Chapter 1: Introduction

1.0 In Search of a Strange Question

Practices of educational leadership have begun to change in significant ways over the last several decades as technologies have transformed tools for management and assessment. The last thirty years have seen an explosion in digital technologies that has changed the landscape of learning in institutions at all levels. The impact of these changes on leadership practices in education has been particularly powerful (Kozloski, 2006). Acquisition of the abilities digital technologies afford has led to the brink of a renaissance in bureaucratic and management oriented tools for school leadership (Hancock & Fulwiler, 2007). Recent reports even indicate that school leaders have begun embracing the use of smartphones much as their counterparts in the private sector have for many years (Ash, 2010). Meanwhile digital technology has made data analysis in leadership and policy studies more powerful as well (Anderson & Dexter, 2000). However inquiry more directly focused on digital media and instructional leadership has been sparse (Halverson, 2005).

Recent work looking more broadly at schools as institutions and the ways in which learning has begun to change with technology provide a groundwork for looking at instructional leadership and digital media (Collins & Halverson, 2009). Implications from work like that of Collins and Halverson also drives us towards questions pertaining to technology that may be in development for schools or in use outside of them, but has yet to see adoption inside of them. The impact of possible tools is ultimately immeasurable. However with the appropriate constructs we can ask meaningful questions about how

digital tools structure organizational learning, and determine some possible implications of current trends in digital media for school leadership theory and practice.

Game and simulation software occupy a key role in setting the direction for the ongoing development of digital technologies. Not only is the market for these technologies growing and diversifying (Lenhart, Jones, & Macgill, 2008), but digital games have been one of the chief ways in which developing digital technologies are brought to scale for wide spread use. As these simulations and digital playgrounds have grown, they have become increasingly rich places to forward the study of a wide variety of human phenomena, including both learning and leadership (Gee, 2003; Yee, 2005).

Over the last twenty years, first multiplayer on-line games and then massively multiplayer on-line games (MMOs) have emerged as venues for new types of leadership practice. Through the lens of games like *Counter Strike*, *The Sims*, and *World of Warcraft* and the affinity spaces (Gee, 2005a) that grow up around them we can gain a glimpse of the roles leaders play in these types of digital media environments. In some instances we can even see the shape of new models for leadership in a distributed virtual context. By reflecting leadership and learning practices in these new venues back on school leadership, we can enrich our understanding of what leadership for learning both in and outside of schools entails. In addition we can see the ways in which some leadership practices are influenced by the use of digital technology and might be further transformed as the work of both leadership and learning is increasingly enacted with and through these tools.

In this study, I examine leadership in the game *World of Warcraft* (*WoW*) in an effort to better understand what the practices of leaders in this game world look like, and

how those practices are similar and different from the work of school leaders. *World of Warcraft* is an MMO, a virtual world in which millions of people worldwide participate, many of them spending hundreds of hours each year playing (blizzard.com[1]; Thomas & Brown, 2007). To those unfamiliar with MMOs, leadership in *WoW* may seem like an odd place to look for an understanding of school leadership even from a speculative stance. After all, in recent years *World of Warcraft* and other MMOs have received some particularly negative press due to the tendency of a number of college age players to play games to the exclusion of their studies (gamepolitics.com, 2008), and of various anecdotal reports on damaged relationships, neglected families (Leonard, 2007), or even gaming related deaths. While it comes as little surprise that stories of this sort are relatively quick to reach the mainstream media due to their sensationalistic qualities, there is another side to *WoW* and it is far more common. Serious research on games including MMOs indicates that an overwhelming majority of the player population maintains a generally healthy balance of game play and other activities (Williams et al, 2009). More importantly, existing research also points to the ways in which these worlds often function as powerful prosocial spaces for the players frequenting them (Steinkuehler & Williams, 2006).

There are also reasons why *WoW* is a particularly promising place to look for leadership practices in general. Since I began writing this dissertation, two popular press books have been released on the topic of leadership in MMOs. One that focuses

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1 As of January 2008, World of Warcraft had over 10 million subscribers world wide with over 2.5 million in North America alone. While subscription numbers are somewhat inflated due to some individuals holding multiple accounts, even conservative estimates place current active players in the millions.

specifically on how to be a successful guild leader (Andrews, 2010), and one that looks at organizational leadership more broadly based on the author's experiences as a leader in game (Rezvani, 2008). Early research has also pointed to the potential for leadership learning in these synthetic worlds (Thomas & Brown, 2006; Yee, 2005; Reeves & Malone, 2007). From a theoretical standpoint there is enormous potential for examining leadership practices in game worlds due to the fact that as games, MMOs provide simplified decision spaces in which social groups can engage with structured and unstructured tasks and problems. As a result, the real leaders in these virtual spaces are engaging in some of the same basic practices as their counterparts in analog domains, but in a context that is far more accessible for research than most other settings "in the wild."

