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'HUEHUEHUE' 'BR?BR?' THE CARNIVALESQUE GRIEFING BEHAVIOUR OF BRAZILIAN ONLINE GAMERS

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Keywords: *multiplayer online game, Brazil, spam, troll, griefer*

Abstract

This paper describes and discusses the conflicts between Brazilian online gamers and the players from other countries. Two questions are addressed: what, if anything is specific to the disruptive behaviour of Brazilian players and how do they handle the association between their reputation and their nationality. Answers to these questions are strongly interrelated: Brazilian gamers often act in groups, and the use of nationality as their identity marker is decisive in the quickly and spontaneous formation of these groups. Brazilian players take advantage of the wide ambiguity of the comedic in multicultural environments and the carnivalesque tone is probably its most remarkable feature of their behaviour.

1. Introduction

The presence of Brazilians on the internet has increased rapidly during the last decade. By the end of 2012, the number of Brazilian internet users is estimated at 80.9 million (Barbosa, 2013, p. 166), who spend more time online, on average, than other nationalities (Ibope, 2006-2013). The usage of Social Network Sites (SNS) by Brazilians is notoriously high (Dantas & Dodebei, 2010; Chao, 2013; Mizukami, Reia & Varon, 2013), reaching 73% of the Brazilian internet population. Despite not being as high, the percentage of Brazilian internet users who play games online is not irrelevant: at 33% it represents more than 26.6 million people (Barbosa, 2013, p. 485).

The fact that the most common uses of the internet in Brazil are entertainment and social interaction is usually attributed to the sociable and good-humoured nature of Brazilians. However, many records of the Brazilian presence on the internet contradict that image, indicating instead a tendency toward conflict and aggression, particularly in their interactions with people from other countries. The best known example of an online confrontation involving Brazilians took place in *Google's* SNS *Orkut* in 2004 and has been registered in the Proceedings of a previous CaTAC Conference (Fragoso, 2006).

At the 10th anniversary of the Brazilian invasion of *Orkut*, the epicentre of the conflicts between Brazilians and non-Brazilians appears to have migrated to multiplayer online games (MOGs). The level of disruption and aggressiveness of groups of players that present themselves as Brazilian has escalated to unprecedented levels. Identified by the use of infamous memes, most notably 'HUEHUEHUE' and 'BR?BR?'¹, these gamers (and their actions) are the object of the discussion presented in this text. For convenience and by habit, I will refer to the players as 'the HUEHUEs' and to their actions as 'huehueing' ('to huehue' – huehue, huehued, huehueing). The leading questions are:

- is there a difference between the actions of the HUEHUEs and the modes or style of disruptive behaviour perpetrated by gamers from other nationalities? (or, do

¹ 'HUAHUEHUE' is supposed to be the sound of a laughter and 'BR?BR?' is a call to identify other Brazilians in the game.

Brazilians misbehave differently from others?)

- how do the HUEHUEs deal with the association between their online presence and their national identity?

Examples are better suited to the nature of the discussion intended in this paper is than either statistics or demonstrations. Data was obtained with a) an online survey responded by 511 internet users between 28 October and 28 December 2013 and b) cascading searches, starting with the HUEHUEs' best known memes via *Google and Reddit* and in the forums associated with *Steam, World of Warcraft, League of Legends* and *Dota2*. References to stigmatization were obtained with searches by nationality in the same sources. More than 100 webpages, images and videos were considered relevant and incorporated into the dataset. All URLs were last checked in 04 May, 2014.

2 The HUEHUEs

The 'Brazilian invasion' of *Orkut* was not the first or the last conflict between Brazilian internet users and users of other nationalities. One year before, two other confrontations had already taken place - in all three cases, the main target appear to be users from the U.S. (Kahney, 2003; Fragoso, 2006). The reasons for this eventual 'preference' involve a complex set of socio-historical factors, which are beyond the scope of this text. A description of the first of these events helps to understand the tone of the disagreements between Brazilian and U.S. internet users.

In 2003, 'serious users' of *Fotolog*, a photo-blogging and SNS, started to complain that Brazilians were spoiling the service by posting a large number of bad quality pictures of themselves. At first, the founders of *Fotolog* appear to have ignored these complaints and considered the practice harmless (Kahney, 2003). However, the "artistic New York photobloggers" were loud about their aversion to sharing *Fotolog* with the "sexy Brazilian cam girls"² and their "saucy webcam portraits" (Kahney, 2003). Such stereotypical references to Brazilian women are likely to have fuelled the increase in *Fotolog's* popularity that is said to have made it impossible to maintain the service free of charge. When *Fotolog* created its 'gold camera' service and restricted the free use of the service to a single picture per day and up to 5 comments, Brazilians members were upset and flooded the service with protesting images and angry comments, which were responded to with angrier and even more insulting pictures and comments³, in an escalating battle.

The other conflict from 2003 happened in a multiplayer game, *Ragnarok Online* (RO), where some of the best known huehueing memes are said to have been created. It started as most other such confrontations: with the Brazilians insisting on using Portuguese in areas where other players considered that the only acceptable language was English. Brazilian *Ragnarok* servers were created, but most players did not migrate to them. Servers that adopted stricter rules about language attracted more English speaking players, who abandoned areas where Portuguese (and, probably, by that time, also other languages) were used. By the beginning of 2004, players were being banned for using any language other than English in US-based servers.

