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Studies of mobile gaming can yield insight into the effects of proliferating mobile technology at the levels of individual psychology, social organization, and the public sphere. Often dismissed as mere entertainment, mobile games, like the mobile phone itself, have continued to blur boundaries between work, leisure, family life, and public space. This chapter examines the phenomenon of mobile gaming (generally though not exclusively games played on mobile phones), from individual, stand-alone games to mass, location-based gaming. We also briefly inspect the burgeoning field of mobile video entertainment, including TV and "mobisodes." In interrogating both the demographic and qualitative aspects of mobile entertainment, this chapter proposes conceptual dimensions for understanding mobile gaming, including its consequences for social life.

Games are naturally occurring learning environments, which "provide a representational trace of both individual and collective activity and how it changes over time, enabling the researcher to unpack the bidirectional influence of self and society" (Steinkuehler and Williams 2006, p. 98). While play creates social order, it simultaneously is "a free activity standing quite consciously outside 'ordinary' life as being 'not serious,' but at the same time absorbing the player intensely and utterly" (Huizinga 1950 [1944], p. 13). Indeed, from some vantage points, play is even considered morally suspect: a pure waste of time, skill, and resources (Callois 1961 [1958], pp. 5–6). The pure essence of play, as freedom, spontaneity, and physiological and psychological intensity, provides a unique means of unpacking rituals of mobilization in the twenty-first century.

In early human history, and still today in hunter-gatherer societies, gaming involved necessarily mobile players and simulated hunting, fighting and survival skills. As societies became sedentary, so too did many gaming practices. However, in the twentieth century, Western society dramatically remobilized (via personal transportation and communication technologies), vastly expanding physical mobility, with concomitant sociological effects (Urry 2000, p. 53). While mobilization is the process by which mobile technologies are folding themselves into the fabric of our economies, social lives,
and communities, the resulting individual and collective displacements are themselves
new opportunities for creativity. In fact, the individualistic essence of the mobile
phone has already altered social interactions to be more gamelike, according to Kopomaa (2000), implicating the essential play elements of real-time action and surprise.

Mobile Gaming: Global Trends

In 1997, Nokia embedded the game Snake in their mobile phones (Castells et al. 2004),
thus launching the mobile gaming era. Geographically embedded multiplayer games,
such as Botfighters, were popular in Europe and Asia by 2001, but the mobile gaming
industry did not gain a foothold in the United States until Sprint launched the mobile
gaming community Game Lobby in late 2003. Despite initial enthusiasm from experts,
including predictions that 80 percent of all Western wireless users would play mobile
games (Kleijen, de Ruyter, and Wetzels 2003), the actual uptake has been far more
modest.

The Asia Pacific region (primarily Japan and South Korea) has led the world in mo-
bile gaming adoption, followed by Europe (particularly Scandinavia, the UK, and Italy)
(Chau 2006). Only 11 to 12 percent of U.S. wireless subscribers play games (Rainie and
Keeter 2006), versus 40 percent of those in Korea and even higher numbers in Japan
(M:Metrics 2006). Messaging services only account for 30 percent of mobile revenue
in Japan and Korea, while they generally account for 70 to 80 percent of revenue in
Europe and 80 percent in North America (Sharma 2006). Although the cultural use of
the mobile phone as a communicative versus leisure device may be partially explained
by the availability or cost of technology, it is also strongly related to issues of lifestyle.
Moreau, Sanchez, and Niu (2004) attribute this phenomenon to the Japanese enthusi-
asm for arcade and console games, the Korean attachment to PC games, the successful
launch of mobile data networks in northern Asia, ample phone subsidization, and the
relatively unfragmented handset market in those countries. The reason gaming has
taken off in Asian countries, mGAIN (2003) believes, is that BREW, HTML, and Java
games enable a richer gaming experience compared to SMS and WAP games that work
in the GSM-network in Europe and the United States. This of course implies that Asian
gamers are looking for a mobile gaming experience that is more immersive and similar
to console gaming.