1.1 Why Warcraft? Some starter points

A number of factors emerge that make a game like *WoW* particularly intriguing as a space for learning more about leadership, and particularly about school leadership. To begin with, schools are relatively unique organizations and finding useful comparisons in other contexts can be difficult. While other businesses may be able to make do with a substantial segment of their work force operating at a relatively static level of knowledge, schools have to be what Senge calls learning organizations even if they're just getting by (Senge, 1990).[2] Furthermore, in some successful schools teachers already form vibrant

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[2] While a skilled graphic artist or accountant may need to learn new tools as they become available, expert teachers need to continually reinvest in learning how to teach (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1992) as the demands of their practice are constantly in flux based on their changing clientele.

communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) through which educators can both individually

and collectively engage in continuous learning.

In *WoW* players organize themselves into groups called guilds[3]. While not all

guilds exist for the same purpose, those guilds that are formed around the most difficult

cooperative challenges in the game (known as end game) need their members to engage

in continuous learning as they advance in the game. There are two essential reasons for

this in *WoW*. On the one hand in-game challenges become increasingly difficult as a

guild progresses through them requiring all players to continuously improve their mastery

of the game in general, and their specific role in game.[4] On the other hand, the game's

designers and developers at Blizzard are continuously modifying the rules that govern

how the game is played in an effort to maintain player interest and keep the game fun. As

a result, players also need to periodically revise or relearn their roles so as to maintain a

high level of performance. In effect, this forces players to engage in a process not unlike

double loop learning where previously mastered skills or tasks are revisited and refined

rather than simply repeated according to formula (Argyris, 1991). While teaching

expertise requires engaging in this pattern of development, gamers in *WoW* have to

engage in a similar pattern just to stay afloat with changes to the game's content. In other

words, end game players in *WoW* are in some sense engaged in an active simulation of

double loop learning.

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[3] As Steinkuehler has illustrated previously, communities of practice form at various levels in a game like *WoW* (Steinkuehler, 2006a) including within guilds.

[4] If you are more familiar with *WoW*, you might note that this isn't entirely true due to the nature of the expansions that have been developed for the game. While it is true that the new end game content in an expansion is typically easier than the old end game content, the new content still scales up in difficulty within each expansion, and particularly as new patches add newer more challenging instances.

There are also two essential structural features of schools as organizations that guilds parallel at least in part. Guilds and schools both have nominal leaders who are key actors in the system, but in both types of organizations leadership tasks are distributed across the system due to the number and variety of challenges that arise perennially and periodically (Spillane, Diamond, & Halverson, 2001). Schools and guilds are also both organizations that contain loosely coupled elements. The distributed nature of leadership in these organizations means that they are loosely coupled organizationally so that in many instances members have autonomy to act within and beyond (or even against) the established rules. In addition both settings are to some degree loosely coupled temporally, such that not all organizational outcomes are the result of a direct or linear work flow (Weick, 1976).

Both guilds and schools also work towards norm referenced measurable progress as defined by an external source that relies on the analysis of statistical data. For schools this assessment comes in the form of standardized student testing. For guilds measurement is a function of in-game statistics operationalized by the player community, as guilds are rated against each other in terms of their progression in game through third party analysis (wowjutsu.com). While these external measurements exist, leaders in both types of organizations are confronted with important decisions as to how they will work towards what are more or less pre-defined goals, and even to what degree they are interested in acknowledging them as the actual aims of their organizations.

