and identity making are constantly taking place in the cultural arenas that computer games represent. The arenas are places where the users have the ability to gain experience, evolve their personalities, create styles and develop life projects. Through the arenas, the individuals have the opportunity to express who they are, to find themselves and who they wish to be, and to create and evolve their own identity (Ungdomsstyrelsen 2005:1:129,130).

The creation of identities is a target for much concern especially within the media discourse. There is an anxiety about how these new identities take form and are influenced. One major worry is the influence of violence in the games. Barbro Johansson observed in her study Good Friends Merry Fighters that violence and death are elements in most games to various degrees (Johansson 2003:131). When asking the children themselves why they play the games the answer is usually that it is fun and exciting (Johansson 2003:134). The violence is a way to achieve the goal and not the goal itself (Johansson 2003:136-137).

In the computer games, the plot is rudimentary and there are no individual fortunes that can engage the feelings of the player. The focus lies on the very act that the player him/herself performs.

In the context of children’s computer game playing, violence fills different purposes. However, the action of fighting and killing in the scenery of the game is of minor significance compared to the joy and excitement of the playing itself (Johansson 2003:144).

However, Johansson’s study is mainly focused on games rated for children and not games rated for teenagers. These games, still on some occasion filter down to the younger population creating difficulties for parents and teachers. The game Grand Theft Auto, known as GTA, rated for mature/teen, features the life of a gangster, where the player runs around town completing missions through acts of violence, beating up an innocent grand-pa to steal his car and defying the police. In the school where my mother is a teacher, GTA has become a real problem since the kids have made a real life game based on this otherwise virtual game, beating up each other and vandalizing property.

Games have become powerful tools to reach out to young people. As well as they can be used for good, by creating educational games; they can also be used for evil. There are, for example, games specifically designed to spread propaganda of warfare and heroism through killing.

In 2002, a year after 9/11, the United States Army founded the creation of the game “American Army”. The game features an environment based on maps over Iraq, with copies of real existing buildings, roads and habitats, where the player in the body of an American soldier ventures the ground to kill insurgents. It is a first-person-shooter game where your vision is subjective, seen out of the eye of the shooter. The player use standard weapons, carried by the United States army, to prepare for the real deal. The game is available for free on the net and is used to recruit soldiers to the United States Army. American Army is the first game, funded by a military power in order to create real life soldiers out of young people (Guerre 2007). Although, the game is not meant for children, it too like GTA filters down to a much younger audience than intended.

The aim of the computer game is to convey a view of reality in which the players identify themselves. When playing computer games you enact a role, identify yourself with it, and strive to overcome tribulations in the body of your character. You form what Van Looy defines as “a transcendental unity” with your game character. Personal pronouns and spatial references are tied to the game character (Van Looy 2010:183,184). This is why players sometimes find themselves changing the gender they refer to each other by in accordance with the gender of the character they are playing and not in accordance with the gender of the player. It is when a game is successful in creating these transcendental units that games like American Army and GTA becomes true dangers to the health of the players; when children identify themselves with killers and gangsters.

When a player enters the virtual world in the body of an avatar, we call it avatarsial introjections (Van Looy 2010:177). In the online gaming setting, individuals are integrated with machines. The simulated body is informational. The avatar-user relation, in which a player uses an avatar as a vehicle to navigate cyberspace, is sometimes reversed in the way that the avatar may influence the users actions and beliefs (O'Riordan 2006:247), in the same way as the “transcendental unity” described by Van Looy.
The avatarial introjections can arouse an emotional experience in the interaction with the non-actual reality inside the world of make-believe (Van Looy 2010:180). These virtual bodies are not humans transformed into data but embodied fantasies. As such, they reproduce problematic versions of identity and manifest the notion of the normative body; they create stereotypes and conventions (O’Riordan 2006:250-251).

Van Looy suggests that, while playing computer games, the player engages in “pretense play” by generating perception (Van Looy 2010:154). This pretense is voluntary but the player must accept the variables of the game as real in order for the play to continue (Van Looy 2010:159-160).

When a person plays computer games, he or she projects his or her mind into a virtual body. This is called subjective imagining, where a person becomes part of the picture he or she is imagining (Van Looy 2010:168). The subjective imagining allows the player to enact imagined performances and compare them to others. Furthermore, introducing rules into the imagined facilitates the possibility of probing the self to find its position in the world (Van Looy 2010:170).

Computer games allow participants to assume the roles they might have to play in real life, they create understanding and sympathy, broaden perspectives and allow the player to cope and understand his or her feelings and environment (Van Looy 2010:167).

That cyber culture enables the creation of identities cannot be questioned. However, it is disputed how coherent and stable these created identities are when the subjects creating them have the ability to express multiple ”selves” in the virtual environment (Figueroa Sarriera 2006:97, 98). The ideal state of identity, as seen by Figueroa Sarriera, must then be perceived as a stable singularity. This I question. I believe it is the possibility of expressing multiple “selves” that makes the cyber cultural arena an ideal place of creating identity because it is this feature that allow players to explore their different perceptions of who they are and merge together these perceptions into what in the end will constitute their identity.

Viewing cyber culturally made identities as unstable because they contain multiple selves would suggest that the normal state of an identity is “stable”. Viewing identity as stable there would be no room for change and as such no room for development. From this view, no person would be able to better him/herself; an unstable identity, on the other hand, is accessible to improvement.

I rather agree with Fung who suggests that cyber life can help improving self-confidence by giving players a second chance of developing a new virtual self (Fung 2006:134), or Van Looy who views cyber life as a way to probe the world and the self (Van Looy 2010). However, we must not forget that an environment that is ideal for creating identity is also a target for bad influences such as GTA and American Army and should not be taken lightly.

3.3 Setting
Cyber culture is recognized as a space in which subjects share and experience the same concerns, identity and interests (Fung 2006:132-133). It is a new social
space with new forms of social exchange, sociability and new identity patterns. This communicative web creates a social web (Alcántara 2007:229, 237). The developers of cyberspace recognize this. They produce an online environment similar to the real-life, replicating the issues of real-life: conflicts, chaos, pressures and problems, enabling players to solve their issues in the virtual environment (Fung 2006:133).

Since the setting of online gaming is a replication of real life, online networks only survive through referencing and connecting aspects of the real daily life to the virtual space (Fung 2006:137). As such, it is impossible to polarize the cyber world and the real world, given that the online setting is dictated and limited by the real-world setting (Fung 2006:138).

Digital environments consist of four properties. They are procedural because they are dependent on programming, participational as the state of the programming is dependent on participating actions, spatial in their structure and encyclopedic in the way that they are able to store massive amounts of information (Van Looy 2010:33-34). As such, we could view digital environments like shopping malls, they are dependent on the manager who programs the workers to behave a specific way, dependent on the customers and their opinion to survive financially, spatial in the way they are constructed and because of their structure they are able to store massive amounts of product. So, what do we do in these gigantic shopping malls?

According to Van Looy, in the setting of computer games we “play”. “Play”, as an activity follows six criteria’s:

- Play is not obligatory
- Play is limited in space and time
- Play has an unknown outcome
- Play does not create wealth
- Play is governed by rules
- Play is based in a world of make-believe

Looking at computer game playing from Van Looy’s perception, we can only apply “play” on the games that are made for single play that has not made it to the e-sports arena, where games are played on a professional level to win real life resources. Multiplayer games often contain some element of peer-pressure as noted by Linderoth and Bennerstedt in their study *Living in World of Warcraft* (Linderoth & Bennerstedt 2007:41).

Trying to apply this theory on multiplayer games like Dota the theory is unfortunately flawed and if put into practice it could easily be disproven. If a person joins in the play because of peer-pressure from his or her friends, does the play suddenly become something other than play? If a person plays a game in a competition and wins money, is it no longer play? I do not cast away Van Looy’s six criteria but I suggest that we view them rather as criteria for how the play should be perceived by the player to be “play”. A player who competes and wins money is still engaged in “play” as long as he is not playing for the sole reason of earning money. A player, who plays a game because his friends ask him to, is still “playing” as long as he does not perceive the play as an obligation.

According to Van Looy, it is this aimlessness that enables a free play state where problems can be explored and culture produced by driving the players to
generate theories and produce codes for sharing that knowledge (Van Looy 2010:232). I, however, disagree. I cannot see why the aimlessness of these six criteria is imperative for players to generate theories or produce codes. Even the professional players who do play for the sole reason of creating wealth is dependent on generating theories and using codes for sharing knowledge as well as the players who play out of peer-pressure.

3.4 The Community

A virtual community is [...] a group of people who share something socially that unites them and where the link is sufficiently powerful so that a sense of belonging could emerge and in some cases even a feeling of identity.


According to Introna, in order that a community has a social and ethical value it must fulfill two conditions, a horizon of common concern and a horizon of common meaning. To be a community the members must share a horizon of common concern (Introna 2007:97, 99). This horizon, over time, becomes a set of prejudices that enables the defining of the community’s identity and its boundary through rites of exclusion.

The prejudices produced in the community, tend over time, to become part of the background. At this stage, the stranger becomes a threat as he or she has the power to disrupt status quo and challenge these rooted prejudices that defines the community. The virtuality of the online community enables the stranger to intrude more easily since no filters can contain all strangers (Introna 2007:100, 101, 107). The sense of community is dependent on a close proximity between the members (Introna 2007:96). The shared horizon of common concern is vital to create proximity between members (Introna 2007:106).

According to Alcántara, the network of actively interacting actors produces a collective identity (Alcántara 2007:235). This identity is expressed, as stated by Introna, through language, practices, artifacts and tools. These forms of expression constitute the community’s horizon of meaning. The horizon of meaning is durable and nuanced; it expresses a clear difference between the inside and the outside. The more the actors invest themselves in the community the closer they are tied to it and the preservation of the community becomes a core concern of the individual: the identity of the individual becomes tightly linked to the identity of the community (Introna 2007:104-105). To the active users of computer games, the community is a vital tool where they can express their horizon of common concern and meaning.

The virtuality of online communities enables its members to encounter each other on different terms than in their embodied lives (Introna 2007:105). Pimienta observes that the liberation from the constraints of distance smoothes out geographic and cultural borders and separates the phenomena of culture from the geographic field moving it to the virtual where its evolution is sustained through participative processes (Pimienta 2007:208). Online communities provide a sense of belonging, security and identity that function as a substitute for the geographically tied community. However, online communities are not replacing
the geographically bounded ones but co-existing with them (Fung 2006:129). Geographical “culture” co-exists with virtual “culture” in the same way. As Taylor states, offline values are not left behind when a player move online, neither is culture (Taylor 2006:153).

According to Fung, online communities are not purely virtual; the users are closely connected with each other through real-life identities. As such, cyber culture is interwoven in the daily life (Fung 2006:130). In his study of Jinyong, an online role-playing game, Fung finds that isolation is a disadvantage and the game encourages, through its structure, the players to join social networks called “tribes”. The game features chatting, cheating, warfare, trade, camaraderie, and self-development: features that Fung points out are elements of the “real” life as well (Fung 2006:131). As such, cyber life has integrated itself with real life to such an extent that social relationships are inseparable with cyber life (Fung 2006:131-132).

These virtual social networks are equally important as the social relationships in everyday life. Offline interaction while playing, for instance in a cybercafé or using a voice-chat program, enhances social relationships both in the offline and online life (Fung 2006:135). The online community promises a bright future for education in the way that it enables knowledge to be shared and created collectively (Pimienta 2007:207). Taylor makes some good points in this area by suggesting that the players might create a collective intelligence through communities where the players can share tips and post guides on how to play (Taylor 2006:81).

However, the extensiveness of the web makes it possible for online communities to form where what could be considered “the wrong knowledge and values” are shared. As Taylor states, issues concerning gender or race, for example, does not fall away online but get imported into the new space in complicated ways (Taylor 2006:153). As such, these issues can be imported and reinforced through the use of communities and there are several communities advocating, for example, racism, anti-semitism or homophobia, located on the web just a “Google” away. One way to deal with this problem is through administrators.

The role of the administrator might take the form of a gatekeeper, deciding which posts are allowed on the site and which are not. The administrator guards the users from inappropriate language and posts containing degrading statements towards different cultures, race and sexual orientation, leaving the community a safe environment where the players may share opinions. As such, exploring communities, you must view them not only as communities but also as social hierarchies deeply embedded with power-relationships not only between the “posters” but also between the “posters” and the administrator(s) of the site (Taylor 2006:83).

3.5 The Team
As Goffman states (see page 47), team members must recognize that they cannot uphold a face against each other (Goffman 1974:77). A player may gain confidence in collective actions, like those of a team, by exposing his or her real-life identity in the gaming milieu (Fung 2006:136). This means that to be able to
trust the team the players have to share parts of themselves with the other players, knowledge that, like the rites of institution described by Bourdieu (see page 41), serves to define the members as initiated, excluding others who do not possess this knowledge.

Social connections, collective knowledge, and group actions are central to the individual’s experience (Taylor 2006:9). Johansson describes how she observed that the children in her study seemed to have more fun when everyone got involved in the playing, making the game a common project (Johansson 2003:143). Looking at team games like Dota, the engagement of all players in the game is imperative to the success of both the team and the player since all the team members performances add up to the final result of the team. As such, a disengaged player can drag down the whole team’s result.

The unity of the team becomes stronger when facing a common enemy. To function as a team the team needs to establish consensus. Fung finds that, consensus is more successfully established when the players meet face-to-face. As such, Internet cafés become spaces where the team may organize common strategies, evaluate collective capital, divide labor and establish leadership (Fung 2006:135).

The commitment to a larger group moves the idea of socializing beyond simple chatting, or informal friendship networks, to recognition that there is a fundamental necessity to rely on others in the game (Taylor 2006:88). Being in a group brings with it a range of traditional issues associated with sports. Groups have leaders, either informal or formal, and participants engage in various roles and tasks for successful play (Taylor 2006:106). Some teams develop code words that express, for example, where they run into enemies and a variety of things that is of use to the team’s shared awareness (Ungdomsstyrelsen 2006:2:109).

In a team, like within any group of people, there is a hierarchy defined through a role taking process. The roles are constructed in reference to the currently dominant discourse. Johansson defines discourses as “truths that always compete with other discourses about being defined as the predominant, or preferably the only truth” (Johansson 2003:135). In Dota, the play discourse defines not only the real-life roles of team members but also their virtual roles within the game, which are closely linked to their real-life roles.

Virtual battle arenas have become increasingly popular. There are significant differences between the different arenas, used for multiplayer games, but most multiplayer games share the feature that they depend on co-operation between the players (Ungdomsstyrelsen 2006:2:88). As Falkner states:

To play multiplayer is elementary social; it revolves around doing something together with other people.

cannot tell us the whole truth. I suggest that both forms of play need to be explored and I take it upon me to add something to the research field of sessional multiplayer gaming in this study of Dota.

3.6 The Competition

Opposition and conflict lie at the very basis of how we interpret and represent the world.


The fascination of gaming lies in the will to overcome obstacles, to reach new heights and evolve (Ungdomsstyrelsen 2006:2:88). As such, the progression in a game is defined by a growth topos, a desire to evolve (Van Looy 2010:132). This growth topos, in context of competition, introduces an economical dynamic to the game, where objects of “evolution” become commodities (Van Looy 2010:132).

Jakobsson, who researches e-sports and cyber-athletes, questions the distinction between sport and gaming by declaring that the difference between sports in the “real world” and in the virtual is simply that the virtual provides no limit to the possibilities. Only the programming within the games define how far you can go (Jakobsson 2007:65).

E-sports have become increasingly popular and are given much attention especially in Korea where you can watch a computer game in an arena just as you can watch a football game in Sweden. The most popular e-sport games are Counter-strike, Warcraft 3 and Battlefield. At a lower level, the teams are usually called clans but among the elite, the teams are instead called e-sport teams. The e-sport teams are often made up of players with different nationalities. Since tournaments for girls often get less attention than the ordinary tournaments, it is quite common to see girls compete alongside with the boys (Ungdomsstyrelsen 2006:2:108,110).

3.7 Morality, Values and Traditions

When the rules apply to everyone equally, everyone is equal.


One of the basic principles of gaming is that all players should start out on an equal basis (Van Looy 2010:160). Every contestant should theoretically have the same chance of winning. After the rules are applied, only the skill of the player determines his or her success (Van Looy 2010:246). When the rules are acknowledged, equal treatment is enabled and the rules must be upheld throughout the entire game (Van Looy 2010:160).

Rules are used to restrict, guide and limit bodily actions (Van Looy 2010:184). The moderator, that is the computer, governs the play and maintains the system of rules (Van Looy 2010:160). Computers are dumb but honest machines; they cannot cheat or make judgments based on anything outside of their programming. They are, as such, neutral; they do not perceive race, gender, age or any demographic variables outside of their vision (Van Looy 2010:246).
such, computers should really be viewed as role models for the creation of a better society. However, where there are rules, there are people who break them. A cheater is someone who violates the rules while pretending to respect them. The cheater is dependent on others following the rules, lest he or she would lose the advantages gained through cheating (Van Looy 2010:148).

Breaking the rules declared by the moderator is only possible through players successful altering of the game. No cheating can be done through standard actions; what can be done in the game is allowed. As such, the player must change “what can be done” to be able to cheat (Van Looy 2010:149).

However, there is also another set of rules that hides beneath the surface, rules that players do not tend to give notice to. Barbro Johansson calls these “play rules”. She observed that the children adapt to different play rules to solve problems like “how to organize the playing when there’s just one computer?” (Johansson 2003:132).

These play rules, constituted by the players, can always be created or recreated towards their preferred purpose. Players may ignore or invoke, challenge or defend, and sometimes enforce the rules to create a befitting environment for the players to enjoy the game on more common ground (Taylor 2006:157).

While studying the online role-playing game “Jinyong”, Fung found traces of common moral principles within the tribes playing the game. The common moral states that brutal killings should be avoided. As a result, the identity of notorious “player killers” are circulated and publicly condemned by the community (Fung 2006:131). A player must cultivate a socially acknowledged virtual character to fit in with informal rules existing within the virtual social networks (Fung 2006:134). However, rules are often broken and unwanted practices such as bullying are quite common on the net; it has been experienced by about 18% of the older users of computer games in Sweden (Mediarådet 2008:45).

Alcántara concludes that the Internet provides the possibility of constructing a more equal and friendly world based on principles of solidarity. However, not everyone have access to the new information technologies and the digital divide created as a result is a hindrance to the creation of a more equal world (Alcántara 2007:240-241). As such, Internet does enable a brighter future but it is a future far far away. Not until the technology has become so cheap that anyone can afford it, can we start talking about a more equal world. Taking the interest of the market in mind it would be financially unsound for corporations to sell their products at a price where everyone could afford it. As such, the future we are dreaming of would only be possible by changing human nature itself and the human drive for success and wealth.

3.8 Capital

The mechanism, which allows virtual capital and real capital to be exchanged, has essentially announced the death of the ideal and paved the way for real-life intervention of the virtual.

The space of cyber life is a space of exclusion and inclusion that originates from the socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds of the individuals within it (Fung 2006:136). As such, real-life capital is converted into virtual capital and used to define positions within the virtual field in the same way that capital is used to define positions in any given field.

Capital can be converted from the virtual to the "real", as well, by the trade of fictional bodies, weapons and utilities (Fung 2006:137). It is a highway of economic exchange where virtual capital can be produced inside the virtual and exchanged for real money. In Second Life, users can create virtual objects to trade for real money. Another example is Project Entropia where the economy is completely dependent on players exchanging real money for virtual money (Van Looy 2010:134-135). Virtual economy functions to imitate an economic reality, to maintain an illusion of scarcity (Van Looy 2010:172). Even though Van Looy claims that “virtual” means something like “almost real” and that it is real only in appearance not in fact (Van Looy 2010:125), Fung states that: “there is no difference between the cyber world and the real capitalistic world” (Fung 2006:137).

To survive in the virtual environment of gaming you have to accumulate wealth and resources. Money dominates in both worlds and serves as a link between the two. This pervasiveness of capital and its ability to penetrate into the new virtual world paves the way of “a future that will reflect the commercial past” (Fung 2006:137, 138).

This contagion of the “real” capitalist system into the virtual is not one of a kind. The contagion extends to many other events where the games become subject to real-world influence. The contagion can be seen through commercial product placement where corporations pay to have their products displayed as part of the gaming environment, through advertising banners that advertise for products that do not exist in the virtual, through the input produced by players and through the introduction of cheats (Van Looy 2010:147-148). It can be seen, as on DreamHack, by corporations who front their products at the place of play.

Cultural capital is produced online through processes of cultural production. These processes signify the evolving structuration that produces cyber culture and defines the value of capital in the field.

Cyber social reality is constructed both individually and collectively through the interweaving patterns, actions and interpretations of life. The cultural side of constructed reality is recognized as processes of meaning and commonality that negotiate common sense, a construction of common understanding and establishment of norms (Gotved 2006:171). As in any production of constructed reality, capital plays an important part in its creation.

According to Gotved, the relations between space and time are out of balance. This change challenges the established time zones and results in a necessity to perceive time differently. Time is important in the construction of cyber social reality. Space is important in the perception of that reality. As Gotved states “time is inscribed as a factor in every sort of communication”. As such, social meaning is in part tied to the time spent in the context.

Spatiality helps us make sense of our surroundings. The social world is perceived through spatial terms like hierarchy, proximity, network and so forth (Gotved 2006:173-176). Markers of game progression, such as level and stats,
enhance the models of status and hierarchy at work in the game (Taylor 2006:49). Consequently, time in itself becomes a form of capital.

Online gaming is a closed market consisting of only a few games, a harsh climate where not all games survive; a market that is dependent on active users (Lauwert 2009:94-95). As such, the users, like time, become capital in the field. As seen by Taylor:

Game designers increasingly rely on productive player communities, be it to prepare a product for commercial launch or to update and refine a game once it has reached the market.


The structure of the game is vital to its survival. Structural flaws dissatisfy the users and create unwanted behavior (Lauwert 2009:97). To find these flaws, corporations co-operate with so called “beta-testers” who are allowed to play and explore the game for free before it is released in return for valuable insight into the play experience of the game. Beta testers find bugs (programming errors) and share their opinions about the game, allowing the producers to model the game in accordance with the opinion of potential “buyers” before releasing it on to the market (Lauwert 2009:99-100). To attract and hold on to beta-testers the corporations must compete to make their games attractive even before they are released. If the beta-testers are bored with the game, their part of the production is discontinued.

To keep the beta-testers interested in the game, it is vital that the corporation listens to the testers opinion and continually updates the game in accordance with them. It is also important that the corporations keep the line of communication open, sending information-messages about the progress of the game as well as making it easy for testers to send their feedback to the creator(s).

3.9 Structuring Society
Culture is closely linked to daily life. It has its own shape, purpose and meaning. Producing and maintaining society is done through exploring common meanings and directions. The process of producing culture consists of two elements, a traditional consisting of known meanings and a creative, which includes the pursuit of finding new meanings (Van Looy 2010:49).

Technology is part of the process of structuring society. Culture is the humans’ desire to play. Games can be used to find cultural indicators such as semantic patterns expressing preferences, weaknesses and strengths of society in a fixed state of its evolution. As such, games mirror society (Van Looy 2010:50). By mirroring society, games simulate the processes of socialization, institutionalization and cultivation taking place in real life and, consequently, become part of that process.

Every computer simulation consists of entities, states and events. The objects in the simulation are the entities, the value of the entities are determined by the state that defines the possible moves and power relations between objects. Events are actions that change the state, for example the movement of an object (Van Looy 2010:75). If you think of gaming as a game of chess the entities are the pieces. The value of the different pieces is defined by the possible moves they can
make and their position in relation to other pieces on the board. Moving a piece on the board changes its position and therefore its value and the value of the other pieces it affects.

The purpose of the computer simulation can be either physical or behavioral. The physical tries to mimic reality as close as possible and is used to collect statistics. The behavioral tries to mimic human and group behavior to account for the irregularities in human behavior through calculating the probability of a certain behavior (Van Looy 2010:77-78).

Computer games are simulations, which consists of virtual entities that interact in accordance to a given set of rules (Van Looy 2010:85). When you make a computer game you need to create a reality that is attractive to the player but you also need to have an understanding of the behavior of the player. Playing computer games is all about asking questions. You ask the game a question and the game answers. “Can I jump over this cliff?” “Yes!” Sais the computer and allows you to jump. This is why you need to know the players behavior. When creating a game you must foresee all possible questions a player may ask. Answering, “I do not know...” is not an option and may create bug. All questions must have answers in order for the play to continue.

Every simulation is a ‘simplified’ version of reality, and, as such, it is based on the conceptions and beliefs of its designers.


That is, the conception of reality and the players as perceived through the eyes of designers.

Viewing the process of creating culture as detriment or potentially hazardous, we may perform interesting experimentations, according to Taylor. That is to say that only when we really acknowledge these spaces, offline/online, as legitimate and powerful sites of production, and acknowledge the diverse agents involved in their creation, can we begin to address the challenges facing them progressively (Taylor 2006:154).

The cultural aspect is often the unarticulated component hiding below many of the debates we currently see rising to the surface in this field. Rather than thinking narrowly about how property or speech should be regulated we could formulate the question as: how much culture can be regulated and through which means? (Taylor 2006:154).

3.10 Language
Language, expressed through chatting activities, is vital in developing and maintaining relationships online. The games become platforms where players communicate and interact, sharing values and beliefs (Fung 2006:134). Language allows us to perceive the space behind the screen as an actual space through metaphors, analogies, expressions of sound and so forth (Gotved 2006:174).

There are many sites where information about computer games can be found. Foot observes that personal websites are more likely to enable visitors to add their own comments to the site (Foot 2006:92). To track the language of computer game culture, there is, as a result, a value in finding the sites that the players use to express themselves between each other.
The language of computer games is also visible in the coding and naming processes found in the interaction between players; taught through processes of socialization.

### 3.11 Acts of Institution

To fit in with the community, group or team, the members go through a process of social engineering in which the rules of coexistence are taught and the ethical concepts, which sustain the rules are defined (Pimienta 2007:207).

Being new to a game can be both exciting and at the same time cause for distress. Entering the hostile field of experienced players can be hard if you are on your own (Taylor 2006:32). The solution to this problem is to undergo a rite of institution by becoming a member in a clan or a team.

When a clan recruits new members, the new additions generally undergo a process of evaluation in which they petition to join the clan/team. Applicants are regularly required to spend some time grouping with members of the clan to see whether they will fit in with the team or clan (Taylor 2006:43). Attention is given in assessing whether they are a good fit with any codes of conduct a clan/team might have (Taylor 2006:44).

### 3.12 Conclusions Drawn from Previous Studies

When you are to perform a study, no matter the subject, one of the most vital tasks is to find where the need is. By looking at previous research within the field of study, you may find the gaps in-between where further study is needed. My intent is to investigate my research question “Assuming that processes of socialization, institutionalization and cultivation is at play within the field of computer game playing, specifically in the field of Dota, what function does these processes have and how do they influence the play and the players?” and the issues raised in reference to Bourdieu and Goffman. In this section, I will, in short, go through how these topics have been explored and motivate where I find need for further study.

Interaction has been very thoroughly explored and does not need much more investigation. However, the complex relationship between the online and offline need some further exploration. Previous studies do speak of these spaces but they mainly confirm their presence, they do not go into detail in how these spaces differ and how the relationships between players may change when moving between these spaces.

How identities may be developed using computer games has been a focus in many computer game studies. That computer games play an important part in the development of character cannot be questioned and I see no further need in investigating this question. However, speaking of role taking as part of the identity process, there is much more exploration needed and in Dota where the ”role” is of such important, this issue can be explored to a great advantage.

When it comes to setting, studies mainly focus on the virtual part of the setting and not the actual space where the embodied player is located when entering into the virtual. As such, there is a need to explore how the ”real-life” setting influences the players in relation to the virtual. Looking at the setting of computer games, in difference to looking at the field, my main focus is to find the
environment in which the games are played. I distinguish setting from field by looking at setting as a space of material objects rather than an abstract space of power relations and forces: such as I view the field. As such, the environment at DreamHack where the study’s main part will take place is of great importance.

There is much research about online communities and I therefore do not see a point in exploring this part of the field in detail. However, some exploration into which communities are particularly important to the players of my study is still of interest and can be used to find subjects for the study.

Looking at research about the team-feature of computer game playing there is much more research needed. In Dota, the role-taking feature is a major part of the team’s essence and I will for that reason link those two questions in my study and investigate them as one, since every team is at its core founded in a set of power relations defined through roles.

Viewing computer game playing as a competition, there is much research about e-sports but not that much about the features of the game itself. Morality is an important issue when it comes to games since upholding the moral between the players is in part what enables the game to function. There have been studies on this subject but more is needed. Studies about cheating, easily makes the phenomenon too simple than it is. Cheating is not black and white because ”cheating” is a perception in relation to the perception of ”rules” and perceptions cannot so easily be declared as truths. Using hermeneutics and social constructionism as perspective I cannot declare anything as true: rules and cheating are, as such, defined by socially constructed definitions, which research have yet neglected to explore.

How capital is used in the computer game field does not need much more investigation but exploring how capital is used in the particular field of Dota can still be of interest.

How games structure subculture is perceived through morality, values and traditions. As such, I intend to put focus on these topics rather than the actual structuring of society since society is in many ways a product of structuring morality, values and traditions. Studies tend to put this structuring of society into a macro perspective looking at the phenomenon from ”above”. My study will not indulge in the macro level at all but is narrowed to the micro level where I find there is much more need of further study.

The language used by computer game players has only been touched on the surface. The complex system of codes and naming needs my attention and Dota, being a game of strategy and deeply reliant on coding, is the perfect field to search for answers.

Like language, acts of institution have not been sufficiently explored and I will, as a result, put focus on the acts of institution that takes place when players are initialized into the team or clan.

Now I have thoroughly gone through the questions I did find some form of answer to but there are still some that I did not find any research about at all. These are: habitus, naming, symbolic power and titles.

Habitus is most important when it comes to my own perception of the study and to remember that the perception of all subjects is after all only perceptions founded in habitus.
Naming refers to the phenomena that are given names and a place in the language of computer game playing.

Symbolic power refers to the power players acquire through various processes of negotiating power relations. I will investigate both how symbolic power is acquired and how it can be used.

