

Video Gaming Parlours: The Emerging Field of Video Gaming in India

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Gagunjoat S. Chhina

School of Social Sciences

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Gagunjoat S. Chhina

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This thesis critically interrogates the role of local context in the adoption and interpretation of video technology and gaming practices in the little studied locale of India. Video gaming is a recent phenomenon in India which has been rapidly increasing in popularity, yet it has gained little academic attention in digital gaming research. The project seeks to understand the emergence of practices of consumption of video games in India from the point of view of Indians themselves through the exploration of how Indian video gamers situate, interpret and negotiate the practice of video game play.

In his book *Video Gamers* (2012), Gary Crawford makes a case for analysing game play as a practice, situated within everyday experiences and social networks. Crawford identifies two deficiencies in gaming studies: the dominance of a Western-centric viewpoint and the disregard for player context. This research addresses these shortcomings in two ways. First, through situating the field research in Chandigarh. Second, by employing a mixed methods qualitative approach - observations, interviews, focus groups, field notes, pictures and video recordings – to elicit the detail of the gamers' cultural context. Situating these practices within the broader social, historical, geographical and cultural milieu allows for the conceptualisation of contextual factors in terms of their influence on the adoption and interpretation of the global gaming practice in a local setting. These methods allow for the examination of, first, multiple culturally embedded factors and, second, the players' processes of sense making applied to video gaming. Each method makes the social world of the gamers visible in different ways.

Fieldwork predominantly took place in video gaming parlours. Investigating game players in the space of the video gaming parlour enabled a more honed understanding of how the practice of video gaming was 'glocalised' within particular social, geographical and cultural contexts. A smaller second study was conducted in Manchester, to collect data in a setting that is culturally different from India. This contrasting data provided greater sensitivity to cultural factors in India which might have otherwise been overlooked or which had been obscured.

The research draws theoretically upon Bourdieu's theories of social field, habitus, and capital, combining these with Goffman's notions of dramaturgy and framing, and Robertson's concept of glocalisation. These concepts provided a theoretical framework that enabled an interrogation of the data to reveal the sociocultural processes embedded in the gaming parlours, and the individual's creative engagements with video game products themselves. The methodological and theoretical framework, then, were complementary, offering both an experiential and contextual approach.

This study found that video gamers interpret and make sense of the practice of video gaming through their contextual situation, and that they will both consciously and unconsciously attempt to glocalise the practice of video gaming so that it becomes culturally more acceptable.

Declaration

No portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

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To my father, and his erudite words when I told him that I was doing a PhD:

What!?! You're doing a Ph.D? Don't be stupid! Only an idiot would do a Ph.D.!

Chapter 1. Video gaming in India: The Emergence and Social Construction

‘It is happening quickly, it is in the way it hooks people in and I see India is getting into gaming in a big way’ (Ankit, Indian video game player).

Introduction

Ankit did not grow up with video games. He has no childhood memories of owning a console, or even a computer. In the last five years, however, video gaming has become an important part of his life. Ankit is a typical example of video gamers in India, where video gaming has gained increasing popularity in the last decade (Mukherjee, 2015: 237). This thesis examines the emergence of video gaming in India with a particular focus on the role of the socio-cultural context of India. My aim is to understand the video gaming as a culturally situated practice in India. In order to extend video games analyses to non-Western environments, in which the enactment of everyday life is different for non-Western social actors compared to Western social actors who have been the focus of much of the video gaming scholarship.

My research is informed by, and seeks to extend, the discussion begun by Gary Crawford in *Video Gamers* (2012). Crawford argues for an analysis of game play that describes how video games are situated within everyday experiences and social networks. He maintains that video gaming is ‘not something that takes place in one specific location at one specific time’ (Crawford, DiGRA, 2011); it ‘is infused into everyday life’ (Crawford, 2012) and must therefore be studied as such. In his investigation of video gaming literature, Crawford claims that isolating games from other social practices is problematic for two reasons. First, it ignores the role played by the normative context in influencing player behaviour. Second, it erases the video gamer as a social actor and replaces him or her with a homogenous and notional Western subject. A research paradigm which ignores cultural diversity inevitably disregards the existence of non-Western individuals and marginalises their voices.

I expand upon Crawford’s scholarship through empirical research employing a mixed qualitative methods approach. I have chosen India as a locale in an attempt to address the two deficiencies in gaming studies raised by Crawford, namely the disregard for player context and the focus on a Western-centric viewpoint. Studying video gaming in India as a

practice that is culturally situated allows me to address both of these concerns. India offers an ideal setting in which to do this, not only because it is a non-Western culture that has hitherto gained little attention in digital gaming research (Shaw, 2013), but also because video gaming is a very recent phenomenon in India. This means that I explore video gaming in relation to Indian practices and the Indian subject, rather than assuming a notional Western subject. I have supplemented my Indian field work with a smaller second field research, conducted in Manchester, United Kingdom, to collect data in a setting that is culturally different from India. I use the Manchester data to distinguish the unique characteristics of video gaming as it emerges in India. I am concerned with understanding how practices of consuming video games have arisen in India and locating those practices within the broader social, historical and cultural context.

While the practice of video gaming has become increasingly pervasive in India (Fathima, 2015), both the activity and what it means to be a 'gamer' are shaped by the cultural context. I am concerned with the processes through which Indian actors negotiate video gaming practices within the broader cultural context of their lives. Therefore, the critical focus of this thesis settles on the specific questions of how the practice of video gaming in India has emerged, and how actors have negotiated the emerging practice within their greater cultural context and their own individual experiences, goals and history. In exploring these issues, I consider the relationship between the practice of video gaming and the various cultural factors that have led to its acceptance and the formation of video gaming as a social field in India. My purpose is to show how the foreign practice of video gaming has merged with Indian culture and how social actors necessarily negotiate an emerging field and its attendant practices within their greater cultural context.

Organisation of the Thesis

This chapter begins with an explanation of what motivated my study and sets out the research questions that have supported its organisation. I then outline the key arguments and themes that comprise chapters two to seven.

The key consideration in motivating my interest is to understand how Indian social actors contextually interpret and negotiate the practice of video game play. I am Indo-Canadian, and I have travelled extensively in India. I have played video games since I was a child. This inspired me to understand how Indians interpreted and understood video gaming. Video games are Western consumer products that circulate through the global economy.

As such, video gaming has become a pervasive cultural product of contemporary society, and it both models and shapes culture (Consalvo, 2006; Bogost, 2007; Higgins, 2008; Nakamura, 2009). Despite its prevalence little research has been conducted on the role of context and culture in players' experience. The academic literature on digital gaming is from a Western context with an implicit view that video gamers are a homogenous group. My goal is to demonstrate the nexus between a gamer's cultural context and the experience of play.

The convergence of the local and the global, where the Western video game meets the Indian gamer, provides the focal point of my research. I chose India as a field site in order to help fill a gap in video game research, which to date has mainly been conducted in Western countries. I selected Chandigarh for my research site because it has the highest per capita income in India and has aggressively pursued urbanisation and development of an IT industry (Saran, 2004). I chose Manchester as a Western comparative city to Chandigarh due to relevant similarities between the two cities, specifically a high concentration of students, cultural diversity, and the presence of modern technological infrastructure. Despite these similarities, Chandigarh and Manchester are culturally very different, and Manchester thus serves as a comparative Western fieldwork site that is culturally distinct from India.

In addition to Crawford, in Chapter 2, I situate my study in relation to the extant video gaming literature exploring how it has drawn upon psychological, cultural, literary and sociological research and theories. As Crawford mentions, much of this work has failed to contextualise digital gaming as a practice thereby ignoring cultural factors which undoubtedly impact the experience of video game play. Furthermore, overlooking the importance of cultural context has led to video game studies to regard gamers as a homogenous, Western entity. By doing so, the literature has neglected the cultural diversity of video gamers and the effect this diversity has on the practice of video gaming. I argue that the social theories of Pierre Bourdieu and Erving Goffman as well as literature on glocalisation are useful to help explore how video gaming emerged in India and how social actors have worked to construct the field and its associated practices within the broader cultural context.

Bourdieu's concept of the social field is particularly useful to my investigation. The field of video gaming has its own set of practices, rules and values and is not isolated from the broader culture. How Bourdieu links his concepts of capital and habitus to that of the social

field provides a distinctive and powerful framework through which to understand the practice of video gaming. In this thesis I use Bourdieu's concepts to understand how social actors are exposed to video gaming practices differently depending upon how the field of video gaming is situated in relation to other factors, for example urban or rural life in India. I adopt the notions of habitus and capital to investigate how certain social actors work to make video gaming a successful enterprise in India, and how certain social actors are discouraged or encouraged to frequent video gaming parlours. Bourdieu's theory, whilst useful, does tend to emphasise routine practices, which is not entirely appropriate to the study of video gaming in India since it continues to emerge.

To further aid my analysis, therefore, I explore how Goffman's micro-sociology of interaction explains how consciousness permits social actor creativity in the creation of the practice of video gaming. This helps to provide a deeper understanding of their activities within specific cultural contexts in India, and in my comparison case of Manchester, England. Goffman (1974: 2) argues that meaning only arises in processes of interaction, interpretation and contextualisation and these processes create social frameworks that help social actors to navigate their way through life. His notion of dramaturgy emphasises how social actors express themselves to others and organise social life through everyday interaction. Using Goffman's theory of dramaturgy, I examine how social actors make more or less conscious decisions to use roles, props and so on, when establishing a new practice. Through performance social actors learn which kinds of behaviours are acceptable within a given social situation. Dramaturgy is valuable to my research as it elucidates how actors connect their behaviour to the context of the development of the video gaming field. Goffman's concept of frame analysis also provides a useful tool for conceptualising how video gamers understand video gaming and video games within India. A frame is a shared definition used by participants in an activity which correspond to how a practice is organised (Gitlin, 1980: 6). I use the idea of frame analysis to explore how video game players make video games relevant to the local cultural situation. Through the examination of the social field, practices, capital, framing and dramaturgy I demonstrate that these two thinkers are more useful together to understanding how video games emerge and are contextualised by social actors to suit local tastes.

Glocalisation is also important to my investigation of video gaming in India. When a global force meets a local culture, the global force may conflict with the local culture and in order to be accepted by local social actors a process of negotiation must occur. Glocalisation conceives global social processes as being reciprocally integrated through

social, political and economic changes that reshape contemporary societies (Giddens, 1990; Scholte, 1993; Castells, 1996). It is an ongoing and active process that involves the interaction and an amalgamation of both global and local economic and socio-cultural characteristics of society serving to widen and hasten global connectedness across cultures (Sucháček, 2011: 322).

The concept of 'glocal' (Roberstson, 1995) facilitates an understanding of the way that an extra-cultural product intersects with a local culture. The concept of glocalisation is essential for understanding how Indian video game players make contextual sense of their encounters with digital games. For a product or practice to be glocalised, either the product or practice itself must be changed to suit local tastes or the actors themselves re-interpret their behaviour in a manner consistent with pre-existing cultural contexts. Thus, the broader social milieu has a profound effect on how Indian video game players engage with video gaming.

In the context of game design and production, global video game producers have not yet successfully glocalised video games by adapting them to local context (though this has happened at a local level by individuals who modify existing games, as explained in Chapter 6). Thus the process of glocalisation of video gaming in India has so far mainly occurred through the act of game play whereby new social field has been integrated into the local context. Glocalisation occurs in two ways at the level of the individual: how Indian gamers interpret Western video games through their cultural lens, and how Indian gamers adopt the practice of video gaming. Video games are globalised products, developed in the West and East Asia, containing almost exclusively Western characteristics and themes. Despite their genealogy, video games are primarily a culturally situated practice.

In Chapter 3 I describe the methodological approach of this study, the two fieldwork sites, and the methods of data collection and analysis. This research has been shaped by my own personal, cultural, political and sociological concerns while recognising that the primary aim of any study must be to address an intellectual concern (Mason, 1996: 18 – 21). My research therefore addresses gaps in video gaming scholarship through the exploration of digital gaming within a non-Western cultural context. By locating video gaming as an everyday practice I focus on the subjective importance of game playing to individuals in India. I am examining a cultural practice that has only recently become established in the Indian context, a practice which has its own rules and values which are not immune to

influence from the wider culture. Furthermore, I show how video games become meaningful to people in this context.

I sought to answer three key questions through my study of the emergence of the practice of video gaming in Indian:

1. How has video game play emerged in India?
2. How do actors work to bring about video game play in India?
3. How is the practice of video game play adopted and situated in the greater context of the players' social world?

The research questions above are arose from the themes and issues set out in the literature and theory in Chapter 2. These questions serve as a starting point to explore how video gaming entered the socio-cultural tapestry of India, how through macro and micro factors video gaming was constituted as a practice, and how Indian actors have been able to glocalise the practice of digital game play so that it makes sense to them within the local situation.

My research draws upon various qualitative methods including interviews, focus groups, participant and non-participant observations and photographs. My main field research was conducted in Chandigarh, India over a period of four months from January to May in 2013. I had hypothesised that Chandigarh, as a modern city, would offer an opportunity to explore the adaption of video gaming in a particular local setting. Using a mixed method qualitative approach I observed the behaviour of the game players in terms of the usage of the video gaming parlours and the interaction between all social actors who entered these physical video gaming spaces. Additionally, I drew upon a second site of field research, namely Manchester in the United Kingdom. The fieldwork in Manchester was conducted in 2013 after the completion of my Indian field work with the aim of collecting data in a setting that was culturally different from India. I have used the data gathered in Manchester to help shed light on the particularities of the practice of video gaming as it is emerging in India. Furthermore, the comparative field work in Manchester helped to substantiate my claims about the culturally-specific practices that I identified in my fieldwork.

The comparative method provides greater depth about the processes of society (Roberts, 1978; Macridis & Burg, 1991) through the comparison of two or more societies with the objective of uncovering social processes which may otherwise be hidden without the data from the additional site (Beck, Bryman & Liao, 2004: 153). I chose to compare video gaming as a contemporary practice by interviewing video gamers in India and the United

Kingdom about their video gaming habits and the meanings they attached to video gaming, focusing on the differences between them. These differences, as will become clear in the subsequent chapters, can be explained with the help of differences in historical and contemporary cultural context. My study, therefore, also helps fill the gap in knowledge about the history of video gaming in India.

A significant strength of the comparative method is that it can help scholars to resist adopting a normative perspective rooted in the West. Such a perspective leads to treating society as a standardised cultural model, and in video game studies, may cause game studies scholars to overlook the importance that everyday cultural factors play in situating video game play. A comparative method concentrates upon comparisons of social and cultural differences and the cultural specificity of processes placing significant emphasis on contextualisation; consequently serving to provide a better understanding of different societies, their social structures and institutions (Hantrais, 1996). Therefore, having a comparison allows for developing a more complete picture of the social processes and facilitates the identification of the elements that are unique to each of the contexts in question. In other words, cross national comparisons can provide a robust analytic framework for examining and explaining phenomena as culturally situated, while also identifying 'global' characteristics that are shared across contexts. The comparative data set helped to explicate aspects of the practice of video gaming in India that would have otherwise remained obscured. For my purposes, the Manchester study assisted in distinguishing both cultural specificities and global similarities. As such, the secondary research was necessary to help shed light on what I will examine as globalised elements of Indian video gaming practice.

Contrasting two societies that differ from each other as much as India and the United Kingdom can be problematic. Attempting to situate the Indian video gamer within his or her culture may have led to a large amount of data that did not help in understanding how cultural factors affect the practice of video gaming. To direct my research I selected a focal point for my research, namely the Indian video gaming parlour. The fieldwork in Manchester mirrored that conducted in Chandigarh in that it was concentrated in a single public video gaming venue and social actors who frequented these spaces. The Manchester fieldwork site was smaller and more focussed than the Chandigarh site since it was based upon the conceptual work already established in Chandigarh. This comparative data helped to explicate aspects of the practice of video gaming in India that would have otherwise remained obscured. For my purposes, the Manchester study assisted in

distinguishing cultural specificities and global similarities. As such, the secondary research was necessary to help shed light on what I will examine as glocalised elements of Indian video gaming practice.

In Chapter 4, the first empirical chapter of this thesis, I examine the history of video gaming in India, and I focus on how social actors initially encountered digital gaming, as I argue that attitudes towards video gaming are significantly shaped by first encounters. I argue that the personal and local history of video gaming have created a unique cultural space that effects the emergence of video game play in particular ways. I also examine how the contrasting economic and infrastructural conditions in India, as compared to the United Kingdom, meant video gaming emerged at different times and in different ways in these countries. In India, infrastructural and economic restrictions dictated that the computer hardware and software necessary for playing video games became widely available much later than in Western countries such as the United Kingdom. Thus, differences in how Indian and British gamers first encountered video gaming were largely shaped by contextual factors outside of their control.

As opportunities to engage in video gaming increased in India, a clear dichotomy developed between urban and rural areas. Opportunities to engage with the practice of video gaming differed greatly between cities and rural villages because of both cultural and infrastructural differences. I explore how the culture and infrastructure of Chandigarh allowed video gamers to have access to home based video game hardware or public video game machines in a similar manner to the West, though 20 years or so later.

The data from Manchester serve as a counterpoint, highlighting that first encounters with video games reveal something about cultural differences, but also assist in explaining the different ways in which video gaming is interpreted in the two countries. Glocalisation happens everywhere in differing ways when a practice becomes adopted and situated within the local cultural context. Chapter 4 helps illuminate how not only the timing of the entry of video gaming into a country but also the manner in which gamers first encounter video games are unique to each country, dependent on broader socio-cultural and economic conditions.

Bourdieu's concepts of field and habitus theoretically underpin my discussion in Chapter 4. These concepts help to explain how social actors in India migrate between fields and the means by which capital is imported into emerging fields and the field's relation to similar

fields. Goffman aids in my analysis through his theory of cultural frames which emphasises how actors make sense of the world around them. When a new practice enters a culture social actors must necessarily frame the practice in order to make sense of it. I argue that social actors understand the emerging practice through socially positioning it to other existing and more traditional practices. In Manchester, given the already established field of video gaming, how actors socially position the practice of video gaming is different than in India. However, even established fields do not stand still but rather constantly undergo changes, as is visible in the United Kingdom in how the experience of video gaming has changed over the course of players' lives.

In Chapter 5, shifting my focus from my consideration in Chapter 4 of the factors at the macro level that influenced the emergence of video gaming as a field, I concentrate on the physical spaces where video games are played. I am interested in how video gaming is culturally glocalised in gaming parlours in India and the United Kingdom. I examine the ways in which video game parlour owners and gamers are glocalising the practice of video gaming in India and the United Kingdom. The comparison between Manchester and Chandigarh illustrates that even though the physical spaces of the video gaming parlours share similarities, they are glocalised for the local tastes and conventions. This comparison reinforces Crawford's (2012) assertion that focusing on cultural context is important if we wish to understand the practice of playing video games and hence also the social field of video gaming.

The main issue that I am concerned with is the construction of the physical space of video gaming parlours and the ways in which the novel field of video gaming is being shaped into a culturally contextualised practice. Bourdieu's theories of habitus and the social field coupled with Goffman's dramaturgy provide the theoretical underpinnings for Chapter 5. I demonstrate that as public video gaming spaces become commonplace in India they become part of the everyday cultural context. Due to the newness of video gaming in India, I have been able to observe this transformation taking shape, partly through the ways that gamers are trying to situate the practices within their lives. In contrast, video gaming is already established in Manchester, and public video gaming venues are much less common. However, regardless of this difference, I show that in both cases video game parlour owners and gamers must position the practice of video gaming within the unique cultural context of Chandigarh or Manchester. The impossibility of separating the practice from the culture requires that the owners of the gaming parlours situate the public gaming

venues in a way that suits the tastes of the local culture. In both cities, the physical gaming spaces are glocalised differently.

Video game parlour owners, who possess high amounts of cultural and economic capital, use various strategies to situate the practice so that it attracts more customers. In the case of India, I am also concerned with detailing some of the ways in which these key actors with cultural and economic capital, that is, the video game parlour owners (whom I refer to as entrepreneurial actors), have sought to encourage potential customers to enter the field of video gaming by linking video gaming practices to more established practices such as consumption and the celebration of birthday parties in the case of India and the use of the public gaming spaces as gaming bars in Manchester. If the entrepreneurial actors are successful in this, social actors then adopt the new practice of video gaming, and when enough of them do so, they collectively contribute to the establishment of the field of video gaming.

When gamers enter the space of video game parlours, they use their existing habitus to make sense of the physical space and the practices that take place there. My research indicates that, in India, because the emerging field of video game play does not possess an established field-specific habitus how gamers use these physical spaces is uncertain despite the entrepreneurial actor's efforts to control the activity. Regardless of entrepreneurial actors' attempt to facilitate the formation a field-specific habitus through the use of dramaturgical props to mould a particular type of behaviour within the video gaming spaces, gamers whose habitus 'fits' the space may reconfigure the entrepreneurial actor's desired practice by reframing it. Entrepreneurial actors were central to helping cobble together practices and props to help social actors develop a feel for the space of the video gaming parlour. As such, an emerging field is not shaped by any single actor. Instead, an emerging field is constituted by a variety of actors who adopt the new practice over time.

In this way, even though the entrepreneurial actor has a significant influence on the habitus of the gaming parlour, no single social actor is responsible for how the emerging practice is shaped. I am interested in the social actors' interpretation of the practice of video gaming, how actors play video games, how video gaming parlours comes into being and, finally, the degree to which gamers are able to influence what goes on in these physical spaces. Because of processes of glocalisation, the Western field of video gaming is transformed in India, meaning that the field-specific habitus that is to be found in Western countries is not

appropriate for India. I argue that the practice of video gaming is thus in the process of being formed as is the appropriate 'feel for the game' (Bourdieu & Coleman, 1991).

My fieldwork from India serves as an example of video gaming as an emerging field while the data from United Kingdom provides a contrast of video gaming in an established field. The comparatively longer history of video gaming in the United Kingdom means that social actors who enter the physical gaming spaces are familiar with a specific organisation of space and behaviours within it and their expectations reflect this similarity. Thus the ability of the British social actors to creatively shape the practices within the physical spaces were much more constrained by that established habitus. But in India, the field is still being established, which allows entrepreneurial actors and gamers greater capacity to shape the practices and physical space.