Finally, leadership in both schools and guilds involves fundamental practices that are required by leaders in virtually any kind of organization. Both types of leaders have to do short and long term planning. They are periodically faced with the integration of new

technologies. As with any work with people, leadership practices in school and guilds entail ongoing conflict management for persistent or intractable issues, and intervention in escalated conflicts for issues that have boiled over (Constantino & Merchant, 2005). Resource allocation, visioning, maintaining morale, and work within and through organizational culture are all tasks that are also present in guilds, just as they are in schools. This last group of activities tends to be informed by the specific organizational context or domain of practice. However, the fact that these features are common in such a wide variety of domains is precisely what allows for comparisons between educational leadership and leadership in other contexts (Fullan, 2003). The challenge in looking at constructs of this sort across domains involves finding the correct grain size for describing practices such that they are meaningful, but not so generic as to prove useless.

1.2 The shape of guilds for leadership practice

Guilds range in size from just a few players to well over 100, and they are lead by individuals referred to as guild leaders, or guild masters. There are a number of types of guilds in *World of Warcraft* and while many guilds are primarily social in function, a significant number are structured around the aim of successfully completing end game content (Williams et al, 2006). End game content requires in depth planning and coordination among cross-functional teams that range in size from 10 to 40 people engaged in simultaneous play for extended periods of time in order to complete (Yee, 2006; Steinkuehler, 2006b). Informal statistics on the game taken between 2006 and 2007 indicated that only a small portion of players were seeing end game, with potentially as few as 2% actually engaging with the challenges available at the highest tier of difficulty

(Crews, 2007). However, Blizzard has sought to make more of the game available to more of its playership over time.

Of course, guilds differ sharply from schools in some key areas. Guilds are voluntary associations that emerge within a recreational activity, and with very few exceptions people play games such as *WoW* for entertainment rather than as a vocation (or occupation). While the common visible structural features of schools are things like classes & passing periods, text books & student discipline, and worksheets & testing, the visible features of WoW as a fantasy game are things like elves & blacksmiths, demons & dungeons[5], and magic swords & quests. Less visible features also differ between the two contexts. While school leaders are concerned with Annual Yearly Progress (AYP), guild leaders focus on very different statistics like "damage meters" & "hit caps"[6].

While differences such as these might seem to trivialize the benefits for educational leadership research to be found through the examination of MMO guilds and their leaders, there are also differences that make guilds in *WoW* particularly useful for extending theories of leadership practices in organizations, and even re-conceptualizing what school leadership might entail in a digital age. As we face the challenge of finding qualified and competent leaders to fill positions in virtual schools where technology mediated interaction in a geographically distributed organization structures practice, the

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5 Dungeons in *WoW* are referred to as "instances" by both players and developers due to the fact that while a group of players are in one, they are in a separate virtual space from the primary world. Each instantiation of one of these spaces is also distinct such that multiple groups can "run" the same dungeon in their own instance.
6 These discourse specific terms are just a fraction of a larger vocabulary that has been developed for talking about how the simulation model underlying games like these is represented in the game world, and what players can do in relation to that model to improve outcomes during play.

experiences of guild leaders who take these conditions as a given becomes a particularly

compelling topic of study. In addition, given the ongoing challenges in principal staffing

more generally and the emergent nature of successful school principals in the past (Roza,

2003), the emergent nature of leadership in guilds becomes another strong stimulus for

scrutinizing this leadership context. After all, it is in large part this emergent quality that

has led corporate researchers to look seriously at leaders in these virtual worlds (IBM,

2006; Reeves & Malone, 2007). In general, with the world of business looking at the

potential of video games as tools for leadership and a generation of students who are

deeply involved with games (Gee, 2003; Lenhart et al, 2008), educational researchers and

practitioners can ill afford to ignore the implications of gaming technology for both

learning and leading more generally (Halverson, 2005). However, even more important

than all of these factors is the simple fact that end-game raiding in *WoW* is a learning

activity. While the content players learn may not be particularly relevant for questions of

instructional leadership, the organizational features that support this learning are.

MMOs also offer us a potentially useful metaphors for how leadership practices

can be sliced for analysis in almost any context. A pilot study I conducted on guild

leadership with colleague my colleague Seann Dikkers (Wolfenstein & Dikkers, 2009)

demonstrated two essential types of leadership practices in *World of Warcraft*, raid

leadership and guild leadership. Popular writing on the topic also tends to divide up

leadership in MMOs this way (Andrews, 2010). Raid leadership involves the active

coordination of players gaming together simultaneously, while guild leadership involves

the ongoing management of organizational and interpersonal issues in the group over the

long haul. When we look at the traditions of research in educational leadership, we see

consistent attention to the school version of guild leadership with an abundance of

research focused on school culture, instructional programs, and other longer-term tools of

reform (Deal & Peterson, 1999; Slavin, 1994; Hargreaves & Fink, 2003). Meanwhile, we

have a persistent gap in the analysis of leadership practices at the "raid" level, with only a

handful of work looking at questions of how school leaders can do things like provide

effective formative feedback, or the ways in which they approach the challenges

presented by a disgruntled parent or teacher (Peterson, 2001). The Guild/Raid metaphor

for leadership practice is an instructive example of how guild leadership can effectively

reflect school leadership practices, allowing us to reframe familiar problems in new

contexts.