Cultural Variations in Gaming Lifestyles

Gender

Contrary to stereotypes and trends in console gaming, survey data from 2003 to the
present confirms that women are as likely to play mobile games as men (McAteer
2005; I-play 2005; M:Metrics 2006). However, these same sources note that women
are significantly less likely than men to download mobile games (nearly two to one), and males eighteen to thirty-four are the most active game downloaders (M:Metrics 2006). These data are explained in several ways. Women gamers may favor one game consistently, while men constantly look for something new (Ruff 2004). Or perhaps women prefer card, puzzle, and arcade games, which tend to be embedded on the mobile device, while men prefer more action-oriented games, which must be downloaded (McAteer 2005). However, we offer a third (nonorthogonal) possibility: as has happened with many other technology-use practices, there is simply an initial gender gap that will diminish over time.

Age
Although mobile gaming is primarily a youth-driven activity, it is slowly gaining widespread popularity. In a detailed examination, the 2006 Pew Internet and American Life survey found that mobile game use is directly related to age: of individuals with game-enabled mobiles, 47 percent of those under 30 play games, 21 percent of those 30–49, 17 percent of those 50–65, and only 8 percent of those over 65 (Rainie and Keeter 2006). However, when individuals without game-enabled mobiles were asked if they would like the capability, the results were inverted—only 9 percent of those under 30 replied favorably, versus 18 percent of those over 65, indicating that at least one quarter of the mobile gaming age discrepancy is explained by the fact that younger people are simply more likely to have game-enabled mobiles. In addition, the average age of the mobile gamer is older in Asia, ranging from 19 to 35, confirming mGAIN’s (2003) analysis that game playing has been stigmatized as child’s play in Europe and North America, while electronic games are part of the overarching media culture involving all ages in Asia.

Race and Ethnicity
When compared with typical U.S. wireless subscribers, mobile gamers are more likely to be Hispanic, black, or Asian (NPD Group 2005). The 2006 Pew survey found that 20 percent of white individuals with game-enabled mobiles play games, versus 29 percent of blacks and 40 percent of English-speaking Hispanics (Rainie and Keeter 2006). As with other leisure practices, these figures may be significantly related to patterns of urban life and pre-existing leisure activities.

Gaming Preferences
Casual arcade, puzzle, and card games such as Tetris and Bejeweled consistently top all demographic brackets in the United States, while action games, particularly multiplayer games, are more popular in Europe. However, the Swedish game producer It’s Alive encountered great resistance when it launched location-based Botfighters in Germany and Denmark, both countries with strong traditions of personal privacy that
were reluctant to embrace a game based on identifying the geographic locations of other physical players (de Souza e Silva 2006). Mobile users in Japan and South Korea are also the most active game downloaders—over twice as active as North Americans and Europeans (Menon et al. 2005; M:Metrics 2006). In addition, it must be noted that less than half of U.S. mobile subscribers have devices capable of playing complex games, and likely belong to the same group of young males who already invest in electronic gaming.

**Gaming Habits**

Mobile gaming has multiple foundations: prior gaming practices, mobile lifestyles, social attitudes toward gaming, and cultural perspectives on the mobile device. Consumers with prior gaming practice on other devices are twice as likely to play mobile games, notably handheld gamers and console gamers, and PC and Internet gamers to a lesser extent (NPD Group 2005). Mobile games seem to have initially followed the model of Internet or PC games, drawing large crowds of women and teens, and requiring an overall low investment in gaming equipment and time resources.

Mobile gamers are more likely to be those with more mobile lifestyles. They universally play games to kill brief periods of time or alleviate temporary boredom (Moore and Rutter 2004), with average gaming sessions around eleven minutes (NPD Group 2005). However, while Americans tend to make calls to fill in these free moments (Rainie and Keeter 2006), mobile gaming in Europe and Asia is linked to the greater use of hands-free public transportation (Geser 2004; mGAIN 2003). It is of little surprise, then, that individuals who rely heavily on their cell phones are twice as likely to play games as those with a landline as well (Rainie and Keeter 2006; NPD Group 2005).