Chapter 6 shifts the focus to the video games themselves, exploring how actors make sense of video games as part of their existing culture. In this chapter, I make use of Goffman's concept of framing to explore the implications of glocalisation for how digital games are received by Indian actors. Theoretically, Goffman's frames are the result of unconscious socially embedded norms and of conscious agency. Actors may alter their behaviour or reconfigure an object so that it better fits their culturally specific tastes. I show that while video games might seem to be part of the global technological infrastructure and culture industry, gaming is differently positioned in unique contexts and this positioning limits and facilitates, enabling diverse ways in which social actors glocalise their practices.

As video games travel from Western video game producers to specific locations in non-Western markets they may not appeal to consumers because they do not fit culturally-specific frames. This, I argue, can lead to the rejection of certain video games or to actors seeking to adapt games to fit within culturally-specific frames. Genres of video games that social actors cannot make sense of are rejected. In Chandigarh, the theme of science fiction is not culturally compatible and it makes little sense to the people I interviewed. I argue that the subsequent rejection of games based on science fiction theme by the Indian research participants is unconscious. They reject such video games because of an incompatibility between the game and their cultural frame. Contemporary war based video games, such as Call of Duty, were very popular amongst the Indian research participants because they can make sense of these games as 'realistic'. In addition war games fit a cultural frame that places great value upon the military. If rejection of certain themes were to happen with all games that are incompatible with the culture, a wholesale rejection of

the field of video gaming would result. Therefore, for video gaming to exist as a field, Indian actors must adapt games to culturally-specific frames.

My examination then is directed towards how players interpret video games in order to make sense of them. This sense-making occurs in two ways. First, actors can 'read' a video game in a way which locates the video game within their culture, so that it fits within culturally-specific frames that are already present. Based on my comparative data I show that different video games are popular in Kyoto Lounge in Manchester because actors use different cultural frames to make sense of the act of game play. In this way, video games are glocalised as a result of how players interpret them within pre-existing cultural frames. Second, social actors can actively modify the video game's content so that it better represents features of the local culture. This practice is called 'modding' whereby Western games are consciously and creatively adapted to provide a deeper association and experience between the local actor, the game, and the field of video gaming. I conclude that modded video games are framed in such a way as to provide greater cultural compatibility for the local gamer. Whereas the few domestically produced games that exist tend to be of relatively poor production quality, modded video games allow for the high production value of Western games with an appropriate cultural framing. In both of these instances of glocalisation (i.e. interpretation and modding) actors must situate the emerging practice within their cultural context so that it makes sense in their lives whether this is done through interpretation or actively modding the video game itself. Comparatively, modding, although it does take place in the United Kingdom, is must less important there because Western video games already fit the cultural frames that British gamers use to make sense of the games. In other words, a well-made game can be framed in a culturally specific way, thus making it more accessible and relevant to Indian gamers. In both these instances of glocalisation, actors must situate the emerging practice within their cultural context so that it makes sense in their lives whether this is done through interpretation or actively modding the video game itself. Comparatively, modding, although it does take place in the United Kingdom, is must less important there because Western video games already fit the cultural frames that British gamers use to make sense of the games.

The concluding Chapter 7 seeks to address the concerns articulated by Gary Crawford's (2012) book *Video Gamers* by summarising the aims and findings of the thesis. Through the theoretical conceptualisation of Bourdieu, Goffman and the theory of glocalisation I argue that video gaming is glocalised by means of contextualised socio-economic factors in Chapter 4, the creation of physical spaces in Chapter 5, and how players interpret and

make sense of the practice of video gaming in Chapter 6. I argue that video gaming is an emerging field in India which is gradually being glocalised through the cultural situating of the practice by social actors. Conversely, I highlight that the process of glocalisation also occurs in the West, and drawing upon my conclusions based upon my Manchester fieldwork, I emphasise that practices are inevitably linked to the cultural context in which they reside. Bourdieu's model of social practice allows for a complex understanding of how social actors use and relate to the field of video gaming in correspondence to their social capital and habitus, while Goffman's micro-sociological approach provides nuance for investigating how video gamers employ various strategies to communicate and make sense of the practice of video gaming. In each case of my field research, Chandigarh and Manchester, social actors used communicative strategies to articulate how the practice of video gaming is glocalised within their lives, and therefore, attempted to socially position the practice so that it made sense in a culturally specific way in their lives.

Introduction

My research is a qualitative exploration of Indian video game players. Specifically, I am concerned with how video gamers negotiate their practices within the broader cultural context and the influence that this context has when gamers act and interpret the practice of video gaming. Video gaming has become ubiquitous mainstream entertainment; as such, it has significant academic importance (Schiesel, 2007). Digital games are arguably the most influential form of popular expression and entertainment in most contemporary Western societies (Jones, 2008). As a consequence, video games are now one of the most pervasive digital cultural products of contemporary society, both modelling and shaping culture (Consalvo, 2006; Bogost, 2007; Higgins, 2008; Nakamura, 2009). The central focus of my research is how the practice of video gaming is situated within the context and culture of the player's everyday life. The act of game play is always culturally located, and so it follows that the practice of video gaming is embedded into the wider cultural dimensions of the player's life. I am concerned with understanding how the practices of consuming digital games in India have arisen as a result of their location within these broader cultural dimensions.

In his 2012 book *Video Gamers*, Gary Crawford explores the sociality of video games and players' engagement with video games in their everyday lives. Crawford's central argument is that play is infused into everyday life, and therefore, should not be considered removed from the broader culture. My work expands on Crawford's premise through the use of empirical research to investigate the experience of the Indian video game player as a social actor who engages in a common practice. In investigating the experiential aspect of video game play, I am specifically focusing on how, in India, video gaming as a practice is adopted and situated by the player within his or her cultural context.

The lack of a domestic computer industry coupled with restrictions on international trade meant that computer technology, and hence the practice of video gaming, came later to India than to the West. Consequently, video gaming has been largely absent from as a significant practice until the 1990s, arriving two decades later than video gaming came to the West. Even though the practice of video gaming has been gaining in popularity in India (Nath, 2013) academic literature of video gaming is scarce (Mukherjee, 2015; Shaw,

2013). This thesis constitutes one of the few studies focused specifically on video games in India.

Gamers inevitably contextually situate the practice of video gaming within their lives through already existing cultural and social structures. How physical spaces are constructed and interpreted influence how social actors both utilise these spaces and contextualise the practices that take place within these physical spaces. In order to function, all cultures must have some notion of the common space constituting the concept of the public and the private spaces (Kaviraj, 1997). Research studies have understood that public space is a reflection of the cultural values and practices (Arefi & Meyers, 2003). For example, video games played at home take place in a private space whereas LAN play is social in that it depends on the presence of other players (Swalwell, 2003). The different uses of public and private spaces, and the capital associated with them, illustrate the differences in cultural meaning (Hayden, 1995: 35). My field work helps to illustrate how the practice of video gaming is glocalised differently within the two cultural settings of Chandigarh and Manchester.

In this chapter I begin by examining how scholars of video gaming define video games as an entertainment medium. Due to their increasing cultural importance, many researchers have interrogated video games, and there exists a lively debate over how the medium should be approached academically. Scholars have exerted a great deal of effort in their attempts to define digital games and to position these games historically in relation to text, media, play, literature, drama, and other categories (Linderoth, 2013: 1). Some of the most significant discussions surround the ludology versus narratology debates, in which scholars question whether video games should be characterised as rules or texts (e.g Aarseth, 1997; Crawford, 2012; Ekelinsen, 1999; Frasca, 2003; Juul, 2005; Pearce, 2005; Murray, 2005). Fundamentally, I claim that the academic fixation on categorising video games within this debate has led scholars to neglect video gaming as part of the broader culture, and as a consequence, to segregate the practice of video gaming from the broader cultural context in which it resides. As a result of this, I contend that most academic video gaming research has tended to detach the practice from the player, leading researchers to overlook why and how actors play video games in the first instance. Ignoring the cultural context has also led video game studies to the questionable position of treating gamers and the culture of gaming as a homogenous Western entity, and, thereby, overlooking cultural diversity. It follows that a method of analysis that disregards cultural specificity also ignores the voices of non-Western individuals, marginalising those voices in turn.

Next, I discuss two common approaches in digital game studies: the psychological model and the cultural studies model. Whilst the vast majority of psychological research in video gaming has focused on the potential negative impacts of the video game on the player, such as aggression, addiction, and depression (e.g. Anderson et al., 2010; Anderson & Dil, 2000; Ferguson, 2013; Lemola et al., 2011), I argue that the psychological framework is insufficient because, in its focus on the video game's effects on the gamer, it ignores the wider cultural context in which video gaming takes place. As an alternative, influenced by cultural studies, I adopt a sociological approach focused on practices and everyday life.

I partially employ the cultural studies approach, which pays attention to actors and how they conduct and construct their everyday lives. Although the cultural studies approach is more productive for my analysis, due to its focus on the broader cultural context and on societal conflict, struggle and process (Carey, 1997: 272), cultural studies is criticised for conflicts over definitions, methods, theories and the fundamental goals of the discipline (Shaw, 2010). Consequently, the problem facing cultural studies is one of a theoretical paradigm, where cultural studies has become an umbrella term for many different approaches, leading to conflicts over how to define concepts, which methods and theoretical approaches to use (Katz, 2000), when studying video games, as well as over the fundamental goals of the discipline.

Next, I briefly examine theories of globalisation and glocalisation. If one viewed my material through the lens of globalisation, one would concentrate on the expanding and integrating global forces, and one would discuss how the homogenising forces of video gaming are brought into the local context of India. However, I believe that globalisation is insufficient as an analytical lens for the examination of video game play in India because it underestimates the importance of the local context. For my research, the notion of glocalisation is better, since unlike globalisation, which considers the local as simply amalgamated into the larger global culture, glocalisation recognises that it is often the case that the global and the local coalesce in a process of adaptation where the global practice is adapted to the local culture's needs, tastes, and social structures. Through the theories of Bourdieu and Goffman, I examine the convergence of the global and the local in India by situating video gaming as a cultural practice and examining the implications for how video gaming is organised in everyday life. I argue that Bourdieu's concepts of field, capital, and habitus facilitate a robust understanding of practice, providing a schema for the various elements that are adopted when social actors appropriate global practices in a local context. However, Bourdieu's conceptual model of practice fails to fully capture the importance of

the individual actor's consciousness, which is necessary when examining the glocalisation of a new practice. Here, Goffman's theories of dramaturgy and framing are useful in accentuating the dynamics of actor interaction. I argue that Goffman provides a robust conceptual model for theorising how actors navigate both within and between social fields through the dramaturgy and frames.

In order to illuminate the role of cultural context on the social actor, I have used the United Kingdom as a comparison case. A contrast between the practice of video gaming in two different cultural settings serves as a way of highlighting the glocalised nature of video gaming in India, as well as the United Kingdom. This comparison allows me to reveal more clearly what is particular to video gaming in the Indian context.

Theoretical Debates: Narrative and Ludic Approaches

Video games, also called computer games or digital games, are essentially games which operate in virtual environments. Video games are a comparatively new cultural form, intimately linked to the appearance of computers, postdating literature, cinema, and television (Juul, 2005: 3). In recent years, due to the cultural and economic importance of video games, the field of digital game studies has proliferated (Squire, 2011). The debate in the literature surrounds the formal characteristics of video games as a distinct medium, and on the terminology that is appropriate for analysing video games. How we as academics classify a subject or practice has enormous consequences for how we go on to study that phenomenon. Therefore, it is not surprising that, from the very inception of video game scholarship, there has been a significant amount of debate about whether video games should be categorised as specific types of text or games (Linderoth, 2013). One division that has resulted from this debate is between researchers who either study video games as narrative or ludic.

The narratological view claims that digital games are best understood as forms of narrative (similar to novels and cinema) and part of a long tradition of textual representation designed to tell stories; it therefore follows that video games are best studied using narrative theories (Atkins, 2003; Calleja, 2007; Laurel, 1993; Murray, 1997). Narrative scholars argue that 'video games can be placed within a wider explanatory scheme that attends to narratives of all forms, including, most centrally, literature and film' (Tavinor, 2008: 3). Some narrative scholars propose that the evolution of video gaming is akin to a fully immersive interactive drama (Murray, 1997) or as part of a bigger complex of

transmedia storytelling, where integral elements of fiction are dispersed systematically across multiple delivery channels for the purpose of creating a unified and coordinated entertainment experience (Jenkins, 2003).

However, most contemporary researchers of game studies argue that narrative theory is no longer appropriate to manage the forms and formats of digital games, and call instead for a new paradigm of video game studies called 'ludology' (Juul, 2001; Frasca, 1999; Eskelinen, 2001), from the Latin *ludere*, meaning 'to play.' The central argument of ludic scholars is that video gamers engage with dynamic and interactive systems, while media audiences consume static texts. Ludologists argue that video games are made to be played by a player, and that narratology is insufficient to study video game play because narrative is not a necessary condition of video games. The most significant difference between a narrative and a game is that in the first case, the user is an observer who views and interprets 'what has happened,' whereas in the second case, the user is an 'involved player' who cares about 'what is going to happen' (Frasca, 2003: 224).

Ludologists argue that, because the actor is directly involved with decisions that impact the game, games are not texts, and thus cannot be understood through media studies methods such as textual or ideological analysis (Juul, 2000). Furthermore, unlike textual media such as novels and film, a video game does not require a narrative. Therefore, focusing on the rules of the game, ludologists define video games as 'rule-based formal systems with a variable and quantifiable outcome, where different outcomes are assigned different values, the player exerts effort in order to influence the outcome, the player feels attached to the outcome, and the consequences of the activity are optional and negotiable' (Juul, 2005: 6). Hence, the ludic position in game studies is that digital games should be understood as abstract rule-based systems.

How a scholar chooses to position digital games affects the consideration of relevant questions, appropriate methods, and to what degree the results of a given study contribute to the understanding of the practice (Linderoth, 2013: 1). These debates are relevant to my work because, as a researcher, how I stake my position in the narrative versus ludic debate profoundly affects my understanding and interpretation of the Indian gamer. Do I choose to see the Indian gamer as a viewer taking part in the game's narrative? Or do I view the gamer as a player participating in a rule-based activity such as football?

Not satisfied with either option, I postulate that the ludic-narrative debate oversimplifies the social complexities of the video gaming practice. Most scholars now admit that video games cannot be wholly reduced to either their play or storytelling elements (Mayra, 2008: 10). Some of the limitations in our current dominant game studies paradigm may be linked to how we perceive the notion of 'play'. Although he was writing about play in a general sense, Huizinga's (1955) seminal book *Homo Ludens* remains a standard reference in gaming literature (Crawford, 2003; Fullerton, Swain & Hoffman, 2004; Salen & Zimmerman, 2004). In *Homo Ludens*, Huizinga discusses the concept of the magic circle, which has become fundamental to ludic approaches to video gaming. In his description, games take place inside a magic circle, outside of which the game does not apply; the magic circle is treated by Huizinga as removed from the rest of the world. Play then becomes an activity carried out for its own sake, segregated from the rest of life, within the self-contained system of rules of the magic circle (Crawford, 2015: 2). Consequently, it is not surprising that scholars often treat games as being outside 'normal' life in that they are assigned a separate space and time (Caillois, 2007; Crawford, 2012). Thus, digital game researchers treat games as their own isolated system when investigating how meaning is created for players instead of culturally situating the practice of video game play (Salen & Zimmerman, 2012). Since video game play is embodied by the gamer, who as a social actor is culturally situated, it follows that game play should also be culturally positioned so that the practice can be better understood.

Separation of Games and Culture

Extracting play from the broader cultural context assumes a separation between games and the 'real' world, imbuing games with a sense of artificiality that is often seen as one of their defining elements. Calleja (2010) contends that the magic circle has been used as a way of separating play from everyday life and as a more formal separation of game-space from non-game-space. However, all practices need to be understood as part of a wider 'material culture' (Lury, 1996: 1). Because play exists in the world alongside multiple other practices, taking part in this practice will have consequences in other social arenas and vice versa. Crawford (2012) extends Lury's notion of a wider material culture, disagreeing with Juul's ludic arguments, and makes the claim that the consequences of 'real life' are not 'optional'. In other words, the practice of video gaming permeates into all arenas of social life, and vice versa, as the actors migrate in and from different social locations.

The lack of detailed and extensive analysis of the importance and location of video gaming in patterns of the everyday becomes even more striking when one considers that video gaming is becoming, for more and more people, a relatively ordinary and at times even mundane activity (Crawford, 2012: 148).

As a consequence of video gaming being a 'mundane' activity, the movement of actors into this social sphere is commonplace and, therefore, rooted in everyday life. By virtue of video games being commonplace, for the actors involved, video games are normative practices within society. As discussed in Chapter 5, even in India where video gaming is a relatively new practice, digital games are becoming commonplace, which allows actors to have common, and thus shared, video gaming experiences. Therefore the consequences of the practice of video game play cannot be isolated merely to a synthetic arena detached from the rest of the world. Yet strangely, theorists tend to study gamers as divorced from their socio-cultural context, as if the games are created and are used in a cultural vacuum. Moreover, the view that video games are ludic in the sense of 'separated from life' has led scholars to depict digital games as escapist because of an assumed common perception of play as the opposite of seriousness and work, which then sets video games apart from ordinary life.

Unfortunately, the preoccupation with the categorisation and definitions of the video game as an entity separate from ordinary life may have aided the current predicament of scholarship in which the player is removed from the game. I argue that such a view is problematic because play cannot be removed from culture. Instead, any study of video gaming should take into account other elements of the gamer's life and not treat video gaming as taking place in a vacuum. If walking in the park or travelling to another country is treated as reality, even if removed from daily routine, then surely games also exist in the real world. Moreover, digital games are no less part of real life than a book or a play or the act of writing this text because their interpretation is shaped by the reader's life experiences. Calleja (2010) argues that it is not possible for the game space to exclude the complexity of social and personal relations because the lived experience of the players invariably informs the experience of the game and vice versa. Similarly, Crawford argues that video game play should not be regarded as a practice outside of everyday life.

There is little doubt that not only is video gameplay influenced by its location with everyday social practices, but that video games' importance extends beyond the sight of the screen, helping to shape the individual's sense of identity, life narratives and networks (Crawford, 2012: 141).

Hence, the relationship of the video game player and the activity of play must be understood within other diverse social fields. As Crawford highlights, it is necessary for video games to be investigated in relation to the world in which the games are played because the practice of video game play is affected by gamers' cultural situatedness.

As social actors, video gamers are rooted in everyday life. Everyday life simply *is*, indisputably: the essential, taken-for-granted continuum of mundane activities that frames our forays (Felski, 1999: 15). The everyday consists of social rules and norms which are deeply embedded in our culture (Garfinkel, 1967). These rules are often so embedded that social actors are unaware of them, and through situating the practice within the everyday the norms can be uncovered and seen for how they affect behaviour. Consequently, everyday life for all actors is habitual, ordinary and mundane. Video gamers, like all social actors, conduct their everyday lives according to unwritten rules. Through the examination of common activities, the understanding of the largely taken-for-granted world becomes apparent (Gardiner, 2000: 2). The purpose of my study is to analyse how video gamers situate the practice of video gaming, through the adoption and interpretation of the practice, within their specific cultural context.

Similarly, psychological approaches to video games that aim to understand why people play games and the impact these have on them have not adequately addressed the broader cultural contexts within which video gaming takes place. Early psychological game studies focused largely on video games as artefacts removed from both the player and the effects of the game on the player. A significant body of research from a psychological perspective seeks to study the impact of games upon audiences (Anderson, Gentile, & Buckley, 2007). Early digital game research in psychology focused on the potential negative aspects of computer games, and a significant portion of the psychological literature has engaged in debates around violence in video gaming (Anderson & Bushman 2002; Deitz, 1998; Gentile & Anderson, 2006). There are two main perspectives: that video games increase aggression, and that digital games provide a release for repressed aggression (Kirriemuir & Mcfarlane, 2007). Both of these psychological perspectives have substantially relied upon traditional psychological methods, which suffer from issues similar to those discussed previously: they include no way to position the meaning and importance of video game play in the broader context of the player's life. Even studies that do not get involved in these debates over gaming addiction and violence, but focus on broader issues such as why video games are so appealing, still suffer from the problem that they are stuck on the individual. For example, Richard Wood (2003), in a work examining

the structural characteristics of video games, seeks to answer why games appeal to players. He states that one would assume that video games elicit powerful reactions in their players, such as fear, aggression, wonder, or joy. Video game designers try to stimulate these emotions by balancing a number of game components, such as character traits, game rewards, obstacles, game narratives, and competition with other human opponents and/or collaboration with other players in team games. Digital game researchers agree that games essentially provide their players with amusement, addiction, enjoyment, satisfaction, mastery, diversion, or other forms of entertainment (Messerly, 2004; Smed & Hakonen, 2003). Even though Wood's work offers important insights into why people play video games; however, it suffers from the same tunnel vision as other psychological studies in focusing exclusively on the single individual and his or her experience of video game play. By doing so, the psychological viewpoint is cut off from the cultural context and the social nature of everyday life.

Such perspectives have led to video game players being treated as homogenous subjects. Consequently, the psychological approach used to study video games has been studied primarily through aspects such as their structure and the mechanics represented in their graphical presentations, instead of the interaction between the player, the video game and the broader cultural context. The danger is that ignoring the cultural context of video games leads to a notion of a singular culture, and worse, an ethnocentric scholarship where players are conceived as homogenous subjects within a cultural context that is assumed to be uniform.