1.3 Problematizing Educational Leadership Research

While research on educational leadership provides us with a framework for what

the different aspects of leadership are as well as some reasonable pointers towards some

essential features of practice, there is an unfortunate scarcity of strong descriptive work

focused on creating a comprehensive picture of contemporary school leadership practices

in different settings (Davis et al, 2005). In fairness the discipline of educational

leadership studies began as a somewhat ambiguous affair, which led to departments at

institutes of higher education whose constitution was largely based on preexisting silos of

expertise rather than a concrete analysis of what their students would need to learn

(Bredeson, 1995). At the same time, while the education leadership research community

has shown a desire for a coherent research agenda, formation of such an agenda has not

been without cost. To the extent that this agenda exists it has come largely through the

"third wave" of school reform,[7] providing a focus on accountability and top down policy in research and practice. The price to pay for this recent push is that we have tended to put the cart (evaluation) before the horse (description) in educational leadership studies, even as we try to work towards a common ground for sense making in the field.

Still, both research and policy contexts matter. Understanding these environments is necessary for interpreting prior work on school leadership, and mobilizing more recent work to inform our understanding of how leadership in schools has changed. In addition, by defining the research environment one can begin to see how research on a domain like guild leadership can raise significant questions that we tend to miss when operating under the normative constraints of the field. With major funding efforts aimed at research that meets a traditional gold standard of empirical education research (i.e. experimental or quasi-experimental studies of interventions that show improvement in student performance in mathematics and literacy), tools for measurement have de facto tended towards standardized test outcomes. Constructs used for educational leadership research have mostly been tied to this relatively narrow variety of outcome that has only thin connections to the actual activities of leadership (Murphy, 2002). If we wish to conduct education research with integrity however, it is crucial to bear in mind that the actual outcomes of school are numerous and complex (McNeil, 2000). The choice to privilege quantifiable standardized performance data in understanding schools and their leaders is then an inherently political one with very distinct consequences (Apple, 2002).

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[7] Hess and others have characterized reform activities in three waves, with the current focus on standards and accountability constituting third wave reform. Second wave reform took place in the 1980s and early 1990s, and was largely focused on school based management and other initiatives that aimed to situate teacher voices more prominently in setting instructional agendas (Hess, 1998).

On a practical level these consequences involve limiting the kinds of research on school leadership that are considered legitimate within the current conversation about school improvement both at the policy level and within the academy (Dorn, 1998). For researchers concerned with characterizing effective leadership, one route towards legitimacy within the larger discourse is to opt for an approach that moves backwards from schools where success is evident based on test data, towards the features of leadership found in these institutions so as to satisfy the political demands of the research environment (Spillane, 2008). It comes as no surprise then that only a fraction of the available work actually focuses on leadership competencies or activities (signifiers of practice), favoring instead analysis of curricula, organizational structures, or policies (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003).

In fact the great mass of contemporary research around school leadership within the context of accountability isn't really concerned with the "what" of leadership at all, so much as it is interested in tools for school leaders or policy makers. As a result it focuses largely on topics like comprehensive school reform programs, value added assessments and pay for performance initiatives, and other measures that school or district leaders can purchase or otherwise adopt (Murphy, 2002). Of course, there is a legitimate oppositional discourse that is also quite vocal within leadership studies. Under the unassailable banner of social justice, this other side approaches the current environment of standardization and accountability from a critical policy analysis perspective that usually highlights ways in which the accountability movement either draws attention to or exacerbates prior disparities in educational outcomes (Valenzuela, 2004). Like the more dominant discourse this strand of research has also produced some meaningful studies that look

towards school leadership practice (Capper & Frattura, 2009), but these studies constitute only a fraction of the work pursued from this lens.