Needless to say, many Brazilians were banned on the spot. A huge uproar in the Brazilian community occurred. In a certain Brazilian forum (...) they would organize raids and clans to fight English Speakers on english servers
Huge groups would reach max level and travel in packs on PVP servers and ask "BR?"(...) If you failed to reply in Portuguese, they would camp you, sometimes for

² http://gothamist.com/2003/06/04/fotolognet_revolution_volta.php

³ <http://photodude.com/2003/06/09/the-defreeing-of-fotolog>

hours speaking poorly worded english insults suggesting you log off. This led to an intense hate of Brazilians on these RO servers. Huge clans would form anti-BR Brigades and hunt down Brazilians. It became an all out war.

(*GreenEyedMonster*, 24 June 2012⁴)

The confrontation spread to other games⁵ and continues to this day. It is unlikely that the percentage of HUEHUEs is significant in relation to the total number of Brazilians who play MOGs, but the relation between huehueing and Brazil became a stigma for Brazilian gamers. The following conversation was motivated by a widespread cartoon that supposedly tells the story of the invasion of RO by the HUEHUEs⁶:

Ugh I hate brazillians [sic]. If you've ever played a not so popular mmorpg, then you'd know how annoying their shit American [sic] grammar is. Since they suck so much, they ask for money and items. This is why I quit online games. Now it's come back to haunt me

(Anonymous, 31 December 2009⁷)

You should play some Valve games or something. I've only met like 1 non-American in l4D, and he raped a tank with his eyes

(Anonymous, 3 January 2010⁸)

At the time of writing, it is easy to find Brazilians who claim to have been insulted for minor reasons, such as using BR as part of their names. Some respond angrily, others hide their nationality. The comments below were motivated by a post in *Reddit* that links to a video in which a monkey with the face of a HUEHUE teases a dog using the HUEHUEs memes:

I'm glad I am a brazilian, not a [sic] "american" (because the rest of the continent is not american, right?).

Otherwise I'd be an obese redneck who thinks that the Iraq war was correct, or that Jesus was real.

Brb: getting some Mc Donalds [sic] burgers.

Yep, stereotypes hurt, heh.

(*stephangb*, 2012⁹)

I'm Brazilian and I was about to defend my fellow countrymen. until I remembered how many times I told Brazilian players to piss off in both English and Portuguese. There's a reason why I keep my nationality (and gender) a secret in games, mostly to avoid the massive racist backlash which occurs when one discovers my nationality.

(*nenssa*, 2012¹⁰)

HUEHUE and BR? BR? are also used with pride. Especially after the publication of a brief article and an infographic about the bad reputation of Brazilians in MOGs by the newspaper *Folha de S Paulo* in May, 2013¹¹, these memes appear to be spreading to non-gaming environments. In October 2013, Sony announced that its newest console would be sold in Brazil at a very high price. The news was received with jokes about Sony "shielding the rest of the world from Brazilians online"¹² and *Folha de S. Paulo* re-heated its previous article with a lamentable headline: "Foreigners commemorate PS4 prices in Brazil for keeping

⁴ <http://forums.na.leagueoflegends.com/board/showthread.php?t=2276298>

⁵ For example: *Tibia*, *Lineage*, *World of Warcraft*, *DotA 2*, *League of Legends*, *DeadZ*.

⁶ <http://i0.kym-cdn.com/photos/images/original/000/135/593/brfw0.png>

⁷ <http://lolbot.net/index.php?content=viewer&vmode=random&id=2956#.UwqzwYXdeZo>

⁸ <http://lolbot.net/index.php?content=viewer&vmode=random&id=2956#.UwqzwYXdeZo>

⁹ http://www.reddit.com/r/wow/comments/wwi6u/so_i_made_a_toon_on_warsonus/c5h9sct

¹⁰ http://www.reddit.com/r/wow/comments/wwi6u/so_i_made_a_toon_on_warsonus/c5h5wsx

¹¹ <http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/tec/2013/05/1280744-brasileiros-ganham-fama-ruim-praticando-assalto-e-arrastao-em-jogos-on-line.shtml>

¹² <http://www.destructoid.com/playstation-4-will-cost-1-850-in-brazil-263741.phtml#comment-1086305077>

Brazilians away”¹³. The infographic was reproduced in various Brazilian game forums and blogs, accompanied by criticisms of the HUEHUES¹⁴ or, less frequently, of the newspaper¹⁵. The following are approximate translations of the names given to the actions attributed to the HUEHUES in the infographic, with summarized versions of their descriptions:

- Virtual begging – asking for money or equipment ('gibe moni plox') instead of playing to earn them;
- Assault – threatening to report other players if they didn't give what was been asked ('gibe moni plox' combined with 'I report u');
- Creative begging – artistic performances (such as dancing or reciting) to be given money or equipment;
- Pillage – simultaneous robbery by a large number of gamers;
- Friendly fire – joining a team to deliberately ruin its chances instead of collaborating;
- BR?BR?BR? – repeatedly shouting or writing BR? or BRASIL? in the open chat to find other Brazilians, independently of the disturbance caused to other players;
- Racism – when other players associate their behaviour with their nationality, Brazilian gamers accuse them of racism ('thas raciss')

