ABSTRACT

1. Abstract
This talk presents the results of a longitudinal investigation of the co-evolution of social structures and behaviors of members of virtual communities formed by players of a Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Game (MMORPG) called World of Warcraft (WoW). Data were collected from 8 groups of participants in this virtual game at 3 time points in 2005. Each group had between 8 and 17 participants. Eleven network relations and over 50 attributes were recorded at each time point.

The main objective of this study was to investigate the extent to which the dynamics of advice retrieval and perceived expertise in MMORPGs reflect the same theoretical motivations that have been identified as explanations for the corresponding dynamics in ‘non-gaming’ knowledge networks such as management consulting teams and research groups. Our findings suggest that structural and behavioral motivations present in these gaming networks are similar to those found in ‘non-gaming’ networks previously studied. Recent advancements in goodness-of-fit measures allow for improved modeling of network dynamics. The findings of this analysis reveal how proposed goodness-of-fit measures increase the information available about a model.