Despite lesser overall frequency, Americans are more competitive mobile gamers than Europeans; they are twice as likely to play to beat previous high scores, and tend to play more often and for longer periods (1-play 2005). While a growing segment of American gamers is likely driving up these usage statistics, Japanese and Korean gamers of all ages place high, personal values in mobile gaming, viewing it as enjoyment and social activity (Fife et al. 2006; Kang, chapter 31 in this volume). In Asia, gaming may be viewed as a general, social lifestyle, whereas in Europe or the United States it is characteristic of a hardcore gaming sector, the very young, or people looking for distraction during occasional free time.

Finally, cultural views about the mobile device are also integral to understanding gaming practices. The majority of North American mobile users view their mobile as a device for work, communication, and voice telephony (Menon et al. 2005, p. 20). In contrast, the Japanese generally perceive mobiles as singular devices simultaneously enabling communication, entertainment, and leisure (Fife et al. 2006). Hence cultural, environmental explanations trump other interpretive frameworks.
In summary, usage data demonstrate that game playing is a widespread source of pleasure across many demographic categories, not the restricted domain of boys and young men as is typically represented in the media. Rather than being an extension of PC and console games, mobile gaming has its own ethos and attractions. Although Asian and European mobile gamers are more interested in multiplayer action games and gaming as leisure activity, Americans overwhelmingly see mobile gaming as a casual (though serious!) way to pass time.

**Mobile Gaming Typologies: New Social Modalities?**

There is evidence that mobile gaming is becoming a more social technology as the industry evolves. Although originally thought of as a personal technology (Kleijnen, de Ruyter, and Wetzes 2003), mobile gaming's popular developments revolved around simpler games that let gamers "chat" with each other, engage in tournaments, and post scores on community boards. Three main social modalities emerged through which people engage in mobile gaming.

**Hardcore Gamers**

Hardcore gamers are more likely to be young and male, have a console gaming background, see gaming as a leisure activity or hobby, prefer complex action and adventure games, download games, and be swayed by games with advanced graphical and design capabilities (Anderson 2002; Ruff 2004). They are isolate-achievers, playing games to challenge themselves and win.

**Casual Gamers**

Casual gamers, who have always composed the majority of the market, are more likely to be distributed along the age dimension and between the genders. They see mobile gaming as a way to pass time, and prefer easy-to-use, fun games (Anderson 2002; Chau 2006). For these users, games fall into the pattern of digital technologies that function to drive out the ennui of daily existence (Turkle 1995). However, this solitary play is only productive of culture in a limited way (Huizinga 1950 [1944], p. 47), and the key point of the mobility paradigm is that mobile people will have the opportunity to create new, unique experiences. Thus, it is unsurprising that social gaming is growing—fueled by converts from casual mobile gaming, console gaming, and PC gaming, who are all interested in the new communication opportunities afforded by mobile technology.

**Social Gamers**

This third and rather innovative group, the social gamers, composes roughly 40 percent of the current market (Cifaldi 2006). Social gamers are more likely to be women...
and to be interested in making connections, communicating, and being part of a community, both online and in physical space (Ruff 2004). Perhaps the strongest evidence of the collective use of mobile technologies and the construction of social networks is the development of multiplayer, location-based games in the mold of Bottfighters. While there have been some experiments in this genre of spontaneously collaborative, always-on, and massive multiplayer games, smaller situated gaming experiences are the norm for experimental pervasive game design (McGonigal 2005). These games often have a one-off deployment, and are designed for specific local communities. There are some successful geopositional amusements, which are an offshoot of treasure hunting. These often combine GPS (geopositioning location technology) with the search for trinkets. One leading game site, geocaching.com, claims as of October 2006 to have more than thirty thousand active members and more than three hundred thousand “geo-caches” (stashed trinkets) around the globe. These activities can sometimes cause public bemusement or even serious alarm (Vogel 2005). While a fun hobby, there seems to be only limited adoption of massive social-location gaming despite continuing, often-high visibility experiments (see McGonigal 2005 for a description of some of these).