To my knowledge this list remains uncontested and, in my experience, it is a reasonable account of the behaviour of the HUEHUES. However, a common complaint about the HUEHUES in specialized forums and blogs has not been mentioned in the infographic: that Brazilian gamers don't know English¹⁶ or refuse to speak English despite being able to¹⁷. Creative begging, on the other hand, has not been mentioned by any other source and was not known of by any player I had the opportunity to ask. It is easy to find references to Brazilian gamers spamming open chat channels with their memes, begging, assaulting, letting their teams down and then accusing others of racism for responding to their provocation. There are several opinions about the reasons behind the HUEHUES' behaviour, for example: that it is a development of the hatred initiated in Ragnarok¹⁸; that the HUEHUES are poor children playing in public places¹⁹ or who have “minimal computer and internet access for free”²⁰; that Brazilians are unable to play properly because of the geographic distance to the U.S and low quality of the internet in Brazil²¹; that they are unskilled and not committed to the team and the game. The behaviour of the HUEHUES has also been associated to Brazilian culture in general, with huehueing being said to mirror daily life in Brazil²². Curiously, this last idea is popular amongst Brazilians. During an interview to *Folha de S. Paulo*, the CEO of a Brazilian company dedicated to online games declared: “We can affirm that this is not a problem that originates in the game. The player, in online worlds, is a reflection of how he lives in real world”²³. This assertion was reproduced in several blogs and websites as being

¹³ <http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/tec/2013/10/1358688-gamers-comemoram-preco-do-ps4-no-brasil-por-manter-brasileiros-longe.shtml>

¹⁴ <http://www.madjoystick.com/2013/05/a-ma-fama-dos-brasileiros-nos-jogos.html> and

<http://www.donasdecasawow.com.br/nao-seja-um-huehue-br-isso-nao-e-legal/>

¹⁵ <http://criticasobvias.blogspot.com.br/2013/05/o-brasileiro-na-internet-huehuehue.html>

¹⁶ <http://forums.na.leagueoflegends.com/board/showthread.php?t=2276298&page=2> 06-24-2012

¹⁷ <http://forums.na.leagueoflegends.com/board/showthread.php?t=2276298>,

¹⁸ <http://forums.na.leagueoflegends.com/board/showthread.php?t=2276298>

¹⁹ http://www.reddit.com/r/wow/comments/150vxe/is_anyone_else_frustrated_by_grouping_with_latin/

²⁰ <http://forums.na.leagueoflegends.com/board/showthread.php?t=2276298>

²¹ <http://www.awesomenauts.com/forum/viewtopic.php?f=6&t=24685>

²² <http://forums.na.leagueoflegends.com/board/showthread.php?s=&t=548941&page=2> and

<http://forums.na.leagueoflegends.com/board/showthread.php?t=2276298&page=3>

²³ <http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/tec/2013/05/1280744-brasileiros-ganham-fama-ruim-praticando-assalto-e-arrastao-em-jogos-on-line.shtml>

the final word on the matter. Despite being true at one level (as online and offline are tightly intertwined and inseparable), it can be dangerously taken at face value, as if Brazil were populated by beggars, robbers and street gangs that shout HUEHUEHUE (or laugh like that). One common point in all these opinions is that they are no more than that: opinions. None of them is based on consistent evidence or on a sufficiently sound rationale. Some of those ideas are even in contradiction with what is known about Brazilian internet users, who, for example, are neither mostly children nor especially poor (Barbosa, 2013). More importantly, none of these opinions has challenged the fundamental and unproven assumption that the behaviour of the HUEHUEs is different from those of other gamers who participate in disruptive practices. In this paper, I try to identify some similarities and differences between huehueing and other patterns of online aggression reported by previous literature.

3 Spammers, Trolls and Grievers

Three styles of disruptive behaviour in online environments are directly related to the behaviour of the HUEHUEs: spamming, trolling and grieving. Each of those has been traditionally associated with a specific type of action, which previous authors have studied in specific online environments, such as *Usenet* Groups (Donath, 1998), feminist forums (Herring *et al*, 2002) or the *Wikipedia* (Shachaf & Hara, 2010). My choice to focus on the HUEHUEs and their practices broadens the scope of the discussion: huehueing originated in MOGs and remains heavily associated with Brazilian games and gamers. However, as the examples used in this text demonstrate, huehueing spread from the gameworlds to forums and sites dedicated to games and to other areas of the internet such as *Facebook*.

By structuring this section according to the division between spamming, trolling and grieving prevalent in the literature, I do not intend to imply that the separation between them is clear-cut or that they are mutually exclusive: the behaviour of the HUEHUEs is proof that, in practice, they can be indistinguishable.

3.1 Spammers

Nowadays, 'internet spam' is frequently thought of as 'email spam', massive amounts of unrequested email messages intended for phishing or advertising, usually spread by bots. However, spam is not always distributed by email or even automated. In the context of games, spam has been defined as "[c]opious amounts of unwanted text whose volume is so great it renders its content useless or pointless", and the action of spamming has been described as "generating so much text that its sheer quantity is offensive regardless of its content" (Hess, 2003, p. 29). This is the case of the repetition of HUEHUEHUE or BR?BR?: the memes themselves are not insulting, it is the way in which they are used that is offensive. Stivale classified the motivations for spam in a crescendo that goes from 'playful' to 'pernicious' spam. Between these two extremes lie 'ambiguous spams' (1997, p 133). In this initial sub-section, I will try to maintain the exemplification of Stivale's categories within the limits of the previous definition of spam, but his own examples cover a very broad range of disruptive behaviour and can be adopted to refer to huehueing in general. The least harmful type of spam would be 'playful spam', such as gamers teasing each other in silly and innocuous ways, as part of a shared joke. On the other extreme of Stivale's categories is 'pernicious spam', in which the messages repeated are ostensibly aggressive. Along the line that crosses from one extreme to the other, spam become 'ambiguous': jokes can be understood as aggression and acts of aggression can be taken playfully. For example, it is possible that (at least in some cases), despite being exaggerated, the repetition of BR? BR? was not meant to be spam, but an attempt to locate other Brazilians in the game to form a

team. Another example is the playful use of the meme HUEHUE in game forums and SNS, a joke that easily becomes annoying and therefore, on the receiving end, is pernicious spam.