Titles are closely linked to symbolic power, as well as to role taking. These titles inherit symbolic power and can only be acquired through collective processes. That is to say, that a person cannot give him or herself a title, a title is given by the collective. I will explore which titles are relevant to the field and how players can acquire these.
4. Theory

Culture and Media

Media cannot in any sense be understood as separate entities. Media is necessary in maintaining and structuring modern societies (Jensen 2002:171). Media has a reflexive function that can be summed up into two parts. First, it contextualizes events and issues in the world to each other. Second, it re-contextualizes those events and issues by giving alternative perspectives and choices of interpretation (Jensen 2002:171, 172). It is in this way Jensen suggests that media maintain society (Jensen 2002:172). These choices of interpretation that Jensen claims media is providing are inspired by the hermeneutic theory, advocating an interpreting standpoint in handling media content.

“Culture is that which simultaneously unites and differentiates human beings.”


All human beings share culture; they experience and communicate meaning. The traditional view of culture ties culture to particular social groups in a geographical location, however, the boundaries of culture have lately been blurred by new communication technology, allowing culture to extend across space and time (Jensen 2002:172). As such, we see a new form of cultivation process arising that uses these new tools for transference.

There are two ways of perceiving culture: culture as a product of human creativity and culture as a process, which pervades all of mental and social life. Perceiving culture as a process, we refer to the cultivation of the human spirit, a lived reality of the every-day-life. Culture as a product has been given negative connotations by the industrialization of culture, the mass-production of culture (Jensen 2002:172). According to Jensen, culture is structures of meaning that may be influenced by economic infrastructures, national political regulation and local cultural formations (Jensen 2002:173). As such, culture is not only linked to cultivation but also to institutionalization and socialization.

The modernization of social relations has given life to several new subcultures (Jensen 2002:173). Subcultures are a way of life. Subcultures are self-reliant cultural formations, historical forms of social organization. Subcultures like the one encircling computer games blur the geographical boundaries of nations, bringing them together, bridging the gap between cultural differences. They reintroduce elements of Gemeinschaft, homogeneous, communitarian social formations, into the modern context. These cultural formations are subordinated to a national culture.

Subcultures represent social and cultural universes in opposition to a perceived mainstream national culture. Subcultural universes generate a sense of community and solidarity that does not stop at the national border (Jensen 2002:176). In this way, culture becomes an element of social conflict and change.
Subcultures can become sites of social struggle by exercising a resistance through rituals (Jensen 2002:177).

The computer as a medium was not recognized until the 1980s and the general view of the medium was that of a mass medium. With the introduction of the World Wide Web during the 1990s the view of computers as medium was changed and it began to be recognized as a completely new type of medium. The new view of the medium noted the importance of integration and how this feature facilitates social divergence; it enables more diverse and dispersed forms of interaction. The new medium’s increased transmission capacity and mobility, challenges the time-space distanciation of communication. Today computers have been embedded into everyday objects, which raise three important questions:

Thinking of the medium as a tool for online data collection the question of accessibility emerges. Internet allows its users access to a massive field of knowledge. However, this access is limited. First, because access demands the use of technical instruments that might not be available to everyone. This creates a digital divide between those who can and those who cannot. Secondly, because the knowledge in itself might not be valid seeing how the vast quantity of information makes the data difficult to verify.

The second question is the question of the validity of findings. Internet allows its user to take on multiple identities, which limits the explanatory value of any information collected since it might not be traceable to its original source. In other words, we do not know who is speaking or is responsible for the information.

The third question is that of research ethics. Data collected online encounters the difficult question of what is public and what is private. In this way, Internet may blur the boundaries between the private and the public sphere leaving the researcher in an ethical dilemma. Consequently, the researcher faces question of anonymity, confidentiality and informed consent (Jensen 2002:182-184).

To face this issue I have chosen only to use the information provided by the subjects themselves. Any information about them that they have not shared with me during interview or open observation will not be mentioned in this paper. I have chosen not to do any research about the subjects. In this way, I limit my own perception of their identities to be built on information gained with their consent.

Looking at computers as a medium of interactivity Jensen speaks of three types of interactivity. Interaction 1, refers to the medium-user relation of communication, how users may interact with the medium to influence the media content. This interaction is characterized by selectivity. Selections by the user are necessary for the interaction to proceed. By making different selections, the users may influence the media content they receive.

The second type of interaction refers to how Internet provides access to a public sphere. This creates a relation between media and social structure. The third type of interaction refers to how the medium may be used to structure society. It refers to how social agents participate in the structuration of society through the medium (Jensen 2002:184, 185). This third type of interaction is especially important to my study since it is closely linked to my research question.
regarding the function of socialization, institutionalization and cultivation within the field of computer game playing.

According to Jensen, intertextuality may be understood as a framework for how textual meanings are produced and circulated in society. The computer as medium amplifies the degree of intertextuality present in society (Jensen 2002:186, 187). Intertextuality, as I recognize it, is the idea of how textual meanings is connected to each other.

Looking at computer games, we find a high degree of intertextuality. Warcraft III as an example, shares many traits with Nordic, Germanic and ancient Greek mythology. In Warcraft III, we find both Elves, from the Germanic mythology and Orchs from the Nordic mythology. In Dota, we find the hero Zeus from the ancient Greek mythology.

To use creatures from mythology seems to be quite common in computer games. This intertextuality provides the players with a preordained understanding of the characters they face in the games. A player expects the elves to carry bows and the Orchs to carry axes and Zeus to through bolts of lightning. The works of Tolkien and the filming of Lord of the Rings have helped to put the Orchs and the Elves on the map in western popular culture.

Computers are often blamed to be the cause of a “dumbening” of the younger generation. However, this lack of educational value ascribed to computer games have on many occasions been disproved by previous researchers (see chapter 3).

Jensen speaks of computers as a tool for reorganizing work and education, a conception closely linked to the view of computing as communication (Jensen 2002:190). I share his point of view but would like to expand the concept since there are many games that take part in the educational act itself, such as Backpacker and The Human Body (original title: “Människokroppen”).

Another critique that the usage of computers receives is that computers substitute human connection. The most obvious evidence of this perceived substitution is the existence of artificial intelligence (Jensen 2002:190). However, the polarization between human interaction and the interaction between human and artificial intelligence may not be as black and white as some claim. It is full of gray shades. The claim that humans substitute other humans with artificial intelligence does not take into account how artificial intelligence may also enable interaction between humans instead of only substituting them.

In many computer games, artificial intelligence may take the form of an opposing force to the characters played by humans. In Dota, a team of human players may chose to play against an artificially intelligent team if they do not find opponents to play with. This takes away some of the social interaction between teams but not the social interaction within the team. However, using AI-bots is usually not the preferred way of playing to most of the gamers since no matter how well programmed the artificially intelligent opponents are, they do not have the inventiveness of humans and can never pose the same challenge as playing against other humans does.

Another way artificial intelligence may enable human interaction lies within the structure of the game itself. In Dota, both teams have artificially intelligent “helpers” who fight alongside with the human players. Without the artificially intelligent forces, from which you may earn gold and experience, the economical system of the game would solely rely on the resources you may gain
by killing the other players, which would remove not only part of the fun but also a major part of the variation in the game and the amount of possible strategies used.

4.1 Bourdieu
Although Bourdieu does not specifically research computers or Internet, his theories are like Jensen’s work related to my research question and the purpose of this study. Looking at socialization, institutionalization, cultivation, human interaction and the creation of identity, the hidden powers that influence these mechanisms are revealed in theoretical terms by using the theories of Bourdieu. In this study, we will discuss Habitus, which creates practices and give them meaning. We will discuss the field of abstract power relations, represented by the possession of capital, that defines which roles are handed to the players when interacting. We will discuss rites of institution that serve to create unity within the team and to distinguish the members from the non-members. In this chapter, my aim is to present these theoretical terms such as Bourdieu defines them himself.

4.1.1 Habitus
Habitus is the ability to produce classifiable practices and products, and the ability to value and distinguish them from each other (Bourdieu 1993:298). Habitus is a necessity, transformed generative dispositions that produce practices and gives them meaning (Bourdieu 1993:298). Habitus transcends the field in which it was given birth and gives the ability to create systematic and universal applications on new grounds (Bourdieu 1993:298).

Different existential conditions produce different habitus, which in turn produces practices that tend to appear like systematic configurations of characteristics that express objective differences in the existential conditions (Bourdieu 1993:299). Actors acknowledge these systems, equipped with frameworks of perception and estimations of value, which is needed to decipher and value the systems’ unique features. Habitus is not only a structuring structure that organizes practices and how they are perceived, but also a structured structure where the social world in itself is a product. The dispositions of habitus are representations of the structure of sign systems (Bourdieu 1993:300).

To prevent habitus from creating mechanical thinking, you need to acknowledge that the social world is a “knowledge act”, which means that primary knowledge is misguided, a product of habitus. The practices produced by habitus are works of structured products. They are produced by the same structured structure through the deciphering of the logic enforced by a given field (Bourdieu 1993:301). Habitus produces systematic transpositions, enforced by the different conditions existing in the different contexts where habitus is put to practice (Bourdieu 1993:302).
4.1.2 Field and Capital
The context in which habitus is put to practice is called “the field”. The field is a social space of abstract representation, a product of a structuring process that maps out the field before us where social everyday actors perceive the social world from different positions, different habitus, unaware of their own position in it and the relationship they have to other actors (Bourdieu 1993:297).

Upon the field, capital is distributed in unequal supply where the total volume of capital possessed defines the positions of actors (Bourdieu 1993:306-307). The logic of a given field is represented by the game and the capital necessary to participate in the game (Bourdieu 1993:269). It is a place of play where objective relationships between individuals and institutions compete for the same objective. It is the field’s general law that actors in dominating positions, holding the highest value of capital, stand in relation to any new additions to the field who hold less capital. The elder members of a field strategize to preserve a gradual accumulation of capital, while new members strategize to change the distribution of accumulated capital, revaluing the capital held by the dominating members (Bourdieu 1997:214-215).

Consequently, the value of capital is defined by its volume and structure at a given time in relation to the field in which it is used (Bourdieu 1993:269). As such, the specific laws of the field define the value of the group’s characteristics. This means that all the resources of the actor is not in play at the same time, only the logic of the field defines which resources are exploitable at the specific market, which in relation to the field functions like a specific form of capital (Bourdieu 1993:270). This means that the social status and power, the actors possess is dependent on the specific capital they can utilize; no matter what other forms of capital they possess (Bourdieu 1993:270).

Members of the field act in accordance with their own possessed capital as well as the possessed capital of all the others. Social laws determine the ways of accumulating capital (Bourdieu 1997:39, 73). The structure of the field is determined through the power relations created in the distribution of capital (Bourdieu 1997:128). A collective knowledge capital is shared between members within a specific field (Bourdieu 1997:33).

Capital can take both objectified form and incorporated form. The assets of capital define the chance of profit in a given field (Bourdieu 1993:230). Capital represents the determined state of the system of characteristics and resources that determine the status of the actors in the field (Bourdieu 1993:271).

The value of capital an actor possesses is defined in two stages; the first stage is the overall volume of capital and the second is the composition of the capital, the relative weight of different forms of capital (Bourdieu 1993:231).

Actors and groups are defined by their relative positions in the field. As such, an actor cannot occupy more than one region of the field. This space is a field of forces where objective power relations are imposed on every actor within the field and are not reducible to their actions or intentions (Bourdieu 1993:230).

The economic capital’s distribution structure is inverted symmetrically to the distribution structure of the cultural capital (Bourdieu 1993:278). “The intellectual” are, according to Bourdieu, the group that is richest of cultural capital and poorest of economical capital (Bourdieu 1997:259).
Cultural, social and symbolic capital is often called prestige, reputation or fame; the form taken by these various types of capital when they are perceived and recognized as legitimate (Bourdieu 1993:230). Apart from this feature, they also share the characteristic that they are all incorporated forms, forms that can be legally guaranteed and represent power over a field (Bourdieu 1993:230). Symbolic capital is capital of whatever kind perceived by an actor and recognized as self-evident (Bourdieu 1993:238).

Capital is used to define “truths” through struggles between specific authorities holding specific capital (Bourdieu 1997:197). Capital is tied to the field. For example, in a field where cultural capital is dominant, it is easier to accumulate cultural capital and social capital is more easily accumulated through social action (Bourdieu 1997:143, 210). Those who hold a specific capital are not interested in spreading the laws of how to accumulate that capital; it is the unequal distribution of capital that gives the dominant capital holders an advantage (Bourdieu 1997:20, 23).

**4.1.3 Language and Linguistic Capital**

Language is the exemplary formal mechanism whose generative capacities are without limits. There is nothing that cannot be said and it is possible to say nothing.

Bourdieu (1999:41)

To Bourdieu, language is “a kind of wealth” that anyone can acquire in limitless supply without draining the stock: where all who possess the treasure aid in the preservation of it (Bourdieu 1999:43). Language represents authority, legitimates and symbolizes it (Bourdieu 1999:109). Linguistic exchanges are expressions of symbolic power where the speakers of different groups are actualized (Bourdieu 1999:37).

The linguistic habitus contains socially constructed dispositions that define what we say and we do not say. It contains both the linguistic capacity to compose grammatically correct discourses as well as the social capacity to use this ability correctly in a given situation (Bourdieu 1999:37). Viewing language in relation to society, Bourdieu finds that "there are structures of the linguistic market, which impose themselves as a system of specific sanctions and censorships." Bourdieu (1999:37) Censorship determines not only the code, the manner of speaking, but also what the speech contains, what is possible to say and what is not (Bourdieu 1999:77).

There is a relationship between the linguistic habitus and the linguistic market; both are needed for communication to function effectively. Relying on only one of them results in errors and failures. Grammar translates meaning only partially; only in context to a market is meaning revealed in its entirety (Bourdieu 1999:38).

The discourses circulating on the linguistic market are produced through a co-operative process where the speaker stylize an “idiolect” from the universal language and the recipient produces the message in the way he or she perceives it through his or her experience (Bourdieu 1999:39). Language is charged with
social connotations, which reveal themselves most evidently when communication takes place between different social classes (Bourdieu 1999:40).

Linguistic capital carries power in its unequal distribution upon the linguistic field. Bourdieu differentiates the capital necessary to produce legitimate ordinary speech from the capital that is used as “instruments of expression”, which produces resources in objectified form: the written discourse worthy of publishing (Bourdieu 1999:57).

The legitimate language is not self-preserving but can only be continued through the ceaseless production of language made by the struggle between the authorities in the field that compete to impose the legitimate mode of expression. However, the linguistic forces that use language do not solely determine the linguistic power relation; the entire social structure is projected in each interaction (Bourdieu 1999:58, 67). The power of words is the “delegated power” of the voice and its speech (Bourdieu 1999:107).

The transmission of linguistic capital submits to the laws of the legitimate transmission of cultural capital. The quantity of linguistic capital possessed is as such, like cultural capital, dependent on the level of education and on the social trajectory (Bourdieu 1999:61).

There is no social agent who does not aspire, as far as his circumstance permit, to have the power to name and to create the world through naming (Bourdieu 1999:105).

Naming contributes in creating structure and the measure of the significance of naming increases the more it is recognized (Bourdieu 1999:105). There are two types of names: the common noun and the qualifying noun. Common nouns are produced through an official act of naming where an acknowledged agent bequeaths an official title. Qualifying nouns involve insults and have little symbolic efficacy since they are limited to the actor who bestows them (Bourdieu 1999:105). Both types of naming acts are socially grounded acts of institution and destitution where an individual denote to someone that he or she has a property and that he or she must perform in agreement with the social essence consequently bestowed upon him or her (Bourdieu 1999:105-106).

4.1.4 Symbolic Power

As Bourdieu states, “Symbolic power is a power of constructing reality”. Bourdieu (1999:166) The linguistic power relation is not solely defined by the linguistic competence present in the communication but also by the symbolic power possessed by the participants (Bourdieu 1999:72).

There is no symbolic power without the symbolism of power. […] The symbolic efficacy of the discourse of authority always depends, in part, on the linguistic competence of the person who utters it. Bourdieu (1999:75)

Symbolic power uses three symbolic instruments: structuring structures, structured structures and instruments of domination. Structuring structures involve instruments for knowing and constructing the objective world, symbolic forms of subjective structure. These instruments create consensus. Structured
structures contain the means of communication, symbolic objects of objective structures. These instruments create objective meaning as a product of the communication. Instruments of domination take the form of power where ideologies are a part and where specialists compete for the monopoly of legitimate cultural production. Symbolic structures can only exercise a structuring power because they are in themselves structured (Bourdieu 1999:165, 166).

Symbols are instruments of social integration: instruments of knowledge and communication. They enable a consensus on the sense of the social world and contribute to create social order (Bourdieu 1999:166).

The dominant culture creates an ideological effect through concealing the function of partition: the culture that unites is also the culture that separates and legitimates distinctions by enforcing all other cultures to define themselves on a basis of the wideness of the gap between them and the dominant culture (Bourdieu 1999:167).

Relations of communication are always relations of power dependent on the symbolic power accumulated by the actor (Bourdieu 1999:167). The different groups of society are engaged in a symbolic struggle aimed at imposing the definition of the social world that best suits their interests (Bourdieu 1999:167). In that sense, the field of symbolic production is a “microcosm” of the field of symbolic struggle (Bourdieu 1999:168). Symbolic systems can be produced either by the group as a whole or by a body of specialists (Bourdieu 1999:168).

Symbolic power is “a power of constituting the given through utterances” but symbolic power does not dwell in symbolic systems, rather in a relationship between those who exercise power and those who succumbs to it (Bourdieu 1999:170). Symbolic power is a transformed form of the other forms of power (Bourdieu 1999:170).

4.1.5 Acts of Institution

The act of institution is an act of communication that signifies to a person what their identity is: it both communicates it to the person and enforces it upon that person by articulating it in front of an audience (Bourdieu 1999:121).

Acts of institution differentiate those to whom the rite concerns from those whom it does not (Bourdieu 1999:117). As such, all rites legitimate or sanctify an arbitrary boundary, an established order (Bourdieu 1999:118-119). The rites with the most social efficacy are those that are founded in objective difference, a natural boundary (Bourdieu 1999:120). The people’s obedience to an institution is proportional to the gravity of the rites of initiation into that institution (Bourdieu 1999:123).

The institution of identity is the obligation of a social essence that signifies to an individual that he or she is a certain way and should behave accordingly (Bourdieu 1999:120). An individual instituted deem themselves indebted to act in accordance with this definition and his or her function (Bourdieu 1999:121).

The act of institution serves to discourage any endeavor to cross the line of the boundary. However, an individual who is sure of his cultural identity may play with the rules of the cultural game and take small steps outside of the boundary, but never travel far from it (Bourdieu 1999:122, 125).
The legitimate representative of an institutionalized group is “an object of guaranteed belief” who acts in correspondence to his appearance, what everyone believes him or her to be, not because of personal belief but rather because of a collective conviction, created by the institution that takes on visual marks in attribute form, like uniforms (Bourdieu 1999:125-126). The common belief, pre-existing the ritual is the requirement for the efficacy of ritual (Bourdieu 1999:126).

The veritable miracle produced by acts of institution lies undoubtedly in the fact that they manage to make consecrated individuals believe that their existence is justified, that their existence serves some purpose. Bourdieu (1999:126)

4.1.6 Applying Bourdieu
Although Bourdieu’s studies, as previously noted, are not focused on the use of internet or computer games, his theories can be applied on this study since they focus on social relations, culture, identity, language and so on, all things that do exist in the field of computer gaming.

Bourdieu provides me with a toolbox for problematization when observing the subjects of my study. His theories mainly focus on the power relationship between members and objects in a field.

Bourdieu’s understanding of language is utterly useful when looking at the dominant play discourses in the field and how these are created through language and linguistic capital.

The concept of habitus can be effectively applied when reflecting on the influence my own presence has to the study, my perception of the subjects and the perception of the subjects when they share their thoughts with me.

Social Theory
This chapter aims to introduce you to the wide field of social theory and social studies. The main focus lies on some of the authors who have participated in developing the field of sociological research and the terms they use.

Cultural sociology has its roots in the industrialization, the accelerated economical evolution, urbanization, secularization and the growth of national states. These major social changes are closely linked to changes in the lived reality of the everyday man (Miegel & Johansson 2002:36). These changes resulted in a new type of researchers who focused on bringing the changes of society into light (Miegel & Johansson 2002:35).

Cultural sociology aims to investigate the human being as thinking, feeling and acting beings (Miegel & Johansson 2002:31). Cultural sociology has been described as “a third culture” placed in between the rational natural science and the science of literature and humanities. Cultural sociology battles with the complexity of bridging the gap between rationalism and empirism, the hard information age and the soft romantic era (Miegel & Johansson 2008:32).

At the beginning, sociology constructed its theories on the idea that society remains in a fixed state until something erupts the balance. However, in the middle of the 20th century, the social scientist Norbert Elias had a breakthrough in the academic world of sociology. He described society as an ongoing process
over vast historical timelines (Miegel & Johansson 2002:118). This is the popular view of society today and the perspective I use.

4.2 Social Constructionism and Institutionalization

Social constructionism is based on the idea that reality is socially constructed. As we share our everyday world with other people we create meanings socially that dominate the way in which we view reality. Language takes a major part in this process by giving meaning to objects in various ways.

Every day we create new habits and routines through our social relations. In this way, we build a collective framework not only within our institution but also between institutions. A person may belong to more than one institution just as a parent can be a co-worker as well as being a parent (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2008:87).

The human is separated from the animal by its advanced instinctive behavior. To stop this behavior from turning into chaos we must create a social order that functions as a framework for our actions. This social order is created though institutionalization (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2008:85).

The difference between man and animal lies in that man has no specific relationship to his or her environment. While a horse or a dog is predetermined by their biological nature to exist in a specific environment, man may chose his or her place in the world. That is not to say that there are no biological limitations to man’s ability to survive in most environments but the fact that some tribes chose to stay as nomads while others evolved into agricultural societies cannot exclusively be attested to biology; there must be something else influencing their choices (Berger & Luckman 1966:65, 66).

Humanness is socio-culturally variable; there are as many ways to become human, as there are cultures (Berger & Luckman 1966:67). Human nature only exists in the sense of anthropological constants that delimit and permit man’s socio-cultural formations (Berger & Luckman 1966:67).

Ordinarily, the self and the organism of the human develop accordingly with a socially determined environment in a relationship between the organism and the self. This relationship is eccentric. On one hand a human is a body, and on the other a human has a body, the human experiences him/herself as an entity that is differentiated to that of his body (Berger & Luckman 1966:68).

Humans interacting together produces human environments and these are, as such, products of man’s specific humanity and his sociality. Social order is an ongoing production in man’s externalization; his strive to render his/her environment into terms that are to him comprehensible. Consequently, social order exists only as a product of human activity, not as the product of biological data or a natural environment (Berger & Luckman 1966:69-70).

Rendering the environment and human activity into comprehensible meanings, habitualization allows a variety of situations to be defined by predefinitions. Human conduct is assigned standard weights that allow the individual to achieve a given definition of the situation (described by Goffman on page 45) without analyzing each situation step by step (Berger & Luckman 1966:71).
Habitualization coexists with institutionalization, the “typification of habitualized actions by types of actors” (Berger & Luckman 1966:72).

The typifications of habitualized actions that constitute institutions are always shared ones. They are available to all members of the particular social group in question, and the institution itself typifies individual actors as well as individual actions.


Institutions determine which actions are to be performed by which actors (Berger & Luckman 1966:72). Institutionalization takes place daily in the way we act in accordance to the framework (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2008:86). We assume that a child acts like a child, that a grown-up acts like a grown-up, in much the same way that we assume that a gamer will spend time by his computer and a football player will spend time on the field trying to score goals.

Institutions are related to historicity and control; they cannot be created instantaneously and are products of their own history (Berger & Luckman 1966:72). As such, institutionalization is present in every social situation continuing in time (Berger & Luckman 1966:73).

4.3 Goffman
As a social scientist, Goffman uses the idea of reality as a social construct, looking at how this construct is created. His main focus lies on creating “reality” through social interaction by achieving so called “definitions of the situation”, which is the aim of any interaction from Goffman’s point of view.

Erving Goffman has influenced many researchers within the field of sociology. Goffman provides the tools for understanding how language is interwoven into particular circumstances of social life, how it reflects, gives meaning and adds structure in those circumstances (Ihlen & co 2009:120).

Goffman’s main focus lies on face-to-face interaction, which he views as “a world of implicit knowledge” (Ihlen & co 2009:120).

In his early work, Goffman observes on one hand, everyday life and on the other hand, he invokes separate worlds beyond the subjects’ everyday world (Ihlen & co 2009:121). Goffman’s strategy consists of metaphors, concepts, models, contrast and imagery (Ihlen & co 2009:121).

I have chosen Goffman because his theories are essentially built on social interaction, which fits well with both the purpose of this study, to investigate the social interaction occurring in the computer gaming field, and the research question in part focusing on socialization.

In this chapter we will discuss setting, the space in which action occurs. We will discuss the differences and similarities in interaction between individuals and other individuals, teams and other teams, and interaction between the individual and the team.

Note, however, that the term team, as used by Goffman is not related to the classic notion of a team such as in sports or in this case computer games. A team, from Goffman’s point of view is any group of people where all members are required to cooperate in order to achieve a definition of the situation. It can be a
group of co-workers; a group of friends, a family and so on, as well as it can be an actual “team” in the classical sense.

4.3.1 Setting
The social setting is a place surrounded by defined boundaries where a specific activity regularly takes place. Within the social setting, we find a team of actors who co-operates to project a given definition of the situation in front of the audience (Goffman 1974:207).

The term setting, as used by Goffman, has many similarities with the term field, used by Bourdieu. The difference is that Goffman’s setting can be seen through many more perspectives than Bourdieu’s field. Bourdieu’s field mainly focuses on the abstract power relations created through the possession of capital, while Goffman’s setting puts the notion into a wider perspective.

A setting can be perceived through different perspectives: the technical aspect of efficiency the political aspect of social control, the structural aspect of the way relations are structured and finally, the cultural aspect of moral values which influences the action within the setting (Goffman 1974:208). In the social setting, the actors usually highlight similarities and even out differences (Goffman 1974:207).

In this paper I have chosen mainly to focus on the structural and cultural aspects of Goffman’s setting, leaving political aspects of social control to be dealt with using Bourdieu’s field instead since his view is more easily applied as it contains more specific terminology to describe the forces of power.

4.3.2 Individual
When an individual perform in front of other individuals he/she projects consciously or unconsciously a definition of the situation in which his self-perception is an important part (Goffman 1974:210).

When the individual interacts with other individuals, he/she uses a sign system that reveals things otherwise hidden (Goffman 1974:35). The individual may in his/her private life uphold behavioral norms he/she does not believe in because he/she feels the presence of an invisible audience who will punish him/her if he/she does not. As such, the individual may be his/her own audience or imagine an audience that is not present (Goffman 1974:76).

Individuals with different roles live under the same dramaturgic conditions (Goffman 1974:156). When an individual encounters another, he or she seeks to acquire information about the other individual or to apply the information he or she already possesses about the person. This information is used to define the situation and enables foresight into what can be expected from the individual and how the person should act to produce a wanted behavior. If the individual is new to the person, he or she may use preordained experience of similar individuals to acquire the information more effectively (Goffman 1974:11).

Newton states, that all objects influences each other when occurring in the same space. In the same way, Goffman describes, that all individuals influences each other when acting on the same stage (Goffman 1974:12). In this interaction, there are two sign-activities taking place: the "give expression" and the "give off expression". The first is the expression the
individual sends out. Verbal symbols and other types of communication symbols that the individual uses to send out information represent it. The second is the expression the individual transfers. It is represented by activities. An activity is done for reasons outside of the information transferred.

The individual may use both types of communication to transfer false information. The verbal symbols are in this sense linked to betrayal and the activities are linked to hypocrisy (Goffman 1974:12).

The value of the information gained through interaction cannot be determined until the person in question has left the stage. The conclusions drawn from the interaction vary in accuracy but are necessary for the individual’s ability to act (Goffman 1974:12, 13).

Taking the perspective of the person entering the interaction, Goffman states, that it is always in his or her interest to control the others behavior, especially in the way they act in reaction towards him or her. Consequently, it is in the individual’s own interest to control his or her behavior so that he or she gives off the expression most favorable to him/herself (Goffman 1974:13). An individual is most likely to act in accordance with what the traditions of his group or social status demand to achieve a specific response (Goffman 1974:15). The first impressions are valuable (Goffman 1974:19).

An individual is classified as “cynical” if he does not believe in his own actions. Some actors are involuntary cynical because their audience does not allow them to be honest. A cynical performance does not have to be egoistic but can be chosen for reasons like making someone feeling better by facilitating the person’s idea of his position by acting in accordance with it even if the actor does not believe in his performance (Goffman 1974:25, 26). Cynical acting can also be used to isolate the individual’s inner “self” from the audience (Goffman 1974:27). An individual who do believe in his/hers actions is classified as “sincere” (Goffman 1974:25).

“Front” is the expressive standard equipment, which is used consciously or unconsciously by the individual during his/her performance (Goffman 1974:28). This standard equipment includes the setting: the scenery and the props. The setting is tied to space (Goffman 1974:29).

Every actor has a personal front, expressive equipment which belongs to the actor no matter where he or she is. This personal front includes features like gender, age, race and so on. Appearance is the stimuli that inform us of the actor’s social status. Manner is the stimuli that inform us of the position in the interaction that the actor is expecting to play. Appearance and manner may contradict each other. There is a relationship between setting, appearance and manner (Goffman 1974:30, 31).

A given social front tends to be institutionalized and produce stereotypic expectations where the front becomes a collective representation. Even if someone tries to change the collective front, he or she usually finds that he/she must do so by choosing another preexisting front (Goffman 1974:33).

A Performance is socialized to fit with the expectations and conditions existing in the society where it is performed. When an individual performs, he, consequently, tends to exemplify society’s officially sanctioned values to a larger extent than his behavior in entirety (Goffman 1974:39).
Many groups in society have reasons for exacting a methodological unpretentiousness, toning down any expressions of prosperity, personal capacity, intellectual strength and self-esteem (Goffman 1974:41).

Most societies idealize the higher social stratum, generating an ambition to achieve a position close to the holy centre of society. If an individual is to approach the ideal norms during his/her performance, he/she must reject or hide any actions that contradict those norms. Through audience segregation, the individual makes sure that the audience he/she takes a certain role in front of is not the same as the one for which he/she enacts a different role (Goffman 1974:40, 44, 50).