While I do not mean to suggest that these research agendas are less than timely within the current context of American educational leadership studies, they are powerful forces that have in combination effectively narrowed the range of questions researchers are likely to pursue. Caught between the Scylla of positivist best practices and the Charybdis of post modern critical analysis, it becomes increasingly difficult to chart a course guided by a constructivist epistemology toward the more modest goal of describing common place practices of leadership that keep schools running and create the potential for learning communities. It is even more difficult to ask very salient questions pertaining to the ways in which new technologies for learners and education professionals may be changing those practices.

Interestingly enough, the field of higher education has had more latitude for attempting to at least define leadership practices as they are now in the field of PK-12 education. The forecasts of a leadership shortage in American schools, a perennial feature of the conversation on school reform and the future of these institutions over the last several decades[8] (Hargreaves & Fink, 2003), ignited discussions that look beyond the question of where future principals will come from, to also consider what can help make them more effective (Gilman & Lanman-Givens, 2001). As much as the accountability driven policy context of recent years has framed the study of schools and their leaders in

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[8] To be specific, researchers in the 1980s first began pointing towards the substantial turnover in school principals based on the age of this school leader population, and this concern has been exacerbated by the growing student population, in large part driven by immigration (Whitaker, 2001).

terms of best practices at the classroom level, this same context has forced the question of what policies for school leadership preparation (Hess & Kelly, 2007), selection, or placement (Roza, 2003) can ensure that new leaders will be able to improve student outcomes.

While research on contemporary leadership practices might be thin, work on leadership preparation points to at least a de facto agreement on school leader competencies and features based on commonalities within existing programs of study (Davis et al, 2005). These conclusions are supported by corresponding features defined by national standards for such programs (NPBEA, 2002). More importantly they seem to be bolstered by more prosaic (but ultimately invaluable) evaluation of programs and standards by practitioners themselves (Levine, 2005, pp. 28 - 30). Ultimately, I believe it to be deeply problematic that many of our best conceptions of leadership practice rely on an understanding of the features we are missing from school leader preparation programs. Not only is this troubling from a policy standpoint and disturbing as a member of the education research community, it is also problematic in that frameworks derived in whole or part from this work are suspect so long as they go untested.

At the same time, education research comes with its own set of fairly restrictive constraints, some of which are there to protect children and some of which are simply the product of schools being full of inquisitive people (students and teachers alike) who tend to respond to things like a researcher in the room or a change in the curriculum. As for working with school leaders directly, principals tend to be impossibly busy already as well as under an intense amount of pressure for their schools to succeed. While the use of artifacts can help to elicit phronetic narratives that effectively skirt some of these

obstructing factors (Halverson, 2004), they are less useful in helping to describe and understand the day-to-day practices that are so deeply tied to the interpersonal and managerial aspects of leadership. While research on instructional leadership that explores these practices does need to take place in schools as well, there are at least ways of orienting to some of the facets of practice we can expect to encounter in schools as those practices begin to change through the use of digital tools by looking to their counterparts in guilds.

1.4 Change and consequence: Why now is the time for learning from games

If we look past work on leadership preparation programs and the array of work on schools and leaders that helps to define practice on the ground, there are two additional issues that present themselves if we wish to account for how school leadership practices are changing, or might be likely to change in the coming years. First, the requirements for the effective leading of teaching and learning are being irrevocably changed by the slow but inevitable infusion of new technologies and media into the educational environment (Collins & Halverson, 2009), and the much more rapid infusion of digital media into both the lives of students (Jenkins et al, 2006), and the professional contexts for which schools prepare them (Friedman, 2005; 21stcenturyskills.org). Second, and not unrelated, much of the recent push to understand effective school leadership and leadership preparation has proceeded independently of ways in which the high stakes accountability movement fundamentally changes what it means to be an effective leader. While in previous decades finding the right people to hire and getting them into classrooms was considered to be the hallmark of good leadership, the new instructional leadership means breaking down the

well established model of teachers as independent experts and facilitating the development of a common language around student achievement (Elmore, 2000; Halverson et al, 2007).