HUE?

HUE? HUE? HUE? HUE? HUE?

hue hue hue hue hue

hue hue

hue

hue

hue

hoehoehoehoehoehoe milliondollarhoes

(several users, 14 July 2013²⁴)

The traces of interactions with HUEHUEs encountered in forums, blogs and SNS indicate that replying to their spamming as if it is of the playful type (for example, with the same meme) or ignoring them tends to interrupt the huehueing. This suggests that the HUEHUEs crave attention, a characteristic often related to the concept of troll.

3.2 Trolls

Online references to trolls are commonly associated to legendary beings that hide under bridges waiting for an opportunity to make some mischief. A different origin is reported for example by Donath (1998), who recalls a 1995 message in a discussion list warning that a participant could be ‘trolling a baited line’ at the others²⁵. The latter appears to be a closer analogy to the current understanding of internet trolling as sending provocative messages (in mailing lists, forums, SNS) with the intention to incite conflict. However, trolling does not need to be a proper message: attacks on Brazilian players are often used as bait, and several HUEHUE's memes are also basically baits.

Morrissey (2010) discussed the pragmatics of trolling in terms of three elements: the ‘high-order intention’, ‘informative intention’ and ‘stimulus’. The first (high-order intention) is the troll’s overall plan, that is, what the troll really wants to achieve by trolling. The second (informative intention) is the content of the troll’s utterance, i.e., what the troll effectively says. The third (stimulus) is the strategy applied to achieve the high-order intention, the provocation. Most of the time, the troll’s high-order intention is to make others seem foolish by taking the bait and reacting to it: this requires witnesses of the trolls’ targets being made fools of. Trolls seek attention (Herring *et al.*, 2002; Morrissey, 2010; Shachaf and Hara, 2010), and their intended audience can be more important for them than their victims. This is a possible explanation for the existence of criticisms of Brazilians that appear to be no more than bait.

In spite of trolls' preferences for easy targets (Herring *et al.*, 2002), the more experienced the deceived, the cleverer the troll appears to be. Fooling someone who is considered an expert or authority would be particularly rewarding. The *Wikipedia* trolls, for example, are known to contribute biased content to provoke other contributors with the high-order intention to report their reaction and have them blocked by an administrator²⁶. The HUEHUEs act similarly when they provoke top ranked U.S. players asking for money or equipment ('gibe moni plox') to induce violence against them and then report the other gamer to the moderators for racism.

²⁴ http://www.reddit.com/r/leagueoflegends/comments/1ia7ic/attack_of_the_huehuehuehuehue

²⁵ “Are you familiar with fishing? Trolling is where you set your fishing lines in the water and then slowly go back and forth dragging the bait and hoping for a bite. Trolling on the Net is the same concept - someone baits a post and then waits for the bite on the line and then enjoys the ensuing fight” (Unidentified author, 1995, cited in Donath, 1998).

²⁶ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Don't_take_the_bait

Another motivation for trolling is that it is fun. The internet is seen by many users as a permanently available entertainment venue. The trolls of (the Hebrew version of) *Wikipedia* interviewed by Shachaf and Hara (2010) explicitly talked about "the joy they get from vandalizing". Differently to other types of vandals who attack the *Wikipedia*, those trolls didn't get much pleasure in damaging the encyclopaedia's entries: their targets are the people, and they are motivated by "revenge on the community or on some members of the community" (Shachaf and Hara, 2010). By attacking the community that gives support to the existence of the *Wikipedia*, these trolls can cause the destruction of their own territory, as the HUEHUEs have caused game servers to be shut down, or the blockage of Brazilian IPs in RO and other games. Noticing this similarity is important as the findings of Shachaf and Hara indicate that ways of trolling that can cause the destruction of the troll's own territory are likely to be motivated by revenge and hate. This suggests that these can be some of the motivations for huehueing.

A study of trolls in a feminist forum suggested that trolls who are driven by control and self-empowerment would target vulnerable groups, and trolls who attack stigmatized groups would be motivated by "hatred towards people who are perceived as different or threatening by the troller" (Herring *et al.*, 2002, p. 381). Thus, besides acting differently according to their motivations, trolls can also attack in different ways depending on the profile of their target group. The same authors foresaw the possibility that different trolling patterns could be found if the target was a mainstream group rather than a minority group. They did not consider that the trolls could be members of a minority group and their target a mainstream group, as appears to be the case of conflicts between Brazilians and U.S. internet users.

Records in game forums and SNSs reveal that the HUEHUEs see themselves – and are seen by other players – as a sociocultural and economic minority from a peripheral nation, whilst the U.S. players are considered – and consider themselves – to be a dominant group.

The HUEHUEs preference for group action can be a consequence of this inversion in the direction of trolling; a strategy that makes it possible for the minority (the weaker) to attack the dominant (the stronger). It would also be an individual protection for each of the lower ranked players attacking the higher ranked players.