To summarize, games, and now mobile games, allow people to pursue three main types of relationships with competitive activities: hardcore, casual, and social. Mobility allows users ascribing to any of the three gaming modalities to play games in new physical and emotional environments, and in the case of social gamers, introduces an abundance of new human material. As a result, through mobility, broad new vistas of opportunity for physical and social gaming interaction are created, and new, multiple nuances are possible as players interact with their environment in very different ways via games.

While populations of casual and hardcore gamers will never disappear, our subsequent interest lies with the expanding social gaming modality and the prospect of mobile gaming as a uniquely novel technology. The key attribute of mobile gaming is that it combines gaming engagements with the mobile interfaces dedicated to communication between players (such as SMS, text messaging, and mobile chat), as well as locating them in the intimate mobile device (Licoppe and Inada 2006). Multiplayer public activities may remain less popular in the United States than in Europe and Asia presumably due to time, technology, and lifestyle constraints. Despite this variation, ethnographic data from Europe and Asia are vital in understanding the potential consequences of these games for public space, individual psychology, and social life.

**Sociological Trends through Mobile Gaming**

Baber and Westmancott (2004) demonstrate that merely adding the variable of mobility to a multiplayer card game changes the nature of play and alters the social aspects
of gaming. Mobile gaming activities, therefore, have real implications for the mobile phone's impact on individual and social life. Perhaps, as people have different, pseudo-virtual, and often asynchronous competition with other players, more of the pleasure of being a public person is draining out of the public sphere. Or alternatively, public space itself is being transformed through innovative, proactive social practices. To assess these hypotheses, we present some of the ethnographic data on social, location-based mobile gaming, and then propose some sociological interpretations.

Case Studies of Mobile Gaming

**Moji in Japan** Licoppe and Inada (2006) found that Moji players often took longer detours, or aboveground transportation, to avoid pausing their game during work commutes or running errands. Additionally, couples played together, inventing new modes of gaming that let them specifically interact as a couple (such as spamming each other with SMS to distract each other from picking up virtual objects). Most importantly, mobile gaming transformed encounters with strangers into important, interesting events. Players actively acknowledged others in close proximity with text messages (versus the normal face-to-face polite ignoring, as often occurs between affiliated, but not friendly, individuals in public). Moji players also collaboratively communicated in this way to avoid face-to-face meetings, which presented opportunities for social power dynamics to dramatically alter the gaming relationship (such as an encounter between a young female player who avoids meeting an older male player in a subway car).

**Jindeo in Tokyo** While playing Jindeo, Licoppe and Guillot (2006) deduced that the screens of the mobile devices became a public space in which connected users were sometimes mutually aware of each other's movements. As for Licoppe and Inada (2006), texting played a vital role in the success of mobile gaming, as players commented directly on their positions and displacements, so as to construe reflexively their mobility as accountable to other players. In particular, there was an enormous interest in mediated encounters, which stimulated brief but intense text messaging. Again, mobility was demonstrated as inherently social in nature, requiring extensive interactional work by the gamers.

**Can You See Me Now, by Blast Theory, in Tokyo and Cardiff** One player reported that there were moments when the players can hear each other in real space, thus composing sensitive nuances in the virtual-physical relationship with other players. As one player described, "I had a definite heart-stopping moment when my concerns suddenly switched from desperately trying to escape, to desperately hoping that the runner [other player] chasing me had not been run over by a reversing truck (that's what it
sounded like had happened)" (Blast Theory 2006). As with Moji and Jindeo, the awareness of and concern for other players was inseparable from any goal-directed play.

**Botfighters, by It's Alive, in Sweden** For Sotamaa (2002), the gaming experience altered one's surroundings as much as one's surroundings configure the gaming experience. While mobile gaming overwrote new meanings onto public spaces, the emotional territories of a city, such as the "ghetto" or "rich area," impact the gaming experience located there. In addition, there has been one violent experience cited with the use of Botfighters. In 2001, a player vacationing in Sweden located and eliminated five nearby players, who then joined together and physically beat him in retaliation. Psychological identification is so intense in the games that when one Botfighter "kills" another, the latter player can resume play after "recharging" their robot's batteries online (Sotamaa 2002).