Most game scholars tend to treat video gamers as mere passive receivers, rather than active participants in the creation of meanings and social values. In fact, players are reflective; they think about their practices in more ways than solely attempting to figure out the most efficient ways of achieving their video game play goals (Sicart, 2009: 112). Because of their reflexivity, gamers must situate their activities within their already-established daily lives. As I will explain in further detail below, in this study I conceptualise video gaming in India in Bourdieusian terms as an emerging social field in which social actors with high degrees of cultural and economic capital operate so as to attract social actors from adjacent social fields. When looked at from this perspective, it becomes clear that gamers are required by their socially integrated circumstances to take into account how the process of video game play impacts on their lives. It follows that video gaming must be understood as a practice that takes place amongst other cultural processes, and that is both effected by and effects these practices.

The social world outside of video game play inevitably affects how the player interprets the world, and these experiences are always embedded within wider systems of social values and norms particular to that cultural context. As demonstrated by my research, the players' interpretation of the meaning of video gaming goes beyond merely the mechanics and narrative of the video game. The player is also a social actor in a culture outside the game, and this circumstance affects the interpretation of the game and the game culture (Sicart, 2009: 113). Video gamers are social actors who participate in multiple activities that take place in numerous social fields. Each field competes for the actor's time and priorities. Furthermore, video gaming is not just the act of playing a game; instead, the total activity encompasses a wide range of mental activities, including memories, dreams, conversations, identities, friendships, artwork and storytelling (Crawford, 2012: 143). The consequences of game play are manifested outside of the 'circle' of the game, and those lived experiences external to game play, again, inform the act of video gameplay. Video game-related social interactions extend beyond the screen, including discussions with family members and friends, and need to be understood as such (Crawford, 2012: 143; Crawford & Rutter, 2007); the act of play is located within interrelated social fields. As such, the experiences formed in one field travel with the actor when he or she resides in other fields, thereby influencing these fields as well.

I have discussed some of the literature surrounding the debates of ludic versus narrative game studies scholars. For ludic game scholars, the appeal of video games is posited to be their interactivity and their pervasiveness (Klimmt, 2003), while for narrative scholars, the context of storytelling is central (Atkins, 2003; Frasca, 2003; Murray, 1997). Both of these theoretical stances have limitations. Gradually, the ludic approach has been gaining popularity in video game studies; however, focusing on play elements alone can lead researchers to overlooking the fact that games are rich cultural texts encoded with symbolic ideological positions just as any other medium (Harpold, 2008; King & Krywinska, 2006; Leonard, 2006; Miller, 2006). I have argued thus far that the preoccupation with categorising and defining video games in the narrative vs ludic debate has led to the current state of video game studies, where the player has become removed from the study of video gaming. Ludic scholars have a tendency to isolate play from society, asserting that 'rules separate the game from the rest of the world by carving out an area where rules apply' (Juul, 2005: 164); this ignores the larger social context. I have suggested that these complexities of practices are lost in the debates between ludic and narratological approaches. Although digital game studies research has gradually moved

from the focus on the video game as an object and has begun to focus on the player, situating the player within space, current scholarship does not fully appreciate the importance of the player's cultural context.

For my research, the narrative aspect of the video game cannot be separated from its ludic component. My data clearly demonstrate that narratives are an integral part of the experience of game play. As discussed below in my empirical chapters, my research demonstrates that the narrative theme of the game is central to establishing a connection between the player to the game, a connection which must be understood in light of historical and cultural factors which are unique to India.

The Cultural Studies Approaches to Video Games

Video game researchers such as Gentile (2011) criticise psychological accounts of video gaming as too simplistic, while cultural studies scholars argue that video games must be examined as being rooted in the meaning and practices of everyday life. Cultural studies considers societies as complex formations, necessarily contradictory and always historically specific (Hall, 1980: 36).

[W]e can picture cultural studies as a distinctive approach to culture that results when we stop thinking about culture as particular valued texts and think about it as a broader process ... and each person's voice and reflections about culture are valuable. (Couldry, 2000: 2)

As Couldry (2000) says, a cultural studies approach shifts the investigative lens of the researcher away from the object or text and reorients it to the person (in the case of game studies, the player). Williams (1981: 64) describes cultural studies as 'the analysis of all forms of signification ... within the actual means and conditions of their production.' The importance of this approach is that not only do we as researchers focus on the people, but we recognise the means of cultural production through the consumption of objects. Therefore, society and culture do not comprise an absolute body of work, but rather, they include the continual selection and reinterpretation of practices and their corresponding systems of interest and values (Williams, 1963: 308). In this sense, actors generate meaning and ultimately globalise practices such as video game play by consuming and interpreting them.

Although cultural studies has the potential to situate media in a wider societal context through an 'expanding space for sustained, rigorous and self-reflexive empirical research

into the power-laden complexity of contemporary culture' (Couldry, 2000: 1), Adrienne Shaw (2010) argues that much of the research has hitherto viewed or portrayed game culture as largely removed from 'regular' culture. She concludes that in order to redress the balance, more critical cultural studies of video games are required. In this vein, Steinkuehler (2006) claims that games can be studied as cultural artefacts. Culture is a process (Carey, 1997: 272), it is not something that we merely consume; culture is what we make, for example in the practices of consumption (Storey, 2000: 59).

Shaw (2010) proposes that applying a critical cultural approach to the study of games would be very productive in the analysis of video game culture through emphasizing elements like knowledge acquisition, identity and preference. This would help to remove the distinction that has been drawn between video games and other forms of contemporary culture, which has led to a sense that video game culture is separate from mainstream culture. She makes a case for studying video gaming through framing it using descriptions of who plays, what they play, and how they play. These categories offer a starting point for research that centres around the player while avoiding the generic definitions of gamer identity which is common in game studies. Using this approach, the importance of video gaming is best understood by investigating how video games are consumed and what cultural meanings are attributed to them (Roig, Cornelio, Ardevol, Alsina & Pages, 2009; Malaby, 2007). By avoiding rigid categorisations, researchers can aim for a more complex understanding of gamers as cultural actors, and gaming as a cultural practice which is included as part of, rather than being distinct from, their everyday lives and mainstream culture.

Such an approach that focuses on cultural context is a favourable starting point for understanding the particularities of video gaming in India. It also addresses Crawford's (2012: 66) criticism that even though calls to consider the social context of video games have become increasingly vociferous, there is still a lack of contextual research within video gaming scholarship.

One cannot simply ignore the differences between the ludic and narrative approaches, because 'to claim there is no difference between games and narratives is to ignore essential qualities of both categories' (Aarseth, 1997). The ludic approach is correct in noting that players must interpret the rules. Similarly, the narrative approach is correct in arguing that the consumer's interpretation of a text is significant, as is the question of how he or she actively derives meaning from it. The meaning derived by the consumer cannot be solely

dependent on the actual media product (e.g. Iser, 1993) because the reader necessarily attributes his or her own experiences to extract meaning from the narrative. Thus, a method which adopts both ludic and narrative perspectives is needed to understand the wider context of the player in society. Crawford (2012) asserts that the interactive potential of video games is often overestimated, while audiences of media forms such as films and literature are too readily dismissed as passive. Toby Miller (2006) argues that media must be studied in terms of both active audiences and dominant ideology, while Tuchman (1994) states even texts must be understood by exploring their relationships to practice and process. Keeping these arguments in mind, my research considers gameplay as a fundamentally social phenomenon which occurs within or in relation to already established social fields such as work, school and other activities. Therefore, in order to understand the Indian gamer, my analytical lens takes in the wider social context. Thus the aim of my study is to address the following two questions: What does video gaming mean to Indian players in terms of their leisure and consumption? And how does the Indian video game player culturally situate the practice of video gaming?

I have discussed elements of cultural studies that treat culture and its manifestations as a broad process. I assert that a theoretical lens that inherently positions the gamer as a reflective, culturally embedded agent is central to understanding the process of gameplay. Arsenault & Perron (2009: 109) conceptualize gameplay as an activity in which the game and the gamer are two separate entities meeting at a junction point. My research explores this junction point. However, as the player is a culturally embedded actor, the central thread of my argument is based upon my examination of the situatedness of the player by considering the broader social, cultural and historical context outside of the game itself. Video gamers, as social actors, have the capacity to shape their world in various ways by reflecting upon their situation and the choices available to them. It follows that a theoretical grounding for video game studies must encompass many aspects of social life because the process of game play is directly affected by them, while the cultural context itself is in turn affected by the act of the consumption of the game. The concept of glocalisation emphasises the significance of the multiple influences inherent in the processes of consumption, and the roles and relationships that are embedded within these social processes.

As a theoretical approach, glocalisation highlights how local actors adapt and transform global practices through socio-cultural influences to suit particular local cultural tastes (Beyer, 2007; Robertson, 1992: 173–4). As I have explained above, by overlooking the

cultural context, video game studies has tended to depict video game players as culturally homogenous agents or even as ‘a-cultural’. Furthermore, because video game players are viewed as essentially the same, video game scholarship has centred on gaming as a homogeneous practice, irrespective of the cultural and geographic location of where video gaming takes place. This is problematic because the meanings attached to playing video games and to gamers vary between cultural contexts. Regardless of content (as most video games are produced by Western¹ companies), video gaming is ‘glocalised’ as an activity by the actors within the specific cultural context.

Some recent works, to some extent, have taken into account how players glocalise video gaming. Notably, Taylor (2012), in her work of competitive video gaming, discusses the uniqueness of South Korean video gaming. The video game StarCraft, which is produced by the California-based company Blizzard, is the most popular video game in South Korea. South Koreans have glocalised the American video game StarCraft in the form of competitive video game play. Taylor discusses how South Korea has become the ‘promised land’ for competitive computer game play, and is viewed by many as the future of e-sport— organised multiplayer competitive video game play, in which competitions are held between professional players. In South Korea, professional video game players are national heroes, making six-figure salaries, holding sponsorship deals with companies like Nike and Adidas, and drawing crowds of thousands in stadiums.

By situating the act of video game play, glocalisation contextualises the activity so that the influence of the local culture cannot be ignored. Paying attention to how local actors adopt video gaming as a global medium allows for understanding the players’ interpretation within a unique culturally bounded system. Fundamentally, participation in computer gaming is constructed through social and cultural formulations of identity, leisure, and the institutions and structures we inhabit (Taylor, 2008). Video game play is a process, and as a result video games are more than merely products; they are practices and sites of rich meaning-making (Steinkuehler, 2005: 20). Taylor’s work demonstrates the importance of understanding such processes of glocalisation in video game studies: the meanings Korean players attach to competitive video game play are distinctly different from those of players in other cultures, because no other country has embraced e-sports to nearly the same extent. In other words, the South Korean video game experience is, to a large extent, glocalised through its adoption and interpretation as an e-sport, a competitive practice

¹ Video gaming companies outside of the West exist, however, the majority of video game producers are now situated exist within Western countries (Byford, 2014).

which attracts an extremely large audience. As such, the practice of game play needs to be understood as a form of cultural production (Pearce, 2006), as a transformative practice where the actor contextualises the practice through its performance. Video game play, thus, is not merely an act of consuming culture, but also of producing culture through appropriating and transforming the practice through its consumption. When a video game is played, the glocal is realised as the global flow arrives at local markets, and is understood, accepted, embraced, or rejected in a particular way in that locale. Overlooking context means oversimplifying how global practices are locally adopted and interpreted. If researchers do not pay attention to how game play is uniquely glocalised, they risk reproducing a mono-cultural body of research which excludes non-Western cultures.

In this thesis I compare the practice of video game play in India and the United Kingdom as a way of highlighting how the process of glocalisation of video gaming is particularised in different cultural contexts. Though my main focus lies in understanding the emergence of video gaming as a cultural practice in India, I use the United Kingdom as a contrasting case to highlight the specificities of the Indian context.

Capital, Habitus and the Social Field of Video Gaming

Social Field

A theoretical lens for my research must incorporate elements of the relations between actors and culture. Exploring the influences of culture on the social actors' involvement in a practice may lead to a more nuanced understanding of how Indian actors glocalise video gaming. Social actors engage in practices that are embedded within their cultural context. Therefore, Indian video gamers must necessarily interpret their experiences through the use of particular cultural frameworks. A focus on their consumption choices helps illuminate how Indian video game players² act within an emerging field within the particular cultural context of India.

Bourdieu defines a field as

² I use the term 'Indian video game player' to refer to video game players who are both culturally and geographically located in India. It is important to note that it is not my intention to reduce the experience of Indian video game players to an implied culturally homogenous actor as this would risk 'reproducing a mono-cultural body of research'. However, I believe that actors, given their social context, have culturally specific socialising forces that act upon them. I will, therefore, also show differences in video game play within India.

a field of forces, whose necessity is imposed on agents who are engaged in it, and a field of struggles within which agents confront each other, with differentiated means and ends according to their position in the structure of the field of forces. (Reed-Danahay, 2004: 32).

According to Bourdieu, society is divided into spheres of action which he designates as 'fields'. Fields are relational social spaces with their own specific types of activities which take place within them. Social fields encompass the relations among the social actors in functionally differentiated parts of society (e.g. education, health, politics) (Anheier, 1995: 860). Social actors, institutions and groups are defined in relation to each other by the social position which they occupy within the structured space of the field (Grenfell & James, 1998: 16; Jenkins, 1992: 85). Since social actors are defined by their position in the hierarchically structured social field, the field becomes an arena of constant struggle as social actors compete for resources, or, to use Bourdieu's term, for capital (Friedland, 2009: 17; Jenkins, 1992: 85).

Video gaming have been conceptualised by many scholars as a social field (e.g. Consalvo, 2006; Crawford, 2012; Nichols, 2013; Walsh & Apperley, 2009) as it enables scholars to postulate how the circulation of discourses of games contributes to a determinate structuring of perceptions (Kirkpatrick, 2012). For my purposes, the social field facilitates an understanding of the behaviour and motivations of Indian video game players within the field through their competition for capital.

Economic, Cultural and Social Capital

For Bourdieu (1984), capital is any resource in a given field that enables an actor to appropriate and accumulate the specific rewards which arise from successful participation in the field. Capital takes one of three forms: economic, social and cultural. Economic capital is monetary and financial. It 'is immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalised in the forms of property rights' (Bourdieu, 1986: 242). Examples of institutionalised economic capital include property, stocks and bonds and other investments that can be converted directly into monetary funds.

Cultural capital refers to a collection of symbolic elements (such as credentials, skills, tastes) appropriated by actors. Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital is knowledge akin to intellectual form or sophistication (Jenkins, 1992: 53). Cultural capital is not as easily acquired as economic capital, because rather being directly obtained through monetary gain or investments, cultural capital is attained through familiarity with the dominant

culture in society³ (Sullivan, 2002: 145). It can be acquired, to a varying extent, depending on the period, the society, and the social class, in the absence of any deliberate inculcation, and therefore quite unconsciously (Bourdieu, 1986). Through the embodiment of cultural capital, social actors learn how to speak, and acquire the tastes, attitudes and bodily temperaments required to navigate effectively within a field. An actor participating in social life will obtain ideas and knowledge through their cultural capital which other social actors may not be privy to, and their tastes in material culture (e.g. cultural goods such as books, paintings, music tastes, vocabulary, etc.) are realised through their consumption of it. The acquisition of cultural capital provides competitive advantages for actors in the field. For example, Bourdieu contends that even though it is possible for a social actor to attain academic credentials, those individuals who possess greater cultural capital have an advantage because the education system assumes possession of cultural capital. Therefore, those students who possess cultural capital (such as a more sophisticated vocabulary, literary knowledge and tastes) will outperform other disadvantaged students who do not.

Finally, Bourdieu defines social capital as

the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – or in other words, to membership in a group. (Bourdieu, 1986: 243).

Put another way, social capital is the sum of resources that accrue to an individual or group through a network of valued relationships (Jenkins, 1992: 52; Gauntlett, 2011: 2).

Networks comprising of friends, families and colleagues can allow access to benefits such as status and recognition associated with cooperation and connectedness. By possessing high degrees of social capital, social actors may draw upon their networks in order to maintain advantages for themselves, their social class, or their children. So, for example, if an individual is friends with the mayor, he or she might be able to use their connection to gain an advantage for employment in city hall, or fast-track a building permit, thus using his or her social capital to gain economic capital. Bourdieu states that all three forms of capital may be equally important, and can be accumulated, exchanged and transferred in social arenas. Every social actor accumulates differing amounts of all three types of capital in the field, and is partially defined in the field by the expenditure of his or her capital.

³ An example of cultural capital in this context is the ability to understand and use ‘educated’ language.

My research demonstrates that the three forms of capital play an important role in developing an understanding of the social field of Indian video gaming. For example, high amounts of economic capital are necessary in order to take part in the practice of video gaming. The economic capital required to be a gamer in a relatively poor country like India is significantly greater than it is in a wealthier country such as the United Kingdom. It follows that the average video game player in India will possess more economic capital than the average person. Furthermore, infrastructure that is taken for granted in the West is often a luxury in non-Western environments. Access to infrastructure, such as stable electricity, varies across different locations, and influences the amount of economic capital required to play video games. Furthermore, cultural capital is required of the video gamers in order to have sufficient knowledge of, and to comprehend, not only the technology required for video game play, but also the existence of video games as a medium. I will return to the importance of cultural capital for understanding the relationship between the act of video game play and the Indian actor in subsequent chapters, but I mention it here to illustrate the utility of Bourdieu's theories of field and capital in my research. Now I will turn to Bourdieu's theory of habitus, and its centrality to his conceptualisation of practice.

Habitus

The manner in which actors employ their capital is determined by their habitus. Bourdieu defines habitus as:

A system of lasting, transposable dispositions which, integrating past experiences, functions at every moment as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations, and actions and makes possible the achievement of infinitely diversified tasks, thanks to analogical transfers of schemes permitting the solution of similarly shaped problems. (Bourdieu, 1977: 95).

Habitus describes a system of structure ingrained within an individual which characterises a set of acquired schemata, sensibilities, dispositions and tastes. Habitus is a complex result of embodying social structures that constitute dispositions that are reproduced through tastes, preferences, and actions which reproduce the embodiment of habitus. The embodiment of habitus is the product of the processes of socialisation, inculcation and training by which behaviour is made to feel natural and 'correct' to social actors serving to mediate all experiences (Fourcade, 2010: 1; Jackson, 1989: 136). Social actors embody the 'feel for' or 'practical knowledge' of the field that they regularly navigate. For example, Bourdieu demonstrates habitus through the example of how a skilled football player has a 'feel for the game' when passing the football without consciously deliberating his or her action. Thus, embodied habitus functions as an unconscious perpetual classifying structure

that generates practical action (Lizardo, 2004: 379); through its unconscious nature, habitus allows actors to function in a pre-reflexive, non-cognitive form (Adkins, 2003: 24). According to Bourdieu, without the embodiment of habitus, navigation within social arenas would be difficult. It is the unconsciousness of habitus that allows actors to function within fields without expending substantial effort in navigating their everyday worlds (Adams, 2006: 514). It is this unconscious embodied element of habitus which is constructive when attempting to understand video game play.

Crawford (Crawford, 2012; Crawford & Rutter, 2006) makes a strong case for utilising Bourdieu's theories in game studies, stating that habitus is particularly useful because of its emphasis on embodiment.

It is evident that playing video games is more than merely a matter of knowing the rules and acting upon them, but video gaming is located within a wider social context and order. However, most of this is not consciously recognised, but rather expressed and experienced through our embodied encounter with the video game, which comes to feel like 'second nature' or an almost automatic response. (Crawford, 2012: 110).

Crawford argues that when people play video games, they do so as socially situated individuals who are nevertheless rarely aware of the ways in which their social context shapes their experience of game play. In this way, a video gamer's habitus is not a result of free will, but rather is created by the interplay between dispositions, which are shaped by past events, and structures. However, Bourdieu's conception of habitus has been criticised for not allowing enough conscious or reflexive action to the social actor (Farnell, 2000). Nick Crossley (1999: 658) similarly criticises habitus arguing that 'it needs to recuperate the reflective and creative aspects of practice'. Jenkins, one of the most notable critics of Bourdieu, argues that Bourdieu does not provide an explanation in his model of how actors overcome their habitus; rather he conceptualises actors as being incapable of perceiving social reality as anything more than 'the way things are' (Jenkins, 1992: 42). Ultimately, this leads to confusion in Bourdieu's social theory model as there is no underlying specificity of how consciousness can be manifested in actors through habitus.

It remains difficult to understand how, in Bourdieu's model of practice, actors or collectivities can intervene in their own history in any substantial fashion (Jenkins, 1992: 51).

It is noteworthy to mention that the degree to which habitus is unconscious and conscious has been a contention of scholars for some time (Reay, 2010: 81). Bourdieu, in his later work, has attempted to infuse reflexive action into his notion of habitus. As some proponents of Bourdieu have noted, habitus is not a 'set and inflexible culture, which

remains static throughout people's lives' (Crawford, 2012: 110). Rather, they claim, Bourdieu's habitus allows for flexibility, as exemplified by the following quote:

Habitus is not the fate that some people read into it. Being the product of history, it is an open system of dispositions that is constantly subjected to experiences, and therefore constantly affected by them in a way that either reinforces or modifies its structure. (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992: 133).

Therefore, while habitus socially constrains an actor's behaviour and is influenced by social predispositions and conventions, conscious action can nonetheless be exercised within the strategic manipulation of the constraints (i.e. the playing of the game). However, even with these later refinements, Bourdieu's habitus is often still criticised as being anti-reflexive (e.g. Archer 2010; Crossley, 1999), because at its core, for Bourdieu's notion of habitus to function, actors must take their social world for granted; it must be patterned, internalised and used by social actors in everyday practice (Eichner, 2014 :27). Although I recognise the debate regarding the degree of conscious versus unconscious action within Bourdieu's habitus, for my purposes, I am using his theory of practice as a tool to interrogate my particular question of the investigation of an emerging field in a novel context. While I have viewed certain elements of Bourdieu as being restrictive, I do acknowledge that there are critics who may use him in a more nuanced fashion.