One of the decisive factors that make it possible for the HUEHUEs to attack in groups is the use of identity markers. Their memes, in particular, identify the HUEHUEs by nationality (explicitly in BR? and implicitly in HUEHUEHUE). Combined with the insistence on the use of Portuguese in English-speaking servers and corruptions of the language of the HUEHUEs' target group (such as 'thas raciss') converge with the recognition of language markers as "the online world's most deliberate identity signals" (Donath, 1998). Through the use of memes that appear to be childish or noob talk (such as 'gibe moni plox'), the HUEHUEs exaggerate their supposed dumbness and ignorance and appear to be mocking themselves. The high-order intention, however, can be different: the pretence of lack of intelligence and the apparent impossibility of communication can be a strategy to ridicule the U.S. players who complain the HUEHUEs cannot speak English and those who say that they are children or unskilled players. If taken seriously, these memes can turn the power relation inside out, victimizing the HUEHUEs and causing the U.S. players to appear arrogant, self-important and unprepared to deal with the multicultural reality of the internet: a typical case of successful trolling.

The strength and frequency of the HUEHUEs' language markers are decisive in the construction and reinforcement of their sense of community. However, the literature on trolls depicts them as loners: the gregarious behaviour of the HUEHUEs is more akin to that of grievers.

3.3 Grievers

Griever is a word more commonly used to characterize those who engage in disruptive behaviour in MOGs. The high-order intention of a griever is to spoil the game for other players and, in this sense, grievers play their own game, one in which the objective is to impair the pleasure of others and, at the limit, to cause pain. This broad definition implies that grieving can be done in many different ways, including spamming and trolling.

Chen, Duh & Ng (2009) and Lin & Sun (2005) described grieving in similar terms to those used by *Folha de S. Paulo* in relation to huehueing: begging, robbery, extortion and gang formation. Achterbosch, Miller & Vamplew (2013) compiled many types of grieving actions from previous literature and organized them in 15 categories. Those were the basis for their study of the convergences and divergences in what is considered acceptable behaviour in Role-Playing MOGs by players who see themselves as grievers and players who think themselves victims of grievers. Many – but not all – forms of huehueing scored high in the list of actions considered grieving by most players (perpetrators and victims): spamming, verbal harassment, blocking, camping, scamming, and damaging their own team.

By 'hunting in packs', many grievers, as the HUEHUEs, take greater advantage of the relative anonymity of the internet. In multiuser environments, the technological anonymity is reinforced by the anonymity of the crowd. Chen, Duh & Ng (2009) studied the possible associations between grieving, de-individuation and "crowd behaviour", that is, the fact that, when immersed in a group, an individual feels at the same time indistinguishable and visible. This results in a reduction of the sense of responsibility and of inhibition, which in turn can lead to deviant behaviour. In the context of online gaming, the technological anonymity and the anonymity of the crowd can be reinforced by the supposedly well-defined boundaries between the game and the real. The excuse that 'it is just a game' can be a facilitator for the reduction in self-awareness and self-regulation. Thus, it is possible to say that online gamers act within three layers of anonymity: the first results from the technological mediation; the second from the crowd situation (each player is anonymous within his group) and the third from the protection of the "magic circle" that supposedly separates the game from the reality (Huizinga, 1970). The HUEHUEs group identity fills the gaps between those layers of anonymity: each player remains anonymous in the crowd of HUEHUEs, but the HUEHUEs are not anonymous in the internet. Therefore, each HUEHUE is at the same time anonymous and identified in the game environment: the offline identity of a HUEHUE is far from obvious, but a HUEHUE is not any gamer, not even any griever; it is specifically a HUEHUE. The nature of the identity markers used by the group imposes limits: for example, a 'real' HUEHUE must know enough Portuguese to reply when asked 'BR?', and failing the test is usually fatal for the character. On the other hand, an attack to one HUEHUE is an attack to all HUEHUEs and can result in an incredibly quick and coordinated response by the group of BRs present at the time.

Studies of disruptive behaviour in online environments are marked by a recurrent dichotomy, which divides grievers from grieved, spammers from non-spammers and trolls from victims of trolls. The underlying assumption is that human behaviour can be understood in dualistic terms. Lin & Sun (2005) adopted a more refined approach in their study of the Taiwanese grievers, called 'white-eyed'. They recognized that, in order to understand grieving, it was necessary to take into account the complete social dynamics of the game. This led them to the perception that the majority of players occasionally act in ways that are considered to be grieving and suggests the possibility that the HUEHUEs are not typically low ranked because of lack of skills or experience, but because players prefer to huehue with secondary characters, preserving their more powerful characters for 'normal' play. Huehueing would be the type of play that Lin & Sun (2005) call explicit grieving (as opposed to implicit grieving). Explicit grievers (such as the HUEHUEs) are obvious to other players and recognize

themselves as griefers. Implicit griefers are not aware that their actions constitute grieving and do not see themselves as griefers or their actions as grieving.

Once I was playing PW with my boyfriend (...) a new guy entered the clan and started to brag about his char and insult everyone in all possible ways. Then my boyfriend said (...) "You must be swearing like this because you don't do shit in life. You must be a 13 year old wanker that does NOT have a girlfriend and spend the whole day alt-tabbing between pw and redtube"

(*Survey Respondent #456*)

The majority of players are capable of denying their own grieving through the construction of a clear-cut difference between themselves (supposedly, non-griefers) and the griefers. The positive identity of their own group is created and reinforced by the stigmatization of the griefers: a typical strategy of "othering" that emphasizes the distance between the two groups. This situation encountered by Lin & Sun (2005) in Taiwanese MOGs has many similarities to the relation between Brazilian and U.S. gamers.