An individual is often more aware of the norms he/she is supposed to enact than the ones he/she thoughtlessly enacts. A false appearance is an appearance that expresses a contradiction between the impressions conjured up and the reality behind them (Goffman 1974:55, 58).

An impostor is a man that is found playing a role that he or she does not have the social standing he/she is claiming (Goffman 1974:58). If an individual upholds a false appearance in one setting, it will create distrust in all other settings, even in the ones where the individual’s appearance is sincere (Goffman 1974:62). If an appearance is to be trusted, the audience witnessing it must be able to trust that the actor is sincere (Goffman 1974:68-69).

A new standing in society gives the individual a new role to play. To find his/her place in the drama he/she will be given scene directives and it will be presumed that the actor has a repertoire that he/she can use to play this role (Goffman 1974:69).

The normal interaction is joined together like a scene in a drama (Goffman 1974:68). Socialization does not have that much to do with the knowledge of the many specific details of a given role but the many different ways of expression, which enable him to enact any role, that he/she likely needed to play (Goffman 1974:70).

### 4.3.3 Team

Goffman’s team, as stated, consists of any group of people whose co-operation is vital to achieve a given definition of the situation. Accordingly, a team member is an individual whose co-operative acting is required to establish this given definition of the situation (Goffman 1974:78). The performance serves to express the characteristics of the task to be handled not the characteristics of the actor (Goffman 1974:73). Team performance is recognized as a group of individuals who co-operate to express a certain routine (Goffman 1974:75).

A team performance has three levels: the individual performance, the performance of the complete set of actors and the individual performances that is adjusted to create a “team impression” (Goffman 1974:75). The team performance is something that the members can seclude themselves from enough to be able to enact other performances and express other forms of reality (Goffman 1974:181). Individuals who belong to the same team know they have a valuable relation to each other.

Every team member must trust in his/her team members and that they will behave properly in a form of mutual co-dependence. The team must also share a
mutual familiarity to be able to establish a specific definition of the situation in front of an audience, which may vary in characteristics depending on the audience. As such, the members must realize that they cannot uphold a “face” towards each other (Goffman 1974:77).

To express a definition of the situation it is necessary that all members be united in the standpoints they take and keeping it secret that they have not founded the standpoints on their own. As such, team members should wait for the official standpoint before choosing theirs and the standpoint should be revealed to the members in time (Goffman 1974:82).

No matter if the team members agree that the official version of reality is the most “real”, they will unintentionally express a quantity of other reality versions that contradict the official one (Goffman 1974:181). A team is a group of individuals who need to perform in intimate co-operation to preserve a given projected definition of the situation (Goffman 1974:95).

The choice of team members is important: each member must be able to share a mutual co-dependence and familiarity (Goffman 1974:84). A team member may never be part of both the team and the audience. A team may have a director who directs the drama, actors, actions and so on. Other team members may take part and influence the guidelines for the performance (Goffman 1974:89). If the performance of the team is to be effective, the co-operative actions that enable its existence must be kept secret (Goffman 1974:95).

One of the major threats to the team is the destructive information leaking out from the team. A team must be careful to reveal their secrets (Goffman 1974:126). There are various types of secrets. The dark secrets contain facts about the team that they keep hidden because they reveal things about the team that contradicts the “face” the team is upholding (Goffman 1974:126). The strategic secrets contain intentions and qualifications the team possesses that they hide from their audience so that they cannot adjust to them in an effective way (Goffman 1974:126). Inside-secrets contain secrets that are typical for a member of the team and serve to seclude the team from the audience (Goffman 1974:127). Confided secrets contain secrets that the members have been trusted with and they are obliged to keep secret because of his/her relation to the team (Goffman 1974:128). Free secrets contain secrets that a member can reveal without altering the appearance he or she is upholding (Goffman 1974:128).

By admitting to each other that they are hiding relevant information, the members of the team realize that the “face” they officially project is only a face (Goffman 1974:17). This illusion is called team collusion and the most important form of team collusion is the system of secret signals through which the members can transmit information to each other without revealing the information to the audience (Goffman 1974:157). Another form of team collusion is the communication that tells a member that the appearance he/she is upholding is only for show which enables him to create a private defense against the audience and their demands (Goffman 1974:164).

When the team goes backstage where the audience cannot hear them, they often speak in condemning terms about the audience that contradicts the way they treat the audience when they are present (Goffman 1974:151). Backstage, the team often discusses their different direction methodological problems
(Goffman 1974:155). They tend to old wounds and strengthen the moral at the prospect of their next appearance (Goffman 1974:156).

It is vital that the team members understand that they are bound to a dramaturgic loyalty, that they have certain moral obligations towards their team (Goffman 1974:187). They may not reveal the team’s secrets or use their position in the team performance to project their own “show” (Goffman 1974:187).

Emotional bonds between a team member and its audience are a threat to the team performance. A way to minimize the risks is to change audience regularly. A team member should keep an emotional distance to his performance, stopping him/herself from being carried away by his own performance (Goffman 1974:188).

Every team member has a dramaturgic discipline that they are forced to preserve during his/her role performance. A team member who enacts his or her dramaturgic discipline effectively does not make him/herself subject to unintended gestures or mishaps (Goffman 1974:188, 189).

Dramaturgic prudence is vital, that the individual has foresight and the ability to plan in advance the best way to enact an action. For the sake of the team, it is demanded that the actor enacts his performance wisely and with caution, arming him/herself for any possible eventualities and utilizes all available recourses. The best possible way to make sure a team member has dramaturgic prudence is by keeping the team at a small scale; the less members the less are the risks of one of them making a mistake (Goffman 1974:190-192).

**4.3.4 Individual versus Team**

The goal of the individual is to establish a given definition of the situation, which represents his/her perception of reality. The goal of the team is the same. However, the definition of the situation will not be alike for both individual and team.

The definition of the situation made by an individual is broad, descriptive, detailed and in agreement with the person producing it. The definition of the situation made by a team will be narrow: a thin line that varies in value between the members, leaving the team in disagreement. This disagreement creates contradictions in the perspective of reality shared and disables united action (Goffman 1974:80). As a result, the most important moments of an interaction is the ones that are described similarly by all actors (Goffman 1974:82).

**4.3.5 Team versus Team**

When two teams are confronted with each other with the intention of conducting social interaction, both teams’ members usually try to uphold the illusion that they are what they claim to be. Every participant in the interaction strives to learn his or her place in the interaction and to keep to it (Goffman 1974:149). Both teams exact unofficial communication transference to each other (Goffman 1974:168).

This unofficial communication transference enables the team to send out non-binding invitations to the team for purposes such as, revealing that the social distance between the two teams shall be widened or reduced (Goffman 1974:168).
When two teams interact socially, we often find that one of the teams has a lower standing than the other. The lower standing team will conduct efforts to change their standing against the other team (Goffman 1974:174).

4.3.6 Individual versus individual
When two individuals do not know each other’s opinions or social standing, they enact a process of tentative explorations (Goffman 1974:169).

According to Goffman, we achieve a form of *modus vivendi* when interacting in a group. The participants contribute jointly to produce only one common definition of the situation, a temporary consensus (Goffman 1974:18). There will be events during the interactions ongoing that will question and contrast the achieved definition of the situation and/or the actors. These mishaps result in embarrassing deadlocks (Goffman 1974:20).

Society is organized on the principle that every individual that hold a specific set of social characteristics, have a moral right to be valued and treated accordingly. This puts a demand on the individual that he or she must be the one he/she is claiming to be (Goffman 1974:21).

Goffman defines interaction as: the individual’s mutual influence on each other’s actions and handling when appearing in each other’s near presence (Goffman 1974:23). An “act” can be defined as the combined activity of a specific individual at a given moment which functions to influence another individual (Goffman 1974:23). An act is performed in front of an audience in accordance to a predefined framework of action (Goffman 1974:23). Social role is realized as the rights and obligations bounded to a given status (Goffman 1974:23).

4.3.7 Applying Goffman
An understanding of social interaction is vital for researchers of interpersonal relationships. It is in action and interaction that the interrelationship between language and society may be found. Thus understanding communication and language use is the key to understanding the nature of relationships.

Goffman makes a distinction between the face we show to others and the face behind the mask. For this exploration, Goffman uses the terms: front, backstage, give expression and give-off expression.

Goffman notes the function of interaction both between individuals and between groups. His term “team” can be applied on the teams we see in Dota, to some extent, and I will study the interaction within the team and against other teams based on Goffman’s theories.
5. Method

Qualitative Studies
This chapter will introduce you to the qualitative study, methods that might be used and how I have adopted the qualitative approach in this study. I have chosen the qualitative method since it works well with my aim of this study, which is to explore the social features of gaming. The study is made on a micro level and as such, qualitative method is preferred. I am using hermeneutics as perspective, which is a perspective based on interpretations. This method is best applied on qualitative studies since these give deeper insights into the field of study, to interpreted and analyzed from a hermeneutic standpoint.

5.1 Qualitative Method
The qualitative method takes the subject’s perspective in contrast to the quantitative method which is primarily based on the researcher’s own ideas.

The qualitative method is closely tied to context and interpretation. It mainly uses methods such as, interview, observation, photography, recordings, memories and field notes.

The task of the researcher is to seek understanding of phenomenon occurring naturally in a given field from the perspective of the inhabitants of that field. Qualitative studies focus on social interaction and discourse (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2008:17).

Alvesson and Sköldberg suggest a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods to achieve a study with both broadness and dept (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2008:18). As my study will show, I have borrowed the method of survey from the quantitative study to achieve the broadness that Alvesson and Sköldberg mention. However, I will not go into details about the quantitative method since my study is primarily qualitative.

The qualitative method speaks highly of reflective research and uses the term “habitus” created by Bourdieu (see page 37) (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2008:19). The qualitative method is closely linked to the hermeneutic theory, which we will get further into later on in this paper. In short, the qualitative researcher interprets an interpretation of reality made by the subjects of the study (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2008:20).

When analyzing the empirical data collected in the field, the researcher must always reflect on why certain interpretations are made and try to find what other interpretations could have been made in order to paint a picture as closely linked to “reality” as possible (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2008:21).

The ambition of the qualitative researcher is to create a result that can be used to generalize the probable result of a study in a similar field. This generalization, that the quantitative method claims possible, has been widely criticized. As an answer to the critique, Alvesson and Sköldberg point out that the term “generalize” is what must be discussed and not whether it is possible or not. Alvesson and Sköldberg state that the qualitative researcher does not seek to
create a general “truth” but rather to find the generally probable (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2008:52).

The qualitative study makes possible a broader and richer description of the field, which is sensitive to the ideas, and meanings of the individuals inhabiting the field (Alvesson & Deetz 2000:60).

5.1.1 Induction, Deduction and Abduction
The Qualitative study uses three different methods for understanding. The first is induction, which is based in several separate cases and seeks to find a connection between them. The second, deduction, is based in a general rule and seeks to understand a specific case. The third, and the method I will use, is the method of abduction. The method of abduction investigates a specific case on a basis of a hypothetical framework (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2008:54, 55). Abduction shares similar traits with both induction and deduction but is not exclusively made up of the two. It carries traits of its own that cannot be found in either.

Abduction is based on empirical data but does not exclude theoretical assumptions. During analyze the two goes hand in hand to seek an understanding founded in both empirical data and theoretical hypothesis. The facts are necessary to generate the theory and the theory is not only a summarization of the facts (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2008:56).

5.1.2 Observation
As Jensen states, the observational study’s objective is to detail what it has seen: to paint the picture but not to explain what it shows (Jensen 2002:161).

Doing observation in a public environment, the researcher may either chose to be hidden or revealed. To do observations without the subjects awareness might lessen the influence of the observer on what is observed but it brings up difficult ethical questions (Ekström & Larsson 2000:27). Furthermore, even the hidden observer faces the problem of influencing the field. Even if you do not reveal yourself as a research, the field is still influenced by the presence of the researcher’s persona (Aspers 2007: 62, 63).

I have chosen to be completely revealed as I believe that the ethical requirements of the researcher are more important than negotiating the probability of influencing the field to be studied. The influence I might have on the observation can be reduced and revealed through reflexivity.

My study takes place both in a public and in a private environment. The problem found in studies of the private environment is a problematic of access. It can be hard to find subjects who wish to be studied (Ekström & Larsson 2000:38).

The observer faces two problems, how he or she may influence the field through his or her own perception of the field and how to present the study to those whose consent is needed.

Reality does not have a voice. It is given voice by the researcher and as such it is grounded in the researcher’s own preordained knowledge. When presenting the study you need the consent of those who are to be studied. The question is a balance between how much should be revealed for ethical reasons and what should remain hidden so as not to influence the subject(s) (Ekström & Larsson 2000:42).
In an attempt to uphold this balance, I have chosen to reveal myself as a researcher. The subject’s know that I take an interest in their culture but I have not specified my intentions further as I do not wish the subjects to put an effort into presenting me with the “right” material for my study.

According to Ekström and Larsson, the observer usually uses the method of field notes. It is vitally important that the researcher writes down what he or she sees and find relevant to the study. These notes should be written down in an approximation as close in time to the study as possible while they are still fresh in mind (Ekström & Larsson 2000:43).

The researcher must always be alert to what is said and done to not miss any important details. I have chosen to take field notes continuously during the event by keeping a document open on my laptop where I write down anything that I notice and find useful to the study.

Another decision the observer must make is how long the observation should last: how much time should it cover? You may either chose to set the time limit as a fixed point in time or at a stage where you feel you have gained all the knowledge you need to generate theory (Ekström & Larsson 2000:44). Since the main part of my study takes place on DreamHack, this choice has already been made for me. There is already a fixed point in time when my study has to end. When DreamHack is ended, so is the observation.

5.1.3 Interview
After observation has mapped out the details, the interview’s purpose is to interpret what the details mean (Jensen 2002:161). The interview work hand in hand with the observation by both showing us the picture and telling us what it means.

The interviewer could be understood as an angler, seeking the best catch. The interviewer searches for a catch of relevant meaning (Kvale 1997:11). The task of the interview is to encourage the subjects of the study to share their worlds with the researcher through verbal and non-verbal communication.

The research interview is founded in dialog (Kvale 1997:12, 13). The method of interview is closely linked to the qualitative approach. The theory is found by revealing the methodological problems tied to the interview (Kvale 1997:17).

To use interview as method is simple. You can easily sit down and start interviewing without any preparation, but the good researcher puts more thought into it.

The methodological researcher seeks answers to the methodological questions raised. How do I start the interview? How many shall I interview? Can the interview hurt the subjects? Can I be sure to understand what the interviewees mean? Do I have to transcribe the interviews? How do I analyze them? Will my interpretations be subjective? Moreover, how do I report the results? These are all questions that need answers before the interview begins (Kvale 1997:19).

The study based in interview goes through seven stages:

- Theme setting – to formulate the subject of the study
- Planning – to plan the study in accordance with the knowledge you aim to gain.
• The interview – to perform the interview in accordance with the interview guide.
• Transcribing – to transcribe and code the empirical data gathered.
• Analyze – to find which method for analyzing is suitable and perform it.
• Verifying – to find how the results can be used to generalize, how they are consistent and how they coherence with what was supposed to be studied.
• Reporting – to report the results in accordance with scientific principles and create a readably product.

Kvale (1997:85)

The theme setting refers to the theoretical analyze of what is to be studied and the formulating of a research question. Theme setting asks the questions what, why, and how? What is to be studied and which knowledge do I need to have to be able to study it? Why do I study this? How will I perform the study? Which methods will I use? (Kvale 1997:86, 91)

5.1.3.1 Meaning Concentration
Using the method of meaning concentration, the researcher focuses on the meanings expressed by the interviewees, presenting them in a shorter and more concise version where the essential meanings of the statements are revealed (Kvale 1997:174).

Meaning concentration is a method of exclusion where the researcher becomes the judge of what is important. To avoid normative judgments I have chosen to use a list of specific subjects when I turned the transcriptions into structured text, including everything related to the subjects and excluding what is not essential based on this list:

• The background of the player
• How Dota is perceived by the players
• The preferred way of playing
• The competitive part of Dota
• Social features, for ex. Clans, teams and regular playmates
• Questions of usage
• The relationship between the game and private life
• Habits related to the game
• Definitions of success, according to the player
• Emotions related to the game
• Peer pressure and the outside perception of computer game playing
• Morals, values and traditions

5.1.3.2 Narrative Interviewing
Case studies may include narratives, interviews structured like stories. The researcher encourages the interviewees to tell stories. These stories may be kept intact or be reconstructed to reveal the essential meanings expressed in them. Narrative interviewing, give access to the human’s existential spatial dimensions by presenting the interviewees experience chronologically (Kvale 1997:48).

I have chosen to use narrative interviewing as a method to get access to the experience of each individual subject at DreamHack. In contrast to the traditional narrative interview, where the researcher is present while the story is
told, I have chosen to eliminate my presence by asking the subjects to write their stories in text rather than sharing them face-to-face. In this way I avoid the problematic of turning spoken language into written language as well as limiting my influence over the stories.

Every transcription from one context to another inhabits a series of judgments. Spoken languages and written languages are different rhetoric forms. Transcribing spoken language into written language denotes that the researcher must transcribe the spoken language of one person made through his/her rhetoric rules, using the researcher’s own framework of rules to create written language. This reconstruction of the text is inevitably full of judgments creating exclusions (Kvale 1997:149, 152).

By asking my subjects to write the text themselves, I gain access to their rhetoric rules of written language allowing me to present their stories without reconstruction, in their own voice.

5.1.3.3 Research Ethics
The interviewer should act in accordance with four ethical issues: first, Informed consent refers to that the object of study must have knowledge about the general purpose of the study. Second, Confidentiality means that private data, which might identify the subjects, should not be revealed. Third, Consequences refer to that the subject should not suffer the results of the study. Fourth, the researcher’s pose, that the researcher acts in accordance with what is ethically and morally right (Kvale 1997:107-11).

5.1.3.4 Interview Guide
The purpose of the interview guide is to present the topics that are relevant to the study and in what order they shall be handled. The interview questions could be handled thematically or/and dynamically.

In a thematic interview, the questions are raised surrounding the subject of study. The thematic interview places focus on finding data relevant to the study meanwhile the dynamic interview projects more focus to the relationship between the parties present in the interview, including the researcher (Kvale 1997:121).

I have chosen to use the following methods: introducing questions, following up questions, direct questions, indirect questions and silence. The introducing questions ask the interviewee to tell about something with his/her own words. Then the researcher asks following up questions to encourage the interviewee to get into more details of what he/she has told. The direct questions are specific asking, “have you ever played this game?” and the indirect questions are specific about others “do you think others might enjoy it?” and so on. The technique of silence is just as it sounds that the researcher keeps silent encouraging the interviewee to fill the gap in the silence (Kvale 1997:124, 125).

I have chosen to only write down the introducing questions, making sure that I cover the subjects I wish and then using the natural flow of the dialog to achieve detail.
5.1.3.5 Handling the Interviews

The interviews are registered through a recording device, written notes or memory. I have chosen to use a software that records voice-chat like a tape recorder. In this way I am allowed to concentrate on the subject and the dynamic of the interview. However, a tape recorder cannot register the visual aspects of the interview. As a result, word, tone, pauses, audiovisual aspects of the interviews become more important (Kvale 1997:147).

When recording an interview it is important to minimize the background noise by choosing a suitable setting for the interviews (Kvale 1997:149). This is why conducting the interviews at DreamHack was impossible, since there was no place of quiet. The interviews were instead conducted through the use of internet, most before DreamHack, but as Naga did not have time to be interviewed before DreamHack, he was instead interviewed after.

Once the registering of the interview is done, the next step is to transcribe the recording into written text. It is important to remember that the transcription, no matter how it is done, will be a construction based on the choices made by who ever transcribes it (Kvale 1997:149).

There is no standard rules for transcription; it is a choice of the position between two extremes, the literally transcription, transcribing word for word and the formal transcription, using formal rules of language (Kvale 1997:156). I chose to transcribe the interviews literally, marking pauses with punctuation marks where the amount of punctuation marks represent an approximate reflection of the pause’s time length.

To turn the transcriptions into a presentable text to include in the study report I used meaning concentration as method (see chapter 5.1.3.1 above).

5.1.4 Coding Survey Results

To keep order I have chosen to code my material in accordance with who is speaking, what subject the speech cover and which attitude the speaker has towards the subject.

I used color markers in the top right corner to mark the questions and wrote numbers within the colored fields to mark the answers. In this way I could easily sort through the material when looking at a specific question, sifting out who had answered which question and how they answered. I counted the various answers of each question to gain insight into how many players were sharing the same view of a topic.

5.1.5 Methods of Analyzing

Analyzing empirical data is done through three processes:

1. Structuring the material – usually done through transcription and coding.
2. Elucidate the material – for example by excluding unnecessary material based on the research question(s) and theoretical assumptions.
3. Analyzing the material – expounding the chosen material to gain new perspectives.

To create a presentable text I used meaning concentration, which is normally part of step three in the analyze. I used the result of this process, the written text, together with the narrative interviews and data collected through the experience as a foundation for the analyze.

The analyze was done using the method of meaning decipherment, which goes outside the borders of the actual empiric data to search for deeper meanings and venturous interpretations of the text. This method is often found in humanities studies and is influenced by the hermeneutic philosophy (Kvale 1997:174, 175, 182).

Meaning decipherment allows an exploration of the deeper meanings that the qualitative approach advocate. Since both Goffman and Bourdieu’s theories are founded in qualitative research and the method is related to hermeneutics, I found this method goes well in hand with both my choice of method and my choice of theory.

Like hermeneutics keep reminding us, everything is an interpretation and, according to social constructionism, a construction. This argument applies to the analyze as well. The researcher’s perception of the subject influences how the empirical data is analyzed (Kvale 1997:187).

Different researchers find different interpretations of the same text, which creates a problematic, however, this problematic is only valid when assuming that there is one ”right” way of interpreting the text, which demands absolute objectivity. According to hermeneutics and social constructionism such a ”truth” does not exist. The hermeneutic question-answer-dialectics, allows a polygamic result with several interpretations (Kvale 1997:190-191). This denotes that the researcher asks a question to text and searches for the answer in it. However, the method also advocates paying attention to the questions the text in itself raises and not only those raised by the researcher.

Using the hermeneutic approach, a perception subjectivity appears and these polygamic interpretations of the text are, according to Kvale, a strength ascribed to the interview-research (Kvale 1997:192).

5.1.6 Reflexive Methodology
The teachings of reflexive studies places focus on investigating how personal and intellectual involvement may influence the perception of the object of study (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2008:486). Reflexive methodology focuses on how the researcher actively constructs reality.

Reflexive theory speaks of a “vain realism” which is founded in the idea that there is no actual “truth”. The perception of “truth” is locked in time and space. What is true in one time and one place may not be “true” in another (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2008:530). To be “reflexive” also takes another feature. The term also refers to how the different layers reflect in each other (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2008:490). With this means that I as a researcher am not only influenced by the object of study but that the object of study is in the same way influenced by me.

Discussing reflexivity, you may find a third side of the term: how the researcher’s own framework of perception influences the study (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2008:492). This framework is built on previous experience of interpretation and may carry limits with it. A researcher who has always used
critical theory in previous studies may tend to place more focus on political aspects in the interpretation. Meanwhile a researcher who has only done social studies may focus more on the interaction between the subjects, neglecting its political meaning (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2008:493).

The aim of the reflexive methodology is to question the weaknesses in the framework of perception you use (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2008:488). To fight these tendencies, Alvesson and Sköldberg suggest a broad theoretical ground to increase the framework of interpretation (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2008:493). This is one of the major reasons why I have chosen not only to use social theory but also culture and media studies as a foundation for the framework I am building.

This third part of the reflexivity applies to the subject(s) as well; just like the researcher, the subject(s) uses a framework to understand and mediate reality (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2008:530).

5.1.6.1 Insight, Emancipation and Polyphony

The reflexive methodology driven by insight places focus on the hermeneutical process. To gain insight to the meaning hidden beneath the surface is the aim of this type of research. The interpretation process becomes central and the empirical data to be interpreted gains ground (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2008:504).

Reflexive methodology may also be driven by emancipation, which sheds less light on the empirical data, or be driven by polyphony, which aims to bring out multiple voices. Using polyphony as method, you reduce the more advanced interpretations and instead try to paint a bigger picture (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2008:504, 505).

I have chosen to use a little bit of both insight driven and polyphony driven reflexive methodology, staying true to the purpose of the study, which takes a broad perspective, but not neglecting the hermeneutics. This is more time-consuming than simply choosing one or the other but it is made possible by my extensive explorative study that I conducted while writing the paper *Through the Looking Glass into the World of Computer Games*. That study was a complete study in itself, however, since the study was written and performed in a period of only two months, I had to cut down on many things I wished to study further. Now the essay makes the perfect explorative study for this paper and saves time for a more extensive reflexive methodology.

5.1.7 Criteria for Qualitative Studies

Apart from being reflexive, the qualitative study must also fulfill the criteria of being pluralistic-democratic and having a function. The qualitative study must fill a function by extending the knowledge about something. There has to be a gap in science to be filled (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2008:532). This means that the researcher has to find a completely new field that either has not been explored or find a field that has not been explored "enough". The qualitative study must also be pluralistic-democratic by giving a wide range of information, which allows multiple interpretations and this goes hand in hand with the polyphony method (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2008:533). In this sense the study must seek out the various interpretations possible and present them. It may also include empirical
data that the researcher for various reasons has chosen not to analyze, leaving an interpretation of the data possible for other researchers.

5.2 Hermeneutics
Hermeneutics is a state of mind where the interpretation and understanding’s multitude are allowed to collide and give inspiration (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2008:191). Hermeneutics is colored by intuition, an inner seeing, estranged from the formal unawareness of the common sense. It results in an understanding founded in the origin of meaning (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2008:193, 194).

There are several types of hermeneutics. The hermeneutic perspective I have chosen to use is the aletic hermeneutic method.

5.2.1 Aletic Hermeneutic
The aletic hermeneutic is a state colored by a correspondence thinking. It requires a correspondence between the researcher’s framework for perception and the framework used by the object of study (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2008:198). In short, to understand gamers’ perception of the world, in accordance with the aletic hermeneutics the researcher needs to be a gamer as well. Considering that my own background is in part as a gamer, the aletic hermeneutics appears the most natural method for me.

The aletic hermeneutics dissolves the polarity between subject and object. The purpose of the study is not to find something completely new and foreign to the researcher but rather to find something hidden beneath the surface of which the researcher was previously unaware.

The aletic hermeneutics suggests a different circle than the original hermeneutic circle where the part and the whole relate to each other to create understanding between them. The aletic hermeneutic circle instead suggests a relationship between preordained understanding and understanding (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2008:200).
5.2.2 Methodological Principalities
Alvesson and Sköldberg suggest the following methodological principalities for hermeneutic research based on the teachings of Madison (1988):

- Coherence – the interpretation should be logically consistent.
- Multitude – respect shall be given to the work in its entirety.
- Penetrating – the underlying problematic shall be revealed.
- Groundwork – all questions should be answered.
- Adequacy – text and not the researcher should raise the questions.
- Contextuality – the text should be placed in its historical and cultural context.
- Correspondence – the interpretation should correspond with what the author writes and the established interpretations of the text.
- Suggestiveness – the interpretations should give fruits to new ideas.
- Potential – the interpretation should be extensible.


The framework for interpretation should be consistent with both the researcher’s framework for interpretation and the framework used by other researchers in the field. If the researcher’s framework for interpretation is not consistent with that of other researchers’ the reason must be given (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2008:204). However, explaining why interpretations are not consistent with other researchers’ might sometimes be difficult since not all researchers give a clear picture of what their actual framework is.

5.2.3 Text
The term “text” may be misleading by giving connotations to its most common meaning of words on a paper. The text, however, does not necessarily have to take the form of something written but could also refer to a metaphor where social actions become symbols with meaning within the framework of a text (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2008:205). In my case, the text consists of the social actions of the players in the online and the offline field in which they interact.

The charge of the researcher is to ask questions to the text and seek their answers. The questions should not be made as a monolog but rather as a dialog between the text and the researcher and the researcher should always seek to validate the answers found in the text by repeating the question and perhaps find other possible answers to it (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2008:205, 206).

To undertake this massive process of interpreting, the researcher divides the text into pieces and interprets each peace separately before interpreting the whole picture (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2008:208). The process is like a puzzle where each piece must be examined carefully before finding its right place in the picture.
6. The Explorative Study

6.1 Method
The explorative study was conducted during the course of two months as an essay and a study in itself. *Through the Looking Glass into the World of Computer Games* includes the method of survey and the method of interview. Although the purpose of an explorative study is to get a main picture of the field and what it looks like on the surface, this explorative study has also drilled some holes into the field to acquire dept.

Using the method of survey was a strategic choice because I had easy access to the community and to one of the forums used. This access allowed me to post my survey on the site and then let it run its own course while I could focus on perfecting my methods for the main study and the theory that is to be the foundation for it. The purpose of the survey is to get an overlooking sense of the field, to find the questions relevant to it and to find subjects for the interviews later conducted.

Apart from using survey, I have chosen the method of interview to get more detailed answers to some of the questions raised and to find suitable subjects for the main study.

6.1.1 Survey
My focus aims at the phenomena occurring within the field rather than the subjects’ own demographics. Hence, when it comes to demographic characteristics I have chosen to limit the questions to gender and age leaving room for more detailed questions about the subject’s attitude towards various phenomena occurring within the computer game culture.

I designed the survey in two parts. The first part contains ten questions aiming at the player’s background as player. The questions aim to get a sense of what kind of player is speaking. The questions in the first section are limited-choice questions by giving alternative answers for the players to choose between. The second part leaves open questions aimed at discovering the player’s point of view when it comes to the various phenomena occurring in the field.

Fifty-two subjects participated in the survey and the results where coded depending on the various answers found (see chapter 5.1.4).

6.1.2 Interview
The purpose of the interview is to get a deeper knowledge about the players themselves. The questions are similar to those in the survey but the players are given the opportunity to elaborate their answers hence giving me a deeper understanding about the field that I am planning to enter.

I used a semi-standardized interview technique where the interview mainly relies on topics rather than questions. I began by asking the subjects to tell me about themselves. Then I used questions to acquire a continuation in the dialog. I used an interview guide containing all the topics I wanted to cover in the
interviews and extended its content by improvising during the course of the interview.