Bourdieu's Formula for Practice

Of key importance to my work, is the extent to which Bourdieu's theory of the social field considers the importance of how multiple contextual variables (i.e. capital, field and habitus) interrelate, affecting the actor's behaviour toward a practice. The link between capital, habitus and the field, where the habitus disposes actors to particular behaviour within a social field, is the basis of Bourdieu's theoretical model. According to Bourdieu (1984: 11), any social practice can be accounted for by the following formula:

$$[(\text{Capital}) (\text{Habitus})] + \text{Field} = \text{Practice}$$

The practice takes place within the social field. Habitus brings in the subjective dimension to actor behaviour which is contextualised through social structures. Lastly, capital is deployed by the social actors in order to gain advantage within a field's hierarchical structure. Given the multi-variability of Bourdieu's model of social theory, it is not surprising that it has found favour in the scholarship on digital games (e.g. Nichols, 2013; Taylor, 2012). For example, in a discussion about video games as cultural commodities, Nichols (2013: 34) uses Bourdieu's concept of social field to argue that video game studies have neglected how audiences use and relate to video games, and that a much more

complex understanding of the cultural processes which mediate play is possible. Nichols argues that the meaning of video games is not only defined by gamers and game producers, but different sub-cultures and different levels of capital have strong influence on the social meaning of video games. As a second example, Taylor (2012), through her exploration of professional gaming, explores the importance of material objects that are required to participate in competitive video game play and how various types of capital are deployed in the world of professional video gaming.

Video gamers do not play video games in a cultural vacuum; they enter and invariably will exit game play, migrating between different fields and practices. Habitus must vary culturally, which means that how video gaming is viewed and shaped in India will be considerably different to how Western social actors view the same activity. Undoubtedly, the habitus of the Indian actor affects how he or she makes sense of video gaming, and whether he or she ultimately adopts the practice as part of his or her life. In addition, Bourdieu's frequent use of gaming metaphors lends his theories well to a study of video gaming. Furthermore, habitus is both possessed by the actor and exerted by the field on the actor; therefore, the concept directs the analytical gaze beyond the practice itself and helps to account for cultural factors that inevitably impact how video gaming is adopted and enacted. However, as previously mentioned, a limitation of habitus for my research is the lack of theorisation of how a practice comes into being in a newly formed or an emerging field, such as is the case with video gaming in India, which has only relatively recently become more established there.

An established practice, such as football, has its similarly well-established habitus embodied within the actors trained and practicing in the field of sports. However, as discussed in detail in Chapter 4, because video gaming in India is a recently developed practice, the habitus of the social actors is not as well-established as Bourdieu tends to envisage when discussing the concept. This has implications for how individuals might make sense of the practices. For example, an established field, such as listening to music, contains a hierarchical relationship of aesthetics and taste anchored in a long tradition. In this way, upper class individuals may prefer to listen to classical music, whereas lower class individuals may prefer rock music. Furthermore, actors in a field have an unconscious consensus among other actors. Few individuals would argue that heavy metal is superior, or of higher status, than classical music even if they listen to heavy metal music. Even though these 'heavy metal' actors do not actively take part in the practice of listening to classical music, they are still likely to perceive classical music as containing a high degree of cultural capital. But in the case of video game play in India, no established

hierarchy exists in the newly emerging practice, and social actors have no recognised system of hierarchy that they can use to judge it against other practices. Nevertheless, actors must, by some means, gather information to actively and consciously form an understanding of the new field and their position within it.

This is an important element in the consideration and development of Indian video game playing because the field lacks conventions and tradition, and thus, a habitus specific to video game play in an Indian context. As discussed earlier, habitus does allow social actors with some flexibility in adapting to new situations through judging what the best way to act would be, and this requires consciously paying attention to the situation and making decisions about how to act; however social actors may have greater consciousness and knowledge of their situation than Bourdieu conceptualises. So for my purposes, Bourdieu's theory is somewhat problematic in its application to video gamers in India because the practice of video gaming lacks any traditional habitus with its accompanying combination of capital resources. Consequently, even though capital and habitus exist within the field, as demonstrated in Chapter 5 in my discussion of physical gaming spaces, there is often confusion among the social actors who enter the gaming parlours as to what the 'rules of the game' are because, in many cases, they may be entering the field for the first time.

In order to fill the gaps identified in Bourdieu's theorising, I now turn to explore how Goffman's micro-sociology of interaction allows for the consciousness of social actors, recognising the individual's ability to position themselves within a social field, even against an ingrained habitus. I now go on to discuss how Goffman's theories of dramaturgy and framing allow for a more nuanced micro-sociological understanding for how video gamers communicate and form an understanding of the emerging practice of video game play.

Using Goffman's Micro-sociological Approach to Study Video Gaming

Goffman, like Bourdieu, sees the self as a social product. Goffman's micro-sociological approach details the interactions of everyday life, focusing on how the self is formed through such social interactions. The focus of his work was the organisation of everyday behaviour. Goffman's dramaturgical metaphor and his framing theory facilitate an understanding of how actors make sense of their lives, and how they use this to inform their action. In this section, I will examine Goffman's concepts of dramaturgy (i.e.

performance, frontstage, backstage) and framing. Both dramaturgy and framing are relevant to my study in their emphasis on the organisation of social experiences; thus, when applied to video gaming, both dramaturgy and framing situate the practice within a social context of interaction without essentialising video gaming by removing it from social reality.

In a Goffmanian framework, everyday life is understood in reference to theatre and the theatre provides a template for how a performance might be organised. Goffman's dramaturgical metaphor emphasises expressiveness as the main component of social interactions and compares life to a play in which people are the 'actors'. People, as actors, must convey their characteristics to others. According to Goffman, actors construct meaning through a process of interaction, interpretation and contextualisation (Vliegthart & van Zoonen, 2011: 103). It is through this process that individuals learn which kinds of performance are acceptable and which are not within a given social situation. Actors thus organise their interactions according to the social situation and their performance is shaped by the environment and the audience. We are always performing, whether we are conscious of it or not. The goal for the actor is a successful performance where the audience interprets the performance in line with the individual's desired impression. As such, Goffman's approach is concerned with the mode of presentation employed by the actor and its meaning in the broader social context (Goffman, 1959: 24).

Actors perform in regions which are 'defined as any place that is bounded to some degree by barriers of perception' (Goffman, 1959: 109). These regions are divided into two main types: the frontstage and the backstage where actors employ various tools to aid them in their performances including props, lighting, roles, settings and also other people as supporting actors. Goffman (1959: 110) uses the term front region or frontstage 'to refer to the place where the performance is given.' In the frontstage, the performance of the actor is actively judged by the audience. A successful frontstage performance will accomplish the actor's goal of 'giving off' a particular impression. Actors will often have a predefined role where the audience expects them to give a particular performance often utilising specific props. For example, baristas in coffee shops are expected to wear uniforms and greet customers in a friendly manner, and often are trained to greet regular customers on a first name basis (Woldoff, Lozzi & Dilks, 2013). As such, actors are socialised into existing routinized situations, so that many roles are already defined and the scripts are already written. However, there is still room for spontaneity. Actors learn to inhabit the

role and so are able to creatively respond to changing and sometimes unpredictable situations.

Conversely, the backstage is 'defined as a place, relative to a given performance, where the impression fostered by the performance is knowingly contradicted as a matter of course' (Goffman, 1959: 114). The backstage allows for conscious and deliberate planning where actors can prepare and refine their performances. So, for example, the backstage of a coffee house would entail its location, the physical layout of the venue, the training and selection of the staff and other such features which influences the interaction between the practice of the coffee house and the clients. The backstage functions as a place where actors can discuss, polish or refine their performance without revealing themselves to their audience. Furthermore, the backstage allows actors to express aspects of themselves that their audience would find unacceptable (Crossman, 2014). Where the front stage is an active performance space, in contrast, backstages are regions that are 'typically out of bounds to members of the audience' (Goffman, 1959: 124).

These different regions refer to the social space which is associated with a given interaction. Therefore, performances are not always rendered by individual actors but sometimes collectively by several individuals who come together to form a 'team' of actors. According to Goffman (1959: 85), a team is 'any set of individuals who cooperate in staging a single routine.' As explored in more detail in Chapter 5, in the staging of the physical space of video gaming parlours⁴ in India, the owners and staff employ various props and work as a team to create a successful performance for the audience (i.e. the video game parlour customers). From the perspective of the owner of a video gaming parlour, a successful performance is one that attracts the right kind of customers who eventually adopt video gaming as a practice.

Bourdieu assigns such a high degree of power to socialisation that, rather than possessing the ability to consciously intervene in their own actions, social actors largely become individuals to which things happen (Jenkins, 2002: 91). Similar to Bourdieu's field theory, Goffman's dramaturgy presupposes that actors have a largely unconscious role in their performance; however, Goffman assigns a considerable degree of consciousness which social actors express in both their front and back stages. Goffman's micro-

⁴ Indians define video game parlours as indoor air conditioned venues where customers may play video games on either consoles or computers, but more typically a combination of both. Lavishly furnished and serving drinks and hot snacks, gaming parlours are comfortable and welcoming environments.

sociological emphasis on interactions complements Bourdieu's field theory because it helps to investigate how social actors' make their choices and communicate their desired performance within their cultural context. In the absence of an established habitus, the actor must employ, to use Goffman's dramaturgical terms, substitute cues, hints, expressive gestures, status symbols, and so on as predictive devices. Such interactions can be confusing, as it is difficult for an actor to both differentiate and to perceive the criteria being used to evaluate his or her own performance. As Goffman communicates below, it is difficult for social actors to be aware of all the relevant information in their social interactions:

To uncover fully the factual nature of the situation, it would be necessary for the individual to know all relevant social data about the others. It would also be necessary for the individual to know the actual outcome or end product of the activity of the others during the interaction, as well as their innermost feelings concerning him (Goffman, 1959: 249).

In the arena of Indian video gaming parlours, which lack an established performance protocol, it is particularly difficult for actors to know all the information regarding the social interactions that occur in these spaces. The emerging nature of video gaming in India, particularly within video gaming parlours, means that social actors are both more prone to an unawareness of the 'required' behaviour in these physical spaces and the performances within these social arenas have a greater predisposition to misinterpretation. Therefore, people must look to other adjacent social fields that are in some ways similar, in order to understand what might be an acceptable performance in this unfamiliar situation. Coupled with Bourdieu's field theory, dramaturgy offers important insight into how Indian video gamers manage their social interactions. Indian gaming parlours are new and complex social spaces, the practices of which are to be understood in relation to other existing practices that take place in similar fields.

Unfortunately, Goffman's dramaturgical metaphor does not sufficiently address how social actors organise and process their experiences (Gouldner, 1970). Goffman mitigated some of these shortcomings through his concept of frame analysis suggesting that an actor's performance, while directed to an audience, is interpreted and processed through 'frames of experience', which are situational definitions which are constructed by means of organising principles that govern both the social events themselves and participants' experience of these events (1974: 10-11).

Framing Video Game Play Experiences

I have argued that in order to remedy some problems in the video game literature, it is important to situate video games within the broader cultural context. Goffman's frame analysis provides a useful tool for thinking about how actors negotiate contexts because it highlights the importance understanding and unpacking context (Scheff, 2005: 368). Goffman argues that meaning only arises in processes of interaction, interpretation and contextualization and that social frameworks are the outcome of these processes (1974: 2).

Goffman's frames are interpretive schemes that allow individuals to make sense of activity through determining what is relevant and irrelevant to them (Linderoth, Bjork & Olsson, 2012: 2). A frame is a shared definition that participants in an activity have of the situation. Thus, when an individual negotiates a situation, this involves discovering or arriving at the socially given frame, not creating it (Smith, 2006: 58). Frameworks then correspond to how an activity is organised; frames are 'principles of selection, emphasis and presentation composed of little tacit theories about what exists, what happens, and what matters' (Gitlin, 1980: 6). In any given interaction, the first goal is not interaction, but to properly frame the activity and interaction (Goffman, 1974: 127).

To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, casual interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation (Entman, 1993: 52).

A social actor can shape an interaction, situation or activity by using frames to do so; they are invariably giving socially agreed upon meanings to the situation. According to Goffman, all social situations are interpreted by a frame and they serve to answer the question of 'What is going on here?' (Goffman, 1974: 8). The interpretation of the event or action is dependent upon what frame is used to establish meaning. A practice can be framed in different ways, and each frame entails a different understanding of the practice. In turn, how the actors conduct themselves, and ultimately make sense of the activity can vary according to the frame they use. When an actor performs an activity, the context of the activity has a profound effect on how they interpret it. For example, watching a movie in a cinema or watching a movie at home both entail the same activity of watching a movie, but the frame in which the viewer consumes the medium is quite different. A viewer in the cinema adheres to certain rules, such as generally not speaking during the movie, which he or she may otherwise choose to ignore at home. The cinema movie cannot be paused, it must be enjoyed as it is presented. Furthermore, the rituals surrounding the

consumption of the movie may also vary. During my fieldwork I viewed several Hindi movies in the cinema. Bollywood movies tend to be approximately three hours in length and usually have a fifteen minute intermission. Audiences would frequently applaud or cheer during scenes in the movie. Hence, how the Indian audiences frame the practice of watching a cinema movie is different than it would be in the West.

The utility of frame analysis for my research is the flexibility that frame analysis provides for different cultural contexts. Frames inevitably differ across varying cultural situations. Consequently, actors in India necessarily interpret and adopt video game play differently than their Western counterparts because the given glocal factors in India are uniquely tied to the specific cultural space. Framing is a culturally as well as socially dependent activity because it relies on a shared meaning among participants. In this way, frame analysis is especially effective in dealing with context in social interactions (Scheff, 2005) because 'members of society decode lived social reality by picking out the same socially relevant features' (Smith, 2006: 63). In this sense, Goffman's frames are essential for communication, as they enable actors to easily share meaning (Koenig, 2004).

Goffman employs two main types of frames: social frameworks and primary frameworks. Social frameworks 'make sense of events in terms of human agency that is involved in 'guided doings,' such as the newscast reporting of the weather (Trevino, 2003: 40) based upon the actor's own experience and knowledge. Social frameworks 'provide background understanding for the events that incorporate the will, aim and controlling effort of an intelligence, a live agency, the chief one being the human being' (Goffman, 1974: 22). The primary framework, on the other hand, is akin to Bourdieu's habitus in that it originates less from personal experience and more from the stock experiences and understandings available to social actors. It provides the actor with frames which can be quickly and generally unconsciously applied to describe events and gives them social meaning.

Each primary framework allows its user to locate, perceive, identify, and label a seemingly infinite number of concrete occurrences defined in its terms. He is likely to be unaware of such organised features as the framework has and unable to describe the framework with any completeness if asked, yet these handicaps are no bar to his easily and fully applying it (Goffman, 1974: 21).

Thus, the primary framework forms the 'rim of the frame' of available frameworks which provides actors with a common-sense understanding of reality answering all questions about what it is that is taken by participants to be real and how they should be involved in

this reality (Ribeiro, 1994: 59). Actors perceive events in terms of primary frameworks, and each framework provides a different way of describing the event to which it is applied.

The primary frameworks of a particular social group constitute a central element of its culture, especially insofar as understandings emerge concerning principal classes of schemata, the relations of these classes to one another, and the sum total of forces and agents that these interpretive designs acknowledge to be loose in the world (Goffman, 1972: 27).

Overall then, Goffman provides us with several useful concepts for understanding how actors make sense of social contexts. Primary frames help actors move through the world smoothly, to agree with other actors as to ‘what is happening’ and to creatively respond to changing contexts.

Goffman’s notion of frames effectively complements Bourdieu’s field theory. Even though framing is often performed without thought, much like Bourdieu’s habitus, frame theory allows for a greater degree of actor consciousness than habitus. Furthermore, actors can apply multiple frames to a single experience. Therefore, when actors experience a practice for the first time in a field with has no habitus, they can apply several frames from other similar or adjacent fields in order to make sense of the field. This layering of frames provides actors a method to organise their experiences.

These frameworks are not merely a matter of mind but correspond in some sense to the way in which an aspect of the activity itself is organized ... Organisational premises are involved, and these are something cognition somehow arrives at, not something cognition creates or generates. Given their understanding of what it is that is going on, individuals fit their actions to this understanding and ordinarily find that the ongoing world supports this fitting. These organisational premises – sustained both in the mind and in activity – I call the frame of the activity (Goffman, 1974: 247).

For Goffman, actors make sense of activities through cognitive organising of the activity (i.e. framing). Because actors are conscious and, therefore, must actively make choices based upon how they frame their experiences, the cognitive element of framing acknowledges that actors may ‘mis-frame’ an experience. For example, one may see two people engaged in what one may interpret as fighting. However, the two individuals may be training in martial arts. This concept of ‘misframing’ is central to my analysis. When a field is newly emerging, the practice has not been agreed upon by actors and, consequently, lacks a habitus. The actors must then frame the experiences based upon dramaturgical cues. Framing the experiences helps the actor to make sense of the new practice, and interpret, and thus, effectively use their capital according to how the field is framed. As described in Chapter 5, my data suggest that it is difficult to presume how

actors will engage in a new activity (i.e. video gaming in India); therefore, actors who are facilitating the establishment of the newly emerging field do not necessarily agree on how the new field should be organised. This may create confusion as to which performance is expected within the field.

A further complication for an actor who is entering an emerging field is that they are not privy to all the information associated with the emerging practices. Actors locate, perceive, identify and label activities through framing (Goffman, 1974: 26); however, for Goffman individuals live in a glimpsed world (1974: 22) where information is incomplete, perceived in strips. A strip is defined as ‘any arbitrary slice or cut from the stream of ongoing activity’ (Goffman, 1974: 10) and consists of batches of occurrences (Smith, 2006: 56). While actors only have glimpses of activities, which Goffman refers to as ‘strips’, to interpret an experience, nonetheless they are able to make reasonable inferences about the situation by being attentive to the information presented around them (Goffman, 1979: 22). As such, glimpsing provides incomplete information, but is generally an adequate basis on which to reduce the number of potentially applicable frames when dealing with the world (Wilshire, 1982: 274). Frame analysis addresses how individuals make sense of any given strip of activity (Smith, 2006: 55). Due to the fragmented nature of strips, seeking to apply the relevant frame to the strip provides a useful though partial solution to the interpretation of the social interaction. For example, actors who enter coffee houses do not know the backgrounds of the actors around them; however from the performance of the customers (i.e. their clothing, mannerisms) and the staging of the venue (i.e. furniture, location) they can gain deduce enough of the social situation to make informed decisions, as to how to act in that situation

As such, actors’ experiences are grounded in an association between the individuals’ background and perception, and the organisation of the perceived strip (Goffman, 1974: 26). For example, if a verbal exchange is positioned in the insult frame, the words expressed and the gestures made within that interaction will be interpreted as the activity of insulting. In the banter frame the same ‘insults’ will be interpreted differently. An actor’s understanding of the strip is rendered intelligible by the primary framework.

[W]e can hardly glance at anything without applying a primary framework, thereby forming conjectures as to what occurred before and expectations of what is likely to happen now ... mere perceiving, then, is a much more active penetration of the world than at first might be thought. (Goffman, 1974: 38).

A further element of Goffman's model of interaction is his concept of keying. A key refers to 'the set of conventions by which a given activity, one already meaningful in terms of some primary framework, is transformed into something patterned on this activity but seen by the participants to be something quite else' (Goffman, 1974: 43-44). Simply, keying is the modification of a primary framework which allows for a transformation of the activity. In the fight example used previously, a strip of activity that is intelligible as a fight (primary framework) might be keyed so that it is reframed as 'play fighting' or 'practising fighting'. The key is always based on some primary framework which is transformed into something patterned on this activity but seen by the participants as something else. Keying transforms how actors make sense of an activity. Even if the activity is only slightly different than the original activity, the process of keying changes the meaning and practice of the activity. It is definitive of keyed frames that all participants involved are aware that a transformation has occurred (Smith, 2006: 57). It involves one actor signalling a key to another in mutual or intersubjective awareness. Goffman's (1974: 11) principal example of keying is play fighting. Play fighting, which very closely resembles real fighting, has been keyed as a type of play rather than a more serious activity. Playful fighting is closely patterned after something that already has meaning in its own terms, that is, play. Real fighting serves as a model, a detailed pattern to follow, a foundation for form (Goffman, 1974: 41). In this way, keying systematically transforms or modifies a strip of activity. Of course, even though all the actors involved in the process are aware that the practice has been keyed, a spectator may still accidentally mistake play fighting for actual fighting. Therefore, a primary activity is an untransformed activity, while a keyed activity is a transformed practice.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have sociologically located the present study of video gaming within the following literatures: Glocalisation and the convergence of glocal and local social forces; Bourdieu's theories of practice, namely, field habitus and capital; and finally, Goffman's micro-sociological interactionist theories of dramaturgy and framing. I have argued that video games need to be investigated beyond an examination of their ludic and narrative elements and must be understood instead in relation to the cultural context of the video game player. Criticising the often utilised magic circle theory in game studies, where play is viewed as removed from everyday life, I contend that video games are located in patterns and contexts of everyday life. Spurred by the gap in scholarly literature, lacking a

detailed and extensive analysis of locating video gaming patterns within a cultural context (Crawford, 2012: 148), I set the stage for the investigation of video game play in India.

My research attempts to address this gap in the literature by examining video game play in India. In doing so, I am investigating a little studied practice, in a unique cultural context. Video games are very recent to India. Consequently, most Indian gamers have only recently encountered the practice of video games. In order to understand the experience of the Indian video game player I have enlisted Bourdieu's field theory and Goffman's theories of dramaturgy and frame analysis. Bourdieu explains social practices as occurring within social fields, that is, arenas where individuals through their habitus and deployment of their capital, make choices to improve their social position. However, Bourdieu allocates too much importance to the unconscious nature of the actor. My ethnographic data strongly indicates that video gaming in India is too new a practice to possess an established habitus that could unconsciously be applied. Goffman's theory of dramaturgy allows for a greater understanding of the deliberate choices actors make in creating and maintaining their performances. Glocalisation serves to reveal the particularities of the actors' choices as processes whereby the global practice of video game play is embodied and transformed by the Indian gamer within a local context. The comparison of Chandigarh to Manchester assists in highlighting cultural differences which would otherwise be obscured through revealing the variations between these contexts and how these differences were reflected in the way the field of video gaming was constituted in the two cultures.