All strategies of othering encountered by Lin & Sun characterized the group of griefers as weaker than the group of supposedly non-griefers. For example, the Taiwanese suppose that the white-eyed are children. By characterizing the white-eyed as youngsters, the other players reaffirm their superiority over them and, at the same time, find an excuse to forgive and justify their disruptive play (children grief 'by mistake', because they don't know better). The same logic appears to be behind the hypothesis that the HUEHUEs are children. In the case of the HUEHUEs, the attribution of poverty adds to this otherness and inferiorisation: the HUEHUEs are not only children, but they are poor uneducated children, who "lack computer skills" and play on public computers:

My Brazilian friend explained to me why most Brazilian players on WoW are annoying. It's because 90% of them are 8 year old kids playing in a cyber cafe.

(*hard_to_explain*, 2012)

Wow. If that is true, it really explains a lot.

(deleted, 2012²⁷)

In contrast to the implicit griefers, the explicit griefers recognise their actions as grieving. They have deliberately rebelled against the game rules and are responded to by stigmatization. In this, the cultural differences between the Taiwanese and the Brazilians are evident: the Taiwanese gamers react to being characterised as white-eyes with a claim of "professionalization", according to which there are rules to grieving and those who 'grief by the rules' are not white-eyed (Lin & Sun, 2005). These players accept the evidence of their grieving, but reject the stigma of white-eyed with the institutionalisation of their grief play and the othering of another (weaker) group. It is a double layer of stigmatisation, in which implicit griefers name explicit griefers white-eyed, and the 'professional' explicit griefers refuse that denomination and transfer it to the unruly explicit griefers. As the Taiwanese, the Brazilian griefers appear to have found a way to 'professionalize' grieving, but through a very different strategy. The HUEHUEs deal with othering and stigmatization by reaffirming, rather than denying, the separation between them and other players, notably those from the U.S. They reinforce their status as griefers by insisting on playing on U.S. servers even after the creation of servers in Brazil, and take possession of the stigma of being children or lacking skills with their noob and child-talk memes.

The difference in the ways that the white-eyed and the HUEHUEs deal with their stigmatization is a reflection of what is considered proper and improper behaviour in Taiwan and in Brazil. The importance of this difference points to the fact that a proper discussion of the HUEHUEs and huehueing must take Brazilian culture and ethos into account.

²⁷ http://www.reddit.com/r/wow/comments/wwi6u/so_i_made_a_toon_on_warsongus/c5h74g3#c5h74g3

4 A Nation of Griefers?

Brazil is not the only nation associated with disruptive behaviour in games. It is easy to find records of similar complaints about gamers from Russia²⁸, Poland²⁹, the Philippines³⁰, etc. However, there are peculiarities in the history of Brazilian online conflicts and in the patterns of these events that need to be discussed. To this end, the next subsection presents a brief review of some sociological theories about Brazil and the attitude of Brazilians towards foreigners.

4.1 The Cordial Masters

A solid starting point for a review of Brazilian national identity and the relation between Brazilians and people from other regions, especially North America and Europe, is the inversion of the idea of 'mongrelization' preconised by the white supremacists from the Northern Hemisphere:

The Brazilian elite (...) accepted the doctrine of innate white superiority, but they then argued that in Brazil the white was prevailing through miscegenation. Instead of "mongrelizing" the race, racial mixing was "whitening" Brazil. Miscegenation, far from a menace, was Brazil's salvation (Skidmore, 1992, p.6).

Gilberto Freyre's book *The Masters and the Slaves*, launched in 1930, provided academic strength to this theory and emphasized the positive value of the miscegenation between the African slaves (and, on a smaller scale, the native indians) and the Portuguese in the composition of the Brazilian people. Freyre's writing style and eroticised descriptions of the exploitation and degradation of the black and indian women have created an exotic and soft vision of slavery in Brazil. This idea was nourished by the fictional romantic relationships between whites and natives, masters and slaves already present in Brazilian fictional literature and entered a cycle of mutual reinforcement with the image of a 'tropical paradise' advertised to induce the immigration of Europeans to Brazil between the end of the XIXth century and the first decades of the XXth. To this day, the image that Brazil presents to the world – and to its own people, through the mass media – is this combination of positive and welcoming miscegenation, tropical exoticism and exquisite eroticism.

Sergio Buarque de Holanda's *Roots of Brazil* (1936) contributed to this picture of friendliness and receptivity by spreading the notion that Brazilians are cordial men. To the author's disappointment, the widespread understanding of the idea of 'cordial man' is nearer to the one that he was refuting than to the one he was proposing. In place of the sociologist's interpretation, the version that became popular was that of the poet Ribeiro Couto, whose Cordial Man (with capitals) was naively ruled by emotions, is inherently hospitable and has a tendency for credulity (Bezerra, 2005, p.125).

Buarque de Holanda's cordial man is also ruled by emotions rather than reason, but his understanding of cordiality is not restricted to positive feelings: "Enmity can be as cordial as friendship, in the sense that one, like the other, comes from the heart" (Buarque de Holanda, 1995). To consider that the most typical feature of the cordial man is the strength of his emotions, and that these emotions are not necessarily positive, can be a valuable key to understand the passionate overtones of the online confrontations involving Brazilians. However, the emotional imperative of Buarque de Holanda's cordial man also drives him

²⁸ <http://forums.riftgame.com/retired-forums-threads/grand-archive/eu-shards/pve/icewatch/85612-why-do-russians-gamers-have-such-bad-reputation-all-over-world.html>