I do not believe the interviews could be hurtful to the interviewees, as I do not ask them to share anything they do not willingly give away and all participants are kept anonymous.

To be sure to understand what the interviewees intend to purport I continuously ask them to elaborate and explain their statements.

The interviews were not conducted face-to-face because of the geographical difficulties of researching a field that might appear small online but stretches over such a vast area in reality. Hence, I used the medium the players themselves are used to and conducted the interviews via voice-chat. The interviews were recorded with the consent of the interviewees and later transcribed in whole.

Ten subjects were interviewed and of them four subjects volunteered for the main study. However, one of the subjects could not adjust his schedule to act in accordance with his private life resulting in a replacement being found who had not participated in the interviews. He (Naga) was later interviewed in a different session of the study.

I have chosen to summarize the results of the interview, presenting the subjects with their own words giving the readers a chance to get a sense of their personas.

To keep the interpretation of the interview as objective as possible I have chosen to present more or less everything that the subject’s shared in interview even though not everything is vital to the study.

6.2 Results

6.2.1 Survey

The survey consisted of 52 participants with various background and relation to Dota. What all have in common is their membership on dotaforum.se. Many of the players know each other and play together.

To code the results of the survey, I handled them in two sets. The first set, to code the background of the players and the second to find patterns in their opinions.

Looking at background the most obvious result is that the participants are all male. However, this does not surprise me since it is very uncommon that my path crosses with the path of another female player on the net. The age of the participants varies from eleven to twenty-eight. However, most are around twenty years old. Playing with others seems to be the preferred choice of nearly all players and many of them have their own teams or clans.

The majority of the subjects are skilled players, which gives a hint that players who are active on the forums often are as active in their gaming as well. Most players use both battle.net and Garena as well as playing at local area networks connected the old fashion way in real life. On a basis of these results I find a pattern linking to the importance of interactivity in the players' preferred way of playing.

Looking at the second part of the survey I was surprised to find how visible the patterns appear in the answers. Most players prefer to use voice-chat while
playing and many players enjoy listening to music while playing. Those that play in groups are usually also the players that prefer voice-chat.

I asked the players what they thought of the language used while playing and the results where varied. Most players have a negative opinion about the language, speaking of a too large amount of bad language used. Other players find the language “geeky”, containing many words you associate with gaming. Eight players out of the 52 bring up both good and bad aspects of the language meanwhile a small minority has only good things to say about it. It seems that most agree that the language is different from the everyday language used at home and in public.

I also asked the players what their thoughts where when it comes to the un-programmed rules of the game, those that have not been built into the game itself. However, after this survey was done some of them actually have been programmed into the game, which proves the importance of these rules. Most players thought the rules were important to keep the game fair and square. Then there were a group of players that either did not acknowledge that there even are such rules or said they did not care to follow them. A small minority said they followed the rules even though they considered them wrong. Concluding, Most players acknowledge that the rules do exist.

Looking at the social interaction of gaming, I asked how many players had made friends through the game and how important they thought it was for the game to be socially interactive. Almost all of the players had in some way, at some time, experienced friendship while playing and many had made what they considered “real” friendships through the game. Most players placed a high value on the social feature of the game and many claimed that they play the game solely for this reason.

Finally, I asked the players why, if possible, they thought they might quit playing the game. Most answered that they would stop playing if they got tired of the game either for the reason that they played it too much or because the game stopped evolving. Many of the younger players thought that once they started out to create a family they would not play as much. Some of the older participants told in the survey that they did not play as much anymore as a result of women or kids coming into their lives, verifying the younger participants’ visions of the future.

6.2.2 Interview
Eleven players participated in the interviews from which I have chosen four players to be part of this study. The results of the interviews mainly confirm the results of the survey while explaining the various terms that I did not know of or did not know what they meant. These results can be found in the appendix where an extensive list of terminology has been included. In this chapter, I will, instead of rambling on about the very long list of terminology, present the interviews with the four subjects participating in the main study.
6.2.2.1 Bruno

The interview with Bruno was one of the more extensive interviews I conducted. Bruno turned out to be the perfect interview-subject having an extensive knowledge, opinions and insight that he gladly shared with me.

The interview was conducted in December 2008 and since then some things, naturally, have changed. At that time, he was the leader of his clan Potw and as such, he had deep insight about what it means to be a leader. Today, Bruno has played Dota for four years.

Bruno says the best thing about Dota is that you meet so many nice people. He finds the game a good way to pass time but points out that the seductive nature of the game can sometimes pose a problem by making him play longer than is good for him. It can affect his sleeping habits and have a bad influence on his studies. However, Bruno thinks he has learned to withstand the seductive calls of the game, being able to quit when he wishes too.

Bruno has a large group of friends that he plays with regularly. Some are old friends and some are members of the clan. He thinks the game presents a good way to keep in touch with his friends and that without it he might have lost contact with them when he moved to a different city.

When Bruno was the leader of Potw, he found himself sometimes balancing “too many balls in the air” and he used dotaforum.se as a communication platform between him and his team. There information about try-outs and training can be found.

The clan had a set of rules that needed to be followed but Bruno explains that those were so natural that they were not hard to accept. The rules were mainly moral codes like keeping to a good behavior and not stealing items.

Bruno prefers to play with his friends but he sometimes enjoys playing a public game on his own just to get a vacation from the group and experience the game on his own. Bruno finds the public games to be harder to win because his clan’s good teamplay usually insures a win: meanwhile playing public, he has to use other skills than his co-operative talents.

Bruno prefers to play support or nuke because he does not feel self assure enough to take the leading role as carry. Besides, he points out: “the team already has a couple of good carries”. Having a carry in the team is not possible in a public game, Bruno says, because everyone focus too much on their own performance.

The success of a game is measured in the team’s performance. “I can play like shit but as long as my team wins I am satisfied,” says Bruno.

I asked Bruno what advice he would give someone who wants to start playing Dota. Bruno’s advice is to play many games and not care too much about what other people think. People often complain when you are new to the game, especially in public games. The trick is not to take it personal. “Watch how others play and try to imitate”, says Bruno. The best way to learn the game is to find friends to play with who can “show you the ropes”.

64
6.2.2.2 Daska
Daska is the youngest of the participants and the player who was chosen to be the leader of the team. Daska has played Dota for five years of which the two recent years, he has played on a professional level.

He considers teamplay and winning to be the most important part of Dota. He usually plays with his clan and they have competed in several tournaments. Apart from Dota, he also plays World of Warcraft but he prefers Dota because of the team feature.

Daska avoids dealing with un-programmed rules and he finds them to be very varying depending on host or league. He prefers a ranged, high damage, agility hero called Shadow Fiend and he often plays the role of carry.

Daska thinks that the most important feature of a player is that he shall never let the game get the better of him. You shall never get angry no matter how bad it goes, “you cannot always win”, says Daska.

Naturally, Daska does not like losing but he thinks there is an educational value to losing as long as you try to learn from your mistakes. Daska does not like flaming and considers it immature.

The skill he believes he needs to improve is his map-control, which is a cognitive skill, and he points out that he still has plenty to learn about most things.

Daska has made many friends through the game not only in Sweden but also all over the world. On his spare time, while not playing Dota, he usually hangout with friends, both those he plays with and friends who does not play at all.

Daska usually lets the game decide his schedule but it is a choice he makes himself and he does not feel any pressure from his friends to play. Quitting Dota would probably be the result of the game not evolving through updating, says Daska.

6.2.2.3 Crakling
Crakling has played Dota for about 4.5 years. He has been to DreamHack about six times together with his friends. Although it is still fun, it is not as fun as it used to be, says Crakling.

To Crakling the teamplay in the game is the most important feature and he does not have any negative comments about the game. Crakling usually plays through Garena or a similar software called Hamachi. While playing, he prefers to listen to music but he also uses voice-chat for communicational purposes.

Crakling’s favorite game is World of Warcraft and he enjoys playing it and many more at least three hours each day. He considers it unsocial to play computer games while others are in the room with him and he tries not to sit too long beside the computer without taking breaks for other things.

Crakling is the leader and founder of his clan. They are currently busy with putting together a team for professional playing but consider themselves only in the first stage of creating the clan.

Crakling does follow the un-programmed rules and he finds them to be a good part of the game, although some of them need adjustments, he says.
Crakling’s favorite hero is a stealth-based hero named Rikimaru. Rikimaru is permanently invisible until he strikes and he does more damage in the back than in the front. The more agile he gets the more damage he makes. Thus, Rikimaru can be played as a hunter using stealth, speed and damage to quickly cut down his opponents and easily escape retribution. However, he is easily countered if you know what you are doing.

Crakling enjoys belonging to a team and he always places the achievements of the team first, although he still wishes to evolve his own skills as well. To win or to get great statistics are of no importance to Crakling and he measures his own success in what he has achieved for the team as whole.

Although Crakling does not like flaming, he finds himself flaming too sometimes. Dying is not what makes him angry but other things might. If he gets angry, he leaves the computer and does something else to release the agitation.

Although Crakling has made many friends through the game, he points out that many of the friends he made where people already known to which he instead has improved his relationship through the game.

Crakling does not much care what people think of computer game playing but finds it a bit “pathetic” how people sometimes try to turn computer games into something more than what they are.

Quitting Dota would be the result of the game turning too serious, becoming too goal-oriented and losing the environment of friends having fun together.

6.2.2.4 Naga
Naga has played Dota for about three years and he has been to DreamHack several times together with Crakling and other friends. Naga appreciates how Dota requires the players to work as a team to win and finds it a very enjoyable team game. He dislikes the way people get too greedy and start being rude to each other.

Naga thinks Dota has proved its own value because it still captivates its player although it has been around for quite some time. The game has gone through many upgrades since he started playing but the game is not the only thing that has changed, says Naga. The players have changed too. They have become ruder to each other and use much more bad language than in the beginning. Players take the game too serious now days, forgetting that the game is after all just a game.

Naga thinks it is okay for friends to nag at him as long as he deserves it but otherwise it makes him mad. He prefers playing on his own because he feels he has reached a higher skill than his friends and so when he plays with friends he usually have to take the heavy load and that he dislikes.

Naga does not have a specific role he prefers more than others and can play anything that benefits the team. If the team needs a carry, he will play the carry; if the team needs support, he will play support.

Today, Naga only plays Dota and Heroes of Newerth; which he points out, is pretty much the same thing.

Naga usually play on Dota league where you acquire stats to show your skills. To play a game on Dota league you have to wait in a queue until ten players have connected. Then the players are distributed over two teams
depending on their stats in an attempt to make the teams as balanced as possible. Clans sometimes play on Dota league but the games usually consist of random people with no former connection to each other.

Naga has performed in several competitions both on dotaleague.com and at DreamHack. He is currently in a clan called Booby-trap but he is considering a change of clans. He only has a few friends he plays with regularly and three of them are in the same clan as he.

Naga spends about three hours each day playing computer games. He works for a living and enjoys going to the gym when he is not playing computer games or working. He prefers music while playing and his favorite hero is Storm Spirit, which is an electric hero with many fun spells. Naga plays him like a carry.

Naga is a bad looser and prefers to win but he does not care much about stats. He thinks the most important thing about playing is that you help each other out and makes sure that everyone enjoys the game. His only weakness is that he tends to get mad when he or someone else plays bad which can result in both screaming and swearing for everyone to hear.

Having an interest in computer games is not a necessary attribute to become Naga’s friend although he points out that he finds it more enjoyable when people share his interest.

Naga priorities playing computer games before his daily duties because he hates being bored and schedules everything boring at the absolute last minute he has to do it. If he were to stop playing, it would probably be because of his girlfriend who dislikes his gaming.

Naga’s suggestion for anyone with a negative opinion about computer games is to try it themselves and find a game they like. There is after all nearly a game for everyone now days, says Naga. Naga thinks playing computer games is good for the player because you meet many new people and learn new things about them, like language and culture.

Playing computer games can also be a way to deal with aggressions and release stress. “To me computer games are a sanctuary”, says Naga. “Playing computer games is something I am good at and therefore something I find enjoyment in doing”.
7. Main Study - Analysis

Before we take a look at the main study and the analyze I wish to remind you of the purpose of this study and the research-question so that these are fresh in your mind while reflecting on the content of the empirical material and the analyze.

The purpose of the study is to explore the creation of identities related to the interaction mediated through the use of computer games. I aim to map out how processes of socialization, institutionalization and cultivation function and affect the player and the play, using the theories of Bourdieu and Goffman.

The research-question is: “Assuming that processes of socialization, institutionalization and cultivation is at play within the field of computer game playing, specifically in the field of Dota, what function does these processes have and how do they influence the play and the players?”

7.1 Method
The main study was performed using the method of observation and narrative interviewing. The observation took place in two sets. The first set consisted of training before DreamHack where the team and I came together to play Dota and work on our abilities as a team. We used both battle.net and Garena as platform. For communication, we used the voice-chat software Skype.

The training part of the study was conducted exclusively through Internet. As such, none of the players existed in the same physical space during the training. Consequently, all communication had to be transferred trough Internet, which Introna defines as virtual interaction (Introna 2007:103).

This first part allowed me to get to know the players virtually during what felt like a natural course of time before finally meeting them in person at DreamHack. We used the time to determine which roles we ought to take in the team and to find the flaws in our playing and work on those. The second part of the observation took place during the course of four days at DreamHack in Jönköping. During both observations, I participated not only as a researcher but also as a member of the team.

I used the method of narrative interviewing to get a sense of how the subjects perceived the event after it was over. I asked every player to write down their thoughts about the event and used these results as a background to formulating theory. I also wrote my own narrative of how I perceived the event to enable me to compare the differences between the view of the subjects and my own view as researcher. As Goffman states, the most important events in group-interaction are those that are described similarly by all actors (Goffman 1974:82). Through the use of narrative interviewing, I was able to trace which events were important to all of us.

7.2 Training
The training was conducted over the course of about two months where we came together to train once every week. As a result of schedules colliding, some of the
planned training was canceled, but we still managed to play about ten games with each other during the course of the training and we stayed in contact even outside of the gaming.

7.2.1 Getting to Know Each Other
To allow the boys to get to know each other before beginning the training phase I wrote a small piece, introducing myself and asked them to do the same. I then sent out the presentations to everyone, using email, allowing everyone to read the presentations (you find a summarization of them in chapter 2). After everyone had been introduced, we started playing and came to know each other better through the playing.

In no time, we found ourselves taking different roles in the team. Daska took the role of the leader, coordinating and giving orders to the team. Bruno seized the role of support; not only in the way he played but also in the way he acted. He did his best to cheer us all up when things went south and gave the members of the team complements about their playing. Crakling took the role of the joker, who tried to ease up the environment by making jokes. Naga often got the role of the recipient of these jokes and sometimes sent a joke back at Crakling in playful revenge. Naga was the self-critique of the team, often complaining about his own playing and excusing himself when he did something wrong. Crakling sometimes played the part of nagging at Naga when he committed mistakes; however, the two seem to be close enough friends that the other’s comments did not strike a blow. Myself I got the role of being the quiet one, mainly because I did not wish to interfere too much with the other’s conversation and tried to tone down my presence by keeping quiet. This quietness sometimes was remarked and the boys, mainly Bruno, did their best to get me talking.

It amazes me how fast we begun acting in the way Goffman describes it, like actors in a drama. Having the theoretical understanding of what was taking place, the knowing might have influenced my behavior making me more striving to enact my role in the team.

7.3 DreamHack
I have chosen to tell the story about DreamHack through five perspectives. Each player have written me a letter with their experience of DreamHack making it possible for me to let the players tell their story themselves. I begin with my own story for the reason that I as a researcher focused most attention to detail and chronology. Starting with getting a sense of the chronology in which the events took place, might help in following the others’ stories better. This is DreamHack through my eyes:

7.3.1 My Story
I met Bruno on the train between Alvesta and Nääsjö. Walking past him twice without knowing it was he; it struck me that the possibility of more than one extremely tall blonde guy heading towards Jönköping was unlikely. I sent him a message and yes, it was indeed Bruno I had noticed.
We met Daska on the platform in Nässjö where we switched trains. None of us knowing what to say, the air around us felt a bit compressed. It was an awkward feeling to finally meet the boys I had gotten to know through the net.

It turned out that Bruno was actually one of the more talkative persons and Daska who always had stood out as a presence on the net turned out to be much quieter than I had expected. Bruno and I did our best to keep up the conversation.

When arriving in Jönköping, we went to find our bus. I chose to take the lead by asking for directions turning to another group of people who looked like they were heading our way due to there heavy backpacks. Being the oldest in the group I felt it was my responsibility to make sure we found our way.

At DreamHack, everything seemed rather chaotic with thousands of people packing up their things at the same time. When we were finally done packing, Bruno and I went to find Crakling and Naga who unfortunately had seats in a different hall. We found them and their friends already in the process of getting into the DreamHack-spirit. Crakling, wearing a Hawaii shirt made out of key chains, proudly presented his creation, telling us that it had taken ages to get all the key chains on the string.

Daska, busy checking the DreamHack page for information about the Dota tournament, stayed behind and, as a result, Bruno and I kept our visit to Crakling’s camp short.

Sometime around four o’clock the tournament finally begun. After playing for ten minutes, Daska’s computer broke down showing “blue screen of death”. According to the rules, we were supposed to start the game over from the save but the opposing team refused and the administrators agreed with them telling us to continue playing without Daska. Even before the Blue Screen of Death, the opponents had the game under control and were beating us, now without Daska, our carry, it got even worse. We forfeited the game soon after, knowing we did not stand a chance playing 4v5 without our lead.

The air got sour after the disconnect. Feeling cheated by a computer error and losing faith in “the good game”, I turned to researching the rules. I found that the opponents had in fact broken the rules by refusing to load from the save and Daska sent in a complaint, which was soon turned down.

After losing, we were moved to the loser brackets where all the losers competed in a second tournament. We won our first game with ease but lost the second. It was obvious that the skill of the different teams varied much. The second defeat did not feel bad at all as the teams seemed balanced which allowed a fair fight.

After being eliminated from both tournaments, we turned to find something else to do. We played plenty of Dota and Bruno and I spent much time playing Heroes of Newerth too.

When we were finally too tired to keep awake and Bruno had fallen asleep on his keyboard, Daska and I went to find the sleeping compartments. Being misinformed, believing there would be loungers to sleep in; I was in for a surprise: there were none.

After a night sleeping on the bare stone floor and repeatedly waking up to cries of “hello”, every limb in my body ached and I went to find the showers. Those were hidden well and not marked by any sign, resulting in me having to
ask twice to find the way. Back in business, I ate breakfast by my computer while the boys made fun of the fact that I had brought an electric kettle with me. After watching me drink tea and eat soup, they soon came round admitting that it was a good idea to bring equipment for boiling water.

The cries of “hello” started by the man on the stage the day before kept echoing through the hall and annoyed everyone at my table until most begun ignoring the calls.

The second day I mainly spent playing Heroes of Newerth. The reason I prefer Heroes of Newerth before Dota has nothing to do with the actual game but rather with the players playing it. There are more players of my own skill playing Heroes of Newerth, allowing me to achieve some victory now and then instead of constantly being crushed.

Bruno and I spent the night watching the movie “300” which was shown on a large screen in the A-hall. When we returned to the B-hall we found Daska asleep on his keyboard. Bruno and I went back to playing. When Crakling came to tell us that they were going to go sleep we secured our things for the night and went to find a sleeping spot for ourselves. Remembering the cold stone floor, I insisted we would try to sleep in the sport-hall instead where the floor was made of plastic. I, Bruno and Daska set out for the hall and after a long walk in the cold, found a plot large enough for the three of us inside the sports-hall.

I woke up from the feeling of something wet dripping on my forehead. Ready to lunge out at whoever it was who was making a joke out of dripping water on my face I opened my eyes to find a rainstorm had gathered above, leaking in through the roof and dripping in a line crossing right where my head had rested. Moving a bit to get out of the dripping I went back to sleep and awoke shivering in the middle of the day.

Having slept until three o’clock, I decided I would stay up the last night experiencing that side of DreamHack as well.

Tired of the crappy food and sitting still on my stool for three days I persuaded the boys to walk with me into town. After about 30 minutes walking, with legs feeling like popsicles we found a restaurant and sat down to eat. It was probably the best pizza I have had in my life. Only managing to eat half of it I brought the other half with me back to DreamHack, where my pizza carton received many stares of envy.

That night I was set on watching Cloverfield on the big screen but I was caught up in a game and spent the night playing instead. In the morning, I was dead tired, feeling the lack of sleep and substantial food taking its toll.

We packed down our belongings after Internet shut down at eight and went to say goodbye to Crakling and Naga but we could not find them. The voices that had cried out “hello” for the past three days now turned to “goodbye” and a parade of gamers was formed to close the event in ceremony.

Around ten o’clock in the morning we finally got on the bus back to the train station where Daska arrived right in time for his ride to Stockholm. Bruno and I had two hours waiting for our train and took seat at one of the couches on the station, where I soon fell asleep.

Waking up, I found Bruno gone and got worried. Everywhere around me, people were sleeping wherever it was possible, on couches, on windowsills and some on the floor. I called Bruno on the phone and found he had gone for a stroll.
When he returned we bought some tasteless fast food on the station and spent the last hour waiting half asleep. We both were too tired to talk and so we enjoyed a quiet ride home and said goodbye in Alvesta where Bruno got off the train.

Coming home, I fell asleep immediately and slept for half a day before waking up hungry longing for any food, even remotely healthy.

7.3.2 Daska’s Story
The day began early as I rose up around 05:15 and had breakfast. The packing was already done the evening before and so it was only to roll away to the train station and jump on the train to Stockholm. In Stockholm, I swapped train to Nässjö where I met Ellen and Bruno on the train station. It felt rather relaxed even though we only had talked on the Internet before and never actually met.

Everything went smooth and we managed, after a lot of dragging baggage, to get to Elmia where DreamHack takes place.

Before we went in, we decided to eat at Sibylla, right outside of Elmia. The food was all right but the personal lacked any sign of sympathy. Ellen was not allowed to sit and eat her lunch box with us who had bought food even though she offered to buy something small. So, after a somewhat all right luncheon we dragged our stuff to Elmia where we got in more quickly than expected. I thought there would be miles of queuing but it was pretty much just to pass through the control, show the ticket and get a band around the wrist. Finally at the spot, we got our things unpacked and the computers connected in no time. We had some trouble with the Internet connection but it was nothing out of the ordinary for being the first day. The only negative thing about our seats was the chairs. They were way too small to fit to the large tables and very unpleasant to sit on even though some like me had a couple of pillows to put inbetween.

I spent the first hours updating DreamHack’s webpage where the tournament was to be displayed. The Dota tournament was badly prepared and it took a long while before I got any information about what was going to happen.

We played a couple of games and after being eliminated, the atmosphere became fairly poor. Because I was the youngest, I felt a little bit left out. I wish I had one of my friends with me, partly to enjoy DreamHack and partly because it would have made the trip more fun.

In my opinion, our seats were really good. We had some empty seats on the left where we could put our things, which were truly an advantage. We also had a good position to see Razer’s display where they showed Counter-strike and Quake live on the screen.

It was fun to see the best players in the world live with commentary. Anyhow, because I have been stupid enough not to take anything to sleep on with me I borrowed Bruno’s things the first night and the rest of the event I had to sleep on the floor as Bruno wanted to sleep too.

The days passed quickly and it was soon time to go home. Tired like an armoured truck, I packed my things together. It was easier than I thought it would be. Everything fit in the bag and all I had to do now was to carry the stuff down to the central station. Because DreamHack had so many visitors, we were not the only people on our way home and we barely got room on
the bus heading to the train station. In a hurry to catch my bus, which was leaving in ten minutes, I went to get my ticket, threw my luggage into the luggage compartment of the bus, and went on.

I slept like a baby until the bus reached Stockholm where I switched to a train heading to home sweet home, Uppsala. Even though the trip took about six hours, it was not so harsh since I slept most of the way.

After a major lack of sleep and really bad food, I was not feeling too well when I got home. I was dead tired and feeling sick.

In the end, it was a trip I will remember and there will probably be more DreamHacks for me in the future.

7.3.3 Bruno’s Story

I will begin by saying that I thought it was real fun and worth every penny to take this trip. It was truly an experience for me. I slept about a total of eight to nine hours during DreamHack and so I slept 13 hours in a row once I got home. I failed an exam the day after but it was all worth it.

I think the preparations before DreamHack, our training, began giving results in the end and when we played at DreamHack we did all right. However, I do not think DreamHack is the optimal playing environment because of all the noise and the loud music. Therefore, you must not take the tournament too seriously.

The disconnect during the first game was really not fun but I do not think we could have won the game anyways. Still it was not nice by the opponent’s to refuse to load from the save especially since they were so sure to win anyway. They did not care at all about fair play and stubbornly declared that we must continue. To them winning was definitely more important than having fun. If it been me, I would without doubt reload from save because it was the right thing to do, especially if I was sure I would win anyway. It is more fun to play until the end than not play at all.

To me the most important thing about Dota is to have fun and it seldom fails to amuse me. It was real fun to train and compete at DreamHack even though it went pretty bad, that, however, does not matter much. To meet everyone I talked and played with so much was much fun and it felt like we had known each other a lot longer even though it was the first time we met. It was a shame that not everyone sat together but I hope we will next time. I never thought of Ellen as a researcher, not really as a gamer either but more like a friend.

The most important thing about DreamHack was to meet the team, have fun and to download as much as possible. I was quite chocked when I found that I could download in 5/mb/s instead of 30kb/s like I do at home. In the end, I managed to do all the things I wanted and I am grateful to Ellen for coordinating this gathering. Without her effort I probably would not have went there and I hope we will do it again next winter.
7.3.4 Crakling’s Story
The experience of playing with each other before getting to know each other at DreamHack carried a feeling of distance and unknowing at first. After a while, we got more coordinated and that made it more and more fun.

When we met at DreamHack and finally got to know each other face-to-face, I noticed a change in the playing. I though the game got more character, at the same time, it felt like we had known each other longer than we really had.

The major difference between playing through Internet and to have the ability to go see the other player in person was mainly emotional.

Unfortunately, two players ended up away from the group, which led to some misunderstandings while playing. However, I think the cause was mainly human flaws and I do not think there is much of a difference between playing in the same room and playing through Internet.

The experience of DreamHack Winter 2009 was pretty laid back. There was always stuff going on around you and there were so many things you could do. The cutting ceremony was overwhelming and probably very expensive. There were a laser show and many different artists performing at DreamHack. There were a lot of variation in the different features DreamHack provided and I think it could reach a rather large public.

Even the competitions had a lot of variation and allowed most types of players to compete, both creative player’s who style and clock computers as well as those who are simply good at the games.

To meet each other in the way we did by creating a group and play a little over the Internet and then joining a tournament at DreamHack was both interesting and exciting. The ordinary way is for friends to create a group and so I was completely new to the idea of creating a new network in this way.

E-sports have grown at a rapid speed the last two years and it did not go unnoticed at DreamHack. From only counter-strike being a major competition, the scene has evolved to contain a wide range of other games as well. Even DreamHack as an event has grown and spread internationally.

The disconnect during the tournament felt like something that can always happen but it was sad that players do not share a sense of sportsmanship and follow the rules. The administrators seem to be more interesting in making the tournament go smooth than actually following their own rules. I think the moral of gaming is very important and you should always follow the rules.

I mainly perceived Ellen as a gamer rather than a researcher although I did notice that she asked more questions than the others did.

To me, Dota is about having fun and I liked the old concept of DreamHack where this was essential as well. Now days I think the E-sport takes a bit too much room on the event, although I think it is fun for the younger players to be able to see their idols in action.

7.3.5 Naga’s Story
I have been to DreamHack seven or eight times. I think it is an experience most should try. There are not just games but many other activities to participate in at DreamHack.
Of all the times I have been to DreamHack, I think there was only one time I was disappointed. That year the Internet was down all the time and we had seats next to an open door, which left us shivering the entire event. Since then DreamHack has only gotten better, although I think the first time was still the best time.

When I went to DreamHack the first time, we set the record with 7800 participants. This year we beat the record with about 15000. Before, there were pretty much just boys but now several thousand girls go to DreamHack to have fun as well.

The major development of DreamHack over the years is the size and the prize which both have gotten larger. Now days there are also concerts and food carts at DreamHack, which there were not before. One downside is that Jolt Cola has stopped sponsoring the event.

The most important thing about DreamHack is to have fun and to try playing against some of the world’s best players.

There are many competitions, food carts and stores to check out if you take a tour around the place. I won a chassi from Coolmaster in a lottery at DreamHack.

I usually go there to play the Dota tournament, to be with my friends and to meet people who share my interest.

At DreamHack 2009, I joined the Dota tournament together with Puff, Crakling, Daska and Bruno.

It did not go very well. We won one game and lost the others. The first game we met a couple of players who was not very nice. They asked for remakes all the time because they had trouble on their end but as soon as we had a trouble, they would not let us remake. When one of our team members got disconnected, they refused us a remake, which was not very nice, but some seem to do everything just to win.

I think we all did our best at the tournament but it was harder to play at DreamHack because we were not able to communicate due to the noise.

I also think we should have trained more before going to DreamHack but it is hard when not everyone can be flexible in their schedule, which is understandable, but we had three hours we could have trained at DreamHack before the competition, which we didn’t use.

How can I know what is important in their stories?

While the definition of the situation made by an individual is broad and detailed, the definition of the situation made by a team is narrow: a thin line that creates contradictions in the perspective of reality shared (Goffman 1974:80). As such, the most important moments of an interaction are the ones that are described similarly by all actors (Goffman 1974:82). To find which details in the stories are of most importance, I must therefore seek which events were described similarly.

To find these events, I chose to write down every topic that was mentioned in the stories and made a note beside each with the first letter of the players that mentioned it. In this way I could easily distinguish which topics were of most importance to the players by seeing how many mentioned them. I also learned
something about the character of the players by looking at who mentioned what. Daska, for example, did not mention the disconnect, possible since he caused it and might feel bad about it, while all others wrote about it.

You must not forget that the players knew I would read their stories and as consequence they might have adjusted them to some extent to project a better “face”, as Goffman would put it. As such, Daska might have left this part out to project a better face, assuming that he perceives causing the disconnect as unfavourable to him.

7.3.6 Results from the Stories
There was not any topic that was mentioned by all of us. However, most players mentioned that “having fun” was the most important activity, either in reference to DreamHack or Dota, which Bruno also stated as the most important aspect of Dota in his interview.