In combination, Bourdieu, Goffman and glocalisation offer a powerful theoretical base from which to launch an investigation of the emerging practice of video game play by situating it within broader sets of cultural practices in India. Moreover, the study of Indian video game practices offers an opportunity to give voice to a non-Western culture in video game scholarship and so to highlight differences in how video game play is enacted across different contexts. Next, in Chapter 3, I will discuss my research methods. My research methods focused on examining video gaming as an everyday activity that is culturally situated. Explicitly, I discuss how I formed my investigation, framed my questions and conducted my ethnographic research of video game players in India.

Introduction

In the previous chapter I examined the video gaming literature to show that current gaming research has neglected the examination of the video game player as a social actor, choosing instead to focus on the video game as the object of study (Crawford, 2012). Such an approach has led scholars to neglect the cultural context of video gaming and gamers. Additionally, I discussed the fact that of scholarship on gaming in a non-Western context is almost non-existent, despite the literature's emphasis on the global cultural significance of video gaming. This oversight has led academic video game studies to almost solely refer to Western cultural contexts (Higgins, 2008: 4). The formation of game studies as a Western-focused academic field of inquiry serves to perpetuate Western cultural dominance. Social sciences research should seek to interrogate and deconstruct the centralised Western centric notion of the video gamer. I endeavour to speak to this problematic by considering the importance of cultural context in the practice of video gaming in a non-Western locale.

This thesis seeks to expand upon Crawford's (2012) work by addressing the concerns he has raised about the need for academic scholarship to consider video gaming beyond merely the text, but as a practice rooted in everyday life. Central to Crawford's argument is that players should be studied as an integral aspect of the practice of video gaming and therefore examined in relation to the broader socio-cultural context that surrounds them. I explored in Chapter 2 how glocalisation, Bourdieu's theories of practice and Goffman's dramaturgy and framing could be used to facilitate a richer understanding of the Indian video game player's within his or her unique cultural context. Specifically, these theories allow a focus on how Indian gamers adopt and negotiate their practices of game play and their social world. Now I turn to pragmatic concerns of collecting data in India. This chapter is organised in light of the unfolding of the research and organised in a narrative form discussing the disjunctures upon which I decided the various qualitative methods decided during my field research in Chandigarh and Manchester. I focus on more than simply the research methods themselves, but also explore how the research itself evolved in the field.

The chapter is organised as follows. First, I establish Chandigarh as a site of my research. Describing the history and contemporary culture of the city helps to provide an

understanding of Indian video gamers' cultural context. I discuss the locales where my research took place, that is, video game parlours in Chandigarh. In the empirical chapters that follow, I pay particular attention to these video game parlours as physical spaces where social actors engage in the practice of video gaming. Second, I discuss the ethnographic methods that underpin the choices I made for examining particular locations. I give consideration to why the specific research sites were chosen and how ethnographic research methods facilitate a broader understanding of the Indian gamer's cultural milieu. Next, I introduce the methods used and the advantages and limitations of said methods. Fourth, I discuss challenges encountered during the fieldwork, how those problems were overcome and what I would do differently in retrospect. Fifth, I consider the limitations of my research and my rationale for undertaking a smaller comparative research study in Manchester. Specifically, I discuss how the second data set helped to elucidate aspects of the practice of video gaming in India which otherwise may have been obscured. Based on this comparative data I conclude that even though actors in both Chandigarh and Manchester engage in the practice of video game play, how they use and make sense of those spaces is unique shaped by their cultural situation. Finally, I indicate some ethical concerns that were highlighted during the course of my research.

Defining the Research Questions

The aim of this study is to illuminate how the practice of video gaming in India has emerged and how actors negotiate the emerging practice within their greater broader cultural context. Studying video gamers in India provided me with the opportunity to investigate gamers in a previously seldom-examined setting, which allowed for the collection of unique data.

My fieldwork was substantively grounded by three key research questions:

1. How has video game play emerged in India?
2. How do actors work to bring about digital game play in India?
3. How is the practice of video game play adopted and situated in the greater context of the player's social world?

The overall research framework and its related questions were formulated early on in order to provide focus and structure for the investigation (Mason, 1996: 18 – 21: 32). The questions above are concerned with the practice of video gaming within the larger cultural context of Indian society. In Chapter 2, I asserted that actors, who are inextricably linked

to their society, must navigate between different social fields. Consequently, the practices associated with video gaming are not isolated activities that exist in a cultural vacuum; understanding some of the actors' non-video gaming cultural interests served to provide greater contextualisation for their video game play.

Chandigarh as the Research Location

I chose India as a field site specifically because the majority of video game research to date has been conducted in Western countries. India contains a thriving yet under-examined gaming culture which provides a rich source of original ethnographic data that introduces new perspectives and allows us to further understand the relationship between culture, environment and play across cultures. I conducted the field research over a period of four months from January to late May of 2013. The structure and organisation of the city helps to comprehend how its inhabitants organise their everyday lives. Consequently, I was concerned with how the city's space and symbolic structures were ideologically planned and created.

The practice of video gaming requires technology; therefore, my selection of Chandigarh was based upon its stable and robust infrastructure. Chandigarh was a planned city, constructed from 1951 to 1965, and its infrastructure is quite recent and fairly modern (Prakash, 2002). During the 1947 independence the state of Punjab was divided placing Lahore, the previous capital of the state of Punjab, in Pakistan. Rather than establish a new capital in an already existing city, India brought in French architect Le Corbusier to create a new capital in 1961.

Chandigarh's master plan embodied the latest European planning concepts of the time (Sarin, 1980). The city is divided into sectors composed of an area 800 metres by 1,200 metres. Each sector contains shops, a school, health centres, green spaces and places of worship. There are enclosed roads allocated for transport and all houses have direct access to these roads. Sectors are further subdivided into four sections or neighbourhoods: A, B, C and D. Section D is the market neighbourhood within each sector. Sector 17 is an exception to the usual layout of the city because all four of its sections (A, B, C, D) constitute a shopping district. It was designed as a pedestrian walking area with no through roads. The second and third largest markets in Chandigarh are respectively located in sector 8 and sector 35.

Trying to find a temporary home posed several problems. I had very superficial knowledge of the city and I underestimated the logistical concerns of finding accommodation. Most rentals advertised online required a one year lease with a substantial deposit. With the assistance of relatives in Amritsar I managed to secure a flat close to the city centre near the sector 17 shopping district (see Figure 1 below). I reasoned that living in close proximity to the shopping district would provide easier access to potential research participants and sites. My intention to leave in May was driven by my past experiences of the discomfort of being in India in the summer (often reaching 45C degrees Celsius in June). Had it been necessary, however, I would have been prepared to extend my stay. Fortunately, I reached sufficient quantity and quality of data by May. I knew that I had reached a saturation point because, first, any new information that I collected was becoming repetitive and, thus, not offering any new insight. Second, I had exhausted the interview numbers in my research location of the gaming parlour.



Figure 1. Map of Chandigarh illustrating its sectors. The field research site was sector 35 while my flat was located in sector 18. Source: Wikipedia.

Chandigarh is referred to by Indians as an ‘A category’ or ‘tier one’ city due to its modern facilities and urbanisation (e.g. rail network, roadways, availability of goods). Pollution levels are relatively low because industry is prohibited within the city limits, the only exception being low-emissions industries such as the information technology sector. Chandigarh’s low pollution and high literacy rates have created an ideal environment for a strong IT sector to thrive. The high-tech nature of the city is evidenced through the establishment of several ‘tech parks’ or ‘IT campuses’. However, despite its affluence, Chandigarh has many poor occupants (e.g. domestic labourers, homeless residents, rickshaw drivers). In addition, the appeal of the city has led to a rapid population increase. Le Corbusier designed the city for 500,000 inhabitants, with an initial population of 119,881 in 1961; but this has ballooned to over 960,000 (Census India, 2011). With such a rapid rate of population growth, the existing infrastructure is sometimes over stretched (IANS, 2013).

At first glance, an observer may not draw a connection to infrastructure and video gaming. But, as discussed in more detail in Chapter 5, the overburdening of community facilities, an architectural design which does not provide adequate shade from the harsh sun, and the large numbers of vehicles and increased amounts of pollution have helped to foster an environment where indoor play is nurtured, specifically video game play. I will now turn to the selection and use of the qualitative methods in my field site.

Research Design: Methods in the Field

This section outlines the research methods employed and offers a rationale for their selection. The research adopts a qualitative, interpretivist approach to understanding video game play. The purpose of using a mixed qualitative approach was to gather rich detailed data which would create a comprehensive detailed image of the contextual world of the Indian video game player.

Building on Crawford’s (2012) contention, that video gaming is a mundane everyday activity that is best studied as a practice that is removed from broader society, my primary interest was to understand how the actor’s practice of video gaming was connected and intertwined with their lived everyday lives. Therefore, in order to understand how Indian video game players make sense of the practice of video gaming a research methodology must consider the actor’s lived multi-dimensional experience. Similarly, Mason (2011: 78)

contends that the ‘world and what we seek to understand about it is not only lived and experienced, but it is multi-dimensional, contingent, relationally implicated and entwined.’

Given the previously unexamined nature of video gaming in India I could not anticipate what I would discover. Therefore, I needed to employ a method which would allow for the exploration of context with ‘thick’ description when attempting to capture the representation and reality of the lived experience of video gamers in India within their social, cultural and historical conditions (Geertz, 1973). Thick description consists of describing a phenomenon in sufficient detail to all relevant aspects of a culture’s material existence that it provides context and meaning to people’s actions. Through this detail thick description reveals the significance to the ‘frames of interpretation’ by which behaviour is classified and meaning is attributed (Geertz, 1973: 9). A culturally rooted comprehension of these frames is necessary in order to understand how social actors understand and interpret, and the ultimately glocalise, the practice of video gaming. However, a relying upon a single method is not sufficient in capturing a wide enough breath of information to do so.

A mixed method qualitative approach provided me with a flexible and eclectic, yet rigorous, methodology that emphasises the importance of what people actually say and do rather than attempting to confine their lived experience to a single method (Goodwin & Horowitz, 2002). The strength of the qualitative approach lies in integrating different forms of data. Not surprisingly, many qualitative researchers employ a wide range of interconnected multi-methods (Jones, 1999; Lather & Smithies, 1997; Mason, 2002; Ronai, 1998).

A qualitatively driven, mixed method approach offers enormous potential for generating new ways of understanding social experience and lived realities, hence providing a more complete picture of the phenomena under study (Bryman, 1998; 2004; Fielding and Schreier, 2001; Kelle, 2001; Mason, 2006; Mason, 2002a; Williams & May, 1996: 78). In my study, I have used the ethnographic qualitative methods of interviews, field notes, focus groups, non-participant and participant observations, pictures and video recordings. Employing mixed qualitative methods is suited to eliciting the detail of the gamer’s cultural context, which allows for the examination of multiple culturally embedded factors, and ultimately illuminates how players make sense of video gaming. Each method makes the social world of the gamer visible in different ways.

Using Ethnographical Approach to Study Video Gamers

I was apprehensive about using India as my site of study because I was not certain how common a practice video gaming was. During the first two weeks of my field research I was unable to recruit any participants or locate any video gaming venues but after persistent exploration I found both.

Indians define video game parlours as indoor venues where customers play video games on either consoles or computers. They are recent, appearing only about 2 to 3 years prior to my field research. Lavishly furnished, serving drinks and snacks, gaming parlours are comfortable and welcoming environments. I have focused on gaming parlours because they are social spaces in which video games play a pivotal role. An alternative would have been to also conduct my study by gaming booths located in smaller markets but these offer less shade and no shielding from the heat, and are exposed to road noise and pollution. Furthermore, they had a great deal going on in and around them because they were not dedicated video gaming spaces. They would have in other words been difficult environments in which to conduct an extended ethnography on video gaming.

The two most popular video gaming parlours were located in sector 35, three kilometres from my residence. Although I was within walking distance from the parlours, the city was not designed to be pedestrian friendly. Heavy traffic coupled with a lack of sidewalks made walking both difficult and unsafe. Therefore, I travelled to the gaming parlours by rickshaws or three-wheelers. I had assumed gaming venues would be located in the shopping district – sector 17. Unfortunately, there were no gaming spaces in sector 17. It was in sector 35 where I discovered my two research sites: Indulgence and Oxide gaming parlours.

The main site of my ethnographic research was the Indulgence gaming parlour. Ethnographies take an holistic approach in that they try to describe all relevant aspects of a culture's material existence and social system (Geertz, 1973). In order to accomplish this, I performed a prolonged observation over four months. Long-term observation is required for good ethnographic work because ethnographers must gather detailed information and study the meanings of behaviour, language and interaction of the group (Creswell, 1998: 58).

The goal of ethnography is to produce a holistic representation of a clearly bounded group (Naidai & Maeder, 2005). Goffman (1983: 497) states ethnography is essentially the exploration, analysis of, and transformative understanding of the context that actors bring with them into any given situation. It is this marriage of experience and context that gives ethnographies their strength (Goffman, 1974). Ethnography offers insight to lived realities and results in a complex understanding of that lived experience (Ellingson, 1998). It places its emphasis on experience and meaning (Manning, 2009) and addresses sources of experience and context rather than focusing on the abstract questions (Goffman, 1974). To generate robust understandings of culture ethnographers must be able to acquire an emic perspective or the 'insider's point of view' (Roper & Shapira, 1999: 71). To achieve this, ethnographers usually live in the communities they study, and they establish long-term, organic relationships with the people they write about. The subject matter of ethnographic research encompasses social life within the given milieu. Initially I had difficulty attaining insider status in the video gaming parlour. Overtime, however, through building a relationship with the manager Harry, I was given greater access to both the customers and the gaming space itself.

Berg (2001) describes ethnographic research, and specifically interviewing, as conversation with the purpose of securing access to a setting, its participants, and knowledge about the phenomena and activities observed. In this regard, Harry was the 'gatekeeper' to my entire study, allowing me to 'get inside' the lives of the people who I was researching. Gatekeepers deny or allow the researcher access to organisations and groups and may prevent or assist the researcher from approaching potential informants. If the researcher is supported by the gatekeeper, as well as controlling access, the gatekeeper may also serve as a key informant who introduces the investigator to others who become key participants (Shenton & Hayter, 2004: 227). Thus, Harry would either assist me by arranging interview times, or, more often, if there were game players that were willing to be interviewed he would approach them on my behalf, if I was in the gaming parlour, or call my mobile to tell me there was someone at Indulgence who had agreed to be interviewed.

Indulgence is the most popular gaming parlour in Chandigarh. When conducting my research it was only 2 ½ years old, launched on 23rd October 2010, but it had already established a strong customer base allowing me to gather rich ethnographic data. Figure 2 below shows the Indulgence gaming parlour situated on the first floor above three restaurants. The parlour is large; it encompassed more than 2,000 square feet. The

entrance to Indulgence was through a small passageway on the first floor and up a flight of stairs, making both the entrance and the venue space difficult to locate. As a pedestrian on the walkway below I was not aware of the signage above (see Figure 2 on the following page). Also, the name Indulgence does not indicate a relation to video games. The difficulty in discovering the gaming parlour meant that, for the most part, those individuals who went to Indulgence were already aware of its existence or brought to it by friends.



Figure 2. Indulgence gaming parlour Sector 35 Chandigarh above New Zealand Ice Cream, Subway and Shere-e-Punjab.

Upon climbing the stairs I was greeted by a glass door with 'Indulgence' etched in white. A raised glass floor spanned several metres from the door to the reception desk. To the left of the reception was the largest room, a gaming space. The gaming area contained 14 high end computers which were networked on a Local Area Network⁵ (LAN) for interactive multiplayer. A round table with five PCs was also located in the middle of the room. Indulgence also contained a café and a relatively large eating area. The eating area was separated from the video gaming areas and could accommodate about 20 people. It was

⁵ Local Area Network (LAN) refers to computers that are connected to each other so they can communicate information within their restricted network. This is different from accessing the internet to play video games over the web because it does not require an internet connection. The multiplayer video games in the gaming parlours were exclusively LAN based due to the poor internet connections.

evident from its layout that Indulgence was organised to provide an interactive social play environment. On either sides of the table, additional computers were connected to large LCD TVs, but the round table was the most desired gaming location. Indulgence contained one Xbox360 with a Kinect which was referred to as ‘the motion station’. Everything in the gaming parlour, from the high quality Cyborg keyboards, Razor mice, high back leather chairs and glass floor entrance highlighted the opulence of the venue. Not surprisingly, Indulgence was also quite expensive. The hourly rate was 200 Rupees (£2.20). A monthly membership of 1500 Rupees (£1.10) reduced the hourly rate to half. In comparison, a multiplex movie ticket cost approximately 80 Rupees. The interior was decorated in a neutral modern style.

Oxide was not nearly as popular as Indulgence but was Chandigarh’s first gaming parlour (see Figure 3 below). Oxide was almost one year older than Indulgence and located six store fronts from it. Similarly, Oxide had signage comparable to Indulgence, which did not make any obvious reference to gaming, positioned on the first floor above restaurant. However, Oxide was significantly smaller than Indulgence and shared its first floor entrance with a high class Thai Massage parlour. I had walked by Oxide numerous times believing that it was a hair salon. When entering, one must walk by the massage parlour entrance and then enter through a glass door with ‘Oxide’ etched in the glass (much like the etching in Indulgence). Both gaming spaces opened at 11am, however, Oxide closed at 8pm and Indulgence at 10pm. These early closing hours were unsurprising given Chandigarh’s limited night-life. Both gaming parlours strove to create a family-friendly environment with bright lights, windows, snacks and no alcohol.



Figure 3. Oxide web advertisement.
Source: Courtesy Oxide. Printed with Permission.

Despite the similarities between the two gaming spaces, their interiors were quite different. Because of its smaller space, Oxide was divided into only two areas. The reception and eating spaces were combined. The eating area contained two circular tables with four chairs per table. The gaming space was located to the left of the eating space. Whereas Indulgence specialised in LAN computer gaming, Oxide exclusively used a variety of consoles (Playstation 3, Wii, Xbox360). Oxide, though smaller than Indulgence, still had opulent furnishings and hardware. However, unlike the high-backed chairs at Indulgence, Oxide contained two armchairs per console system (see Figure 4 below). There was also a motion gaming area located at the end of the console space.



**Figure 4. Couches at Oxide gaming parlour.
The Motion gaming area is located behind the television.**

Conducting the Ethnography

I conducted my ethnographic research at both Indulgence and Oxide gaming parlours. Indulgence was the primary site of my research. Oxide served as a second site where I gained some secondary comparative information. These additional data were crucial because almost one third of my interviewees in Indulgence were ex-Oxide players. Discussed in Chapter 5, a rudimentary exploration of Oxide was necessary in order to understand the popularity of Indulgence over Oxide.

The use of ethnography allows the researcher to illuminate, understand, and extrapolate social situations (Hoepfl, 1997) through providing detailed, in-depth descriptions of everyday life and practices (Hoey, 2010). I used Indulgence as my ethnographic site because it allowed me to observe gamers in a fixed setting. As a result I could make fine distinctions of their behaviour and consider ambiguities regarding the how and why of their interactions.

The first time that I entered Indulgence I was greeted by the manager, Harry. I communicated my research to him and asked if I could use Indulgence as a site for my ethnographic observation. Harry was friendly but mindful of his position as a manager. He replied that that Indulgence was a private business and I would not be allowed to loiter

but if I purchased a monthly membership I could use the facilities and play games at a discounted rate. To gain access to Indulgence, I purchased a three month membership.

During my first three visits, upon entering I was asked by either the manager, or the other staff, if I wanted something to drink or to play video games. Indulgence was a business establishment so etiquette required I purchase something. I would order a beverage instead of playing video games. When conducting my observations I usually sat on one of the side chairs near the window with my notebook along with some reading material (see Figure 5 on the following page). For most of the day Indulgence tended to be unoccupied by gamers and playing video games by myself would add little to my research. Sitting in a vacant gaming parlour, of course, was a problem for my research when my aim was to observe video gaming. However, it was important that I understand the general day to day activities surround the video gaming parlour for more complete picture of the occurrence of the practice of video gaming in this space. I conducted the majority of my ethnography in Indulgence from its 11am opening to the 10pm closing, every day for a period of approximately of two months. After two months, I abandoned this strict open to closing routine because I was no longer encountering any new data; I had reached the point of saturation in regards to the day to day workings of the parlour. Therefore, it no longer was fruitful to be at Indulgence for the opening, closing and the slower vacant periods when there were no video gamers to observe.

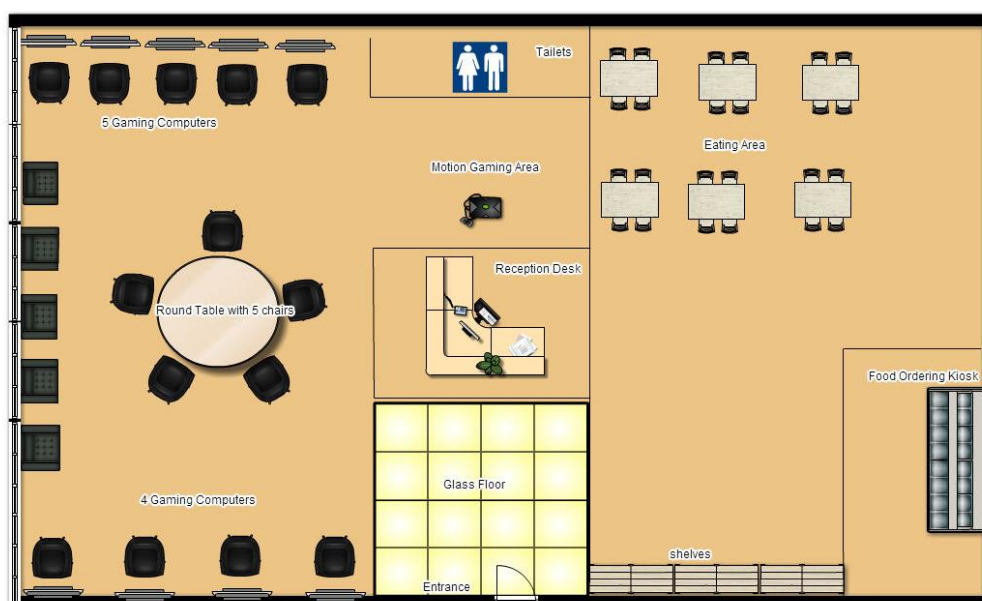


Figure 5. Floorplan of Indulgence gaming parlour.