²⁹ <http://forums.eune.leagueoflegends.com/board/showthread.php?t=662469&page=3>

³⁰ <http://lolbot.net/index.php?content=viewer&vmode=random&id=2956#.UwqzwYXdeZo>

away from conflict, which is avoided at nearly any cost. This is verifiable in daily life in Brazil, but is not reflected in online interactions, which easily become confrontational even when no foreigners are involved (Recuero & Soares, 2013). Apparently, the technological mediation forces the abandonment of some rituals of Brazilian politeness, especially those intended to simulate 'familiarity'. In Brazil, it can be good manners to break anonymity with degrees of warmth that, in other cultures (particularly non-Latin cultures) are normally reserved to close friends and family. However, as Buarque de Holanda noticed, this closeness is superficial and ultimately meant as a '*pièce of résistance*': Brazilian 'friendliness' shields the cordial man from the need to handle impersonal relations, which are something he abhors. However, the technological mediation of the internet establishes a degree of impersonality in which most of the strategies to establish familiarity and 'warm up' interactions used by Brazilians in their daily life cease to be applicable. Even the need to communicate in writing complicates the task: the usual modes of interaction in Brazil oscillate between residual and secondary orality (Ong, 2001), that is, between the need to communicate by sound due to the maintenance of pre-literate attributes and the preference for sound typical of a post-literate society. Communication is made more difficult by the need to use of a foreign language: the majority of Brazilians know little English and have no need or motivation to learn the language, as English is really not used or even useful for daily matters in Brazil³¹. The use of languages other than English is a permanent source of tension between US players and players from other countries.

My English is very rusty, at times a word in Portuguese escaped, and then came the question:

_Who is brazilian?

(...) either I would say "Yes i a brazilian" or I tried to speak with my English that most of the time shows that a guy cannot speak correctly.

The result usually was (...) to be kicked out of the group, no matter how well you could be playing, as for many the simple fact of being BR means you are not a decent player

(Graham, 13 September 2013³²)

The impossibility of maintaining their rituals of politeness due to the technical mediation and the requirement to communicate in a language in which they are not fluent makes online interaction a challenge for Brazilian gamers. Technical disturbances, infra-structure problems and geographic distances complicate it even further by increasing the lag and levels of latency, impairing the performance of Brazilian players. The records encountered in game forums suggest that it is not unusual that Brazilian players are accused of being unskilled due to conditions that are not of their choice.

My question is what is their ***** problem? They are on average way worse at dota than north americans. and not just bad, they are bad and play like they don't give a ***** if they win or lose and play like total retards (...) there is 0 reason for these ***** to pick english when they can't speak it well

(fdghg, 1st May, 2014³³)

Not due to their attitudes I'm fine with those, but their 250+-300+ ping is annoying. Sometimes you will flash away from them and their stuff will still hit you etc due to latency discrepancy [sic].

(...)

If you played another online game with 220 ping, you would be banned.

(Tamed, 11 February 2011³⁴)

³¹ Brazil is geographically far from any English speaking country, its academic environment is of French origin, dubbing has been a legal requirement for broadcasting foreign films on TV since the 1962 and, in recent years, dubbed versions of films and games are becoming increasingly more popular .

³² <http://geektrooper.wordpress.com/2013/09/13/os-hue-hue-hue-br-uma-praga-virtual/>

³³ <http://www.playdota.com/forums/showthread.php?t=1418008&highlight=americans>

As a consequence, from their point of view, the HUEHUEs understand that they are being made to suffer and are unwelcome because of who they are. In a word, they are being grieved, and their response is to (counter) grief by creating another game of their own, one in which they can (must) speak Portuguese and the objectives are such that their high latency is irrelevant.

4.2 Family and Foreigners

As described by the sociologist Roberto Da Matta (1985), the paradoxes of daily life in Brazil are similar to those encountered by Brazilian players in MOGs.

Due to circumstances beyond the scope of this text, the Brazilian State apparatus was designed with the intention to create a specific type of society, rather than to respond to the existing social organization. The impersonal logic of a (supposedly) egalitarian State was imposed on a culture in which the most valuable bonds were those of personal relationships, generating a tension that has not yet been resolved. In Da Matta's interpretation, Brazilians have found a way of dealing with the need to live under an institutional logic that does not match their cultural values by transforming impersonal situations into more familiar events. This often results in requests for exceptions: such as when Brazilian gamers require their high levels of lag and latency to be forgiven, independently of the harm they can have caused to the team.

The association between family and protection is an important key to understand the gregarious behaviour of the HUEHUEs and the facility with which they unite against players from other countries. In anonymous and global online environments, nationality becomes an obvious point of interpersonal convergence. Being 'BR' is sufficient to create a bond between players – and sufficient reason for them to unite against the 'non-BRs'. This explains the speed and agility of coordination of the HUEHUEs' attacks: there is no need for previous arrangements, the HUEHUEs act together because they are Brazilians. The problem is how easily this pre-eminence of nationality translates into nationalism.

It would be naïve to think that Brazilians' confrontations with foreigners started on the internet, or that it is a recently developed trait. The idea that people in Brazil are especially receptive to foreigners is part of an artificial image of the country as a 'friendly multicultural tropical paradise' that has been under construction for centuries. According to Simai and Baenninger (2011), this image includes a "quasi-xenophile" attitude that is, in fact, a myth, in the Barthian sense of an ideological discourse that erases its own existence by making its content appear natural, evident and even inevitable (Barthes, 1991). The authors defend that the success of the "myth of receptivity" of Brazilians can be measured by the strength of the denial of xenophobic feelings and beliefs in Brazil. Their argument would be tautological if the myth itself was not the primary tautology: when asked about their relation to foreigners, Brazilians respond with the narratives of 'soft slavery', positive miscegenation, associations between the tropics and the exotic and the erotic and the agreeable nature of the 'cordial man', that are all part of the construction of the myth. Brazilians interviewed by Simai and Baenninger (2011) and Rezende (2011) repeatedly affirm their receptiveness to foreigners and rejected any suggestion of racism or xenophobia on their part by repositioning Brazilians as the victims, never the perpetrators of aggressions. The pattern is the same that is encountered when the HUEHUEs claim the right to act aggressively because the US. players attacked them first.