**Uncle Roy All Around You, by Blast Theory and the Mixed Reality Lab, in London** As this game paired online and mobile players together to move around a city and rescue strangers, Rowland et al. (2004) found that the mobile gamers placed great trust in the online gamers, and although the latter were free to hinder the mobile gamers, few did. Rowland et al. (2004) also found a crucial blurring of the distinction between game and nongame—the distorted view of the city superimposed by the gaming interface made the mobile players question their everyday relationship to it, prompting them to cross the usual boundaries of public behavior by getting into strangers' cars and other gaming actions.

The bulk of literature on mobile phones, gaming, and public space (including Ling, chapter 13 in this volume; Koskinen and Repo 2006) takes an interactionist approach to the phenomenon, drawing from Goffman's (1963, and other) notions of individual performance on the public stage, to state that focusing on personal business in a public space sends a message of disrespect for the social gathering. Yet, such highly normative approaches are insufficient for describing new, innovative media use. As an alternative, we offer an ethnomethodological approach, examining mobile gaming as exactly that: the commonsense practice of playing a game, or a way to kill time in public. For Garfinkel (1967), "common culture" is the "the socially sanctioned grounds of inference and action that people use in their everyday affairs and which they assume that others use in the same way" (p. 76). But this common culture is continually altered by every successive action, which contributes to determining this attitude of daily life. In other words, while mobile gamers may play on socially understood codes of nonbehavior (such as using earphones or disobeying pedestrian signs) to signal nonparticipation in public space, in doing so, they are creating new paths of meaningful activity that will come to alter public, social interactions. Rather
than be conditioned by available modes of interaction, our individual and collective reality constitutes the world (Mehan and Wood 1983 [1975], p. 189). Instead of reacting negatively to what we perceive as the mobile game player’s disregard for established social, public conventions, we need to understand mobile gamers as coproducers of the space that they move through, by examining a number of relevant sociological variables.

**Embodiment in Mobile Gaming**

Whereas video game players have always demonstrated physical reactions to the virtual events on their screens, mobile gaming takes this one step further: it is a fully embodied activity. The player’s emotions are a vital component of the mobile gaming experience, and his or her body is an “input device” into the game (Grüter, Mielke, and Oks 2005). Despite being split between two roles, embodied passerby and equipped player, mobile gaming action is hybridized between the gaming frame and the urban context, which compose a single mediated reality in which the gamer moves and lives (Licoppe and Guillot 2006). Because the mobile device is an incredibly intimate technology, far from being mind-numbing, social mobile gaming engages psychological awareness. As Hall (1966) points out, people’s feelings about being properly oriented in space run deep, and thus the mobile gaming experience constructs new relations between the players and their physical environments precisely because the gamers are experiencing these surroundings as embodied individuals.

**Gameplay and Intimate Life**

Mobile phones were originally hailed as a means to re-establish locality, or shield oneself from the alienation of urban life by escaping into the narrower realm of familiar relationships with close kin or friends (Gergen 2002). In contrast, mobile gaming replaces this private, intimate conversation with practices aimed at communicating with strangers and exploring the wider world. By adding a self-indulgent function to an already-intimate technology, mobile gaming further interferes with what Ling (2004) terms one’s “vital fields” (work, family, and friends).

**Gameplay and Public Space**

Embedded mobile games offer a “third space” beyond the workplace and home for informal sociability (Steinkuehler and Williams 2006), which transforms the mobile screen into a new type of public space of mediated co-presence (Loftland 1998). Yet rather than abandoning physical community, as occurred with the TV (Putnam 2000), the mobile gamer is located in the physical community and uses public space for informal social interaction. Although mobile phones tend to help their possessors transcend urban life by inscribing the game and their interactions over it, the paradigm of mobility means that people will nevertheless experience their surroundings in new,
poetic, and surprising ways (du Gay et al. 1997). Directed by the game, rather than their personal habits, players may bring about a revaluing of public space.