Capturing the Field Site Data through Qualitative Mixed Methods

My research comprised of a qualitative mixed method approach using: interviews, field notes, non-participant and participant observation, pictures and video recordings. Each method captures field data in a different way allowing for a more complete picture of the research site. Field notes are the primary working tool of the ethnographer and can provide a detailed account of the research site (Cherny, 1999). They are holistic tools which allow for detailed accounts of the environment including cultural constructions as well as the interactions that take place (Jackson, 1990: 286). In my field notes I recorded the time that customers entered and left, the types of games they played, the duration of game play, the clothing they wore, their gender, their approximate age and the number of people who arrived (i.e. as individuals or as a group). I also drew diagrams to show where people preferred being seated. Through the captured data I hoped to discern the day to day happenings of the parlour in regards to the types of individuals who frequented these spaces and how they behaved and interacted.

Visual mediums such as photographs and video have featured in empirical social research for some time (Erickson, 2009; Snell 2011; Heath, Luff, Hindmarsh, 2010; Norris, 2004, Goodwin, 2000). Historically the cost of video equipment was unattainable for most researchers but now, due to its ubiquity, it has gradually become a common tool. Furthermore, the use of visual mediums in social research offers the means for the researcher to reflexively 'revisit' the gathered material (Pink, 2001). Taking photographs and video footage provided me a method of preserving the ethnographic gaming parlour space in a visual manner which I could later revisit to facilitate the writing process. I asked permission of any participants whom I took pictures or video footage of. No one declined and, for the most part, people enjoyed the attention of getting their 'snaps' taken.

As with most ethnographers, my own reflective experiences became part of the research. My interest in the Indian gamers' world was fuelled by curiosity about the process of meaning-making through the adoption and situation of a new social practice. Among researchers there has been significant debate surrounding how much of one's own experiences or feelings should be associated with ethnographic data. Traditional social sciences research asserted that any personal expression only serves to prejudice an otherwise scientific work. Bochner (2001: 138) argues that this scientific paradigm is illusory because it disavows the potential impact of the relationship between the researcher

and participants, and ultimately ignores how researchers reflect on and interpret their results.

Autoethnography, as a method, helps to mitigate some of Bochner's concerns by placing the researcher's interpretation into the research. It is developed from the belief that the personal experience (auto) is needed in conjunction with the systematic analysis (graphy) to understand cultural experience (ethno) (Ellis, 2004; Jones, 2005). Autoethnography seeks to describe and systematically analyse personal experience in order to understand cultural experience. Therefore, this method provides the means to interrogate identity through the examination and reflection of both the Indian video gamer's and my own lived experiences.

Even though this is not an autoethnographic study, my research is nonetheless informed by the method in order to facilitate making sense of, not just the current social context and interactions of video gamers, but also how these experiences have changed over the course of the actors' life. Ultimately, each person's cultural context and personal experiences becomes the lens through which all their actions and perceptions are necessarily filtered (Bochner, 1997: 23). As the weeks turned into months, my attempts to understand the how and why of the Indian video game player turned to questioning my own social context and identity. I kept a detailed diary where I wrote my thoughts and reflections every evening on the day's events. My position as a male, working-class, Canadian-born Indo-Canadian, Sikh and researcher influenced my own interpretations of the world and similarly influenced the interpretations of the actors who interacted with me. My identity as a Canadian male provided me with privilege in a hierarchical class structure that I initially did not understand. Growing up in an Indian household, I had (wrongly) assumed that I understood Indian culture intimately. A common feature of the diaspora are their strong inflections of their 'origin' or homeland which often serves to orient individuals to a real or imagined homeland as an authoritative source of value, identity and loyalty (Brubaker, 2005). Through my field research I learned that my cultural knowledge of India was superficial and lacked any nuanced understanding. Culture does not exist in a bubble, and consequently, the India that my parents knew and taught me about no longer exists. In their time away, their 'home' has transformed and become almost unrecognisable to them. Living in India for four months initially provided me with the sensation of living in a place where I was no longer the other. Sadly, I eventually (if unwillingly) came to the understanding that, even though I looked like most people, I had very little in common with my Indian counterparts. I spoke Punjabi with an accent, my Hindi was 'weak' and I

had a completely different cultural context to those who had been brought up in India. These disparities meant that I interpreted experiences and the social world very differently than the Indians born in India whom I interacted with. Consequently, my interpretation of cultural experiences and the social tapestry was necessarily different than the Indian video gamers whom I encountered. In Goffman's terms, I lacked the frames necessary to make sense of the events in the same way that native Indians interpreted them. This unavoidable divergence underscored my interactions with other players in the context of video game play. Of course, through my ethnographic field work I gained a deeper understanding of the cultural elements that related to how Indian social actors categorised their social fields. However, my understanding after four months of field research is still not as rigorous and a native born Indian.

The most common demographic trait among the customers was their level of affluence. Indulgence customers can broadly be categorised into three distinct types. First, groups of four to 12 male high school students arrived between 2 and 3pm and played for approximately two hours. They typically purchased cola and chips while playing video games. Cola and chips are not foods that one would typically associate with a sense of Indian identity. However, as discussed in more detail in Chapter 5, the consumption of Western goods in India is a marker of status. The students were always from private schools and dressed in uniforms. I had little interaction with the high school students during the ethnography due to my ethical clearance limitations. I did not have authorization to interview any respondents under the age of 18.

Second, there were several groups of males in their mid- to- late 20s who came sporadically in the evenings. The most common was a set of three to six male bankers. The bankers visited Indulgence approximately three times a week, twice during the week and once on weekends. During the week they arrived directly from work, dressed very smartly, and played for about 2 hours. The second most common group, who frequented Indulgence about once a week, were a group of Dell call centre employees. The majority of these video game players were married and used Indulgence as a male space.

Third, parents would often deposit their children, usually between six and 12 years old, at Indulgence using it as a child-minding facility while they went to the shops or ran other errands. I witnessed numerous occasions (approximately 22) where parents left their children at the gaming parlour with the staff for periods ranging from two to five hours. This was most common on weekends. Indulgence was a clean and comfortable

environment with ample staff that were able to take care of children. Indulgence was not designed as a child minding facility, but its location in a busy market meant that it became a convenient location for parents to leave their children for a few hours. The two previous groups of patrons listed above were always male, but groups of children tended to comprise roughly an equal ratio of boys and girls (57% male: 43% female).

Indulgence had four male staff members: Harry, the manager, and three 'housekeeping' or 'kitchen' staff. Harry was 24 years old and had moved from a farming village from Hoshiarpur (130km from Chandigarh) for work. The three male kitchen staff were 15, 16 and 20 years of age. The kitchen staff had a variety of roles, they cleaned spaces, cooked and served food and also played video games with customers. Duties were distributed in strict hierarchy. For example, the manager would never open the reception door for anyone or serve drinks or food. His principal duties were to interact with patrons (i.e. collect money, sell gaming packages, general conversation) and to attend to any computer related difficulties (such as a video game not starting up on a computer). Harry sat by me several times a day engaging in conversation. The staff were paid on salary, hence, there was no incentive for the owner to reduce their working hours. Consequently, the staff would remain at Indulgence regardless of whether or not paying customers were present which resulted in long periods of inactivity. During these times Harry would often play with the two other younger kitchen staff. The oldest staff member, 20 year old Suneel, did not have any interest in playing video games. When the other two staff members played games, the ritual was always the same. It was Harry who initiated the play and asked the boys to set up the game. The staff tended to play during slower periods in the morning, afternoon and an hour before closing. They would also play with customers. For example, if a customer wanted to play a video game but there were was no one to game with, the staff would cease their duties and play with the customer.

The most consistent video game players at Indulgence comprised two groups that came two to three times a week. They both played the first person military-based shooter Call of Duty: Modern Warfare (COD) from 2007 on team death-match mode. A team death-match mode has teams of players gaining points by shooting players from an opposing team during a set amount of time. The team with the highest number of accumulated points wins. Games were played competitively and taken seriously. Players were lively and animated often shouting at each other. I was initially encouraged to play with them; however, both the players and I found the experience frustrating. It was difficult for me to participate because both the staff and the established gaming groups were substantially

above my skill level. The request for me to join them seemed motivated more by etiquette than desire. I played on a total of three occasions. Each time I played with the group, because I was such a bad player, I threw off the balance of the teams and any team that I played on would lose - not the key to popularity.

The best player was always in charge of the team, shouting orders to the other players, directing them, telling them what positions to take and how to move. Of course, because it was an open LAN with everyone physically present, all teams could hear the captains of the other teams. Consequently, directions were constantly being adjusted as players reacted to plans issued by the other team captains. My third game was on a level map with two teams of four players each. Most of the game play occurred in an open courtyard surrounded by buildings. My team captain Harry, told me to hide in a building and not come out until he instructed me. The entire game lasted ten minutes and during that time I was instructed not to leave the building, thus spending most of the game looking outside of a window from the building. It was a frustrating experience, akin to being the last person chosen to play during high school physical education class. After that experience, I seldom played with the more experienced groups that came to Indulgence.

Participant Observation of Birthday Parties

Children's birthday parties were common events in Indulgence. I had to leave the gaming parlour during birthday party events because they were privately hosted. Indulgence would hold approximately three a week. During the busiest months, October and November, there could be as many as three in a single day. Gaining access to birthday parties was imperative to my ethnographic work because they were a major part of the activities at Indulgence.

I had been conducting my ethnography at Indulgence for three weeks and had developed a relatively close relationship with the staff. My request to observe birthday parties was denied, by both the manager and the owner because they were private events that only children, parents and staff were allowed to attend. Trying to find a solution I requested if I could become housekeeping staff. I was requesting a job that was considered far below my status, and therefore, my request was met with amusement and laughter from both the owner and manager. I offered to work as a photographer since I had a DSLR camera. They both agreed and I worked, on a voluntary basis, as the staff photographer. Consequently, my role changed from an observer watching actors who enter the physical

space to an active participant. Participant observation allows the researcher to become a participating member of an existing setting by adopting a role that other members recognise as contextually appropriate and nonthreatening to them (Lindlof, 1995: 4).

I worked at five birthday parties. The birthday parties all followed the same routine. The number of children varied slightly and the number of parents who choose to stay or drop off their kids also differed, but typically a birthday party lasted for 1½ hours. I had limited contact with children because my PhD ethics clearance from the University of Manchester did not allow direct interviews with children. My ethnographic work consisted of taking pictures and recording my observations.

Children and parents would often wander in at various times giving gifts to the birthday child upon entering. Next, the children proceeded to go into the gaming space where a staff member would help them play the game. The game selection process consisted of the staff member listing a few games, the birthday child selecting one, and the staff member loading it for them children to play. Usually a child would choose a game and then gradually everyone would start playing it. Then a child would get bored, ask one of the staff to switch to a different game and then again the process repeated as the children slowly shifted over to the newly selected game. The children were somewhat aware of specific video game titles. The most commonly requested games⁶ among most video gamers at Indulgence were Grand Theft Auto (GTA) and Call of Duty (COD), which were also the first games usually presented to boys. Often the girls would look around at what others were playing and then request one of those games. During the birthday parties, children seldom played LAN games. This is odd because Indulgence is set up specifically for multiplayer LAN play. I suspect the children's lack of LAN playing was because they were unaccustomed to playing interactive multiplayer video games. It was rare that a birthday party had an adequate number of the children whom were familiar enough with LAN gaming for a group game. The few times they engaged in LAN COD gaming the children were confused and frustrated and finally requested to switch to a different game. GTA, along with COD and NFS, were the most popular video games at birthday parties. Both GTA and COD are rated Mature and, therefore, not considered suitable for children, but Manan, the owner of Indulgence, stated that parents were not concerned about the gaming content. He said that most parents were not aware of what was going on. Most Indians view video gaming as a children's practice regardless of the material's content.

⁶ As noted previously, the majority of the customers at Indian video gaming parlours were male. This likely may have impacted video game selection.

The housekeeping staff distributed cheat codes to the birthday kids allowing them to get backpacks, new avatar figures, and so on. The children would either try to make the avatar look like themselves or give the avatar outrageous features (e.g. give the avatar white boxer shorts with hearts on them).

My position as photographer allowed me to ask the occasional question while fulfilling my primary task of taking pictures. By interacting in a specific role with a set duty, I was able to observe how social actors behaved as viewed through the perspective of an Indian gaming parlour staff. Thus, working as a member of staff provided me with insights and experiences that I would not have had as a researcher from the West. Working as a photographer highlighted hierarchical status in Indian culture in a much clearer way than an observational ethnography alone would allow. The ordering of a status-based hierarchy, while also important in the West, is more rigid in an Indian context. A photographer was considered lower status (possessing little cultural or economic capital) and I was generally treated very poorly by the customers. Parents and children treated me better than they did the housekeeping staff, but not nearly as well as the manager or the owner. I was not spoken to unless parents directed me to take a photograph or children demanded things from me. To illustrate, during one of the birthday parties where I was in the role of a photographer, a child told me to get him more mayonnaise sauce for his chips. The housekeeping staff told me to wait until the dinner is served. I told the child that dinner would be served shortly and he replied, ‘What did I tell you to do?’

Even more telling perhaps, parents treated me more respectfully once they discovered that I was from the United Kingdom. Being from the West, in their eyes, I automatically possessed high amounts of social capital and it was assumed that I also had a high degree of economic capital (despite being a PhD student). Similar to my previous mention of Hinglish possessing greater cultural capital than Hindi, due to its association with the West, my association with the West meant that I also possessed greater cultural capital than the average Indian. Parents would then invite me to have dinner or a slice of cake, but neglected to offer the same to the other members of the housekeeping staff. I asked all five sets of parents why they chose to have their child’s party at a gaming parlour, and they all responded that that was where the children wanted to have their party. The parents also stated that it was easier to have a party in a gaming parlour than at home. Furthermore, it puts a limit on the length of the event and when it ends everyone can simply leave. Birthday children knew other children who had celebrated their birthday parties at the

gaming venue. Hence, it appears that word of mouth was how most parents had found out about the various video game parlours.

After I had observed five birthday party events I ceased my structured ethnographic visits. I continued to visit Indulgence as a research site, but without a rigid schedule. Since 11am to 1pm was the slowest period, I began to arrive more commonly after 1pm. At this stage, my focus shifted from observation to conducting interviews.

Conducting Interviews at Indian Gaming Parlours

Understanding the creation of video gaming as a cultural field in India is contingent upon comprehending the specific context in which the actors who engage in the field are situated. Unfortunately, qualitative research is limited by being situated in a specific location and, subsequently, attempts should be made by the analyst to interview actors in order to gain more precise data about their activities (Hammersley, 2005). Also, because I had limited familiarity with Indian culture within India, it was necessary to acquire information directly from my respondents about how they understood their positioning of video game play within the wider context of their lived experiences and social world.

Interviewing the players was helpful in my understanding of how they framed the context of video gaming in their lives, particularly in relation to other aspects of their social lives. Interviews are one of the most powerful methods of understanding human relationships. Moreover, individuals engaged in any cultural practice inevitably attribute meaning to the event which is shaped by their wider circumstances (Bateson, 1972). As the act of interviewing is historically, politically, and contextually situated, interviews in game studies allow the researcher to encompass the gamer's everyday experiences even outside of the game 'to understand the hows of people's lives (the constructive work involved in producing order in everyday life) as well as the traditional whats (activities of everyday life)' (Fontana & Frey, 2005: 10).

The focus of my interviews was to understand how digital game play was contextualised through the adoption and interpretation of the practice in an Indian context. I conducted 25 interviews over a period of four months. The interviewees comprised 23 men, one woman player and one mother who held her daughter's birthday party at Indulgence gaming parlour. Based on my data sample, it is difficult to extrapolate if the majority of Indian gamers are male; however it is probable that the majority of participants who frequent

video gaming parlours are male. This fact is unsurprising, as males in India are afforded more freedom to engage with friends outside of the home (Purewal, 2010) and participating in gaming parlours requires both a higher degree of affluence and autonomy relative to playing video games at home. Since I was not studying a specific component or factor, but rather was engaged in expository research to provide contextual explanations, I used a semi-structured interview approach. I sought to create a data set which expanded on some of the emerging themes of my ethnographic work at the gaming parlour, while acknowledging the wider cultural and structural context of video game play. I had generated initial interview questions in Manchester and expanded upon them in the field. For example the question, 'what is your ethnicity?' while perhaps pertinent in a Western context, tended to exclusively yield the simple response, 'I'm Indian'. As a result, certain questions were modified or abandoned based on input from initial interviews. The final list was comprised of 23 interview questions (see Appendix A). Respondents were encouraged to talk about their experiences. The interviews ranged from 30 minutes to three hours. There was only one 30 minute interview that was an outlier as all the others averaged interviews lasted an hour or more. The interviewee in question seemed reluctant to be interviewed and I assume that his brother, whom I had interviewed previously, likely insisted that he aid in the research project. I provided my potential interviewees the option of where to meet, gave them a copy of the research consent form and asked them for permission to audio record the interview. In conjunction with audio recording I took notes in my journal. This aided when organising the interviews and provided a backup in case the recorder failed. All of the interviews took place in Indulgence, except one interview which was conducted in a nearby coffee shop where the interviewee had gone to meet his friends. Additionally, two supplementary interviews were conducted in the Oxide gaming parlour.

My questions focused on three main aspects of the participant's lives. First, I gathered information about their specific background. How and why they came to Chandigarh and their demographical information such as their age, education, work status and family background. Second, I focused on their gameplay experience. How had they encountered video games? Did they have any video games at home? Why did they play video games? Who did they play with? Third, I was interested in how video games were located in, shaped by and framed by the larger context of their lives. I was not only searching for information specific to video game play, but I was attempting to understand the broader framework of the participant's lives. If they were married what did their wives think of

video game play⁷? Did their wives participate? What did their family think of game play? What other leisure activities were they currently pursuing? What leisure activities had they pursued in the past? What factors had led to them abandoning those activities? How did they spend time with friends and family?

Ethnographic interviewing must search for meaning through the interviewee's knowledge by encouraging respondents to talk about their culture in a non-linear way (Spradley, 1979). Consequently, my interviews were free flowing using my questions as a guide. Since all social behaviour requires context if it is to be understood (Goffman, 1974: 497), I frequently asked probing questions for contextual clarification. For example, a participant described his video game experiences while growing up in a village, and I asked for clarification surrounding the details of village life and how gaming fit into this context. I was able to create discussion about the ways that participants negotiated video game play in relation to other aspects of their lives.

Not having a gatekeeper at Oxide made interviewing impossible. I attempted approaching players on four occasions. The first, a group of two men in their early 20s playing *Need for Speed*, stated that they did not know anything about video games. It was evident by their high skill level that they did and were simply not interested in participating. My second attempt was with two men in their late teens that were playing *Wii* in the motion area. They also responded that they had never played games before. My third attempt, a couple in their early 20s, playing the racing game *Blurr*, told me that they were catching a bus. At my fourth attempt, two men in their early 20s playing *FIFA*, agreed to be interviewed and provided me with their telephone numbers. I tried to arrange a meeting time and place on three separate occasions but on each occasion they failed to appear. I called to inquire why they did not come. The first time they stated that a relative was sick, the second they said that they were out of town and when I called a third time I was told that a cousin was visiting in town. I gave up after the third attempt failed.

At Oxide I was only able to conduct two successful interviews with the manager and one of the staff. As stated previously, even though Oxide was not my main research site, acquiring some data was necessary to obtain contrasting information of a competing Indian video gaming parlour. Furthermore, a third of my respondents were ex-Oxide players who had switched from Oxide to playing exclusively at *Indulgence*. Oxide was the first video

⁷ I had only one woman video gaming participant. She was not married.

gaming parlour in India and, thus, became an example of an initial attempt at glocalising video gaming in a Chandigarian physical space.

Women gamers were not common in either of the gaming parlours, but nonetheless, I felt it was important to interview women because they could provide different insights into the gendered nature of gaming. Any attempts that I made to contact potential women interviewees (e.g. through the men I interviewed in gaming parlours, on a university campus) failed. Approaching potential women respondents was also difficult as I quickly learned that such behaviour could be interpreted as harassment. To locate women participants I attempted to gain access to the University of Chandigarh campus but private spaces in India are carefully guarded. The University of Chandigarh had a fence with armed guards who would not allow me entry. Women were also segregated to a different campus and the security guards were not interested in assisting me with my research. I was told that I would not be allowed entry without permission from either an administrator or a professor from the main campus. The main campus at Chandigarh was co-ed and I was able to gain access with my Canadian passport. My 'outsider' positioning provided me with a privileged position allowing me access to areas where Indians were forbidden.

I made an appointment with a Sociology Professor at Punjab University and asked for her assistance in interviewing women gamers. The professor recommended that I interview her students but she suspected that none of her women students would be gamers. To assist me she had her PhD student facilitate a meeting with a group of four undergraduate students. I interviewed the PhD student, as well as the four undergraduate students, in the Punjab University canteen on the female campus. Upon reaching the gate I called the PhD student and she came and provided me with entry escorting me to where the undergraduate students were waiting for me.