The topics mentioned by four team members:
- How it was to meet offline
- Our impression of DreamHack
- The disconnect.

The topics mentioned by three team members:
- The noise at DreamHack
- The moral of gaming
- How we did in the tournament,
- The sleeping habits at DreamHack
- The training before DreamHack.

Topics mentioned by two team members:
- Meeting each other in Nässjö (however, only three of the members met here)
- Daska, searching for information about the tournament
- The atmosphere after loosing the tournament
- The bad food
- The seating at DreamHack
- Watching E-sports
- DreamHack as playing environment
- The different competitions and alternative activities
- The perception of me

During the course of further analyze, we will return to these topics, in reference to the theoretical frameworks in which they can be presented.
7.4 Values, Morals and Rules

Is there an ethic of gaming present in Dota?
According to Goffman, a performance is socialized to function in accordance with the expectations and conditions existing in the setting where it is performed. As such, when an individual performs, he or she tends to mirror the sanctioned values of that society more than his or her own values (Goffman 1974:39). Using Goffman, it is interesting to explore what function values fullfil in Dota.

The disconnect during our first game in the competition brought an interesting subject into light, the ethic of gaming. Obviously no one liked the disconnect but it gave valuable insight to my study.

We all agree that there is some form of “right way” to play the game. There exists a form of ethic of gaming that decides how you should play. It defines the framework within which we play and what goes outside the boundary of accepted ways of playing.

It seems that we are institutionalized and cultivated into believing that winning is only fun if you deserve it and that the goal does not justify the means. However, not everyone share this view and this results in conflict. Rules are made to minimize the possibility of conflicts arising; but when the rules are not explicit enough, the players instead have to solve the conflicts according to their moral code. Clans often have internal rules of conduct like Bruno states:

Yes. You can’t behave like an aswhole ‘cause then you get ‘fired off’. […] We’ve had troubles with it before I was in charge but now I keep the rules strict!

Bruno

As Computer Games are in many ways inspired by stories of heroism, the heroic “codes of honour” seems to influence the way the players’ sense of the game. You do not earn honor by fighting an unfair battle. Honor is earned through your own achievements. There has to be a risk of losing for the winning to become glorious.

Playing like the team we met during our first game, who were only interested in winning and not in how they achieved it, is without honor. As Bruno states, in his story, regarding the matter “If it been me, I would without doubt reload from save because it was the right thing to do.” As such, Bruno’s statement makes it evident that there is some form of thought concerning the “right thing to do”. A thought many of the players seem to have encountered on the net since many states in the interviews and survey that there are “unwritten” rules and norms even in games that technically do not have rules.

What function does rules have in Dota?
When two teams interact with each other, every participant strive to learn his or her place in the interaction and to act in accordance with it (Goffman 1974:149). Rules function to signal how the interaction is to be conducted, what is allowed and what is forbidden, as well as signaling which roles can be enacted in the interaction.

A vital part of being a team is the reliance on others. As a result, rules of conduct are imperative to the functionality of the team. As a result, among the more active players, rules are created and upheld strictly.
You can’t cheat using map-hack. [...] You can’t backdoor for example, running into the base when no one is there. Apart from that we have some lose rules but it’s not hard. It feels natural. You don’t steel items and stuff like that

Bruno

Cheating is not only viewed as a demeanor but is also on occasion punished with “bans”, which excludes the player from games hosted by the “banner”. The term “ban” comes from banishment, which means that a banned player is banished from the play.

It is close to exclusively the less serious players that ignore the rules or apply them to benefit their own wishes. Yet some of the more experienced players make a difference between rules in public and in inhouse games. Like Daska who states “yes there is unwritten rules in public games but I usually evade them...” and yet states that he follows the rules in inhouse games. The rules are, however, present for a reason as Crakling states:

I think the rules are good. They are wellbalanced and such... There are some that could use some more balance but the rules are definitely improving. There’s a lot of norms and such that are so good that people react, sort of.

Crakling

From Goffman’s perspective, the rules function to signal the position of each player and the possible actions he or she may take. Yet as seen in the interviews, not all players chose to follow the rules of interaction but chose instead like Daska to evade them. Both Crakling and Bruno recognize that the rules improve the game while Naga states that some disputes could have been avoided if everyone followed the rules and the norms. As such, from a player’s perspective the rules have the ability to create an ideal playing environment with as equal opportunity of success as possible if everyone followed the rules, but there are always players who stray across the boundaries, committing actions that should not be “possible”, consequently, tearing a veil in the ideal interaction.

Who decides how the game is to be played?

According to Bourdieu, all social actors struggle to name and create the world through naming (Bourdieu 1999:105). As such, to trace power within a field you must investigate the language, which develops discourse and then search out the power-relationships within the discourse that make it legitimate.

The communicator can never prove his truthfulness through argumentation. A play discourse does not become dominant because it is argued for but through subsequent action. A play discourse dominates because it has proven its success through its use and is being used by teams with high symbolic capital.

The relationship between power and knowledge operates through the production and acceptance of truths. Because of the symbolic capital owned by the successful teams, we acknowledge their way of playing, making their play discourse the “true” way of playing. The more players that adopt the play discourse the more legitimate it becomes. Furthermore, when the discourse has been adopted it structures and reinforces the existing relations of power that
made it dominant by giving an advantage to the players that created the discourse and as such master it most efficiently.

In Dota the dominant play discourse states that a team should consist of a carry, a nuke, a support, a wardho and a tank (we will explore these roles further in chapter 7.6). That there is a play discourse present can be easily proved. Just ask any player on the net what a carry is and all will be able to give you an answer. Or play a public game and wait for someone to use the term “carry” in defense of taking a teammate’s kill.

Since this play discourse has proven effective by professional teams many players adopt it and in so doing reinforce the playdiscourse by making it not only the discourse used by the best players but also the playdiscourse used by most players.

Dominant play discourses are hard to overthrow and can only, using Bourdieu’s “capital”, be overthrown by the same capital as that which made it dominant – symbolic capital. Let’s say that Daska decides that all this nonsense about carry, nukes, wardho and support is not the most efficient way to play. If Daska comes up with a new way of playing the game, he must prove that his strategy is better than the pre-existing play discourse. He can only do this by using the symbolic capital he earns through his team’s victories and these must be in some essence greater than the victories of players using the “carry”-discourse. Once Daska has become a star in the world of Dota and players have begun mimicking his strategy, they will, as a result, reinforce and legitimate his position and the position of his new play discourse by recognizing it as “true”.

As such, causing change is hard work and challenging dominant play discourses is almost impossible for the lone player. It takes many and “important” victories to earn enough symbolic capital to gain such a position in the field of Dota that the player can start creating “new truths”. Consequently, we must see the field as somewhat static. Although the game changes, the play does not.

7.5 Interaction

What forms of interaction exist in Dota and at DreamHack?

According to Jensen, the computer allows for new forms of interaction, which exceed the natural boundaries of time and space (Jensen 2002:182-184).

Computer game players may get gratification not only by using computer games but also through the involvement of friends and the interaction springing from it. Playing Dota is, as such, elementary social. Although it can be played alone, against computer controlled AI’s, most players find the social interaction occurring while playing against other humans a vital feature of the game.

In this study, interaction occurred in two forms, online and offline. The interaction taking place online differed from the offline interaction by being limited to the play or the near presence of gaming. However, it was not limited to Dota; other games were played as well, of which Heroes of Newerth was the most popular.

The offline interaction took place both while playing, talking without the means of a microphone, and while doing other things together. Bruno, Daska and I took a long stroll together to find some alternative cuisine to the food carts,
Bruno and I went to see a movie and we also explored the various alternative activities at DreamHack.

In Dota, interaction takes on two features: computer-player interaction and player-player interaction. The first one refers to the interaction that takes place between the computer and the player where the player communicates orders to the computer and the computer executes them. This interaction sometimes results in disagreements between the player and the computer, which leads to frustration and friction. The disconnect during the tournament at DreamHack, as example, is a form of disagreement where Daska’s computer failed to execute Daska’s commandos.

The second form of interaction is the interaction that occurs between the players. From Bourdieu’s perspective, this interaction takes the form of actors that try to position themselves in the field using their various supply of capital (this will be discussed further in chapter 7.11). From Goffman’s perspective this interaction takes place between actors who try to find their role in the communication and create a common definition of the situation.

As we saw in the stories from DreamHack, a common definition of the situation is often hard to achieve since all players perceive the world differently. While Daska focused on his personal journey to DreamHack, noting what he did and what he found interesting, Bruno noted the team experience, Crakling noted about the meeting between the players and Naga spoke more generally about DreamHack as event.

Under stress, while playing, the common definition of the situation becomes even harder to achieve. Arguments often arise as a result of the players having made different definitions of a situation. As Naga states “when I play on my own I get mad if someone steals the kill [or] if someone fakes a disconnect because his play is bad”. These are both situations that could be seen from an opposite perspective. The player stealing the kill seldom defines the definition of the situation as one where he is a thief but there is often a reason why the kill was taken. Faked disconnects (where the player pulls the plug on purpose) are common in public games but there is no way to prove that the disconnect was not caused by a computer error.

Achieving a common definition is for these reasons hard. First, because there is no way to tell the “truth” of the situation from one perspective or another. Second, as Goffman states, it is nearly impossible for each player to perceive the world in the same way; attention to details will always differ. As such, it takes hard work and co-operation for a team to be able to achieve a common definition of the situation but they can enable it by keeping the group small and by using the backdoor to merge their definitions into a common standpoint.

How did moving from an online context to an offline context change the interaction?

The computer was not recognized as a new medium until the introduction of the World Wide Web during the 1990s. The perception of the new medium notes an importance of integration, which allows for new forms of interaction (Jensen 2002:182-184). Looking at computers as creating a new form of interaction we
must not only ask the question “how does it change the interaction” but also how the interaction is changed when moving from the new medium into its original context, the previously known natural state of face-to-face interaction.

As noted by four out of five team members, meeting each other in an offline context was one of the more interesting parts of the visit to DreamHack.

Daska noted that meeting each other face to face: ”It felt rather relaxed even though we only had talked on the Internet before and never actually met. “ Crakling noted that meeting face to face gave more character to the playing and both Crakling and Bruno noted that it felt like we had known each other longer than we really had.

Meeting each other face-to-face our differences became more obvious. The diversity that seemed to affect us the most was the age difference. Daska, being seventeen, felt secluded from the group and found it harder to connect with us. I, being the oldest of us, found instead that I felt a bit too old for the event. Almost everyone at DreamHack was younger than me and I had hoped that we would interact with other participants as well but I found it hard to achieve contact because of my age while playing on the net I never have this problem.

In relation to Bruno, Crakling and Naga the age difference did not bother me and did not seem to bother them either. They all reported that they viewed me either as a gamer or a friend. None made a point of the fact that I was there as a researcher or that I am older. Concluding, I feel I succeeded with my purpose of integrating myself to the group as one of them.

Since the age difference became more evident in person than on the net and created a divide between us, we noticed Daska being somewhat outside of the circle and did our best to include him. However, the time was too short to overcome the barrier of our differences.

Moving offline the various forms of capital that made us function online changed. In the online, the capital needed was first and foremost defined by which capital we needed to play the game successfully. Offline the requirements became much harder since we now needed capital to interact in other ways than by playing.

Striking a conversation with other team members, we used the capital we possessed to keep the communication open. There is a striking similarity between the types of capital each member possess and which members found it easiest to connect. Bruno and I, who both study at university, share an intellectual capital of knowledge and culture that makes it easy for us to discuss questions related to academics while Naga and Crakling both coming from a working background share similar forms of capital that set them aside from the rest of the group. Daska probably found himself on the outside as a result of none of us being equipped with similar variety of capital as he. As such, the online interest of computer game playing was not enough to connect us once we moved offline.

What is the difference between playing as a team and playing as an individual? When Goffman explores the differences between acting as a team and acting as an individual, his main focus lies on the differences in achieving a definition of the situation. The definition of the situation achieved by the individual is narrow since it is only made up out of one individual’s perception, while the definition of
the situation made by a team is broad and often contradictory (Goffman 1974:80). In Dota, there are many other ways in which the acting differs when playing as a team or as an individual.

Success within Dota carries different connotations to different people. To some the statistics showing the player’s own achievement are viewed as most significant which might make the player tend to solo (go alone) more than the players who view the achievement of the whole team as of highest value.

The focus on stats makes up a large part of the game even to players whose intentions are focused on the team. As Crakling states “I would like to say that I put the team’s achievement first but I tend to look a lot towards my own play. You want to evolve your self as well”.

Based on my own experience, I would like to claim that in Dota the stats have more value in the beginning than they have playing on a professional level. On a professional level statistics like wins and losses are important but not the individual statistics within the game. These are soon forgotten.

I can play bad but as long as we win, I’m satisfied. Well maybe not play bad but if it goes bad. It has a lot to do with if you win. If you sacrifice yourself a little, you are the one who goes in first and get all the ultis on you and then the team comes and kills the opposition. Then it’s worth it.

Bruno

What Bruno leaves implicit here is that this way of playing would give the player bad individual statistics although it has tactical benefits to the team. As such, Bruno’s statement that ”it’s worth it” agrees well with Naga’s statement that ”winning is most important” or Daska’s ”it’s what you do for the team that counts”. Like Crakling finds the teamplay the best part of Dota, all the players seem to agree that the team is more important than the individual statistics.

Playing Dota on a professional level you become highly dependent on the team, however, like Bruno states, you can still enjoy “flying solo” in a public game among strangers as a means of relaxation.

Playing alone and playing with friends are two complete different things. To me playing with my friends is a large part of what makes the games entertaining. Playing with my friends, I can adjust the way I play to benefit the team by knowing how the others play and who I can rely on when I am playing. I use the skills of my hero in combination with the skills of the other players’ heroes, knowing that I can rely on the other players casting the right spells.

Playing with my friends also affects which heroes I pick. When playing with friends, I prefer to play a hero with heal or shield or some other ability that can help the team by giving support to my team members. Playing alone I find that the other players do not always appreciate my support and tend to instead focus on stats and getting kills. The only way to deal with this is to choose heroes that do not depend on others to survive, which is a rather sad solution to me who prefer teamplay.

Crakling agrees with this standpoint and actually gives this as a reason why he might stop playing Dota. “It would be if all the nice company disappeared, if everything was about winning, if there was a unpleasant environment basicly.”
What role does the technical instruments of communication play?
Jensen states that all human beings share culture in that they experience and communicate meaning collectively. With new technology the boundaries of culture have expanded, allowing new processes of cultivation to take place using new tools of transference (Jensen 2002:172).

Looking at Dota you cannot enjoy the game’s full potential without using a voice-chat program to communicate with the other players. Without voice-chat the teamwork becomes much more difficult and you have to priorities how much information you share with your team-memers since it can be quite hazardous to write in the game’s own text-chat system. Writing while you play does not just take attention from the game; it also makes it impossible to cast spells because the spells use keys to cast. This sometimes leads to death something that is called KWW by the players, short for “Killed While Writing”.

Using voice-chat also enables much more social interaction and the conversations seldom stay focused exclusively on team collusion, the codes used for teamplaying. Usually, you enjoy more casual conversation with the team, often about things outside of the game. At the end of games, players often stay in Ventrilo or Skype, the voice-chat software commonly preferred, talking about the game and discussing different incidents that took place during the play. In this way, the players can solve problems they have encountered during the game together. The players help each other out with useful tips and tricks and as a result, the team’s shared knowledge increases through social interaction. This is more common among the active gamers.

The technical instruments can also become obstacles when they do not function correctly. Delay in communications caused by a delay in transferance between computer and computer (so called response time or ping) can be disastrous for the play as communication is so very important for the team’s ability to co-ordinate their efforts.

As all communication in Dota is in a sense collective transferances of meaning, based on Jensen, Dota becomes a platform for sharing culture.

How should you behave when entering the interaction or the battlefield?
Taking the perspective of the person entering the interaction, Goffman states, that it is always in his or her interest to control the others behavior, especially in the way they act in reaction towards him or her. Consequently, it is in the individual’s own interest to control his or her behavior so that he or she gives off the expression most favorable to him/herself (Goffman 1974:13).

This technique of controlling the give-off expression is often used in Dota for strategic purposes. When meeting an opponent on the battlefield you rarely wish the opponent to know your plans, instead you try to give-off a false expression of what you intend to do in order to control the way the opponent react. One of these techniques is called “limping”.

Limping is to give away the impression that you are badly hurt and fleeing the battlefield. A successful “limp” results in the opponent chasing you, hopefully loosing health while doing so, giving you the opportunity to turn at the right moment and surprise him by attacking rather than fleeing. As Daska stated “there’s nothing so satisfying as escaping with just a tiny speck of health left,
being chased over the map and then turn around and ‘bam!’ kill the opponent instead”.

Concluding, controlling the others behavior, as Goffman suggests, is key to success in the interaction between players and opponent. Like any game of chess or poker, figuring out what the players will do next can be quite useful as well as manipulating the opponent into thinking he or she can read you.

7.6 The Role

Which roles can be enacted in Dota?

In Dota, socialization plays the role of teaching each player the roles that can be enacted in a game. These are very specific when playing as a team.

Examples of roles in Dota are: Carry, Ward-ho, Nuke, Tank and Support. These we will investigate further during the study and you may find the terminology with definitions in the appendix.

In short, a Carry is the player that carries the team by being boosted into a “superhero” in contrast to the other heroes. This is done by the team members giving up their kills for the carry and if necessary even their lives.

The Ward-ho spends his gold buying supporting items like Wards, which give vision over a part of the map. By buying wards the player sacrifices some of his/her income. This result in the player having to take a defensive stance where staying alive is the most important issue.

The Nuke is a hero with many damage-spells whose only job is to cast as many spells as possible against the opponent(s). The nuke is, as such, the hero that “nukes” the opposing team with spells. It is a weak hero, a magician that is played from the rear of the team, casting spells from a distance.

The Tank is the strongest hero who goes in to battle first and takes the hits from the opposing team, defending his weaker co-players. The tank is the strongest hero used as a shield against the enemy.

The support is a supportive hero used for healing and casting “buffs”. Buffs are used to give advantages (if cast on friend), or disadvantages (if cast on the opponent). The support usually helps the ward-ho with buying wards when needed.

These roles are defined, not by the game in itself or a certain rulebook that comes with it. These roles are defined through the dominant play discourse. All players are expected to know of them and to play accordingly with them. Each role has specific heroes from which to choose that are considered to fit that role. Choosing a hero with high damage spells naturally assigns you the role of nuke or ward-ho and choosing a strong hero naturally assigns you the role of the tank and so on. As such, arguments often arise when playing public games because players often do not play in accordance with the role that their choice of hero has assign them. Concluding, the roles in Dota are assigned accordingly to the heroes picked or to the decision of the teamleader.

Like Goffman’s study of roles taken in a business environment there are both formal and informal leaders present in the group, although these may in some cases be the same person. Like a business executive plays the role to instruct his employees and hand out orders, the leader of the Dota team plays the same role to the other team members.
Which roles did we take?

According to Goffman, a new place in society gives the individual a new role to play. To be able to enact the new role the actor will be given scene directives and it is presumed that the actor has a large enough repertoire of expressions that he or she will be able to play their role (Goffman 1974:69). Dota is no different from society. A new place in a team will give the player a new role to play. Since our team was formed out of strangers we were all given new roles in the team, although some had enacted similar roles in other teams on previous occasions.

Working as a team, we did not only take on social roles but also the roles of Dota players. Daska with his commanding nature naturally got the role of carry, the leading hero that “carry” the game onward, which is the role he stated as his preferred choice in the interview. Bruno and I, with our more layback nature, got the roles of ward-ho and nuke. Crakling and Naga were not as constricted in their choice and switched the role of tank and support between them depending on which game we played. Sometimes Crakling even played the role of carry, although he prefers support, while Daska instead played a semi-support, a hero that is a blend of both carry and support.

I volunteered for the role of ward-ho for technical reasons. I have the worst internet-connection in the team and I always experience difficulties with lagging while playing. Lagging is when the Internet connection creates a delay or a spike, like a broken recording, where actions made by the players are not transferred correctly into the game. Lag makes it hard to target spells and to counteract movements in team fights. The role of ward-ho gave me an important purpose that the lag could not interfere with. I knew that as long as I made sure my team had vision over the map I could play cowardly and keep the rest of my focus on staying alive.

Playing ward-ho was completely new to me and I found the role somewhat hard to adjust to in the beginning. The hardest part was that I had to be completely unselfish and let go of my old burden of consigning too much stock in my own stats. I had to come to terms with the fact that the stats would in the end appear as if I had played a bad game and instead embrace the part I had played in achieving victory for my team taking inspiration from Bruno’s statement that it is after all “worth it”. Bruno often helped me out with the burden of ward-ho by buying wards when my gold was depleted. Daska gave me instructions on where to place the wards and when I had to make a choice of which places to priorities I found it easy to ask for instructions. The other players stuck to their old way of playing and their old roles they had described in the interviews. They quickly seemed to fall into old routine in their playing although we did not encounter Naga’s bad temper, which he had warned me about in the interview.

I usually scream and curses, so that everyone hear. You see some people smashing their keyboards. I have hit it on a few occasions but I have never broken anything. Mostly I just curse and get angry, but there’s nothing more to it.

Naga

Becoming angry when the game does not turn out as expected is quite common and Crakling also admits to becoming angry sometimes although his solution is to leave the keyboard. “That’s when you know you’ve played to long.” he sais.
Surprisingly, we saw no great outbursts of anger although the boys had ample reason for it since we lost every game in the beginning and had trouble settling into our roles to create good teamplay.

After the games, we used the backstage, as Goffman calls it, to discuss our performance, staying on the chat talking, encouraging each other to not lose faith by reminding each other that we were still completely new as a team and had not learned each other’s styles of playing yet.

Around training day three, we finally began winning, noticing a huge improvement in the teamplay. I felt more confident in my role and had learned not to be greedy, waiting for the chance of getting the killing strike before casting my spells. Instead I found pleasure in how fast my assist-stats were growing when I began casting spells immediately upon encountering an enemy rather than waiting for the moment where killing blows were possible. In this way I often managed to keep the health points of an enemy down enough for a team member to come help finish the job. However, as Naga stated in his story we could have done used more training.

What happens if a team member plays outside of his role?
Goffman states that an individual is often more aware of the norms he or she is supposed to uphold than the norms that he or she actually enacts (Goffman 1974:55, 58). Looking at the interviews we find that the players are very aware of this fact. All players know that flaming should be avoided according to the norms yet both Krakling and Naga admit to flaming. All players know that the team should be placed first yet all of the players confess that they enjoy the game more when they do a good job as individual players.

When being given a role in Dota, knowing how you are supposed to play does not stop players from sometimes acting outside of that role, consciously or unintentionally. Players that do not have a specific role, which routine they are used to, often seem to blur the boundaries between the roles, in part enacting all the roles possible at the same time. A player who usually plays the same role, instead have trouble trying out new ones because they tend to fall back on the role they are used to playing.

Other interests, such as the aim to gain good statistics or buy better items may also interfere with the role the player is supposed to enact on an unconscious level. However, this is more common in a public game than in an in-house game. A public game is played "in public” and is, as such, open to strangers. An in-house game is played in private, inside the house of friendship, and only previous relations can connect to these games. This difference between public and private creates different games.

In public games, winning the game is not always as important to the player as making good stats. Having good stats, are visual markers that give the player self-confidence and satisfaction on an individual level while winning the game is a team effort. Since many players, in public games, feels a certain hopelessness, that they cannot affect the team’s success because the rest of the members of the team do not put in enough effort, players often look rather to the individual stats than the team’s shared success. This makes, enacting the specific role you are
given in the team hard since all roles rely on the other roles to function efficiently. The roles also demand much effort from the player, which is part of the reason that Bruno states that he enjoys flying solo in public games as relaxation. In public games Bruno can cast-off the role and improvise his play in accordance with the mood of the day instead of constantly having to look to the team for a signal on what action to take.

When a player acts outside of his/her given role, when a nuke takes the kill, or the ward-hoo prioritizes items before wards and so on, the roles of the team do not function as they should. The ward-ho relies on the carry to carry the team, or else his/her sacrifice of experience and gold will have been for nothing. The nuke relies on the tank to protect him/her. And the tank relies on the support to heal and shield. All players must play their role correctly, or a crack in the team’s defense is made that threatens to bring down the whole fort. When flying solo, as Bruno states, the one player merges all these roles into one role relying on him or her self to heal, shield, support and damage the opponent.

**How does a player separate the different roles he/she must play?**

Socialization does not have that much to do with the knowledge of the many specific details of a given role but the many different ways of expression, which enables him or her to enact any role, that he/she is likely needed to play, states Goffman (Goffman 1974:70).

A computer game player is not only a computer game player, he or she is a member of a family, perhaps a student, a co-worker, a friend and so on. With all these different roles to play, it becomes vital to separate the different roles from each other, distinguishing which traits are unique to each role. This occurs naturally through socialization.

Keeping the roles enacted in daily life and the role of the gamer separate can in some cases be problematic. Most players participating in the study claim they only priorities their daily duties when they become too important to ignore. During the interviews I found that the players having girlfriends, wives or children found it much harder to hold on to their computer game interest because the roles as boyfriend, husbands or parents sometimes created a conflict with their role as players. When I asked Naga for what reason he might stop playing Dota he stated: “It would probably be because I have a girlfriend who doesn’t like me playing.”

It seems that the roles that bring higher responsibilities are often prioritized before roles that are purely linked to the hobby of playing. This might be part of the reason why computer games are mainly popular among children and young adults, before they come of an age to gain roles to play that give more responsibilities.

The roles of real life and the role of computer game player are not the only roles that need to be separated. The player also needs to distinguish the avatar they play from their own self.

Jensen views computers as a medium of interactivity. One form of interactivity described by Jensen is the “medium-user relation”. This refers to how users interact with the medium through a process of selection, in which the
user may influence the content of the medium (Jensen 2002:184, 185). This relationship suggests that the information transference is a one way channel where the user influences the medium, however, the relation between user and computer can also be seen from the opposite perspective, giving the medium power to influence the user.

In Dota the heroes sometimes influences the way we speak. You refer to a player by the gender of the hero he or she is playing no matter the actual gender of the player. When Daska plays Mirana we still call him “her” because Mirana is a she. It happens that we make jokes by mimicking the voices of our heroes and sometimes we generate jokes by referring to the hero’s abilities. These jokes are a way to distinguish the real from the unreal by bringing humor into the unreal, breaking the illusion and defining it as just that, an illusion. Some examples of jokes picked out from the forum at dotaforum.se is:

- You have played Dota too long when:
  - ...you go to the shoe store and buy red shoes because you think it will make you walk faster.
  - ...you refuse to cross streams or rivers out of fear of getting ganked.
  - ...you go out into the woods to eat trees when you are ill.
  - ...you think you become invisible at the age of six.

- "Your mama is so fat that when Tiny tosses her the whole map dies."
- "Your mama is so fat that when pudge hook her he goes to her and not the other way round."

Of course all of these jokes require some knowledge of the game to be appreciated but they are in themselves good examples of how the virtual environment is brought to clash with reality, using the irony of applying the game on real life situations to create amusement. As one player stated on Dotaforum “I know I’ve played too long when I open the fridge to take a sandwich and start counting the cooldown ‘till I can take another”. The irony is in this sense used to separate the real life from the virtual and the invention of these jokes is, as such, in a sense a form of socialization.

Does my gender affect the way I interact with other players? Bourdieu states that institutionalization is what defines how a person should behave accordingly with the institution he or she belongs to (Bourdieu 1999:121). As a female player I belong to an institution of womanhood and like Goffman suggests, this given social front has generated stereotypes about women (Goffman 1974:33).

These stereotypic views affect the responses I get from other players when my gender is revealed. While playing Dota as a female, I find there is a huge difference between in-house games and public games. Playing in-house, among
friends or friend of friends, I get much more respect than I do in the public games. Since we prefer to use voice-chat while playing, it is hard to hide your identity, but I have not encountered any major difficulties in relation to my gender.

Playing public games, I found the opposite. If I introduce myself as a woman, I get many different responses. The most common response is simple disbelief from the players, who respond by writing comments about how ridiculous it is to try fooling someone that I am a woman. Another response is to suddenly become a sexual object whose attention players compete to get. A third response is to simply evoke curiosity in the players, receiving questions about why I am playing the game and earnest interest in my opinions about it. The response I prefer myself is the “non-response”, players who do not respond to me being a woman as something unique but treats me as a player just like any other. Although, I must admit I rather enjoy the attention I get sometimes.

Given that the rude responses are more common than the pleasant acknowledgements, I find myself avoiding to be identified as a woman in public games by going along with the presumed notion that I am a man just like the other players. This makes gender research in public games a difficulty since it is hard to know how many women there are out there on the net doing just like me and not revealing their identity.

As such, the institution does not apply. As there is no knowledge of my gender, I cannot become part of that institution. However, as most players are presumed to be men, I consequently become part of the male institution, which as Bourdieu states not only means that I must face stereotypic views of men but also that I am given a role to enact, to act in accordance with that institution. As such, I am often expected to, in accordance with the stereotype, be free of emotion and not react to virulence or foul language, something that I find very difficult.

How does the offline and online context affect the role?
Like previously stated, a new standing will give a new role (Goffman 1974:69). Changing context of play may, consequently, give the player a new role.

Looking at social interaction there is not much difference in interaction through Internet and interaction face-to-face, at least not to a gamer. We still talked as we did online and focused on what happened on the screen. However, we all agreed that it was more fun to meet each other in person. Letting relationships made online go offline is a good way to improve the relations already made.

I find it complicated to define the line between offline and online. Going online does not magically change you into a completely different person. You are still the same person underneath even though you are given the ability to become someone else on the surface, as I am given the ability to be a common gamer by not revealing my gender. It does not change who I am to hide my gender. I do not suddenly start behaving “like a man” just because the other players believe I am male, although I do hide my more female responses. My devotion to the game allows me to fit in with the group and become a player just like the others. It is a role I take but I do not consider it extraordinary because I am currently online while I take that role.
Immerging myself into Dota I move into a battlefield where my purpose is to stay alive, keep my friends alive and hopefully deprive the opponent(s) of this ability. It is much like playing the card game “Hollywood” with my parents. I aim towards a goal and hope to reach it first, enjoying myself in the process. If someone asked me what the difference between my offline and online self is, I would answer that I do not know. I guess I become more competitive when I enter the game but then I am quite competitive when I play Hollywood with my parents too. I become more commanding when online, as I am often the leader of my group, but doing workshops in a group for school, I often get the role of the leader as well. I guess I get a bit bolder when I play Dota, but then I get bolder when I talk about something I am confident about in an offline context too. In the end I find it hard to point out just what traits of my persona can solely be ascribed to the “online” and must conclude that I do not believe there are one.