Gameplay and Community/Civic Life
Video and PC gaming (Tamborini et al. 2004), as well as the mobile phone (Katz 2006), have been accused of spurring antisocial behavior. So what happens if you combine them? Because of the issues of embodiment already discussed, and the ability to physically locate other players, competition in mobile games could have physically violent consequences, as illustrated with the Botfighters example. However, with this one exception, the ethnographic data demonstrates that mobile gamers are aware of the distinctions between relationships in the game and in real life.

In general, mobile gaming continues to be a relational tool of reinforcement for urban communities of interest, built around the unique notion of “play.” Opposed to the cold, impersonal picture of urban life painted by Lofland (1998) and Simmel (1971 [1903]), mobile gamers depend on cooperation for goal-attainment. As Huizinga (1950 [1944]) reminds us, play promotes the formation of social groupings that stress their difference from the common world (p. 49), and thus perhaps a more real danger is that mobile games make a breach between players and nonplayers. As Urry (2000) points out, “corporeal mobility is an important part of the process by which members of a country believe they share a common identity bound up with the particular territory the society lays claim to” (p. 49). The conflagrations of public and private, physical and virtual gaming space have possible impacts for nationalism and community building in terms of giving different people radically different experiences and usage patterns of public space.

We may ask at this point, is mobile gaming a social technology? The mobile, communicational, spontaneously playful, and physically intimate aspects of mobile gaming are central to its success and all imply one thing for the user: the game-device hybrid becomes a means of physical and emotional intimacy. Although social gamers insist that it is the communicative possibilities of the game that motivate their play, largely using SMS to communicate with fellow gamers, Geser (2004) points out that SMS allows for equilibrated “economic exchange,” versus phone calls, which are “social exchanges.” Furthermore, the user-centered structure of the mobile communication network means that entertainment is simply an optional practice integrated with the owner’s social practice as fits his or her lifestyle (Castells et al. 2004). So is there anything truly social about it? Despite opportunities for interaction via gaming and text messages, and even real-life meetings through location-based games, mobile gaming is still largely linked to online community activity. While there are some examples of creating informal connections with others (what Steinkuehler and Williams (2006) call “bridging” in MMOGs), the bulk of actual communicative practices are temporary and superficial.
The true play spirit is spontaneity and carelessness, marked by tension and uncertainty (Huizinga 1950 [1944], p. 197). Play is distinct from ordinary life (it is sacred versus biological), and contamination by the latter runs the risk of corrupting and destroying its very nature (Caillous 1961 [1958], p. 43). Mobile gaming, then, "throws the ball out of bounds" by conflating games and everyday life. Although the ubiquity of mobile gaming may enhance the key variable of spontaneity, the high degree of centralization found in most gaming environments eliminates some of the pure play quality, reducing play to low-maintenance social interaction or rule-following.

Mobile Entertainment and "Mobisodes"

Interest in the mobile phone as leisure device is being further explored through the development of mobile TV. Again, individuals in the Asia Pacific region are more than three times as likely as elsewhere to use such mobile media (LogicaCMG 2005). In the United States, at least, there appears to be very low use of and interest in video entertainment on mobile phones; only 2 percent of those with video-capable mobiles use the feature (14 percent without the feature would like it), a disposition inversely correlated with age (Rainie and Keeter 2006). However, a London British Telecom trial of mobile TV found that 73 percent of users were willing to pay for the service, and that the average usage was sixty-six minutes a week with a regular phone and three hours a week with a purpose-built phone (IEE Review 2006). Again, such variables as cultural activity, interest, and technological availability strongly influence mobile TV adoption.