My profile does NOT denote any uncommon characteristic related to a stereotype. I try to follow online games etiquette, but this does NOT oblige me to remain passive

³⁴ <http://forums.na.leagueoflegends.com/board/showthread.php?t=507196>

in a situation that I consider unfair.

(Survey Respondent #246)

5 Carnavalesque Huehueing

In principle, everyone in an online game is supposed to be equal and the same rules apply to all. However, when playing in servers located in the U.S., the conditions encountered by U.S. gamers are not the same of those encountered by players from other countries. Low ping and the primacy of communicating in their native language are preeminent examples. From the perspective of players outside of the U.S., the theoretical equality is not a principle of justice, but of disempowerment. It is possible then, from the point of view of the HUEHUEs, the U.S. players appear to be aggressive by demanding that they circumvent their linguistic, geographical and technological restrictions in the name of 'equality'. Under this interpretation the U.S. players trolled, the gullible HUEHUE took the bait and engaged in a passionate and aggressive counter-attack.

Assuming the position of victim is not a novel way to justify one's own xenophobic discourses. In Brazil as anywhere else, this well-known rhetorical strategy consists in swapping the places of the subject and the object of the aggression, inverting the argument. There are accounts that U.S. players have insulted gamers from Brazil (and other countries) for circumstances beyond their control. However, there are also records of the HUEHUEs attacking first and claiming the position of victim later (in the classic sequence 'gibe moni plox' followed by 'thas raciss, I report u').

Other ways used by the HUEHUEs to justify their aggression include hiding xenophobia under a cover of gaiety and jolliness. This conveniently converges with the idealized happiness that is part of the idealized image of Brazil and with the type of anonymity encountered in MOGs, where every HUEHUE could be any other HUEHUE and individual identities are protected by the collective identity. The game becomes a masquerade and huehueing a form of carnival – a cultural manifestation that is also conveniently part of the Brazilian stereotype.

The organized and unified Brazilian Carnival presented by the mass media is increasingly distant from its origins, but huehueing can be thought of as a variation of Brazilian street carnival (Da Matta, 1978) and as carnival in the Bakhtinian sense, that is, an event in which familiarity amongst strangers and eccentricities are the norm, excesses are allowed and power relations are inverted (Bakhtin, 1984). As carnival, huehueing is an opportunity for the HUEHUEs, who see themselves as a minority, to invert the forces and troll the mainstream group. The "jolly relativity" of the situation has been established from the trademark of the HUEHUEs - the meme of laughter - and the most basic form of huehueing - spamming a channel with that laughter. The relativity of carnival is amplified by the multicultural nature of online interactions, which broadens the ambiguity between what is playful and what is pernicious (Stivale, 1997). The carnivalesque tone and the use of nationality as identity marker are the most outstanding differences between huehueing and other types of disruptive behaviour in MOGs or on the internet in general.

In their peculiar masquerade, the HUEHUEs take control of the stigma placed upon them and mock themselves in order to make fun of the other players. Not only their memes, but also images and videos that ridicule them are created and distributed by them. With this attitude, the HUEHUEs refuse the sanctioned ways of the Feast of Fools, in which those of lower ranking impersonate the authorities, and the carnivalesque inversion is turned inside out: the HUEHUEs don't dress up as kings, but as jesters, and by doing so raise doubts about where the power effectively lies.

6 Final Remarks

In this article, I discussed whether there are differences between the aggressive behaviour of Brazilian players in MOGs and actions from other groups, in online environments. I also tried to verify how Brazilian players deal with the association between their actions and their national identity. To this end, I recalled some episodes of online hostilities between Brazilians and non-Brazilians in SNSs and games, introduced the HUEHUEs and huehueing. References to huehueing collected with an online survey and from secondary sources were used to illustrate the comparisons of the behaviour of the HUEHUEs with descriptions of spamming, trolling and griefing in previous literature.

Huehueing combines these three types of actions, with the main differences between Brazilians and other spammers, trolls and griefers being their preference for group action; the ostentatious use of nationality as their identity marker and the creation of a peculiar carnivalesque setting in which they grant themselves, by means of humour, the right to perform a disturbingly two-folded inversion of power relations.

Huehueing was discussed in this text as a symptom of the complexity of the interplay between national identities, geopolitics and technological mediation in online multicultural interactions. The intention was neither to describe Brazilian culture based on the subculture of the HUEHUEs, nor to imply that huehueing is a typical behaviour of all Brazilian gamers. On the contrary: the sociological theories about Brazilian culture and the relation between Brazilians and foreigners were considered interpretative keys to understand the specific phenomenon under scrutiny. However, the strong convergences between these sociological theories and the behaviour of the HUEHUEs, as well as the popularity of the memes and their increasing appearance in other online environments, suggest that huehueing is representative of Brazilian culture and could be taken as a case for further studies aiming for generalization. The traces of the confrontations between gamers from the U.S. and players from other countries suggest that studying online interactions with Brazilians can lead to a better understanding of international online interactions in general.

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