Socially I think we adapted well to the change of going offline at DreamHack. However, there was a noticeable change in the personality of some. The most evident changes were in Daska and Bruno. It seemed almost as if they switched bodies with each other. Daska who talked much online was quiet offline, meanwhile Bruno who had been quieter online became more talkative offline.

It seems that Internet can both provide a secure forum to bring out peoples identities as well as it can suppress it. Internet may provide an easier playing field for communication for those who find it hard to express their self offline but it can also cover a persons expressive personality by making their voices disappear among the many.

It was a shame that Daska found it harder to express himself offline. It seems that the offline makes differences more evident. Daska told in his narrative that he found the age difference hard to contemplate and that he felt that he was left out because of his age. Maybe this was the reason why he suddenly became a shy laidback person offline, as a result of becoming more aware of his own age. Although, I think he found himself excluded more for the reason of his own withdrawing rather than us perceiving him differently due to age, since this was already a known factor online.

Moving the roles from an online to an offline context can also become a solution to real life problems outside of gaming and players often gather to do other activities together offline than gaming. Both Crakling and Naga often travel to meet with their clan to do outside activities and Daska likes to attend LANs where he and his friends enjoy not only games but also movies and rounds on the town.

Playing Dota I have come to know many people. When I moved to Halmstad to study, I had no residence, even though the term was just about to start. I was forced to buy a ticket for the train homeless, praying that everything would work out somehow. About a week before I was to leave, the player Milken from the group I played Dota with, at that time, offered to rent out his girlfriend’s apartment while she was in Spain. Even though we had never met offline, the relationship we had developed through the computer game playing helped me find a solution to a problem in my offline life. I was later invited to get-togethers at his place together with other gamers from the group that I had come to know online. Today Milken and Pellevanten run Dotaforum.se and have helped me
much in making this study possible by giving me access and publishing information about the study in the weekly news section.

This is just an example of how relationships made inside the game can come to be valuable friends outside of the gaming. Looking back, I can find several more examples and I bet most players have a couple of these stories in their pasts as well.

Searching the net, you can even find stories about people who have met their husbands and wives through computer games. Myself, I have found my best friend and partner through Dota and although none of us have time for playing these days, our relationship still linger on in the offline life we share.

The online can also act to preserve relations made offline. Bruno describes how he managed to keep in contact with his friends from his hometown through playing computer games online and now that he has moved back to Kalmar he can continue his friendships both in the offline and the online, as a result.

Conclusively, the roles might change due to moving between an offline and an online context but the relationships seems to stay the same. Friends will still be friends online even if their personality undergoes changes offline and vice versa.

7.7 The Team

What is a team?
The term team, as used by Goffman, refers to any group of people that are reliant on each other to achieve a given definition of the situation. This term can be applied on our team as well since we are all reliant on each other to achieve this given definition of the situation in order to win the game.

In Dota, a team usually consists of five members who co-operate to achieve victory against an opposing team of players. In-house teams are ordinarily formed like networks where people who already know each other join together to form a team. Sometimes new members are found on forums and initiated into the team through various rituals, what Bourdieu defines as acts of institution (see page 41) (Bourdieu 1999:117-123). In a public game, teams are ordinarily formed out of strangers who have connected to the same game. This makes a large difference in the way the game is played and these types of teams do not always fit the profile of what Goffman describes as a team, since the team members sometimes lack the co-operative skills to achieve the given definition of the situation. In these cases we must raise the question: are these still teams?

If the grounds for calling a group of people a team are their ability to achieve a given definition of the situation, then groups who do not have this ability should not be defined as teams. We must therefore be careful not to mix-up the term team as used by Goffman and the term team used by the gamers themselves which is merely a structural aspect of the game. To distinguish the two terms I chose to refer to the structural aspect as “Dotateam” and only use the term “team” when referring to Goffman’s theory.

In public games it is common that a Dotateam is made up both of friends and of strangers. In these cases the team, using Goffman’s definition, sometimes only include a few of the players in the Dota team. If two people, co-operating to achieve a given definition of the situation, should be defined as a team from
Goffman’s perspective is unclear, having so few members, but I suggest that the term can refer to any number of people that are as Goffman states “reliant on each other”. At DreamHack, Bruno and I often played games alone together with strangers. On these occasions we often found that we together made up a team of our own while the other players played as individuals. In this case we had to depend solely on our mini-team to achieve the given definition of the situation while trying to adapt to the play of the individual players around us. In these cases it is wise to adapt the most important roles of the team: carry and support allowing one player to take the lead while the other support him or her. The need for a given definition of the situation does still apply as the carry and the support must act in unison to achieve successful play.

When the whole Dotateam is made out of individual players, players often express a frustration about the situation. Being forced into a team by the structure of the game, the unreliance on others and lack of co-operation makes the play uneven, especially if the Dotateam’s opponent is a real team (in Goffman’s sense). Daska states that it sometimes feels like he is playing the game one against five when the team he belongs to refuse to co-operate. As such, the term team as Goffman uses it becomes complex when applied on a Dotateam and can only truly be applied when all members rely on each other and co-operate. However, this problematic mainly affects the public games and not the in-house games.

How does symbolic power affect the formation of teams?
As stated earlier in this paper, symbolic power dwells in a relationship between those who exercise power and those who succumb to it (Bourdieu 1999:170). This relationship can be seen in the relationship between the leader of the team and the members, those who succumb to his/her authority.

According to Goffman, socialization is what teaches us which role to play. As such, socialization is what distinguishes the leader from the ruled (Goffman 1974:70). This relationship is upheld through rituals that legitimate the leaders position and through the accumulation of symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1993:230-238).

To become the leader of a group places high demands on the person. The ruled must acknowledge the rulers right to rule by giving it authority. Power is not taken but given. Power demands legitimacy, the justification of its own existence.

As in any team there is a hierarchy. The leader of a team usually has the highest rank but his/her position can only be upheld by being legitimated through the approval of the other members. In our team we used direct democracy, choosing the leader through nomination, candidacy and voting. Since no one but Daska wanted the role of leader we only voted whether to approve him as such, but every member had the opportunity to deny him the position if they wished to do so.

The leader of the team handles the picks, which heroes are to be played. This gives the leader the ability to control a vital part of the game that influences its outcome. Daska was a humble leader; he listened to the wishes of the team and picked the heroes we asked for, to the extent that it was strategically
possible to do so. When our wishes collided with the interest of the whole team, Daska used his symbolic power, which is mainly based on his greater experience of the game, to recommend alternative picks for us. By accepting these suggestions we legitimize Daska’s right to authority over us; the relationship of power between us is reinforced with his exercise of power and our submission.

Another task the leader is responsible for is the organizing of the training. However, since Daska did not take this task seriously I became in a sense the informal leader of the group, becoming the organizing force of the team. I made it my task to schedule our training and communicate with members to find places in our schedules where we all were free to play.

Although I had intended to take any leading role in the team to keep from influencing the study in this manner, I was forced to take on this task, as there would not otherwise have been any training being done and, consequently, no study either. As such, I used my symbolic capital to gain the interest of the members to meet up and train and they in turn legitimated my power over them by showing up. Thus, the power relationship between Daska and I was reversed while organizing training and then reinstated while playing, which makes some form of “measurement” of symbolic power in this case difficult.

Once a set of training had been scheduled, Daska took over and organized the play by finding opponents to play against. At DreamHack, Daska handled the organizing related to the competition, communicating with opponents and with the administrators of the competition.

When a leader fails in his duty as Daska did when he failed to take charge of the organizing of training, the position as leader is questioned and the leader may lose the legitimacy he or she needs to uphold their position. However, when the legitimacy of the leader is questioned, it might not result in an overthrowing of the leadership. According to the general view of what constitutes a Dotateam, the team must have a leader. Even though Daska’s legitimacy was questioned, he was able to keep the position through traditional legitimization by upholding the norms of what constitutes a leader at the field of battle. As long as Daska share the same traditions as the rest of the team and act in accordance with them, his position is given legitimacy.

Concluding, Daska, although failing in some of his duties as leader, kept his position by accumulating his symbolic capital while playing. Yet he needed a second party to step in and organize the training or else he would have no one to “rule” while playing as there would be no playing being done. This suggests that Daska’s symbolic capital outside of the game was not enough in order to exercise power or he lacked the will. On this thesis I make the assumption that Daska’s symbolic capital is mainly formed from experience with the game rather than with leadership of a team. Bruno who has some extensive experience from leading a clan would have been a much better candidate for the task as he holds that symbolic capital but as he did not wish to take on the responsibility, an informal leader had to step in and take charge. Consequently, the possession of high amounts of symbolic capital is not enough to be a good leader. A leader must also have the will to lead and execute whatever tasks are needed of him or her; else he/she loses credibility as a leader.
What play discourses are present in the game?
Socialization, according to Goffman, teaches ways of expression, which enable a person to enact any role that he or she is likely need to play (Goffman 1974:70). In Dota, these roles are in turn defined by the dominant play discourse.

Play discourses are created to answer any need that the game creates. For example, in Dota, there is a limited space on the map and a limited field of vision. As a result, the rule “call miss” has been constructed to solve this issue. As this rule is not programmed into the game itself it exists only as a norm and an element of the dominant play discourse, which each player must learn through socialization.

Players co-operate by dividing the three lanes among themselves. In this, there are apparent similarities between Dota and the more acknowledged team sports like for example football. Just like football players are divided on the field according to various strategies, players in Dota are divided on the lanes to achieve different results.

To understand the importance of the different starting fields you need to understand how the lanes work. When you kill a creep, you are given gold. If one of your neutral creeps kills the creep for you, the gold is shared among all players. Players learn a technique called ”last hit” to make sure they get the gold instead of sharing it. If more than one player go on the lane they have to divide the opportunities to last hit between each other in some way. Thus, sharing the lane gives you less gold. Sharing the lane also gives you less experience because any creep killed within a set proximity gives experience and this experience is divided between those that are inside the proximity. To simplify: the more players on the lane, the less gold and the less experience to the players. However, there is also another side to it, the fewer players on a lane, the higher are the risks to that player(s). This is what must be taken into account when deciding on starting fields.

The starting field 1 + 1 + 3 is used to surprise the enemy on one of the lanes and overcome them through numbers and achieve ”first blood”, the first kill, which is rewarded with extra gold. However, 1 + 1 + 3 is a risky strategy; failing to get the first kill results in that the three players will have gained less gold and experience while two of the players in the team have been put at risk by being left on their own in their lanes. This starting field is, once the first blood has been made or failed changed into one of the other starting fields.

The starting field 1 + 2 + 2 is the most common choice because it enables the carry, to go alone to gain some extra experience and gold on his or her lane while the other players are safer on their lanes.

There is one starting position yet not mentioned. The starting field 1 + 1 + 2 + 1 uses the woods where neutral creeps live, which are more difficult and valuable to kill. This strategy divides 1 + 1 + 2 players on the lanes while one player ”goes woods”, as it is called. This strategy can be a great benefit to the team since three players are gaining more gold and experience by going solo. However, it is vital that these players can dominate their lanes even though they are alone. Otherwise the opposing team, which might be using a different strategy and have more players placed on the lanes, can keep the lone players down by refusing them experience or gold on the lane. This is done through denying. Denying a creep means to last-hit one of the team’s own helping creep
thereby denying the other team the gold and experience killing that creep would have provided.

So what does this have to do with socialization? Well, each starting field creates new roles and as Goffman states, socialization is what teaches us to enact any role that we might be required to enact. As such, socialization plays a large part in teaching the players all the possible roles they are likely needed to enact while the choice of starting field defines which roles are currently to be used.

These roles also give the players a responsibility as they must enact them correctly or the teamwork fails. That every player act with responsibility over their lane is imperative and calling out when the opponent(s) leaves the lane is vitally important; it might save the lives of the teammates by giving them forewarning that an enemy might be expected to appear on their lane. Players encountering the consequences of a team member’s failure to call miss teach the importance of this rule through experience and what is experience but a socializing process.

In the beginning this custom of calling out miss was mainly a courtesy but in the past few years it has become more of an actual rule and it happens on occasion that players get banned for not calling miss. Failing to enact the role, whether due to lack of socialization or not, might result in an exclusion from the group, which is usually taken quite severely. As such, these failures become part of the socializing process by becoming cautionary examples to other players.

Are there any “faces” upheld towards the other members of the team?

According to Goffman, the team must share a mutual familiarity; they must realize that they have a mutual face and cannot uphold “faces” towards each other (Goffman 1974:77).

Taking Goffman’s statement in mind, the first thought that strikes me is that I have myself upheld a face towards the other members of the team by trying to tone down the part of me that is the researcher. I have tried to uphold the face of the player to minimize my influence over the study. As such, I have disabled our team’s ability to achieve a given definition of the situation, which might be part of the reason why we did not do very well in the competition.

Online, Daska upheld the face of a self-confident leader, in which we put our trust. Going offline his face was, however, uncovered as false since the boy we met at DreamHack showed a more insecure face, positioning himself outside of conversations and not participating in mutual activities. This false face creates a divide between the members of the team by signaling that the team does not have a unified front, a mutual face.

I never caught neither Bruno nor Crakling, upholding faces, which denotes that they either do not uphold any or they are really good at it. Naga, I suspect, felt he needed to uphold a face of being “healthy” by highlighting his habits of going to the gym. This part of his face might of course be true, but as he did not pay much attention to what he was eating or feeling the need for exercise at DreamHack it seemed more to be a part of the face he wished to present than the reality. As he pointed this out in the interview as well it seemed important to him to uphold a face of healthiness as a way to cope with his perceived “unhealthiness” of being a gamer. The need for applying this feature to his face
might not be a face per se, since he in truth could have healthy habits in another setting but at DreamHack he tried to give off an expression of being a healthy person, while not seeming to really believing so himself or acting in a manner that could have validated this claim.

As Goffman states, a person may in some cases be involuntary cynical because their audience do not allow them to be honest, thus, acting in accordance with a position they do not themselves believe in (Goffman 1974:25, 26). As such, Naga might uphold this potential “face” of being healthy because he perceives the audience as criticizing him for his interest in computer games, making him believe his hobby is indeed unhealthy. Maybe it is media giving him this notion, the girlfriend who he states “dislikes his interest”, or his belief that the public hold a negative opinion about gaming stated in the interview: “I think those who believe gaming creates murderers should try playing the game before they accuse people”.

To become a team, such as Goffman describes, that do not uphold faces towards each other, takes much more time than we had when conducting this study. During the three months that we trained and visited DreamHack together, we came to know each other but not as close as is necessary to create a true “team”. Faces are inevitably upheld at the beginning, when players encounter each other as individuals rather than as members of the team; only time and continuous interaction can take these away.

What is the function of standpoints in a Dota team?
Team members need to be united in the standpoint they take and not reveal that this standpoint has not been founded on their own. The team upholds an official standpoint defined together or through a director (Goffman 1974:82). In a Dotateam it is important to uphold the team’s standpoint against other teams, especially when there is a discussion between the teams. When discussing rules, the team must be united in the definition of what the rules are to be able to enforce them.

A team also needs to be united in the moral and ethical standpoint they take. Arguments like the one about the disconnect cannot always be solved by referring to rules; sometimes the question of who is in the wrong is more of a moral question. If the team does not share the same view of what is morally right, it will be very difficult to persuade the opposing team that they are acting immorally. It often comes down to how many players agree and how many disagrees. If the opposing team does not uphold an official standpoint, you can use this to your advantage by winning members of the opposing team over to your standpoint by supplying good arguments for your cause.

The team also needs to uphold an official standpoint in their view of priorities. When meeting the opposing team in a team fight the team needs to focus on the same target first, to do this they need to be united in the definition of which opponent is their largest threat and therefore most important to kill. If the team goes into a fight without an official standpoint they will likely target different opponents, leaving the team vulnerable to counter-attacks from the players who are, as a result, left alive.
Official standpoints are, as such, vital to the team’s success, both in-game, while fighting, in pauses and after games when arguments with other teams may arise. In our team we often failed on these points. When arguing about the disconnect we did not have a united standpoint against the other team. Bruno and I considered the question a moral one about doing “the right thing” while Daska sought for rules to support our claim and when being turned down by the administrators quit supporting it. Crakling referred to the issue as one of sportsmanship much like Bruno and I, feeling that the administrators had failed to acknowledge the rules, which did give us right to reload from save although the opponents refused it:

The disconnect during the tournament felt like something that can always happen but it was sad that players do not share a sense of sportsmanship and follow the rules. The administrators seem to be more interesting in making the tournament go smooth than actually following their own rules. I think the moral of gaming is very important and you should always follow the rules.

Crakling

Naga did not take a standpoint, as he affirms in the interview:

I don't think you should use a specific moral but it's different when it happens. If someone fakes disconnect when the play goes bad it's not okey but i someone has killed somebody and the save was recent then I think i's okey to reload from save. Countrary if you have achieved something grand then I think you shouldn't 'cause it is more likely the opponent faked it. You never know.

Naga

As such, Naga’s lack of standpoint and Daska’s submission to the administrators undermined our ability to use a united standpoint against the opposing team. As they had a united opinion in the matter our diversity made their standing stronger than ours even though we had the rules to support us.

Keeping Goffman in mind we should have used a director to create a unified standpoint before taking a stand against the other team. However, as our leader, who would naturally be the director, did not back our standpoint the team was left with only three members sharing a united front instead of five. If it had been any other member that disagreed it might have been easier to direct his or her opinion to back the team, as we had all submitted authority to Daska. If Daska had supported the issue as leader, Naga would more likely submit to his authority as leader and unite with us. As such, the choice of director might be just as important as the choice of leader. Furthermore, the whole team must support the director in order to direct a united standpoint.

Is there any occasion that a team member has become part of the audience?
According to Goffman, a team member may never be part of both the team and the audience (Goffman 1974:89). This, in part, because such a relation would create emotional bonds between the team member and the audience, which might interfere with the success of enactments infront of the audience.
I know at least one member of our team who have made themselves guilty of this crime and that would be me. I am both an audience in the way that I am observing in this study, while I am a member of the team. I am in a sense also the "team" while the subjects of my study are the audience, since I have my own individual aims for this study to conduct a good study and be taken seriously as a researcher when interacting with the subjects. At the same time, my strive to be a good member of the team and not be taken as a researcher collides with the aim to do good research. This contradiction makes this type of study hard and I do often find it difficult to distinguish the researcher from the player. To deal with this issue I have chosen not to hide my subjective perception, revealing it through the use of the pronoun I, rather than using second or third person to describe events that are seen through my eyes.

Being part of the audience has also influenced my ability as a member of the team. In order to record all things that happen while playing in this study, I have had to priorities watching rather than acting, which results in that I have on some occasions been less focused on the actual playing than the recording of the play.

As far as I know, I am the only member of the team that have been part of the audience as well as the team, which does influence my success as a team member. The team is also my audience when performing as a researcher, which blurs the distinction between being a team member and being an audience. This brings up questions of subjectivity, which will be dealt with in the reflexive chapter at the end of this study.

**What kind of secrets and team collusion are there in our team?**

Team collusion is the illusion of a face that the members of the team realize as being a “face” when interacting with the audience. The most important form of team collusion is the system of secret signals that the team uses to transmit information without revealing it to the audience (Goffman 1974:157). Team collusion, as such, includes both dark and strategic secrets.

Dark secrets contain facts about the team that contradicts the “face” the team is upholding (Goffman 1974:126). When using face for strategic purposes, such as making the opposing team think you are better or less good than you are, this knowledge becomes a dark secret that contradicts the face the team is upholding. However, whether these secrets should be considered dark or strategic secrets can be discussed.

The strategic secrets contain intentions and qualifications the team possesses that they hide from their audience so that they cannot adjust to them in an effective way (Goffman 1974:126). Some of these strategic secrets are in fact built into the game. Each team member share vision over the map, being able to see what others in the team sees, both players and artificially controlled units that are allied to the players. This vision is a form of strategic secret. If an opposing team managed to infiltrate the team, they would gain access to this secret but there is an easier way. The cheat ”map hack” gives you access to this secret by allowing players vision over the entire map, revealing the shadows that would otherwise be shown as dark spots on the map. The built-in chat system
and conversations carried out over voice-chat are also strategic secrets that contain information about the team’s planned efforts.

Codes are used for most actions, items, heroes and locations, but these are common to most players and do not become strategic secrets until they are hidden by being transferred through means that the opposing team does not have access too.

The codes in themselves are not meant to hide information but to create more effective ways of transferring it and they constantly transform to become more efficient. For instance, the code "missing from bottom lane" tells the players of the team that an opponent has left the lane they are supposed to be at and, as such, gone missing. This code was then shortened to "miss bot" and today you only write "ss bot" or "ss bl" (bottom lane). As every player know what “ss bl” refers to the code cannot be said to be secret but when it is transferred through the built in chatsystem, only the own team have access to it. As such, the code does not hide the information but the chatsystem hides the code.

Goffman describes several other types of secrets (see page 48), but these are not as vital to this study since they do not effect the play in the same sense as dark secrets and strategic secrets do, which are secrets that are part of team collusion and necessary to hide for the team’s mutual success in the play.

How did we tend our wounds after a game?
Goffman separates the front from the backstage, like spaces in a theater. After a performance on stage, the front, the team uses the backstage to discuss their performance and tend to wounds in order to strengthen the moral at the prospect of their next appearance (Goffman 1974:155, 156). When playing Dota, the game becomes the stage and voice-chat becomes the backstage.

Every team performance ingame is carefully planned on voice-chat and discussed after it has been done. As such, in Dota, the backstage follows in a continuous co-existence with the performance since the closed space of voice-chat allows the team to exist both in the front and the backstage at the same time. This feature makes computer game playing (using voice-chat) unique in the way that it enables the players to exist in two interactive spaces at once. Not only in the way that they exist in both an offline and an online context but that they exist in more than one online context at the same time.

In Dota the team’s front, their performance, is what determines the success of the play. As such, the backstage becomes imperative for discussing and enhancing the team’s performance while at the same time performing. Wounds can, as such, be tended to immediately after they were made, which, using a metaphor, hinders the wounds from festering. A good team can tend any wound while still conducting the performance creating a very strong front against the audience, which in this case most likely will refer to the opposing team. As Naga states, he often becomes angry when he plays bad. A good team would help Naga strengthen his belief in his own capabilities by using the backstage to tend this wound.

When being new to the game, having a good team in this sense becomes even more important. Therefore, listening to Bruno’s advice, a new player should
“play a lot and not listen to people saying mean things, like calling you a noob. Find a friend to play with. [...] It’s much more fun playing with people you know”.

**How does a Dota team ensure dramaturgic prudence?**

Dramaturgic prudence denotes that the individual team members must have foresight and plan their actions in advance so that they are prepared for any counter reaction that their performance might trigger. One way to ensure dramaturgic prudence in a team is to keep the team at a small scale (Goffman 1974:190-192).

In Dota this comes naturally since a dotateam may not include more than five members. The relationship between the front and the backstage, described in the chapter above, is another way to ensure dramaturgic prudence by allowing the team to plan their actions ahead backstage.

Teams also use acts of institution to enhance the quality of their members by putting them through so-called “try-outs” before initiating them into the team (see page xx). A team member that passes the tests can still be kicked out of the team if he or she misbehaves and this “threat” ensures that the players keep a high quality in their performance. The gravity of the initiation processes are also a way to ensure that the team members are proud of and fateful to their position in the team, which ensures that players view their dramaturgic prudence as imperative to the play.

In Bruno’s former clan “Potw”, Bruno was responsible for handling these try-outs. To ensure dramatic prudence, he evaluated all the candidates carefully, looking for the specific features that make a good team member.

> The most important aspect is that the person is nice. That’s probably most important to me. Then of course you need to be able to play Dota. Good teamplay... though it’s not the most important since you don’t get good teamplay from playing public, that you get from playing with the team later on. So what’s most important is that you put an effort into it and know how it works. And that you learn fast.

Bruno

That being nice is the most important aspect of a good team member to Bruno serves well to ensure dramatic prudence since this aspect enables better communication between the team members. A mutual respect between members is vital or members might not follow the advices given by the other members when entering the backstage.

Dramatic prudence is also what enables the team to counter-act the opposing team’s actions. Using a common strategy within the team to handle different situations might provide the foresight that Goffman claims is needed to be prepared for the opposing team’s counter reaction. In this the roles of the team play a vital part to ensure dramatic prudence. As long as all members stay in character the individual member can foresee what actions his or her fellow teammates might take in any given situation and can, consequently, adapt his or her performance according to the others’ expected performance.
How does standing affect the play?

Goffman finds that when two teams interact socially there is often a difference in standing between the two teams where the lower standing team will conduct efforts to change their standing in relation to the other (Goffman 1974:174). In Dota the team’s standing is defined by the skill of the players in it.

In Dota, the best games are played when both teams are of equal skill. Equal skill allows for other features, such as strategy and communicative skills, to determine the outcome of the game, which challenges the team’s ability to work together rather than the skill of the individual players. Since the team feature in Dota is the reason why many play the game, challenging the team’s cooperative skills is often more gratifying than a game that focuses on the single player’s skill.

There are various systems for identifying standing, which are used in order to match up teams with the same standing. Dotaleague where Naga likes to play is one such system. He explains it like this:

> It works by placing you in a que and then when there are ten players in the que they are matched together into teams. You have different points so when the system matches the teams it tries to create as much balance as possible using these points. If there is one guy who have 4000 points and two who have 2000, they are placed on the other team.

Naga

In this study, most players express a necessity to play on “even grounds”. That does not only include playing by the same rules but also to have a similar level of skill. It is often found easier to enhance the skill of the team if the opponent has an equal standing. An opponent that has a much higher standing will not allow the team to work on their problems since these team will identify their opponents weaknesses and use them to their advantage before the opposing team has a chance to reinforce their weak sides.

An opponent with much lower standing will do the opposite. They will not put demands on the team to pay attention to their weaknesses and as such not force the team to work on their mutual effort. As such, choosing teams with the same standing allows more fair games where both teams are nurtured to grow and evolve their mutual skill as teams.

When we trained for DreamHack, Daska used a forum to seek teams with equal skill to compete against. When we joined the tournament at DreamHack we had no say in the matter and the team over all did not enjoy the game as much when we met teams that were either less skilled than us or much more skilled than us. As Bruno states in his story, part of the reason why the behavior of the opposing team during the disconnect was so upsetting was that they were so much more skilled than us that it did not make much difference to them if they at least gave us equal opportunity to win by not forcing us to play four against five.

Concluding, the standing of the team affects the play to a large extent by creating equal or uneven prospects of winning. A game that is already decided due to unequal standing between the teams does not provide as much enjoyment to the players both because it is not fun to be the team that is by their lower
standing destined to lose and because it is not as fun to win if the game did not provide a challenge.

**How did we do as a team when joining the competition?**

According to Goffman, in order achieve success as a team the team needs a mutual co-dependence – a trust between the members, a mutual familiarity – knowing each other behind the faces, a united standpoint, a dramaturgic loyalty, dramaturgic discipline and dramaturgic prudence (Goffman 1974:77, 82, 187-192). This requires that the team must trust each other, be united, know each other well, be loyal to the team, disciplined in their actions and have foresight into what the team might face from the opposition. Getting all these things right takes time, more time than we had when conducting this study, which Naga also points out in his story.

At DreamHack we joined the Dota tournament for amateurs. We lost the first game, won the second and lost the third. All three games were completely different from each other. The first game, we lost because Daska’s computer crashed and had to be restarted. The opposing team refused to play from the saved file, taken just a few minutes before the crash, even though the rules stated that they were obligated to do so. As a result, we had to play the rest of the game four versus five and without our most important hero, the carry played by Daska. Naturally we lost, although the odds were not in our favor to begin with.

When consulting the administrators, reporting how the opposing team had broken the rules, they refused us a restart. Four out of five players described in their diaries this incident similarly and all players agreed that it had been an immoral move by the opponents to refuse us the even playing field that enables a fair game. As such, this equality, described by Van Looy, that the rules are supposed to create, was not applied to the game.

After the disconnect we were moved to the looser-bracket and were given a chance to compete against other teams that had lost in the main tournament. The second game was won easily. Even though the win did encourage us, the lack of challenge in that game made the game in itself uninteresting. That the second game became dull because of the uneven playing field were the challenging team’s skill was inferior to ours, gave insight to the importance of equality in gaming, the importance of equal standing as discussed in the previous subchapter.

The third game was much more balanced and could have turned out either way. As a result, we all enjoyed this game the most. In the end the opposing team beat us to the win by having a better teamplay than us but the mood was still cheerful after the game and when discussing the game backstage all players expressed positive sentiments about the game.

At the end of the first day, the competition was already over for us and we had to find other things to do together. We continued to play together after the game and I believe I am not the only player that found those games more fun than the tournament, possibly since we were able to create more equal standing between the teams in these games. Choosing our opponents clearly made for better games.
Although we went to DreamHack to compete and everyone mentioned the competition in some way, it was not the most important part of the visit to DreamHack. What most players emphasize in the experience was meeting each other offline and making new friends. As such, the social part of the visit had more importance than the competitive part.

Being part of a team, such as Goffman describes it, was an interesting lesson to all of us. However, Goffman emphasizes the success of the team as one of the more important attributes of being a team, while to us, being a team had more to do with the experience of working together towards a common goal than to achieve success through our actions and we did on many occasions fail to achieve the given definition of the situation that Goffman finds a key feature to being a team. As such, Goffman might not define our team as a team, yet it surely felt like we were one.

7.8 Setting

How does social class influence the setting and the play?

Language is charged with social connotations, which reveal themselves most evidently when communication takes place between different social classes (Bourdieu 1999:40).

In Dota social class is seldom referred to as an attribute of a player, as such, players are not defined by their social class but rather by their social standing within the group. Social standing is not something you are born into but something that you earn while playing. Consequently, players do not carry the mark of their parents’ social class into their culture.

