Chapter 89
Leadership Behaviors among Gamers and Student Leaders

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the relationship between leadership in video games and in real-life. The effects of motivation of play, prosocial orientation, and the social context of play on leadership behavior were also investigated. A Game Leadership Behavior questionnaire was constructed to measure game leadership. Other measures included the Leadership Behavior Description Questionnaire, the Motivation of Play questionnaire, Prosocial Orientation Questionnaire (POQ), and questions identifying the type of game play participants were involved in. A total of 321 students participated in the study. All participants held leadership positions in school. Findings showed that game leadership behavior was positively correlated with real-life leadership and emerged as a predictor of real-life leadership, together with prosocial behavior and social game motivation.

INTRODUCTION

Society has been very much concerned with the repercussions of video gaming, particularly on our young people. Most of the studies have focused on the negative effects of video gaming, especially on its effects on aggression (e.g. Anderson, 2004, 2007; Anderson & Dill, 2000; Bartlett, Harris, & Baldassaro, 2006; Bryant & Davies, 2006). However, researchers have also found a myriad of positive effects of video games (for example,

Durkin & Barber, 2002; Risenhuber, 2004; Lee & Peng, 2006).

Jackson et al. (2011) found that children who play more videogames tend to be more creative in tasks such as drawing pictures and writing stories. Game mastery and knowledge is gradually becoming an important part of adolescent subculture, forming part of their social capital, allowing them to gain peer approval, and influencing the nature of their subgroups (Raney, Smith & Baker, 2006). Even within video games, social skills are being

learnt and practiced. Narvaez, et al. (2008) found that players who played helping games are more likely to describe the game characters in the story as having concern and empathy for others. The Pew researchers found that video games afforded adolescents with rich social interaction and civic learning opportunities where players helped each other, made decisions that affect the larger group, or debated moral, ethical or social issues (Lenhart et al. 2008). Although adolescents in the study reported encountering aggressive behavior in games, most of them also witnessed many prosocial behaviors, such as positive social skills, generosity and helpfulness, creative and task-motivated play, and self-regulation. In addition, they also develop social skills as a form of collateral learning as they interact with others within the game (Johnson, 2005, Anderson et al, 2010).

In Massively Multi-player Role-playing Games (or MMOs for short) like *World of Warcraft,* character advancement often necessitates increasing levels of collaboration with other players (Yee, 2006b). This is usually done through participating in a raiding group or guild, where teamwork is needed to defeat the strongest monsters. And where there are groups, leaders will emerge. A valuable area of gain is the development of social competencies, such as leadership and communication skills, as a by-product of game-related social interaction with other players. This of course begs the ultimate question of whether video games may be employed purposefully in the development of important social skills (in this case, leadership).

As there are not many studies on the relationship between video game playing and leadership, it is the purpose of this paper to explore the relationship between video game playing and leadership in both online and real-life contexts. Only video games played in a social context are studied in this paper. These would include both MMOs, and games that are played in multi-player "Co-op" modes. The first kind refers to games with huge virtual environments that support thousands of players at a time, all involved in completing quests,

killing monsters, acquiring loot, and increasing their character levels, whilst socializing with each other and participating in communities within and outside the game. These include games such as *World of Warcraft, Star Wars The Old Republic, and Guild Wars*. The second kind refers to role-playing or strategy games which provide a specific multiplayer mode in which players – connected online or through the local area network - cooperate in teams to achieve specific goals within a limited game environment – hence the term *Co-op Mode* used in the game industry, and in this paper. These may include the multi-player modes of games like the *Halo*, *Left 4 Dead* and the *Resident Evil* series.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Much of the research on game leadership has centered on MMO gaming. One of the main purposes of MMO gaming is to advance one's in-game level and acquire desirable loot that would make one's character more powerful. This requires increased collaboration and interdependence between players, especially because in many MMOs, different characters can complement each other's strengths and weaknesses to form a strong group (Yee, 2006a). Ducheneaut, Yee, Nickell, & Moore (2006a) observed that at higher player levels, *World of Warcraft* becomes a much more social experience, as players collaborate more in order to get the more powerful items in the game. These strategic collaborations often take place in either informal small groups or formal guilds, which are long term social groups where membership is formalized and roles are assigned. It was estimated that 66% of players in *World of Warcraft* are in guilds, and the proportion jumps to 90% for players at levels 43 and above. 90% of such guilds have 35 or fewer members, with the largest guild consisting of around 150 members (Ducheneaut, Yee, Nickell & Moore, 2006b). Guilds are a common means of sharing resources and manpower, and most consist of a rank system, where older players

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