While schools have often been critiqued by academics for their relative intransigence (Tyack & Cuban, 1997; Hess, 1998; Kliebard, 2002), the push for accountability coupled with new technologies has significantly impacted what the technical side of instructional leadership entails in the 21st century. While Richard Elmore put out the call for a new instructional leadership almost a decade ago to combat the loosely coupled nature of schools as institutions (Elmore, 2000), the actual changes that have taken place in schools since have responded to the pressures of accountability less in terms of the human side of educational institutions on which Elmore focused, and more in terms of the technical side through an iterative process of looking at achievement data, and then choosing and modifying curricula so as to improve student achievement (Halverson et al, 2007).

The work of Capper and Frattura has illustrated that goals of social justice are not necessarily entirely irreconcilable with current accountability. However, the combination of these mandates and these goals significantly augment the nature of the practices a school leader engages in. What might before have been a time consuming and locally politically charged, but ultimately trivial task, of creating a master schedule becomes an opportunity to consider whether or not a school is adequately integrated, and what needs to be done to get it there (Capper & Frattura, 2007).

In addition to fundamentally changing how we measure schools, the press for accountability has also become coupled with the use of new technologies to support the

bureaucratic and administrative elements of school systems. While certain tasks had

already been changed by technology prior to the implementation of the No Child Left

Behind act (e.g. email had already become the primary channel of communication

between school and district), others have been changed more recently by demands for

accountability such as data collection and reporting mechanisms. In both instances, these

demands have counterparts in other organizational contexts. The more generic nature of

these "management" tasks points towards the claim Reeves and Malone made in their

study of virtual leaders, that "good leaders are good leaders, regardless of the context."

(2007, pg. 10). While such a claim undoubtedly over reaches the contextual factors in

organizational leadership (Hallinger & Heck 1996), it certainly seems reasonable that

organizations inhabiting the same set of macro-cultural conditions (e.g, human, capitalist,

democratic, American, etc.) will have some common features that will require common

leadership capacities, if not specific practices. As common conditions change, the

adaptations to practice made within one domain can be useful for informing practice

within others.

1.5 Research Questions

Similarities between schools and guilds offer us intriguing opportunities to

enhance our general understanding of leadership in loosely coupled organizations, while

differences between the two contexts create the potential to improve our understanding of

leadership practices mediated through a digital environment. Towards these ends, I began

by framing my inquiry with the larger question:

- How can experiences of leadership in MMOs inform the theory and

practice of PK-16 leadership in an emerging digital context?

At the outset of my study I utilized the following three key questions to allow me to focus

more precisely on leadership in the game *World of Warcraft*:

- What are the practices of successful guild leaders in *World of Warcraft*?

- How can these practices serve to inform both current and future school leadership research and practice?

- In what ways does the division of "guild" and "raid" leadership in *World of Warcraft* help us to reconceptualize leadership studies in education?

Due to the inductive nature of this research some of my questions have undergone

moderate changes over the last two years. To begin with, I realized that the larger

framing question I had started with was actually narrower in some respects than the one I

needed for looking at learning and leadership in *World of Warcraft* meaningfully.

Consequently I have reframed this questions as follows:

- How can studying the work of guild leadership in an MMO inform the

   theory and practice of instructional leadership as the activities of teaching,

   learning, and leadership become increasingly digitally mediated?

While I retained the first key question through out this work, I felt the second began to

lend little additional power to the larger question. In addition, as I drilled down further I

found that the guild/raid division was not the only compelling principle for organizing

leadership in guilds as digitally mediated organizations. As a result this work has come to

focus on two additional key questions that help make the data I've collected and analyzed

more useful for continuing the conversation around guilds, schools, and the future of

instructional leadership. These questions are:

- What are the conditions that create leadership opportunities in a game like *World of Warcraft*, and what aspects of leadership do players who take these opportunities engage in?

- How does playing in a digitally (re)mediating environment like *World of Warcraft* structure organizations and effect leadership for learning?

I have used the term (re)mediating here and at various points throughout this work to draw attention to the mediating effect of interaction through a game like *WoW*. While human interactions are already mediated through Discourses (Gee, 1999) a digital playground like an MMO serves as a second media for interaction operating synergistically with existing Discourses, and helping to form new ones.

I have proceeded from these questions by defining the practices of guild leaders through frameworks familiar to education leadership studies. Based on an analysis of interviews with fourteen leaders from eleven different guilds, I then go on to consider what the actual tasks of leadership in game are. Following this we will take a look at implications of these practices for current and future educational leaders in both traditional and emerging learning environments, as well as how my study of these practices might help forward future research on instructional leadership.