However, social class does in some ways interfere, even though it is not an important attribute. To play Dota, the player must afford a computer, a fairly good internet connection and free time to spend on playing. These needs are in some ways linked to social class. At the bottom of the classes you might not be able to afford a computer with internet connection and if you do you might not be able to afford the free time you need to spend on playing in order to be able to integrate into the community of players. As such, social class does not affect how players are defined as people but rather which people can become players.

As social class in this sense refers to the offline context and the position of players in society as whole, me must not forget the other context: the online. In the online context there is a class system of its own, excluded from everyday society. This hierarchic system is built on the experience of the players. At the top we find the professional players, those that Daska went to DreamHack to see, as he states in his story. At bottom are the new players: those that more experienced players refer to as noobs. Where you end up in the class system is important to which clans or teams you can join and play with/against.

These professional players at the top of the ladder can in the offline context become idols in a culture that allows it, for example in Korea where playing warcraft III and starcraft (similar game) is considered a professional sport. In Korea, players are trained to become better players like the western world would coach a football player or a basket player.

The professional players are also the ones that have most control over which play discourses become dominant and there is normally a one-to-one
correspondence between the dominant discourse and the professional players. As we discuss in the subchapters on symbolic power, these professional players have such high symbolic power that other players imitate their way of playing, giving their play discourse legitimacy and authority.

In the segment between the pros and the noobs, are several other layers. These are in some cases visualized through pointsystems such as on Dotalegaue, described by Naga or by which tournament or brackets these players can play in.

To many players, climbing up the social ladder within the Dota-system is an important motivation to evolve your skill. As Naga states, who is one of the better players of our team, he is considering switching clans since he has climbed higher on this latter than his friends and feel that the divide leaves him playing too much of the game for them rather than with them. Other players like Bruno, finds the enjoyment of having a good game and playing with nice people more important than climbing the social ladder. As consequence, he actually climbed down the ladder by giving up his position as clan leader to enjoy the game without the responsibility.

Concluding, the setting is impregnated with social class and hierarchy but this hierarchic system normally has little affect on the social standing in society outside the cultural boundaries of the gaming, which supports the take on gaming as being a subculture (further discussed in chapter 7.9).

**Is gaming as culture a danger to the health of the players?**

Gaming, from Goffman’s perspective is an institution and, as such, it is targeted for stereotypic perception (Goffman 1974:33). One of these stereotypic perceptions is the perception of gaming as unhealthy.

The notion that gamers would somehow have less interest in sports can be questioned in two parts: first, for the reason that saying players have no interest in sport is to declare that gaming in itself is not to be considered a sport and secondly because there is no data pointing towards a lack of sport interest among gamers, quite the contrary.

There are several games designed for sport and fitness, which contradict the idea of gamers as unhealthy. The most famous is probably the gaming console Nintendo Wii released in 2006.

As part of the study I have explored the healthy side of gaming and tested the latest edition from Nintendo called “Wii fit plus”. The release of the balance board, to be used with the Nintendo Wii, and the game Wii Fit revolutionized the industry for healthy gaming alternatives. The balance board allows you to do several training exercises designed for physical strength and balance. I found that the yoga fitness routines are overall most appreciated by the users. With Wii fit, you can go jogging with your own little Wii-avatar and his/her friends. You can do step-up, boxing, and several other workouts. Playing Wii fit does bring up a sweat. There are several other workout games for Wii, which suggests both awareness from the producers that there is a need for healthier gaming alternatives and a demand from the public who enjoys combining their workout with gaming. As such, this evolution not only suggests a growing awareness within the industry to counter the negative effects of gaming but also that the dichotomy between gaming and sports no longer hold.
However, taking part in DreamHack, could certainly be seen as a danger to the health of the players, as there is a great lack in healthy nutrition and little sleeping being done.

Looking at Crakling, Naga, and their friends, it appears evident that those who are new to DreamHack seemed to be more effected by the lack of sleep and bad food. The lack of sleep took its toll on the moods of the participants. I was surprised to find how affected I was by not sleeping or eating well. Daska also noticed this in his story: “After a major lack of sleep and really bad food, I was not feeling too well when I got home. I was dead tired and feeling sick.”

Another problem was that there was no place to go when you felt your temper boiling over. There was no retreat from the noise and the darkness of the hall, if you did not go out in the cold winter outside. The event turned into a form of forced interaction without escape, making me feel a strong need for isolation, longing for rest in a quiet room with no one to bother me. Bruno also expressed this need for seclusion on the way home by taking a walk on his own while waiting for the train.

Visiting DreamHack, you got a sense that the event was more of a commercial one than an event focused on the interest in gaming. There were many corporations recruiting people or spreading commercial material. Even the military were there to recrute. The warm food available was extremely expensive. The food carts were well aware that the players were depending on them for food and had to pay the prizes they set no matter how high. The food available was fast food, full of grease and without any nutritional value.

If all gamers lived as we did at DreamHack 365 days per year, I would have full understanding for those who claim that gaming is unhealthy. However, I was happy to find that most of us reacted to the way we lived and shared my longing for healthy food, sleep and quietness.

How did the cultural setting express itself at DreamHack?

Goffman views setting from four perspectives, the technical, the structural, the social and the cultural. I have chosen out of strategic benefits to narrow my exploration of setting to the cultural and the social aspect (Goffman 1974:207, 208).

All cultures have rituals and traditions. That the computer game culture would have rituals and traditions as well is not a surprise. At DreamHack, the intrusion of rituals could not be avoided, even though we sometimes did try to exclude ourselves from them.

One ritual that I took special notice to was the rite of shouting “hello”. Anytime the players seemed to realize they had been quiet to long they shouted “hello”. Like birdcalls, others in the hall answered their call, making the answers echo through the camps. I deem these “hellos” were a form of social expression. It united the people shouting, reminding everyone where he or she were and gave a sense of how many were there to share their experience.

Trying to sleep while listening to the “hellos” was not easy and even while awake, many of the gamers seemed to get increasingly annoyed at the cries and it happened on occasion that players refused to answer or answered: “shut up” instead.
Furthermore, every DreamHack has its own signature song. This year the remix of Tetris was played at intervals. When it was put on speaker, the players began clapping their hands to the music, further disturbing the concentration of the more serious gamers.

The last night, many players stayed awake. It seemed to be a form of tradition. I chose to stay awake with them. When the time had come to start packing in the morning, we where many with tired eyes in the hall and the trainstation was full of sleeping gamers, resting in any slot they could find available.

These rituals and traditions gave me a sense of belonging. It felt like we where a large family coming together to share the experience. The experience was empowering, filling me with self-confidence by allowing me to be myself, sharing my hobby without fear of being criticized for it. This unity created, fills the human need to belong to a community, which I think is very important for a person to be able to feel good about their self.

Naga and Crakling also uses DreamHack as a yearly tradition to “keep the band together”, using the setting of DreamHack to reinforce their sense of belonging within their group of friends. To further reinforce the group's unity they used the cultural expression of creating a camp.

As the players often arrived in groups, camps where constructed around each group carrying the traits of the group’s fashion. Naga and Crakling’s camp had a beach-theme with a large plastic palm tree marking it among the row upon row of computers. Dressed in a Hawaii skirt made out of key chains Crakling proudly presented his camp.

Crakling told me that they always have a different theme each year. It is a sort of tradition. Looking around I found many more groups sharing their tradition making their camps look like colorful oases cut out of the grey masses of computers.

These camps are important to the group to signify their unity. The camps often had one larger object, functioning like a flag, to mark their territory. Some of the groups who had arrived unprepared built towers out of coca-cola cans instead. It seems that marking your territory is important to the players. As such, the cultural and social setting is an important part of the experience at DreamHack.

What did the setting of DreamHack 2009 look like?
The social setting is, like the scenery in a drama, in which a specific activity regularly takes place (Goffman 1974:207).

One thing that surprised me at DreamHack was the multitude of commercial displays. I got the feeling that I was a walking commodity. There were different types of commercial displays present. As mentioned, some were recruiting: organizations and schools searching for new members; other’s were trying to sell things and some were mainly informative.

The schools all focused on a specific age group and in some cases a specific gender. Some recruited for high schools and aimed at the 14-15 year olds. Others tried to recruit for universities aiming at the 18-19 year olds. The army was there as well to recruit soldiers having placed a large armoured tank in the center of
their display, which the children could climb on. Ironically, not far away were “Save the Children” seeking donations and members. Chalmers were there showing of robots to get the children with science as interest to apply for their university. The whole thing was in fact a bit scary, looking at how the grown-up world infiltrated this innocent gathering to miss-use the young gamers for their purposes.

Some corporations handed out free materials with their logos on. When their preserves of articles started to run dry, they instead made competitions where participants could compete by screaming the corporations name as loud as possible to win the remaining, previously free, special-lined articles.

However, in the end, the event is about gaming and some corporations did the huge mistake of turning the golden opportunity into the opposite of good marketing by interrupting the gaming. The corporation Razer for instance, played their signature to a small laser show once every hour annoying all the players whose vision was blurred by the light resulting in losses within the games they were playing. The fact that Razor did this mistake was especially ironic because of their motto “for players by players” which would suggest that they could have comprehended their mistake before making it. Instead, they turned themselves into the joke of DreamHack 2009, making players recite their motto with a murmur every time they interrupted the gaming.

Visiting DreamHack, I realized that the event was clearly made for men. Being a woman this fact became obvious. Most competitions were designed for men either intentionally or unintentionally. Many of the competition included a feature where you must shout as loud as possible, girls having smaller lungs and not being able to scream as loud gave them a clear disadvantage in such competitions. Other competitions had to do with physical strength, where yet again the women have an obvious disadvantage. In fact, I asked one of the organizers if they could organize a competition for women and they said they would think about it. In the end, no such competition was held.

There were many children present. Parents dropped them of together with their friends Thursday morning and later picked them up either on Saturday night or Sunday morning. It seemed that many siblings went together and some of the young boys had their sisters with them. The boys acted protectively towards their sisters, helping them out with their computers and showing them things to do.

There were also many couples present, where the girl often did not seem too interested in the actual gaming. Instead, these girls spent most of their time on Facebook and other community-sites.

**How did the players experience the setting, DreamHack 2009?**

As noted in the chapter above, setting is the framework in which action takes place (Goffman 1974:207). Concluded by the visit to DreamHack 2009 we all had a great time although we had to pay the prize of feeling sick when we got home from the lack of sleep and bad food.

Wandering around the event talking to visitors, I found that many of the participants who had been there before were somewhat discontented with the lack of activities besides the gaming this year. This year DreamHack was mainly
focused on E-sport, which was not appreciated by everyone. However, Daska did show a great appreciation for this feature of the event.

The alternatives to gaming took the form of videogames, board games, nightly cinema, checking out commercial displays and participating in competitions and lotteries. Looking at the different displays for video gaming and board games it seemed to be about the same people visiting them every day. To gain access to the game you had to leave something as security to the person in charge, which made some players resilient to using them, not trusting that their belongings would be safe.

Many of the commercial displays held lotteries. To participate you got yourself a lottery ticket from one of the stands and made sure you were present at the draft. It is said to be easy to win. One of the participants, a friend of Naga and Crakling, told me that he, on one of his visits to DreamHack, had made a point of participating in all the lotteries. It resulted in him winning things for a prize of about ten times the value of the ticket to DreamHack. This year Naga proudly presented a chassi from Coolmaster as his prize for participating in the lotteries.

It is clear that DreamHack needs to put more effort into organizing the event. Even though the helpdesk was very willing to be helpful, it was still hard to get information about things concerning the event. It seemed that no one knew anything. Trying to find out how to participate in a competition, the helpdesk made many phone calls and searched the net, only to, almost an hour later, have to admit that they did not know.

The organizing of the Dota tournament also left room for improvement. Finding out how to participate in the tournament, when the games were to begin, who to play against and what rules were used, took some digging and Daska having to contact the administrators. As Daska noted in his story he spent the first hour of the event just trying to find out how to join the tournament.

The dormitory was made out of a couple of paper walls making a box formed area in one of the gaming halls. All the sound from the gamers in the hall escaped into the sleeping area, waking me several times during the night. In the area where no computers kept the warmth up with their engines, it was very cold and I shivered through the entire first night. DreamHack had also misinformed many of the participants making them believe there would be loungers to sleep on. As a result, both Daska and I showed up without ground sheets forcing us to sleep directly on the cold stone floor.

Another sad fact is that there is a quandary of thieving going on at DreamHack and you need to be careful not to leave any loose things lying unsupervised. I solved this issue by bringing a suitcase with a lock and a bicycle lock to chain the suitcase to one of the tables. I was glad to have been warned beforehand by Crakling and Naga. Daska unfortunately lost both his keyboard and his mouse while sleeping.

We all think about returning next year and we have learned much from our visit. The mistakes we made, not having ground sheets, carrying too much food with me, not participating in the alternative activities and joining the lotteries, and so on.

If I go to DreamHack next year I hope we can organize the visit better, being in time for the good seats and getting to sit together. Next year, I will make sure
to learn the schedule for the lotteries and explore if you truly can win back the money spent on the ticket.

I hope we will be more people next year too and that we can organize the trip together, maybe being able to drive there instead of having to drag all of our baggage with us on the train. Having access to a car would be a great advantage at the event as well since you can drive to buy better food and not have to eat all that yank-food.

As one of the oldies said, “DreamHack is like an artful movie, it needs to be seen twice to be appreciated”, I hope to enjoy it better next year.

7.9 The Subculture

What role does communities play in Dota and which issues do they raise?

Jensen states that media is a necessity in structuring and maintaining society (Jensen 2002:171). If we view computer games like a subculture, that is a micro society in itself, communities play the part that media play in the macro society as a line of communication to inform and enlighten the members.

Using communities, you can read about different items and discuss which works with which and learn from other players’ experience as well as your own. For instance, I never new Sangri Yasha, which adds a slowing element, worked with lifesteal until I read a post at dotaforum.se were a player had explained exactly how these two combine with each other. It turns out that since the slowing in this case is based on a chance percentage and does not slow with every hit, the lifesteal works in every other hit than the hit that gets the chance right and adds the slow. To make an account of the slow versus lifesteal items might seem unnecessary, but it serves to give you a small insight to the complex nature of combining items and the necessity of communities where the players can learn about these things. Learning these little tips and tricks takes years of playing but you can speed up the process by reading the guides available on the net.

Viewing gaming as a subculture, communities must also serve to inform the players of daily events important to their micro-society. Bruno states in the interview that he used forums to inform the members of his clan when he was a leader. Naga and Crakling also use forums to communicate between the members of their clan Boobytrap. As such, these communities serve as a line of communication between the members of the society.

The evolvement of these communities, wikis and maps raises the question: “whose game is it?” Does it belong to the game creator or to the players who help shaping it and spend hours writing guides and making maps for players to enjoy. Computer games, in this way, become something other than objects. They occasionally appear to evolve like organisms, being continuously reconstructed and reevaluated by their users. It is hard to define the periphery where the product evolves into an inanimate construct with a life of its own. Consequently, the issue of deciding ownership becomes problematic.

Viewing gaming as a subculture we could handle this question by looking at the macro-society. In the macro-society we live in, media is for the most part owned by different corporations. If we view communities as the subculture’s correspondence to media, they become part of the public sector, owned by corporations, or in this case by their creators, and not by their members.
Looking at a corporation like Facebook, any content published on the site is automatically rendered property of Facebook. Pictures, texts, poems, and so on, are all property of Facebook once they are published in this community and Facebook may use them in any way they wish without the consent of the publisher. From this perspective, the content of forums dedicated to gaming should in a similar sense be viewed as property of whoever owns the community.

Yet, there is media owned by the members of the society in the form of public service. Whether the subcultural communities should be viewed as public service or property of corporations may be discussed. A line may be drawn between communities that are sponsored by the personal investment of the owner or dealings he or she has with corporations, for example by selling marketing space, and the communities that are solely dependent on donations from members, where the latter share more similarities with public service organs and the first share more similarities with corporation-owned organs.

Concluding, there are ways to deal with the ownership of communities. Whether these communities in turn have any right to claim ownership over the games that rely on their continued support is another question. However, legally, the communities cannot claim any right as the games are part of the whole machinery of corporations that exist outside of the subculture but there is an ethical question worth raising here.

In interviews with several Dota players, I have found that Icefrog is the name that most of them associate with the creator of Dota to such an extent that I for a time believed he was the creator of Dota, until a player pointed out the error. When I asked the subjects in my expository study conducted in 2008, which changes they might want in the new releases quite a few answered, “I trust Icefrog knows what needs to be done”. This statement reveals the significance Icefrog has to Dota and to the players. Today, Icefrog is still carrying on the work of updating the map.

Looking at the original, Blizzard Campaigns, the maps created by Blizzard, have little in common with Dota. Still you need to buy Warcraft III and its expansion pack to be able to play Dota. No charge is further required to gain access to the mod (minigame). This results in Blizzard receiving payment for a product they have not funded. It might be argued that the profits rather belong to Icefrog and Guinso, who because of their devotion to Dota are not just its creators but also the people responsible for its continued evolution. However, as noted they have no such claims from a legal point of view but this does not mean that there are no other ways that players can claim some ownership over their work.

In games like EverQuest and World of Warcraft, the players can claim some ownership over their work by selling hard earned items and on occasion even selling their accounts. There is money to make in selling accounts with high-leveled avatars. In games like Project Entropia and Second Life players can create and sell items, buildings and even land. Players like the famous Neverdie invest millions and make millions solely by buying, selling and renting out territory in the virtual environment. In Dota, you do not have this option.

One way to earn money from your labor of creating maps is to use the work as an outline for new games. During the autumn of 2009, two such games were under development based on the Dota map, Heroes of Newerth and Leagues of Legends. Among these, Leagues of Legends may be one of the more interesting
because it is not only based on Dota, but it is also being developed by one of Dota’s creators, Guinso.

With the development of two more games based on the map, Dota, this also brings up some difficult questions of copyright. That Guinso may develop Leagues of Legends based on a game he created does not raise any eyebrows but how about Heroes of Newerth, which is even more alike Dota than Leagues of Legends?

In Leagues of Legends, only the original design is the same as the design of Dota. In Heroes of Newerth as a player stated with a laugh, “they’ve copy-pasted the source code and just changed the names”. This statement might be merely metaphorical but it does come close to the truth. In fact, it is so close to the truth that a player has developed an add-on for the game that changes the names of heroes and items to their corresponding Dota names.

The makers of Heroes of Newerth have the consent of Icefrog to copy Dota but do they have the consent of the players? If not, does the players have the right to protect their game from copyright or does the right solely lay in the hand of the person that did the programming, even though it is the players that guide these hands?

Concluding, communities play a large part in the development and maintaining of the micro-society of computer game culture. Communities act like media to inform members but they have few legal rights and ethics of ownership can be discussed. The creation of tools to enhance the play, such as wikis and guides, raise difficult questions of ownership but the games still belong legally to the corporations that funded them. However, there are a few options to claim ownership over the work and effort the players put in.

**Can players exercise power of their culture?**

According to Jensen, there is two ways of perceiving culture. Culture can either be seen as a product of human creativity and as a process, which refers to the cultivation of the human spirit (Jensen 2002:172). Viewing culture as a product, players certainly can exercise power over their culture in the way that they can participate in the production of culture. Viewing culture as a process they do this instead through selectivity and participation.

As part of this study I, on top of exploring Dota, explored the new game Heroes of Newerth, which Bruno and I also played at DreamHack. Heroes of Newerth have when this paper is finished just become available at the market. However, some of the subjects in the study and I gained access to the game before its release by participating in the beta testing (described also in previous studies). A beta can either be opened or closed. A closed beta consists of players who have been invited to it and an open may be played by anyone who wishes to. A beta testing is usually begun closed and in the end evolves into an open. In this way corporations may first test the foundation of a game, as it is to be played when it is released, by having a small number of devoted players report bugs and request changes without stressing the game or the servers.

When the game moves on to an open beta, the developers may stress test the game and the servers by taking it to its limit. The more users, the more power is needed.
Making the beta open is not the only available option. In the case of Heroes of Newerth, the corporation instead chose to keep the beta closed and increased the number of players by sending out more invites to the players currently playing, allowing them to give away invites to friends. Finding out just how much power the corporation will need to make the game work when it is released to the public would be much more difficult without these players that test it for them.

Letting players help develop the games before they are released brings out questions of copyright and security. Corporations protect their games through so-called NDAs (non-disclosure agreements), that the players must sign before they get access to the game. These NDAs are supposed to prevent the players from releasing information about the games before they are officially released.

At the same time as the developers sent out more invites to the beta for Heroes of Newerth, they also cancelled the NDA, taking away the restriction of keeping silent about the game, allowing the players to speak about the game with others not participating in the beta. It was a smart move to get some free publicity on the eve of releasing the game to the public.

Bruno also participated in the Leagues of Legends beta, the other game based on Dota. As he states, he prefers Leagues of Legends because of its more balanced gameplay. He states that he likes that the defensive structures are much stronger in Leagues of Legends, which makes “home” feel safer. Unlike Dota, you can use the defensive structures as protection. Bruno prefers this feature since the fights become more intense and there is less chasing around the map.

Viewing culture as a process, players can exercise power through selectivity and participation in their culture. As such, when Bruno chooses to play Leagues of Legends rather than Heroes of Newerth, he exercises power over the game by his selection. The exercise of power is part of the human existence. Some are to dominate and some are to be dominated, as shown by Bourdieu with the concept of symbolic power, which dwells in this power relationship (see page 40). It is the natural course of things. Where there is power there is always potential for resistance.

When we speak of subcultures as sites of social struggle through the exercising of resistance through rituals, the struggle is often perceived as a struggle between the subculture and the conventions of society. However, subcultures are also sites of social struggle within themselves where actors struggle to acquire power positions within the culture using their arsenal of capital, as suggested by Bourdieu.

To answer the question if players can exercise power over their culture, I find that players are not one-dimensional human beings; they are not dominated and produced by the market. The players themselves exercise power through the choices they make and the players have more power over their culture than they realize.

7.10 Habitus

How does habitus affect the field?
Reality as we know it is fiction. It is constructed through the participation of social agents and we are all such agents. We all carry culture with us and culture
is at its core only structures of meaning, which together constitute our cultural reality. Through our habitus, we are both producing society as well as we are being produced by it. In this way there is no real truth since everything we know is constructed and the way we perceive things are dependent on our primary framework for perception. These frames are expressed in discourse and are collectively constructed (Bourdieu 1993:298).

In Dota these frames expresses themselves through the gaming discourse. The ethic of gaming is collectively constructed and is to many players their primary framework for gaming. Other gamers use a goal-oriented discourse as primary framework and these sometimes collide as they did at DreamHack.

Where one team is dominated through the tradition of up keeping an enjoyable gaming environment, other players are dominated by their wish to win, which to them exceeds all ethical responsibilities of the player. Such collisions call for compromises but these are often difficult to achieve.

The primary framework for perception also affects how players behave towards each other and how they perceive the interaction. Being a researcher does not exclude me from the influence of habitus. While conducting the study, I was aware of how my habitus might influence the study and the game. That awareness made me act differently from how I would have acted if I had been there only for the joy and excitement. With my extensive education in mind, I did my best to heighten my senses, so not to miss any important detail. At some stages, I found my habitus becoming evident in the interaction, mainly when I tried to distance myself from the players to enable a more objective standpoint. With the lack of sleep and nurturing food, the researcher in me became more and more dormant as the study went on. I found myself more and more returning to my natural state, becoming easily agitated and annoyed by the situation. I did my best not to show, but when the study was over I was very happy to come home.

The habitus of the players were very different since I had strategically chosen players with different backgrounds. While Bruno enjoyed talking about school, Crakling and Naga avoided speaking about their jobs and put more focus on talking about their spare time. They enjoyed talking about games and about going to the gym.

Bruno’s educational habitus was evident in his keen interest in the study and he put much effort into helping out with detailed descriptions of the phenomena related to computer games. He was happy to explore every feature of DreamHack with me and his presence brought me much useful data to be used in the analyze.

Crakling’s habitus, being a veteran when it comes to DreamHack, was evident in the way he had dressed up for the event, suited in a Hawaii skirt made out of key chains. Both Naga and Crakling was a great help in sharing knowledge about the event and in the preparation before DreamHack.

Daska’s habitus was mostly evident in the way his age affected his behavior at the event. He placed himself outside of the group, feeling he did not have much in common with us, which made it hard to reach him.

The different habitus of the players did affect the interaction. Crakling and Naga, sharing a similar habitus and years of friendship, mainly interacted with each other, meanwhile Bruno and I sharing a common academic background
enjoyed interaction on common ground. Daska unfortunately was left out, becoming a fifth wheel.

Habitus also affects the language we use; this Bourdieu calls linguistic habitus. The linguistic habitus defines what we say and we do not say. It contains both the ability to use language grammatically correct as well as the capacity to socially use language correctly in a given situation (Bourdieu 1999:37).

When playing Dota we use an informal language containing many abbreviations and what I would like to call ”chat-language”. Chat language is a form of language created to overcome the time-consuming feature of typed language. Instead of saying ”wait” you shorten the word to w8, since everyone now that 8 is pronounced eight and is phonetically identical to the ending of wait. This form is also used for phrases such as ”you to”, shortened to u2. Apostrophes are often left out leaving people writing cant instead of can’t. Letters unnecessary for understanding the meaning of words are excluded and words are sometimes changed into more phonetical units where only the sound of the word is written such as cuz instead of because. As such, although players surely have the ability to create correct grammatical units through their possession of linguistic capital, in Dota they often chose not to use this ability in order to transfer the information more efficiently. Instead, linguistic habitus has a function in Dota by teaching the players this shortened version of language, which enables them to use a form of communication more adapted to gaming.

7.11 Capital

What forms of capital are imperative for successful play?

Bourdieu refers to the logic of a given field as a “game” and the capital necessary to participate in it. As such, the value of capital is contextual; it is defined by its volume and structure in relation to the context in which it is used (Bourdieu 1993:269). At the core of Dota are social actors who, like Bourdieu described it, compete to position themselves in the field using different forms of capital. These forms of capital are best described by Bourdieu (see page 38)

To achieve power in the game you must earn all the forms of capital that Bourdieu describes. You need knowledge capital to be able to play the heroes well. You need economical capital to buy the equipment necessary to play the game. You need symbolic capital to be included in a team and compete against worthy opponents or as stated, to create play discourses (see page 92). You need social capital to achieve a position within the group and make your opinions matter to the rest of the team.

To learn the game you need to have a talent for language, to possess large amounts of linguistic capital, as Dota is in a sense linguistic. To learn the codes used for communication is necessary to co-operate with the team.

Language comes down to applying meaning. By giving word to something, you realize it as existing, thereby giving it value. To understand what is valued by the gaming culture you must learn the language, which gives it meaning. Looking at language we find that the behavior of players and the strategies of the team are given the highest value since these are things that have been given more words than any other features of the computer game playing. As such, these
are the more vital parts of linguistic capital to possess; the ability to understand these words which have the highest value.

An understanding of language also becomes useful when interacting with players from other parts of the world. As Naga notes in his interview, one of the advantages with Dota is that you get to know people from all over the world and learn their language. As the codes used in Dota are universal, understanding the codes can take you quite far; but to socialize with the players beyond the game play there is an advantage in knowing some of each other’s language and knowing something about each other’s culture.

In Dota, knowledge provides power; as such, a rich knowledge capital is recommended. Knowing the heroes, not just your own but the opponents’ heroes as well is crucial. You need to know which spells to combine, which items to buy and how to create new items by combining several items together. You also need to be good at mathematics to be able to add together the cost of spells, to know if you have enough mana to cast them.

Mana is a deployable and renewable element that you use to cast spells. You can buy items that give the hero the ability to have more mana or that give a higher regeneration rate of the mana that is depleted. All heroes to various degrees use mana, which makes it important that the player understand how the hero works so not to buy too many, too few, or simply the wrong mana item.

In Dota, one of the most difficult things is to know which abilities work with other abilities or “stack” as the players call it. If you buy more than one item that somehow changes your attack, a so-called attack modifier, they might not stack and you will have wasted your gold. Since the attack skill sometimes can only be modified by one of the modifiers, one modifier may cancel the effect of the other. The item you buy first is usually the one that will work while the other will not. When you add even more items to your inventory, the “stacking” and “not stacking” can become surprisingly complex. As such, knowledge capital plays a large part in which players become successful or not. However, being good at the game is not the only motivation to acquire knowledge capital.

To socialize with other players, knowledge capital becomes an important tool in making conversation. Knowing facts about the world is important to keep up conversation. Just imagine discussing snow with a player from Africa or explaining the concept of going home for Christmas with someone who never heard of it? Learning about the world through conversation with players from other parts of the world, can as Naga states, be as satisfying as the game in itself.

Discussing capital, one must not forget economic capital. Economic capital in computer game playing takes two forms. The first is the economic capital of the offline context, which is used to procure a computer, the game, an internet connection and so on. The second form is the capital of the online, which exist solely as a virtual entity within the game. In Dota, this currency is gold.

Obtaining large funds of this economical capital gives the player the ability to buy items. The more gold earned, the better items can be bought. As such, economic capital can be used as measurement of success by allowing the player to show off with an impressive inventory as a mark of his or her achievements.

Like many researchers before me have stated (see previous research), the economic capitalist system in computer games is a mirror of the real life economic capitalist system. In Dota, players need to buy potions to refill their hero's health
just like in real life people need to buy food in order to survive. To earn gold the player needs tools, so called items, like a mechanic needs his tool box and a writer needs his ink in order to earn money.

The earnings are used to upgrade the lifestyle of the hero, giving him better tools, which in turn gives the hero a better ability to survive. Real life economic capital also plays a part, as it is imperative in order to have the means necessary to play. As stated in relation to social class, a player needs both a computer and a good internet-connection in order to play. As a result, players need real life economic capital in order to play as well as they need the virtual economic capital in order to play good.

To conclude, the capital necessary to achieve successful play consists of linguistic capital, knowledge capital, economic capital and social capital. However, there are other forms of capital that are not imperative to achieve success but still play a large part in the playing. Cultural capital for instance plays a large part when interacting between players and symbolic capital allows the player to reach new heights.

What is the function of symbolic capital in Dota?
Symbolic power, as stated (see page 40), dwells in a relationship between those who exercise power and those who succumb to it (Bourdieu 1999:170). The players carrying titles, or a rich amount of other forms of capital, hold symbolic power as Bourdie states that symbolic power is the accumulation of all forms of capital.