Worldwide trials of mobile TV demonstrate that mobile TV does not perform a new or unique function in social life. In general, users watched TV to avoid boredom or endure waits (Repo et al. 2003). Entertainment analysts said that the 24 "mobisodes" trialed by the Fox network in 2005 were only successful because they were linked to a favorite TV show. Similarly, in Germany soap operas were the most popular programs for mobile TV by far (not much movement occurs, making the small-screen format less objectionable). While some users employed traditional viewing habits, such as younger users consuming full-length movies, others employed more inventive tactics such as positioning the mobiles on their desks at work or discreetly below the dashboard while driving.

It may be that some users become bored with the content of the videos and TV programs, and worry that the video sound may disturb other people in public areas (Repo et al. 2003; Koskinen and Repo 2006). Others are undeterred by such concerns, or even use video as a pacifier. For instance, one woman in the London British Telecom study used the mobile to quiet her child at the supermarket (IEE Review 2006). Public, spontaneous karaoke sessions were also noted as popular in a Finnish study (Koskinen and Repo 2006).

Overall, the results from these studies reinforce our earlier conclusions about mobile gaming: consumers remain concerned that entertainment services will interfere with
the mobile’s primary use as a tool for social interaction. Thus, it hardly appears as if TV episodes on mobile phones will do for home and public space what the TV did for the family and neighborhood, namely stunt them (Putnam 2000).

A Future for Cooperative Mobile Games?

Ultimately, mobile users appear not to take gaming as seriously as they take communication. Mobile gaming, even for social gamers, seems more about locating oneself in a social environment and less about actually forming relationships with other people sharing that environment. While the communicative function of mobile phones understandably leads people to explore social contact during their gaming experiences, ultimately, it is only a way to kill time for most gamers, and thus such communication, while value-laden, is not transformative.

Cooperative mobile gaming will continue to develop in Asia and Europe, although less than 5 percent of Americans are interested in multiplayer games (Cifaldi 2006). Although there are emerging social and hardcore gaming groups, issues of playability (small screen sizes), bandwidth, accessibility, desirable games, and high costs remain an impediment, especially for older users. In sum, it seems that mobile gaming will continue to develop along the lines of simple, local games with social capabilities.

This leads us to three conclusions: First, while perhaps relevant to the early adoption of complicated digital technologies, popular notions of “gendered technologies” are not highly relevant to the everyday consumption of readily usable technologies. Mobile games have more in common with easy-to-use devices like the TV remote control or microwave, on which people from all demographic groups became rapidly dependent, but for which there remain some variations by gender.

Second, surveys point to possible stratifications along ethnic and racial divides, and certainly gender is a significant factor in predicting usage patterns. In the United States at least, it appears that ethnic “minorities” tend to be heavier users of gaming technology, which is also the case for mobile phone usage in general. Little public debate has ensued concerning a digital divide in terms of mobile amusement, which in any case would appear to have a gap in the opposite direction than is generally discussed.

Third, mobile gaming technologies also do not seem to have the isolating effect pessimists had predicted (just as they had in the early days of the Internet). Socially inclined people like and use them.

New technologies are not adopted because they are new but because they make possible new uses and services (Castells et al. 2004; Moore and Rutter 2004). Connect-the-dots, travel bingo, and license-plate poker games have been part of long road trips for years, just as word search, crosswords, and now sudoku books are common on commutes. Similarly, there have been scavenger hunts and role-playing games for cen-
tures. Even mobile video episodes had their precursors in the nineteenth-century portable slide projectors known as Magic Lanterns. Perhaps what is more likely is that by embracing new digital technologies, children and adults alike can act mature while remaining immersed in a world of gameplay. People can engage in more game-playing while on the move, and, as with SMS, people will explore new ways of expressing themselves and interacting with each other, complementing physical communities (Katz and Rice 2002). Thus, despite some of the social and artistic experiments to the contrary, and the pleasure of pushing limits of technology, mobile games and video really do more of the same in terms of their social functionality. They have not yet produced profound social transformations, and are unlikely to do so anytime soon. They are, however, another element in the realm of the moral and normative order, giving opportunities for people to express themselves and attain status and solidarity in a “public realm,” even while the main moral economy continues to operate along the lines of families, friends, and colleagues.

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