The advantage of conducting a focus group with women is that it helped to re-address the authoritative relationship that can exist between (a male) researcher and (female) research participants (Fine, 1994). One may arguably contend that such male-female power dynamics may be less an issue nowadays; however, gender dynamics are more pronounced in India than they are in the West. Therefore, when interviewing women in India, group interviews are particularly useful since many methods scholars have highlighted the potential for group interviews to reduce the power relationships between the participants and the researcher (Finch, 1984; Oakley, 1981). Furthermore, group interviews are well

suiting for uncovering daily experience through collective stories and narratives (Madriz, 2000: 840). This became apparent in my focus group because the participants' conversation with each another yielded rich data. The discussion amongst the participants allowed me to access viewpoints, attitudes and experiences that I would have been privy to had I only conducted interviews with the women individually. Moreover, my decision was motivated by a certain pragmatism. I had great difficulty getting women to agree to be interviewed the focus group was the most efficient method of accessing a female perspective through which to view the cultural status of gaming in India. Culturally, it also served to protect the reputations of the women respondents as meeting an unknown man one-to-one could be considered inappropriate behaviour.

My second focus group was conducted in the home of one of the parents who held their son's birthday party at the Indulgence gaming parlour. The interview was conducted with the father and mother of a 10-year old son. The parents were in their early 40s. Interviewing the family allowed me to examine the dynamics of Indian family interaction and the positioning of the parents to their son's video game play. I asked questions regarding how and why they decided to have their son's birthday party at Indulgence and whether they had considered holding the birthday party at a more traditional Indian birthday party venue.

Analysing the Research Data

I transcribed all interviews verbatim and then imported into the software NVIVO for data management which allowed me to more easily code and organise the transcripts. The interviews were conducted in English, Hindi or Punjabi and translated into English. Many respondents spoke a combination of English and either Hindi or Punjabi (Hinglish/Pinglish). Hinglish is a hybrid form of English and Hindi which demonstrates some of the linguistic complications in the situation of data and translation. The two languages, and with them two different cultural discourses, converge globalising into a hybrid which is both similar and unique. Hinglish is considered socially superior to Hindi because it is closer to English (Kothari & Snell, 2011: xxiii). However, it is not simply Hindi with smatterings of English. For example, the incorporated English words often take on a new meaning which is different than the original English word. For example, the word 'hi-fi' (short for high fidelity) which in the West denotes a class of high end audio equipment has no reference to sound production in India. Instead, hi-fi refers to something that is modern and sophisticated. These meanings are contextually based upon how the

word is culturally situated by Indians. Hi-fi may have evolved from hi-fi audio equipment which would have been viewed as modern, foreign and well beyond the budget of the average lower or middle class consumer. Over time the word lost its association with audio reproduction and became connected to notions of modernity and elegance. Nonetheless, the origin of the word is lost and its stead is now a new glocalised definition.

I developed a coding framework using thematic analysis based upon multiple readings. The purpose of thematic coding is to identify themes and categories that emerge from the data through readings of the transcripts (Burnard et al., 2008: 430). I highlighted the emerging themes in NVIVO which generated multiple separate documents based upon the thematic categories. The generated documents were analysed for both frequency of the themes occurrence and the conversational context in which the theme was stated. The most frequently occurring themes were used for the foundation of this dissertation. My analysis consisted of an iterative process where I considered how the ethnographic data from my observations (field notes and visual material) and interviews compared and contrasted to the thematic categories that had emerged through my analysis. Kirsch (1999) states that good qualitative research allows the investigator to understand the lives of the participants. Consequently, I was examining the ethnographic data for patterns that explained how actors contextually interpreted and understood their practice of video game play and how they attached culturally situated meaning to the act of video gaming.

My three data chapters are organised around the most prominent themes that emerged through the analysis: actors' first encounters with video games, the physical video gaming parlour space, and how Indian actors make sense of the practice of video gaming. In order to highlight and contrast specific cultural factors which may otherwise be obscured, I conducted a smaller more focused study in Manchester.

Multi-site ethnography: Conducting Secondary Fieldwork in Manchester

The most common modes of ethnographic research focus upon single sites of observation and participation, but single sited methods make it difficult to identify culturally-specific practices. Consequently, regardless of how comprehensive the Indian data set may be, one of my primary issues was how to uncover culturally specific aspects of video game play when only examining one culturally context. After the initial analysis of my Indian fieldwork data and deliberation with my annual review committee it was agreed that my research would benefit from a comparable secondary data set. Of course, cultural

specificities do exist, nevertheless a multi-sited study allowed me to distinguish cultural particularities and global similarities. This follow-up study would help alleviate some of my own normative preconceptions by providing me with a comparable data set to analyse rather than simply relying upon my own experience and cultural context. For example, if video games were perceived a specific way by social actors I did not have a method of contrasting the information to ascertain if it was culturally specific or a general finding, other than my own video gaming experience. Consequently, rather than comparing the Indian field work research to my own notions of what similar behaviour trends in the West would look like, a second field research site in the West would provide data to use for comparison, ultimately providing greater breadth to my research. A secondary data set could be acquired by either contrasting existing studies or by conducting fieldwork in other sites. Given the minimal amount of comparative literature, I concluded that my research would benefit most from conducting a secondary small scale comparative study in Manchester mirroring the methods and procedure used in Chandigarh. Since I was returning to Manchester with a more focused method and conceptual framework developed in Chandigarh, this secondary fieldwork was of a shorter duration (six weeks as opposed to four months) and consisted of a smaller interview sample.

Multi-site studies are conducted by one investigator or more using the same research plan at several different local, national, or international sites. Data collected from multiple sites means that research results are more likely to be applicable to multiple settings (Marcus, 1998: 34). However, a significant criticism of multi-sited ethnography is that focusing on multiple sites results in a less exhaustive study. Since resources are stretched across more than one geographical area, using multiple sites frequently results in a lower contextual quality than traditional ethnographies (Kiser & Hechter, 1991; Nadia & Maeder, 2005) which emphasise ‘entire culture and social life’ of ‘the people’ (Evans-Pritchard, 1951: 79). Furthermore, more than one case dilutes the overall analysis; the greater number of sites inevitably leads to the greater lack of depth in any single case. Shorter durations lead to limited interaction with participants adding dangers of misrepresentation, privileging and exclusion by the researcher (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Hannerz, 2003). To address problems of detail, multi-sited researchers may simplify their research questions. However, in my case, the Manchester data more easily allowed me to identify culturally specific aspects of video gaming, and to also gain some comparison between two social fields: one established and the second one in the process of being formed.

My more extensive ethnography was first conducted in India, initially with no expectation that I would conduct a secondary ethnography in Manchester. Consequently, because I began my India based research without a second research site in mind, many of the criticisms levelled at multi-sited studies failed to pertain to my Indian ethnography. As a result, for the purposes of this project, the Manchester study provides additional data to help elucidate the extent to which the patterns observed in Chandigarh may be generalisable to other fields versus the extent to which the patterns may be culturally specific to Chandigarh. This then also allows me to provide more culturally attuned interpretations of how the social field of video gaming is being shaped in India by video game parlour owners and by video gamers. Of course, adding only one additional city is not sufficient to allow me to generalise any findings with great confidence, nor is that the purpose of qualitative research, but rather it allows for the illumination of aspects of each field which may otherwise be obscured. In particular, without the comparative fieldwork in Manchester it would be difficult to presume whether the patterns I observed are specific to Chandigarh or whether they are general trends in video game practice. As such, the secondary research is necessary to help shed light on the glocalised elements of Indian video gaming practice.

Multiple research sites should be selected so that they are connected in a way where the relationships between them strengthen the research (Hannerz, 2003; 2006). As discussed above, my research required a city in the West to highlight cultural patterns of video game play which were specific to India; Manchester fulfilled this criterion and additionally it also contains a large student population, like Chandigarh. The population of Greater Manchester is approximately 2.7 million people with 514,000 residing in the city centre (UK population estimates, 2015). It is the largest city in North-West England and a major cultural and economic centre. Much older than Chandigarh, Manchester attained city status in 1853, and has a rich history as an industrial city. Manchester has a strong historical link to India. During the time of British rule, the majority of the textile mills in Manchester processed raw cotton that was shipped from India. Contemporary Manchester is a modern, diverse and cosmopolitan city with a modern technological infrastructure and an extremely high concentration of students due to four universities in close geographical proximity (i.e. Manchester Metropolitan University, University of Bolton, University of Salford University and the University of Manchester). At the time, Manchester still had one remaining video game parlour, the Kyoto Lounge, where my fieldwork took place. Despite these similarities, Chandigarh and Manchester are geographically and culturally

very different, which suited my need for a comparative fieldwork site that was culturally distinct from India.

Multi-sited research can significantly increase the complexity of the project (Voigt-Graf, 2010). For greater comparative precision between the two research sites I focused the majority of my data collection on a single fixed physical location: the video gaming venue. This consistency allowed for the ability to more easily compare multi-sited data since I was focused on how social patterns differed between the two research sites in a fixed location (i.e. the video gaming parlours).

The Kyoto Lounge Video Gaming Bar

I conducted my research in Manchester from July to mid-August of 2013. The shorter duration of the fieldwork meant that my research in Manchester could not be as comprehensive as in Chandigarh, although the fact that I lived in Manchester meant that I had some familiarity with Mancunian culture. Fieldwork in Manchester proved to be significantly easier. I located a research site which was comparable to Chandigarh's Indulgence first by searching on the internet and then by asking my friends and acquaintances. I was surprised by my ignorance regarding the city's video gaming venues. Given its ideal infrastructure and population demographics I was expecting to find several video gaming venues, but there was only one video gaming location, called Kyoto Lounge (see Figure 6 below). In Chapter 5, where I discuss video gaming spaces, I argue that video gaming as a practice outside of the home is a diminishing practice in the West.

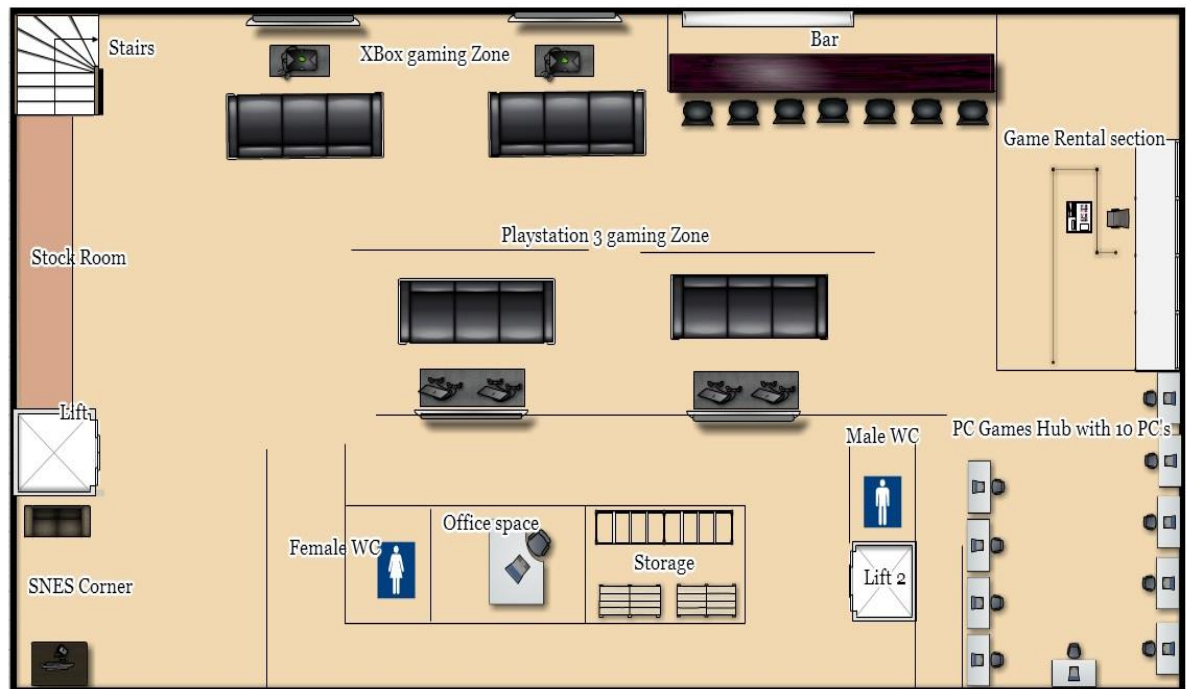


Figure 6. Floor plan of Kyoto Lounge.

Ideally situated to take advantage of the student population from multiple universities, Kyoto Lounge, referred to as a ‘video gaming bar’, was located less than 200 metres from the University of Manchester and 100 metres from Manchester Metropolitan University.

I interviewed the staff at Kyoto Lounge only to discover that the venue was due to close permanently on 10th August 2013. After Kyoto Lounge had closed, a second video gaming bar, Fraggers, opened in February 2014 in Altrincham (located approximately ten miles from Manchester city centre) but this gaming bar also closed in March 2015. At the time of this dissertation writing there are no dedicated video gaming venues in the Greater Manchester area.

I conducted my Manchester fieldwork guided by my Indian research; therefore, the methods I used in the Kyoto Lounge were identical to those I used during my fieldwork in India. I interviewed participants whom I met at the venue and made certain to also interview the manager and staff as I had in Indulgence. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. Additionally, I conducted non-participant and participant observation, and collected photographs and video footage. I conducted nine interviews (one woman, eight men) ranging from 18 to 38 years of age.

The ease of the Manchester interview process greatly contrasted with my experiences in India. Westerners are more familiar with the practice of interviewing, where interviews are a common method of data collection (Halloway, 2005: 53). Often referred to an ‘interview society’, many Western countries commonly employ interview methods when collecting data for purposes of education, electoral politics and market research; and therefore, due to the frequent exposure, citizens become accustomed to such practices (Atkinson & Silverman, 1997). In addition, many of the students in Manchester are likely to have come across interviewing, either directly or through other students, as a research method during their studies. Whereas in Chandigarh my interview approaches were often met by potential respondents with suspicion and apprehension, in Manchester my initial encounters for interviews were welcomed, often enthusiastically. My inquiries to potential participants were met with expressions such as ‘Awesome!’ Participants were keen to express their thoughts about their experiences of video gaming and were happy that I was interested in their hobby. Moreover, a few interviewees felt that an academic interest legitimated their substantial time investment in video gaming. In my Manchester interview recruitment process it was a relief when potential participants who had stated that they would meet me at a location to be interviewed either arrived on time or communicated to me that they were unable to attend and rescheduled. Consequently, the fieldwork in Manchester was significantly easier to conduct than in Chandigarh.

Difficulties When Conducting Research

I have presented the exploration of the research site in a linear manner as a progression from ethnographic observer, to participant photographer and finally interviewer. These transitions may appear seamless but in reality the entire research process was fraught with difficulty. What I have not yet captured are the obstacles involved in conducting research in a city where I was devoid of social ties, thus lacking social capital, and was attempting to generate as much data as possible in a limited time frame.

During the first weeks I encountered intense difficulty conducting my research. Prior to arriving in India, I attempted to contact potential video game players over the internet using Facebook and online gaming forums. Unfortunately, this proved fruitless. It was only after arriving in Chandigarh that the explanation the problems with contacting gamers online became apparent. The internet infrastructure was poor, rendering most types of online gaming impracticable. I placed an ad in the Chandigarh Tribune newspaper requesting research participants. Additionally, I placed posters with both my telephone

number and email addresses in major shopping areas. Neither the newspaper ads nor the postings yielded results and, as a result of not making any contact from potential respondents, I felt defeated.

Attempting to interview people seemed hopeless. When approaching individuals in the various public areas (e.g. cafes, on the street and finally in gaming parlours) I was not able to convince them to be interviewed. My difficulty with finding respondents was complicated by the fact that interviewing for the sake of research is not common in India and, therefore, people were suspicious of my request. They, without exception, would decline unless the interviewer was referred by someone they knew or had something of value that they wanted. Again, my lack of social capital in Chandigarh was a significant obstacle in conducting my research. Frustratingly, subjects would often decline after agreeing to be interviewed. I was unaware that the way that they agreed meant that they had refused. I spent many hours waiting for potential participants at coffee shops who did not arrive and when I called them again they would only reschedule only to not arrive again. In this situation my inability to correctly interpret the Indian dramaturgical performance was deficient because I lacked the understanding of the cues. My father later informed me that it was not what they said that I should pay attention to how they said things. Although I understood his advice I found it unhelpful as I still did not know what cues to look for. In this way, Goffman's dramaturgy illuminates social interactions only when social actors understand the contextual significance of the cues and props involved in the performance.

Indian society is very hierarchically structured (Mines, 1998). Due to the affluence of the city, coupled with the desire to assert ones' social status, wealth is often displayed through this hierarchy. In order for me to find people who would agree to be interviewed I needed to present myself in a way that warranted their respect. I had business cards made to gain a degree of authority. Potential participants always asked what university I was affiliated with and sometimes even asked who my supervisors were. Clothing is also a significant indicator of status. Wearing a T-shirt, although comfortable, is not considered appropriate attire for an adult. To remedy this problem I went to a tailor and had blazers, shirts and trousers made. Dressing well, mentioning that I was foreigner, the sector where I lived and the expensive gym that I was a member of, usually conferred on me a high enough class standing that potential informants were more likely to interact with me.

I have discussed my usage of a mixed qualitative methods approach and how these methods allowed for the emphasis on experience and meaning making (Manning, 2009) when exploring the way in which video game players interpret and make sense of the practice of video game play in a novel context. However, ethnographic methods are not without their faults. In the next section I will discuss some of the critiques of ethnographic methods.

Critiques of Ethnographic Methods

There are two main criticisms levelled at ethnographic research (Brewer, 1994). Firstly, even though I have noted above that one of the strengths of ethnographic methods lies in the fact that reflexivity is an integral part of the research, questions arise about the interpretation of data from ethnographies, and the validity of the use of fieldwork itself (Charmaz, 2006; Creswell, 1998; Hammersley, 1991). As with most qualitative studies, ‘the researcher is the instrument’ (Patton, 2002: 14), therefore, the validity and reliability of research depends on the ability and effort of the researcher (Golafshani, 2003: 600). A criticism of ethnographers is that their personal bias adversely affects their capacity to accurately represent foreign cultures (Clifford, 1981, 1983; Clifford & Marcus, 1986; Marcus, 1980; Marcus and Cushman, 1982; Spencer, 1989; Stocking, 1983). This problem of interpretation is further complicated as the ethnographer, while engaged in fieldwork, chooses which details of his or her research to communicate (Cherny, 1999: 319).

Therefore, the ethnographer’s attempt to speak for a culture is problematic. He or she runs the peril of writing either a closed account that represents only his or her own experiences and interpretations, or an account that is open-ended, ambiguous and possibly confusing. The interpretation and analysis of ethnographic data is dependent upon the rigour of the data. Fundamentally, the best defence against falling prey to criticism of bias and limited accounts of social life is to capture as much comprehensive and thorough data, and to be as systematic as possible with the analysis (Brewer, 1994). Comprehensive data contains a wide breath of holistic and contextual information, thereby providing a more complete picture of social life. Consequently, when I was collecting data my emphasis was on being as thorough as possible in order to capture what Mason (2006) refers to as the multi-dimensional aspect of lived social relations.

Secondly, the validity of ethnographic studies has been questioned due to the lack of generalisable results. The traditional ideology of social research is based on the positivist natural science model that there is an objective truth to be found and that the researcher can

go out to the field and ‘discover’ this truth. Therefore, there was believed that there existed a ‘God’s-eye’ view of the truth that guaranteed absolute methodological certainty (Smith & Deemer, 2000: 877) which could only be accessed by ignoring the subjectivity of the researcher (Campbell, 2003: 8). The notion that an objective truth exists has also been discredited (Hawkesworth, 1990: 138) as it is now understood that the researcher must attend to many points of view, truths, and needs (Newkirk, 1996). Furthermore, most qualitative scholars now agree that ignoring the viewpoint of the investigator overlooks multiple lived perspectives of social life which can render other groups and viewpoints invisible (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000: 2; Naples 2003; Stack, 1974). This result runs counter to the principle of qualitative studies since their purpose is to gather sufficiently rich data to provide a full picture of the social setting. Qualitative researchers employ a wide range of multi-method interconnected practices (Jones, 1999; Lather & Smithies, 1997; Ronai, 1998). Scholars understand that each practice makes the world visible in different ways, therefore, the use of multiple methods reflects an attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question (Denzin & Lincoln, 2004; Flick, 1998). As researchers, we need to acquire information from a broader context in order to situate the local phenomena that we are studying (Hammersley, 2006). In order to generate a more holistic understanding of cultural practice researchers will often complement the ethnographic method with data from documents, maps, photographs, and interviews (Smith, 2006), which, as mentioned previously, I have conducted in order obtain a broader cultural understanding how the Indian actor adopted and situated the practice of playing video games. I will now discuss some of the ethical dimensions involved in my research.

Ethical Issues in Conducting Research

The ethical approach in this study has been concerned with minimising harm to participants (Diener & Crandall, 2004). This has been achieved by being aware of the uneven power differentials between the interviewer and the participants. The ethical dimensions of social science research are primarily concerned with the power differential between those individuals who are doing the research and those that are being researched. Consequently, the criteria for evaluating critical qualitative work are moral and ethical (Denzin, 1997). All ethical decisions entail highly complex deliberations about interactions usually involving several parties where there may be unknown aspects of decision making (Goodwin & Horowitz, 2002; O’Neil, 2002). However, the most common ethical concerns with qualitative research are issues of privacy, consent,

confidentiality, deceit, deception, and causing harm to the participants (Diener & Crandall, 1978; Olesen, 2000: 233).

Qualitative methods place the researcher and the researched in close proximity (Ong, 1995; Stacey, 1991; Visweswaran, 1997) which inherently increases the interaction between them increasing their susceptibility to ethical dilemmas (Weinberg, 2002). Fortunately, even though I had much prolonged interaction with my participants due to the qualitative mixed methods used, the nature of my research centred upon the practice of video gaming that participants did not deem sensitive. Ethical approval was granted by the University Of Manchester School Of Social Sciences' Ethics Panel. I followed all ethical protocols for participants over 18 years of age (exempting children from my sample group). A letter from the Manchester Research Ethics Board supporting my project was obtained and given to the participants. I conducted all my interviews in public video gaming parlours/video gaming bars so that both interviewees and the interviewer (i.e. me) felt safe. Consent is a key ethical principle addressed by every code of ethics in research (Wienberg, 2002: 91), accordingly, the respondents first read the information sheet outlining the study and then they signed a consent form. I communicated to informants that participation was strictly voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time. To preserve anonymity in the transcription the participants' names were changed to pseudonyms. Paper transcripts were kept in a locked drawer and audio files as well as digital versions of the interview transcripts were stored on a password protected university computer.