Many of these players are titled as “professionals” or “cyber-athletes”. These players become like movie stars to the gamers, acquiring their own fan-base and large audiences when they compete. At DreamHack, games between professional players were shown on a big-screen together with commentators, much like a football game. As Daska stated in his story, he enjoyed watching the professionals compete and he further adds in the interview that he thinks it must be quite glorious to be an idol to so many players.

Symbolic power can be used to create play discourses, which determines how the game is to be played. The current play discourse consists of rules regarding the positions different players take in the team, such as carry, support, tank, ward-ho and nuke. Players with high symbolic power have created this discourse and they have to a large extent earned their symbolic power by using the discourse to achieve successful play. This feature has been further discussed on page 92.

Although symbolic power is vital to find opponents and acquire fame, it is the forms of capital it consists of that is most important. Knowledge capital is more important than symbolic capital as knowledge capital is necessary to even be able to play while symbolic capital is not. However, knowledge capital produces symbolic capital and, as such, symbolic capital is reliant on a co-dependence between itself and the forms of capital that produces it.

Which function does linguistic capital and language have in Dota?
Language and the act of naming create structure and meaning to the perceived world. The power in words is increased by recognition, through the active use by
agents (Bourdieu 1999:105). Bourdieu finds that the linguistic market is inhabited by a system of sanctions and censorships that determine both the manner of speaking and what the speech contain (Bourdieu 1999:37, 77).

Knowing the language is imperative to play Dota. Language fills two functions in Dota. First, as a way of coding to enable secret strategy- and communication transference. Secondly, as a way of naming and defining behavior and phenomena.

Coming back to Dota, after spending my summer working in Stockholm with no time for playing, I find even in the short time I was absent, there had been many new words added to the language. Words like flaming, which translates to something close to bullying, have become old and rooted even though it was completely new to me during the explorative study in 2008.

The most significant part language plays in this study is to uncover which phenomena are given value by the players. It has been said that the reason why the Inuits have so many words for snow is because snow is important to them. The same reasoning can be applied to computer game culture. The phenomena that are considered important are given new names.

Bourdieu distinguishes two kinds of nouns, the common noun and the qualifying noun. The common nouns are produced through official acts where an acknowledged agent set an official title. Qualifying nouns are, on the contrary, limited to the person who bestows them in the way that their symbolic efficiency relies on the status of the person using them. The qualifying nouns give qualities to people, things and actions. Examples of qualifying nouns are insults and complements. Their value is defined by the relationship between the speaker and the receptor (Bourdieu 1999:105).

In Dota there are several examples of common nouns created by the players, which have been given an official status through recognition. These common nouns give an important insight into the field by revealing the internal structure of the Dota discourse, which phenomena are important and taken as self-evident knowledge.

One of these is the phenomenon “HoN damaged”. Now what could such an odd expression mean? Understanding the expression is dependent on the player having knowledge not just about Dota but also about other games. HoN is short for Heroes of Newerth, a look-a-like game to Dota. Being HoN damaged is to have become too used to the structure within Heroes of Newerth thereby making the player trying to play Dota as if it was Heroes of Newerth. This reveals much information about the culture around Dota. Using an expression like “HoN damaged” reveals that it is taken for granted that the players are familiar not only with the game itself but also with the context in which the game may relate to other games. This tells us that new releases of look-a-like games are part of the Dota discourse.

Even if you do not play the other games, you are still supposed to possess knowledge capital enough to know of them. This fact contradicts the view of computer games as isolated “products” between which players may chose. The notion suggests that games might sometimes become one unit rather than several. From this perspective, you may be bold enough to suggest that it is the games that belong to a specific group of players rather than the players belonging
to a specific game. As such, it is the players that form the boundaries of the subculture and not the games.

There are also several examples of qualifying nouns. The most commonly used insult in Dota is the word “noob”, which comes from new-be. This word in its essence means that the player is new to the game but it has been given a wider implication by continuously being used as an insult. Now the word is used for any player who does a bad move, appearing as if he or she is a new player. Being called a noob is seldom taken as anything else than an insult. As Bruno advises new players, “one should not take insults like noob to personally. Everybody is noob in the beginning.” Yet, being called a noob can lead to arguments if the player feels the sentiment unjust. As Naga states, “I don’t mind if my friends complain if I play bad, like calling me noob and stuff. I complain about myself too. But I get really annoyed if they complain without any cause for it.”

The most common complement is to be called “pro”, which is short for professional. This word is used to define any player that, contrary to noob, does a good move. There are also common phrases that are used as complement, such as gj, which stands for good job. Gj is ordinarily used when a team member gets a kill or makes a heroic escape.

In Dota it is also imperative to know the strategic codes used to send larger quantities of information between team members in smaller and more efficient units. Some examples of codes used in Dota are: Bot, mid, top, shop, forest, Rosh, river, runes and so on. These are only some of the codes that express places on the map. Rak, gank, push, b, tower and so on, are some codes for actions. Furthermore, there are codes for attitude, wishes, abbreviations for the names of the heroes, skills, items and much more. Playing Dota, you sometimes get the feeling that the game is essentially about learning a cluster of codes. In this way, Dota is in a sense linguistic.

When in need, there is a command to get the teammates attention. In Dota, you can blink on the map where the danger is. This command is often used for various other purposes for example to organize where a teams’ charge is going to hit or to point out where something is. This is also an expression of language since it is a communicative action.

Concluding, the language of the subculture surrounding Dota has created many new words to fit its requirements, both to enhance the play and to explain the specific behaviors of players. These words are given power through their active use by the players.

The sanctions and censornships that Bourdieu speak of, may take the form of a programmed censuring of known foul language or by a social censorship/sanctioning of words through the use of common/qualifying nouns loaded with negative/positive connotations. Good behavior is sanctioned through qualifying nouns such as “gj” or “pro” while bad behavior is censored with common nouns such as “flaming”, which no one wishes to be accused of. Although, several of the players admit that they flame when they get angry.
How was the possession of capital distributed in our team and how did it affect the play?

According to Bourdieu, capital is always distributed over a given field in unequal supply. The position of actors is defined by the volume of capital they possess (Bourdieu 1993:306-307). In Dota, knowledge and linguistic capital has the highest value.

These two types of capital were distributed in uneven quantity within the team. Daska and Bruno held the highest amount of capital, holding about the same quantity of linguistic capital, which was shown through their more active use of codes and their ability to translate them to anyone who did not know their meaning. Daska had the most knowledge capital, with Naga and Crackling not far behind, which was evident in their play. Daska for example could help out most with item building, cost of items and explaining how abilities stacked or did not stack. Daska also had much more knowledge about the popular teams and players who compete in Dota professionally. As such, it was to Daska, we turned when we wondered about something in the game. This made Daska the natural leader of the team and we all put our trust in the information he provided. As was shown, during the part of the study conducted at DreamHack, Daska held less or maybe different social capital than the other players and found it difficult to fit in with the group. He also had less cultural capital than Bruno and I, which made it hard for him to keep up with conversation on cultural and academic matters.

Naga and Crakling seem to hold similar capital because they act towards each other on the same terms. Yet Naga claims in the interview to be the better player, which suggests that he possesses more linguistic and knowledge capital than Crakling. They both hold sufficient knowledge and social capital as well as linguistic. They had no trouble socializing with Bruno and I: meanwhile not neglecting the friends they had brought with them. However, from the social aspect, Crakling often took commando in the conversations outside the game, which suggests a higher amount of social capital and skill.

Bruno has a very rich social capital that allows him to fit in with almost any social situation we faced during the study. Although he did not hold as much knowledge capital as Daska, the players sometimes preferred to ask his opinion solely based on his social standing in the group as one was sure to get a nice and pedagogical answer socially created to fit with the asking person’s need. Although Daska had the answers to everything, his answers were sometimes too complex to be informative. As such, social capital becomes important in communicating knowledge capital successfully.

As a player and a member of the team, my cultural capital, my awareness of my influence on the game and the study, affected me by making me intentionally tone down my presence. The boys sometimes mistook my quietness as moping and conducted cheerful efforts to raise my spirit. Since I did not want them to realize that I was purposely trying to hide my presence, I allowed them to believe their efforts were giving fruit. This tenderness shown towards what they believed to be a moping team member, gave me insight to the socializing process where value is applied to bringing joy and excitement in the play among all players. By my toning down, I had unintentionally disrupted the “natural” state of play and the boys, through their efforts of making me happy, made it evident that every
member’s enjoyment in the play is vital to the team’s overall experience. As Naga states:

The most important thing about Dota is that you help each other out as much as possible and doesn't think too much about being selfish and only trying to show that you are good at the game; that you try to help everyone and be fair to the opponents so that everyone can have a fun game.

Naga

Bruno shares this sentiment with Naga and I am sure Crakling and Daska do to although they expressed themselves differently. Crakling stated that the teamspirit of playing was most important, which is quite close to saying that the team should have fun and Daska said that it is most important not to create a bad environment and learning that you cannot win all the time. Expressing this sentiment, suggests that social capital might in fact be what influences the play the most by being what to a large extent defines the attitude and the environment in which the play is taking place.

Having too much cultural capital, creating awareness of the role I play in the group, might not serve me as player well. By trying to minimize my influence I had unintentionally influenced the play. Although the relationship between researcher and subjects should desirably be kept at a distance from each other, I believe the insight I gained through this mistake can somewhat atone for it.

7. 12 Acts of Institution

How are acts of institution used in teams?
Acts of institution are used to differentiate the members of the institution from the non-members. Rites are used to initiate members into the institution and the members’ obedience to their institution is proportional to the gravity of their initiation. The most socially efficient rites are rites founded in objective differences, such as parents versus children, male versus female and so on (Bourdieu 1999:117-123).

Members of clans and teams undergo evaluation processes called try-outs, where both the player’s skill in the game and their social skills in the group are explored before being allowed membership in the clan or the team. In Potw, Bruno handled this process, initiating members by playing and socializing with them to see if they fit the requirements of the group.

To choose the members of this study all members underwent a process too. Everyone was introduced by writing short letters about themselves. Afterwards their positions in the group were determined through social interaction. Both these processes are examples of acts of institution where people are either included or excluded from the institution, although viewed from a micro perspective rather than the macro-perspective used by Bourdieu.

The cultural expressions of camps are also forms of acts of institution because the members seclude themselves through their cultural expression from the others, the non-members. Uniforms such as Crakling’s Hawaii skirt are used to signal a belonging to the institution.
Acts of institution are not only used to include the wanted players but also to exclude the unwanted ones. Since Dota is a game where you rely to a large extent on your teammates, new players can bring the whole team into ruin by playing bad. When I play with my friends and there is a new player among us, we usually try to help and teach him/her. We give him/her a chance to learn the game. However it is not always the case that other players help each other out or that the person given the help will acknowledge it. This is evident while playing public games where you often come across players who prefer to solo through the game and only mind their own play, which is the reason why Bruno states “You don’t learn teamplay by playing public.”

Solo players also leave little room for helping out new players as well as undermining the teamwork. This is usually viewed in a negative retrospect since these players do not contribute to the team’s shared success as the others do. In in-house games, these players are excluded through acts of institution, leaving a visible difference and a higher presence of teamplay. In public games, unwanted players are excluded through an act of institution called banning, which comes from banishment. Special software is used by hosts of games to create so called banlists where players who have in someway misbehaved are added.

There are two types of banlists. One is automatic, where banlisted players are automatically locked out of the game and the other one is informative, it informs the host that a banlisted player is present in the game’s lobby. The game’s lobby is the first stage of connecting to a game. The player enters the lobby and takes a seat. When the teams have been formed the host may start the game and a countdown begins during which players can leave the lobby if they do not wish to play. If the host uses the informative banlist he or she can choose whether to allow the banlisted player to join in the game and the banlisted player may argue his or her cause.

A player may also be excluded through the use of list-checkers, which checks the players’ ping (their response-time) to make sure that their internet connection fits the requirements for smooth gaming. These come in two forms like the banlist feature and can function either informative or automatic in the same way. Like Bourdieu states, the most efficient rites of institution are based on objective differences, these list-checkers use objective differences to exclude or include players. As such, the list-checkers function as a rite of institution that distinguishes the players with good internet from the ones with bad, who are sometimes referred to as having a “wooden pc”.

Using this rite of institution, Daska would have been excluded from the team because of his bad computer, which did commit the unforgivable sin of disconnecting during a game, and I would have been excluded based on my “wooden” internet connection. However, when playing inhouse these rites of institution are seldom used and the requirements of the initiation are more commonly based on social skills or the player’s skill at the game.

Concluding, rites of institution function better in more closed environment such as inhouse games since these enable more “humanly controlled” rites of initiation that test social and playing skill. Public games can only provide rites of exclusion through the use of bans and list-checkers, which do not give any information about the players skill at the game or how he or she will fit with the group socially.
How are new players defined through acts of institution?
The institution of identity is the obligation of a social essence that signifies to an individual that he or she is a certain way and should behave accordingly (Bourdieu 1999:120). Individuals instituted deem themselves indebted to act in accordance with this definition and their function (Bourdieu 1999:121).

The act of institution serves to discourage any endeavor to cross the line of the boundary. However, an individual who is sure of his cultural identity may play with the rules of the cultural game and take small steps outside of the boundary, but never travel far from it (Bourdieu 1999:122, 125).

When Bruno initiates a member into Potw, that member is given a responsibility to uphold the face that he or she has shown to Bruno while being initiated. As Goffman states, all members of the team must realize that they cannot uphold faces towards each other. As such, the players who wish to be initiated into a clan or a team should show their “true” face already during the initiation process or the obligation of belonging to a certain institution of identity will force the player to keep a false face towards the team, which from Goffman’s standpoint is not a stable position in the team. Once the other members of the team realize the false face, all the player’s performances will be discredited and the team will most likely exclude the member from the clan/team leaving the process of initiation undone.

It is not only the player being initiated who should uphold a true face during the process. The other members of the clan or team must also remember not to keep a false face towards the new member. As such, Bruno is just as responsible for being “true” as the players he initiates. A try-out does not only serve the purpose of evaluating the new member. From the new member’s standpoint, the try-out can also be used to determine if the team fits the requirements of the new player. As such, this rite of institution function as a two-way-street where both the player and the team undergo an evaluation process resulting in either inclusion or exclusion.

As Bourdieu states, an individual who is sure of his cultural identity may take small steps outside the boundary of what is acceptable in the group. Many of the players confess to flaming or becoming angry when playing, yet most clans exclude members who flame or are in any way acting unacceptable towards the other members. Why these players are not excluded from the clan or team may be as a result of the player being sure of his cultural identity. While Naga sometimes even hits his keyboard while playing, his cultural identity is still that of a nice person who the other members of Boobytrap enjoy playing with. Becoming angry and flaming, is as such only a small step outside the boundary to Naga and this feature does not define his institution of identity.
8. Conclusions

8.1 Socialization, Cultivation and Institutionalization
The fundamental necessity to rely on others in the game described by Taylor is at the core of Dota. Playing is essentially to trust in others. Without trust, no stratagem can be developed or applied and the team becomes divided, resulting in a loss. To reach the goal of winning the game you need the other players’ cooperation. As such, there is a forced social interaction present.

To function in the group you must fit in with the norms of the group. To learn to fit in with the group is a socializing act. You need to learn the rules of the group. Game rules can always be adjusted towards a preferred purpose but not following them while the rest of the team give them value is not possible. You must follow the codes of conduct within the group by respecting the moral of the play situation. Rules are vital to uphold this moral by allowing everyone to be engaged on the same terms. This is where socialization plays a vital part.

Socialization is what teaches us the rules of conduct, which roles we can enact and how to successfully interact with other people.

Expressions of cultivation can be found everywhere in computer game playing. Both in the way that players create culture and in the way that they interact with culture and are, as such, produced by it. By playing computer games, we create the culture surrounding it. We create structure through rules, language and discourse.

To be a gamer is to belong to a subculture. Subcultures are self-reliant and kept alive by its members. To be a gamer is to play a vital part in the preservation of your own interest. Gamers can, in this sense, not be seen as simply consumers but rather as citizens in a society consisting of a self-reliant network with its own norms, beliefs, language and rules. As media maintain society, so does the collective of gamers maintain their culture.

While computer games may unite its users in a subculture, it at the same time differentiates them from those who lack understanding of their ways. Media, playing the role as the “big bad wolf” by continuously associating computer games with violence, unhealthiness and crime, help widening the gap between those who play and those who do not. I believe, as the players in this study suggest, that those people should try the games themselves before drawing to conclusions.

Although, computer game usage may bridge gaps between cultures they can also work to shed light on the differences. Differences in real life does not fall away online but are integrated into the virtual space as well. I have, when playing Dota come across several games where players have been excluded because of gender or ethnicity. “No noobs no boobs” is a signature used to show that the game is not open to women or new players. “No russ” is a common game name to signify that Russians are excluded from the game. However, it goes both ways; there are also games where players who carry these demeaning values towards gender or race are excluded.

These are not only expressions of the part cultivation plays in computer games but also expressions of the mayor influence institutionalization have on
players. Acts of exclusion and inclusion are both rites of institution. It is not only in the way players are included or excluded into institutions of players that institutionalization expresses itself but also in the frameworks of perception that players use when creating boundaries between different players and between players and non-players.

Although computer games give us the tools for overcoming differences and gaining understanding of each other we still need to learn how to use these tools and all participants must be open to changing their believes. As such, viewing computer games as some form of solution to the problems created by cultural differences is to exaggerate the power of the medium.

Computer games can also be designed to widen the gap between cultures, such as American Army, where American soldiers kill Iraqis, or the game Under Siege, where Lebanese soldiers fight Americans. There is a tendency in the design of games to widen the gap between the American and the non-American cultures, or to large extent the West form the East.

Cultural, social and symbolic capital, so called prestige, the form that various types of capital are rendered into when being perceived and recognized as legitimate (Bourdieu 1993:230), is what allows players to create facts. It is accumulated to define “truths” through a social struggle between shareholders of prestige (Bourdieu 1997:197). As such, players may express power through the creation of truths. The creation of a “true” way of playing is an example of such a truth.

Using the term discourse, I have taken an interest in the construction of the facts that constitutes the play discourse and I find that these are closely connected to power. Which discourse becomes dominant is determined through a power relation, depending on how many players use the discourse and who these players are, the discourse may be given prominence over other discourses.

Language is one of the primary tools in the construction of reality. Through language, we apply meaning to objects. To find what is important to the players you must look at the language they use. As noted, I find a distinct tendency to give value to behavior and strategy. Most words in Dota either relate to how to behave in the group, like the word flaming, or are words used as tools to create strategies, like the various codes used for transmitting information within the team. By looking at the language, we learn that appropriate behavior and cooperation is the features the players value the most.

Gamers act within two spaces, the virtual and the non-virtual. Although they may take different roles within either space, they are at the core the same individual in both spaces and, as such, they evolve in unity with both. Knowledge gained in the virtual world is still given value in the non-virtual. The codes of conduct within the virtual space are just as important within the non-virtual. Both the virtual and the non-virtual, or the offline and online, are legitimate and powerful sites of production. They produce both individuals and objects through processes of socialization, cultivation and institutionalization.

The process of creating an identity using computer games might raise some concern out of fear of what these identities might be influenced by. Computer games often have an element of violence. This violence worries the media when talking about identity creation. However, turning on the television, watching the news, you usually come across more violence than you do in the games.
The difference between the violence on the television and the violence in the games is that in the games you can influence the violence. Instead of perceiving the games as negative influences, you could perceive them as a way to cope with the violence that exists in our society, a way to overcome it and empower yourself, a way to preserve the faith in the good. Games are after all often about overcoming an evil foe and protect the peace. Learning how to hide and run away is often just as important as learning how to kill in the game. As noted, some of the players in the interviews described that the way they gained the most gratification from the game was not when they killed someone but when they made an impressive escape. Developing skills in problem solving is useful both inside and outside the game.

This will to overcome obstacles makes computer games popular. Computers, according to Jensen, tend to blur the distinction between medium and context. As shown by this study we cannot view computers as simple objects. We must put them into context. Computers are given value through the way that they are used. Without users they are nothing. What is of interest to study is therefore not the computers themselves but the players using them. By coming to know Bruno, Daska, Crakling and Naga you learn about the value of computers through their eyes.

This study also confirms the theory that there can be processes of socialization, cultivation and institutionalization present in gaming that does in some way affect the play. Although the results of this study do not enable a generalization of computer games as whole, they do give insight to a small portion of it from which further questions can be raised.

8.2 Reflection
The aim of this chapter is to search out the potential weaknesses of my study and to reflect on how I handled these. I am well aware of the role I have played in this study and I have done my best to minimize the influence of my own persona and habitus.

I have chosen to perform this study through consensus, working within the structure of the gaming culture without disrupting it. However, no actor can enter a field without affecting it even the slightest no matter what role they take when they enter. I chose to enter the field as a gamer and a friend rather than a researcher hoping not to disrupt the field more than the natural disruption that occurs when a new player joins the group.

To become the gamer and friend rather than the researcher I only mentioned the study when I searched out participants and at the end when interviews were called upon. I never mentioned my research at DreamHack and I tried to participate in the same activities as the rest of the players. After finishing the study, I asked the participants how they perceive me and none of them answered that they perceived me as a researcher.

I used narrative interviewing as a method to minimize the influence of my own framework of perception by asking the players to write their own stories of the visit to DreamHack and I present these, although translated, but otherwise intact. I chose not to “refine” the language in their stories, to fit with the academic conventions used in my own writing, since a refining of their language
would not just make the language academic but also change the perception of the people who wrote it. This way, further conclusion may be drawn from these stories that I have not made myself, leaving the possibility of more polyphonic interpretations.

The greatest weakness of this study was presented by its own structure. By making an intense observation during the course of four days, the study became subject to my own humanity. The lack of sleep, exercise and the consuming of unhealthy food did influence my own ability to stay sharp and aware during the study and I have probably missed some interesting data as a result, especially towards the end of the observation when the toll finally got the best of me. Knowing how the conditions would be, I prepared my baggage with a kettle for soup and a massive amount of fruits in a hopeless attempt to stay healthy. If I had not done so, I would probably have been even worse off at the end than I was.

I chose to use abduction as method by explaining computer game culture on basis of my own hypothetical framework. My theory was that computer game culture contains the same features as any other culture. That they institutionalize, cultivate and socialize their members just like society as a whole does. However, finding the “proof” to verify this thesis was not easy because I had to place the players into a much larger context than the setting that appeared in my line of sight.

To conclude, I denote that a person and not a computer made this study; as such I could not turn to programming to turn off the parts of me that consist of human nature and habitus. This study does not claim to create any truths about computer game culture, merely insight that can be used for reflection and a basis for further exploration.
9. Appendix

9.1 Terminology
This list might appear unnecessary extensive and is as such optional. However, some of the terminology is necessary for understanding what the players speak of in their interviews or in the chat while playing. I have minimized the list to the terminology most frequently used and terminology that may not be self-explanatory. That an area effect skill affects an area or that a strength hero is a strong hero seems too obvious to need explaining but some of the terminology is not as “logical” and must first be explained to enable understanding of the rest of the study.

9.1.1 Team Terminology
**Leader or manager** is someone whose task is to organize and keep the clan together. The role of being leader is often shared to make the burden easier. The leader usually handles the “picks” for the team when playing in captain mode. This means that the leader chooses which heroes are to be played for the whole team.

**Tank** is a heavy unit that can suffer large quantities of damage. The purpose of the tank is to take the hits from the opposing team and protect the weaker heroes.

**Carry** is a hero that can if played right become somewhat like a superhero. The purpose of the carry is to carry the team into success, thereby its name. The carry is the team’s killing machine and a good carry installs fear in its opponents.

**Support** heroes have supportive skills like healing, mana replenishing, shields and buffs. Buffs are used to enhance the skills of a friendly hero. The purpose of the support is to stay in the back, being protected by the tank and casting supporting spells for the players in front of him.

**Ward-ho** is a hero often holding damage spells. His purpose is to buy wards and place them on the map to give his team visibility over the other team’s movements. He sacrifices himself in the face of battle if a choice between two lives has to be made and he casts spells that does damage to the opposing team.

**Hunter or solo hero** is a hero that is played more or less on its own. He/she hunts the opponents, often in the woods, playing like a fox going fast for the kill and then hiding. These heroes are often preferred when playing alone because they do not rely as much on the effort of the team.

**Nuke** is a hero that can cast many spells. His purpose is to keep in the back with the support and cast his spells while trying to stay alive. The nuke also sacrifices himself like the Ward-ho if a choice has to be made between him and a teammate.

**Team-fight** is when your own team gathers to meet the opposing team, creating a larger fight with several players.

The **Mode** decides how the game is to be played, how heroes are picked, how long it will take, if there should be any bosses and which lanes are to be used. The most common modes for choosing hero are all random (AR), all pick (AP), random
draft (RD) selective draft (SD) and captain mode (CM). To these you can add super creeps (SC) easy mode (EM) only mid (OM) and several other commands. A **Hang-around** is someone who acts as a replacement if a team member is indisposed. Professional teams usually have one or several hang-arounds that fill in regularly. **Teamplay** is when the team acts strategically as one unit. The ultimate teamplay is the teamplay where every member plays his or her part to perfection. The ward-ho will leave the last hit of a kill to the carry; the support will heal the carry before healing himself and so on. The better the teamplay is the higher are the chances of winning the game. **Try-out** is a way of checking a player’s skills in a team. The try-out is used to find out whether a player who has applied for membership in either a team or a clan is fit to join. The try-out checks both the actual skill of the player as well as the social skill of the person playing. The social part is often more important than being good at the game because good social skills is the foundation for a good teamplay. **In-house** or **public** are two ways of playing the game. An in-house game refers to a game played among players who has some form of relation to each other. Both teams must know all of its members but the teams do not have to know each other. These games are often planned and organized beforehand. A public game takes place usually on Battle.net and the players do not have to have a relation to each other although some may. Five friends competing against five people who do not know each other is still considered a public game.

### 9.1.2 Skill Terminology

**Baby-sit** is when a hero’s sole purpose is to protect another. The carry and the tank are usually given baby-sitters in the beginning before they grow strong enough to handle themselves. Like a mother, giving her life for her baby so does the baby-sitter give up his/her/she baby-sits. **Map control** is a skill that every professional Dota player wishes to acquire. In short, it means to be good at keeping an eye on the smaller overlooking map, called the mini map. Being good at this enables the player to foresee what is coming and to strategize in advance of an attack. **Micromanagement** is to handle more than one unit at the same time. Some heroes have the skill of copying themselves or to possess creeps. A good micromanagement comes in handy while playing these heroes. **Going woods** or **going lane** is a matter of choice depending on the ability of the hero. Some heroes are in some way fit to kill the neutral creeps in the woods and going woods is therefore a good choice because it allows the team to have two solo lanes. Since there are only three lanes the players are usually distributed 2+2+1 on the lanes. One player going woods means that the team can distribute the heroes 2+1+1 on lanes and +1 in woods. Going solo is an advantage because the player does not have to share the gold and experience earned on the lane with another player. It can also be a disadvantage if the hero is not strong enough to handle a lane alone. **To Rack** the enemy base means to destroy the enemy barracks. Destroying a barrack gives the team stronger AI-units to assist them. Destroying all barracks
gives mega creeps, which are so strong that they often overrun the opponent’s base by taking too long time to kill allowing the creeps to gather in numbers. Achieving mega creeps usually result in victory shortly after.

9.1.3 Programming Terminology

**Lag** is the result of a bad connection between the player and the host. It can either result in creating a delay between the point where a command is given and the point where it is done, or it can create spikes, which makes the game freeze and fast forward to catch up with the time lost. Too much lag can result in a “disconnect”.

**Disconnect** is when a player looses the connection to the game, resulting in a disconnection. It can happen for several reason but most commonly because the Internet connection fails on either the player’s or the host’s end or because of the computer rebooting. Another reason is “fatal error” which is a programming flaw that shuts down Warcraft III. If one player gets “fatal error”, often others in the game do at the same time.

**List checker** is a program that minimizes lag, the interference of a bad Internet connection and allowing players with illegal copies of the game to join games hosted on the Battle.net.

A **Bug** is a computer error. It is a conflict in the program code, which can result in the program acting strange. This especially happens with the skills of new heroes before they are adjusted. The most common bug is probably that a skill sometimes does not have an effect when it is cast. Some bugs can make the AI-creeps behave strangely; others can make the hero respond strangely to commands and so on. Bugs are part of the game and are continually fixed through updating.

**Reload** or **play from save** is to begin the game from a save made during the game. When someone gets disconnected, you often reload the game from a save so that the player can reconnect to the game.

9.1.4 Rules, Cheats and Moral Codes

**Flaming** is a bad thing. It refers to the use of bad language or an excessive use of CAPS LOCK while writing in the chat. It can also refer to a player complaining a bit too much either about the game, the team or about another player. It is considered rude and immature. Too much flaming can result in a ban, which refers to banishment from playing certain games.

**Killsteal** is a concept that is not used as much while playing as a real team. The concept is rather blurry and can mean different things. The basis is that a kill can sometimes belong to a particular player for some reason. Some claim that the reason is that someone attacked the other first and thus he owns the right to finish the job. Others claim that the player that has done the most damage to a hero earns the right to kill it. The later reason can sometimes pose a problem because it is unfair. It states that heroes that can do more damage than others have a higher right to a kill no matter the effort of the player controlling it. Another problem is that the right to kill an enemy can be forfeited by letting it escape. Thus, anyone able to may kill it. What is defined as an escaped and not escaped enemy can often result in disagreement.

**Map-Hack** is a form of cheating, which Garena has a filter to detect. Map-Hack reveals the entire map so that the player can see everything that happens on it.
Without the cheat a player can only see what the team sees, including what the friendly creeps see, or what is revealed by a ward or some “friendly” objects like mines and traps.

**Backdooring** is usually considered cheating. It is one of those un-programmed rules that you must follow. In the latest releases of the game, this rule has been partly programmed into the game. The rule is very similar to that of offside in football. It states that you may not attack an enemy building while having enemy creeps behind on the same lane as the building is located. When it comes to attacking buildings in the base, this rule becomes a bit blurry. Most states that you may attack any building inside the base once you have friendly creeps inside it. However, some still claim that you may only attack the buildings on the lane where the creeps got in. These rules call for different strategies. If you follow the later meaning, you must push each lane separately to get the buildings down.
10. Bibliography