Eventually, I found the Indulgence gaming parlour which became the central location of my research. As discussed previously, the manager Harry acted as a gatekeeper allowing me access to potential participants. All pictures and videography taken were with permission from both Harry and Manan, the owner of Indulgence. Either Harry or Manan would speak to the customers involved and ask their permission for their participation in my research. I was not permitted to speak to or record any footage unless I was given permission. The customers were told that the data I collected would appear in a dissertation which would be freely distributed under an open access licence. Gatekeepers may sometimes apply unwanted direct or indirect pressure to a person to participate (Webster, Lewis & Brown, 2014: 90).

Both Harry and Manan were in positions of power as the owner and the manager of Indulgence; however, they had a vested interest not to offend any of their customers, for fear of losing business, which meant that they were unlikely to pressure customers to

participant in my research. It was seldom that potential participants did not consent to either Harry or Manan; however, there were two birthday parties where I was denied entry, even as a 'staff' photographer.

My gatekeeper relationships with both Manan, and Harry (in particular) allowed me access to the venue and participants which would have otherwise been impossible. Cotterill cautions that we should distinguish between 'friendship and friendliness' and reminds us that 'close friends do not usually arrive with a tape-recorder, listen carefully and sympathetically to what you have to say and then disappear' (1992: 595). Harry provided me access to the venue and provided the interviewees with reassurance that I could be trusted. Trust changes in the course of research and can move from the spheres of public to private but predicting such movement can be very difficult (Armstead, 1995: 631). Over the course of my research Harry and I became somewhat close. Participant-researcher relations can become complicated when the relationship between the research and the participant changes (Kirsch, 1999: 34). However, other than the occasional dinner we did not correspond with each other outside of the gaming parlour. This was owed in part to him understanding that I was in India to complete a specific project and when my data was collected I would be leaving. Nonetheless, Harry facilitated an 'insider' perspective to my research, which located me in the precarious position somewhere between a customer and a staff member.

Conclusion

Through my research I have attempted to understand numerous factors relating to meaning-making and the lived social experiences of the Indian video game player. This research is exploratory and seeks to capture detailed qualitative data through the utilisation of a multi method qualitative approach to data gathering. Qualitative research is sometimes criticized for its lack of generalisability and validity (Feldman, 2003). Modern notions of qualitative research argue that approaches must be holistic and gather varied perspectives in order to attain a broad understand of complex social phenomena (Manning, 2009). Thus, my intention was to explore the experiential dimension of a practice in a previously unexamined context. My research employed ethnographic methods including non-participant and participant observation, interviews and autoethnography to provide a sense of the experiences of my research participants. Through the analysis of my data I seek to provide a contextually broader multi-dimensional picture of the social setting and life experiences of Indian video game players.

In Chapter 4, I examine the history of digital gaming in India, and I focus on how actors initially encountered video gaming. I argue that the personal and local history of video gaming have created a unique cultural space that effects the emergence of digital game play in culturally specific ways. Cultural differences and restricted resources lead to a very different experience of first encounter video game play than found in the West. Focusing on contemporary physical video gaming spaces, in Chapter 5, I concentrate on how video gaming is becoming a glocalised practice in video gaming parlours in India. Using my field work in Manchester, I argue that even though physical gaming spaces of the parlours share many similarities, they are glocalised for local tastes and conventions, and thus, manifest in the usage of these physical game spaces in different ways. Lastly, in Chapter 6, I shift my focus from the video games themselves, to exploring how social actors make sense of digital games as part of their existing culture. Exploring the implications of glocalisation, I argue that if video games are not successfully interpreted and framed by social actors, then they cannot be glocalised in culturally specific ways, and will be rejected. For digital games to successful, they must make contextual sense to the social actors.

Introduction

In this chapter I examine the history of video gaming in India. I argue that the practice of video gaming is partly shaped by the actor's initial video gaming encounters. The individual's first encounter can be significant in that it can influence whether video games become a permanent fixture in the actor's life or they are rejected. The first video game experiences of Indian actors are set in a cultural context which helps shape how they view, interpret, and situate video game play within their lives. A unique set of socio-economic factors has made the experiences of Indian video game players distinct from Western players. Viewing Indian video game play through an historical lens facilitates analysis of how gaming practices are formed and adapted overall, and my research with gamers facilitates analysis of how the practice of video gaming was initially presented, and how it has since circulated, in the players' lives. Without this attention to the historical and cultural milieu that actors inhabit, it would be impossible to fully appreciate why actors attach particular meanings to their participation in the practice of video game play.

Video games have been presented as strong agents of social change, cultural perpetuation and production (Beck, & Wade, 2004; Iwabuchi, 2002; Steinkuehler, 2006). However, it is important to understand how the social field of video games becomes contextualised as a common practice for the video gamer because the interpretation and understanding of the field is strongly affected by the video gamer's historical context⁸. This is particularly important since 'those who play acquire a historically specific habitus' (Kirkpatrick, 2012: 23). Analyses of how video games are situated and how game-playing experiences are positioned in the socio-cultural context of players' lives are notably absent from most contemporary game studies scholarship. Yet historical socio-cultural context emerged as an important theme in my data.

There is a similar lack of research examining how game play is positioned in non-Western players' lived experiences. Indeed, the absence of such research is significant because

⁸ However, many scholars now point towards the inextricable link between perception and the body and show how the body is engaged in the interaction with digital technologies. Following Walter Benjamin, I concur that the modes of perception are interrelated with the cultural and historical context. In the digital era, the modes of perception demand to be re-examined.

scholarship in this area generally asserts that the social world provides the context for audience processes (Crawford, 2012; 2015). The Indian gamer's life-world is a complicated, multifaceted set of activities which are associated with a further set of complex social relations. These relationships interconnect, and form culturally unique experiences. Understanding these interconnections, and how context positions, limits, and enables game play, is critical for a deeper analysis and understanding of video game play.

This chapter will focus on how the experience of video game play is shaped by the Indian economy and material infrastructure at a macro level, and how these very specific conditions constrained the emergence of video gaming as a practice in India until quite recently. Through the interviews with my Indian participants I will analyse their memories of their first encounters with video gaming. I begin my exploration into the emergence of video game play in India by briefly exploring the political and economic restrictions in place and their effects on the entrance of computer technology, and video game hardware, into India. India's closed trade practices led to the much later entrance of video game technology when compared to other developing countries⁹ and delayed the uptake of the practice. A further consequence of the stagnated entrance of computer technology was that, when it did finally arrive, there was no available cultural frame to aid the comprehension and use of the technology.

Next, I create a timeline for the eventual entry of computers and video games into India, setting the stage for video gaming as a new social field. However, the lack of video gaming history means that the majority of my research participants in India encountered video games later in life than is the norm in Western countries and, therefore, were not raised in a 'culture' of video games. Additionally, companies in India did not mount any substantial marketing campaigns surrounding video games, nor did they alter game content to suit the local culture. Instead, Indian video gamers have adopted foreign digital games through their local play practices, which are socio-culturally situated.

The gaming experiences of Indian actors contrast significantly with those in the West, but my research demonstrates that there was also a difference within India between how urban and rural video game players experienced the technologies involved and the game playing. Whereas the urban experience mirrors to some extent the initial Western encounters with video game play in the 1980s, video game play experiences in rural India are very

⁹ A developing country is a nation with an underdeveloped industrial base, and a low Human Development Index relative to other countries (Arthur & Sheffrin, 2003: 471).

different. Infrastructural limitations coupled with a lifestyle distinct from the urban centres had led to unique initial video game encounters. Next, I point out that regardless of whether my participants encountered video games in an urban or rural context, these encounters almost invariably involved a link to the diaspora and to the West. This relationship between India and the West is particularly pronounced in Chandigarh, as it is both a city with an affluent population where most individuals have diasporic links aboard and also as a city where people across India domestically migrate to. Consequently, the formation of video gaming habitus draws upon Chandigarh's extensive diasporic networks.

Finally, expanding upon the literature chapter, I begin to put Bourdieu's and Goffman's theories of social practice and social interaction to work. I focus on how the participants are engaged in processes of making sense of their initial gaming encounters, and I use aspects of Bourdieu's field theory and of Goffman's notions of frame interpretation to illustrate this process. The purpose of using these two theorists in conjunction is to provide a more holistic explanation of how actors in India migrate between fields, the means by which capital is imported into emerging fields and the field's relation to similar fields. I argue that the later entrance of digital games, combined with India's unique culture, renders the experience of video game play and its reception in India distinct.

India's Closed Economic Restrictions and the Entrance of Video Game Technology

During the post-independence era (1947 to 1991), India had a mixed economy with centrally planned interventionist policies and nationalised sectors of the economy. The objectives of industrial policy were to encourage economic growth through reducing foreign dominance on one hand and by increasing or encouraging indigenous capacity and small scale industry on the other. Many foreign companies initially struggled with breaking into the Indian market but found that 'convincing India that it needs Western junk has not been easy' (New Internationalist Magazine¹⁰, 1988). India's industrialisation strategy emphasised the development of heavy industries and envisioned a dominant role for the public sector. This gave the state a strong entrepreneurial presence in the industrial sector. The government regulated the majority of consumer services, including transportation, radio and television broadcasting, in the hope that this would lead to expansion and diversification of manufacturing which, in turn, would increase employment and stimulate agricultural production (Brass, 1990: 289). One of the consequences of India's economic policy was that access to foreign technology was restricted.

¹⁰ New Internationalist Magazine commenting on Pepsi's difficulties in entering the Indian markets.

By the end of 1990 India was in serious economic catastrophe (Brass, 1994). Referred to as a 'balance of payments crisis', India was not able to balance its accounts because, due to numerous economic factors, exports were significantly less than imports (Sato, 2016: 80). After the fiscal crisis, in 1991, India started to adopt free-market principles and liberalise its economy to welcome international trade, in a move towards an internationally active 'market oriented' economy (Wise, Armijo & Katada, 1995). Indian policy was altered to be more open to trade through a reduction in trade barriers and the liberalisation of foreign investment policies. A reduction of direct controls such as lowering tariff levels was used to stimulate trade and improve the efficiency of the economy. Before the 1991 reforms, foreign equity ownership was restricted to 40 percent foreign investment (Holmes, 2008). The new liberal economic policies allowed greater foreign ownership of companies and opened the way for foreign companies to sell their products in the Indian market. While the change to neo-liberal policies was gradual and tariffs were still very high until the late 1990s, my research participants stated that one of the ways they noticed the opening of the Indian economy was the fact that they now have increased access to digital technologies such as computer hardware and video games. Indians were thus introduced rather late to the Western video gaming industry, which in the West by the late 1990s was now mature, having started developing as a form of mainstream entertainment in the 1970s.

Emergence of Video Games in India

In this section I construct a timeline for the introduction of computer games and video games to India. Generally, gaming hardware was scarce in India and none of my participants had knowledge of any gaming hardware sold in the 1980s. Moreover, several interviewees thought that India did not have video gaming until the mid-1990s. In actual fact, India did have an early history of computers, albeit a very small one. Because no such timeline appears to exist previously, I construct below a timeline based on both primary and secondary research. I begin my discussion with the little known domestic Indian computers.

The introduction of computers in India, unlike in the West, is a very recent phenomenon. Computers initially were used primarily for government, industrial or military purposes and did not become mainstream consumer products until the mid to late 1990s. Two factors caused the delay in the adoption of computers and video gaming in India. First, as discussed earlier, the country's economic legislation and policies were restrictive. Several

of my older respondents (over the age of 25) were aware that the influx of computers and gaming technology was caused by the change of India's economic regulation, which allowed foreign companies to more easily sell their products in India. Previously, computers were not considered an investment priority by either the government or the domestic private sector. Therefore, computer development lacked any serious infrastructural investment, and the government did not have any particular policies concerning the manufacturing or adoption of computer technology (Rajarman, 2012).

Second, when computers did finally start entering the market, infrastructural obstacles such as limited electricity supply continued to restrict their uptake. Frequent regulated 'brown outs' meant that cities would have electricity only for a limited number of hours per day. Adding further difficulty, this electricity had erratic voltage and most electronic devices are sensitive to such fluctuations in power. Voltage regulators, which were expensive and difficult to procure, were needed to protect electronic equipment.

This poor infrastructure and the added expense involved in using electronic devices safely prevented video gaming hardware from becoming accessible or practical to the general public. These problems also made it difficult for India to produce a technology market which would have encouraged a robust local video gaming industry. Although a domestic computer manufacturing base did exist for a short time, it was little known. None of my participants mentioned, or could recall when prompted, information about any Indian made computers, and believed that India had never produced computers domestically. For example:

Gagun: Do you know if there were any Indian computers? I mean ... computers that India made?

Gaur: I don't know. No, I do not think India has made computers. We are not that big into manufacturing computers like Taiwan.
(Indulgence, video game player).

My investigation of the early computer manufacturing in India indicates the historic existence of a small initial domestic computer industry. The first domestic computer in India was the HEC-2M, created in 1954 (Mukherjee, 1996: 13). The HEC-2M was a 16-bit computer introduced by the company Electricions and was used for scientific purposes. Between 1970 and 1980, India emphasised a self-reliant technology sector, but was unable to manufacture competitive computer assemblies. India's first attempt at a mainstream personal computer was in 1975, the Altair 8800 or PE-8. It was introduced by Les

Solomon, a Popular Electronics¹¹ technical editor. Sales of the domestic computer were however very poor and it was quickly discontinued.

One of the few studies that I could locate on computer use in India was Shih & Venkatesh's (2003) examination of computer adoption in the United States, Sweden and India. They found that the United States and Sweden were very similar in regards to the rate at which people acquired computers. Both the United States and Sweden show relatively long histories of computer ownership and usage among their population. Also, based upon their data, the average length of computer ownership in the United States was 7.02 years, 5.10 years in Sweden and 1.92 years in India. Furthermore, in the case of India, 75% of PCs had been acquired just two years prior to their data collection. Both of these factors, the short duration and recent acquisition of computer technology meant that computers were not as common in India as they were in Sweden and the United States. This supports my contention that computer ownership and usage is a more recent phenomenon in India than it is in most Western countries. Furthermore, Shih and Venkatesh state that households in India with multiple computer ownership were very rare at the time of the study (only 0.7% of the sample group). According to the authors households tended to adopt a computer mainly for utilitarian purposes such as using accountancy software for business or a word processor for writing. I will return to this point later, as it is central to my discussion of rural video game play in India.

Given the lack of a strong home-grown computer industry and the restrictions on international trade placed by the government, accessing computer technology in India in the 1980s and 1990s was difficult. This meant that gaming was largely absent from the everyday life of the average Indian. Despite the restrictions placed on trade, a few video game manufacturers attempted to sell their hardware in India. Nintendo was licenced to sell the Nintendo Entertainment system in India in the 1980s under the name Nintendo Samurai, but sales were very poor due to high tariffs and limited distribution. A few companies attempted to use creative means to circumvent the high tariffs. For example, in 1995 Sega agreed on a distribution deal with Shaw Wallace, a West Bengal liquor manufacturer, in order to evade the 80% import tariff (Zachariah, 2011). However, the Sega Mega Drive was still prohibitively expensive with a selling price of 18,000 Indian Rupees (approximately £185). Sega quickly withdrew its products from India after poor sales (History of Sega in India, 2015).

¹¹ Popular Electronics was an American electronics hobbyist magazine published from 1957 to 1999.

Video Gaming in the West

Video gaming did not become popular in India until the 1990s, and this is reflected in my sample group: most of my participants were adults aged between 18 and 43 years and did not have their first encounters with video games until their mid to late teens. The experience in India is a sharp contrast with the experiences of Western people of the same age. For Westerners, the more modest price of technology combined with its perceived disposable nature made it an everyday feature early on in childhood. Computer technology has always been more affordable in the West, and this has encouraged a greater adoption of both computers and video gaming. These factors have led to a delay in the development of a substantive player base in India and, consequently, the number of video gamers has grown at a slower rate than in the West. However, even given the relatively slow rate of adoption, video gaming has gradually emerged as a culturally situated practice in India

The first video game is likely as old as the first computer (Aarseth, 1998: 3). The invention of digital games is attributed to Steve Russell, an MIT researcher, who created Spacewar in 1961. Spacewar quickly spread across university and corporate computer labs in the 1960s (www.web.mit.edu). In Spacewar, two players navigate their spaceships around a planet and its gravitational pull while firing torpedoes at each other's ships while trying to avoid crashing into the planet (Aarseth, 1998: 3). Spacewar is both the first graphical and the first two-player graphical game. It used simple pixel or 'stick man' graphics, with a triangle representing a space ship.

Video games were commercially introduced to the public in the 1970s, but unlike games today, they were not accessible from the home. Instead, these video games were marketed as public amusements and placed in arcades and bars alongside jukeboxes and pinball machines. This was mainly because the technology needed to play video games was far too costly for the average individual. Pong, released in 1972, was the first commercially available video game (Herman, 2004). Pong is a simple two-player game where each player controls a paddle, represented by a bar, which moves vertically on either side of the screen. Players use their paddles to bounce the ball back and forth. The history of home video game consoles in the West is also well documented. The first video game console is attributed to the television engineer Ralph Baer in New York (Herman, 2008: 53). Ralph considered that there must be a way for televisions to be used for interactive purposes rather than as passive devices. He was contracted by his employer Sanders Associates to

build what is in effect a game system called the Brown Box (see Figure 7 below).



Figure 7. The Brown Box. Source: Wikipedia.

The Brown Box allowed popular video game cabinet games to be played on a home console. The first games on the Brown Box were popular versions of arcade cabinet games such as Pong, renamed as Ping-pong. Sanders Associates licensed the Brown Box to Magnavox, which released the system under the name Magnavox Odyssey. However, the Odyssey was only available for purchase from Magnavox retail stores, which led to poor sales. In 1977 Atari released a home console (see Figure 8 on the following page) and became the first company to turn commercial arcade systems into a successful home based video game business. By the early 1980s, the video game industry had grown to a billion dollar industry.



Figure 8. Atari 2600 Game Console. Source: Wikipedia.

I now go on to examine in detail my research participants' first encounters with video gaming. Particularly, I am concerned with how players interpret and situate the act of video game play the first time within a new context and without any history associated with the gaming practice. In Chapter 3, I examined Bourdieu's principles of fields¹², capital and habitus. I explored how the idea of social fields aids in the analysis of video game play. More specifically, video game studies need to be relocated within a broader social context (Crawford, 2015; Dyer-Witherford & Peuter, 2009: xxvi). I argued that the concept of social fields helps to address how actors are located within broader historical, social and cultural contexts. The weaknesses of theorising social groups as subgroups isolated from society is that such conceptions do not consider internal diversity within a subculture. It ignores overlap and movement between subcultures. The context has instability and there are often permeable and ill-defined boundaries (Blackshaw & Crawford, 2009). Games are defined by the people who play them (Fine, 1983), and so how a player is culturally situated has profound effects on their interpretation and adoption of video game play. Neglecting these social elements has led to the idea of video game play as an isolated practice which has in turn, fostered the idea, implicit in much of the research, that we can understand video play as somehow separated from the surrounding culture (Crawford, 2012: 25). Couldry (2003) argues that field theory does not address the limits, overlaps and interrelations of multiple fields. For example, Bourdieu's field theory lacks an adequate analysis of how the carving out of a new field positions the actors in the

¹² A field is an organised, heterogeneous domain of practice and action where agents who are unequally positioned compete and cooperate for their positions within the field (Turner, 1974; Martin, 2003).

social arena, and the relationship of the new field to the surrounding fields and actors. Because actors migrate between different fields, the surrounding social fields have a significant effect on how social actors view the emerging field. For Bourdieu, there exists a system or even a hierarchy of tastes that affect how a field is viewed. Actors must make sense of the new practice through their use of social capital and habitus.

However, Bourdieu's notion of habitus underestimates the actor's ability to reflect upon the conditions of their existence in the field (Born, 2010; Butler, 1999) by ignoring the degree of consciousness that the actor within the field possesses (Jenkins, 1992). Furthermore, Bourdieu's theoretical work centred around established practices, and mostly in Western contexts, and therefore he did not account for how actors position themselves in a field when the field is still emerging and not yet established.

As discussed in Chapter 3, I selected video game parlours as my research location, as these represent a business site in which the field is being negotiated. As Bourdieu notes, not all actors within a field have equal amounts of capital. Actors who engage in the video gaming parlour possess varying amounts of capital which they deploy in different ways. This deployment of capital helps to establish the degree of legitimacy the field contains. However, an emerging field must attract new actors who expend their capital in order for the field to become established. In the case of video gaming in India, if the field of video gaming is not successful in attracting video gamers it will not become established.

Arguing that Bourdieu's theory of practice does not sufficiently take into account that social actors can act with a degree of consciousness, I turned to Goffman's theory of social interaction for a theoretical approach which assigns a greater degree of agency to individuals. For Goffman, individuals use their cultural frames to make sense of the world around them. Together, these theories provide a conceptual tool to understand how an emerging practice is deliberately positioned by social actors within a unique cultural context. Using the concepts of the social field and framing in particular, I will expand on Bourdieu and Goffman's work to explain how actors adopt the practice and ultimately adapt it by situating video gaming in the context of their everyday lives.

The Indian Infrastructural and Material Context of Video Game Play

In this section I discuss how the particular Indian context translates into the scarcity of home computer and console use. Because of India's lack of indigenous video gaming history, there was no generational evolution from simple game play such as Pong and Space Invaders to more complex games like Call of Duty (Shaw, 2013). While video gaming in the West became culturally pervasive by the late 1970s (Wolf, 2001: 15), digital games were not widely accessible in India until the 1990s. Consequently, my Indian research participants' first encounters with video games tended to take place in public spaces and in sharply contrasting urban and rural environments that provided different video game experiences. The Indian infrastructural, material and spatial contexts have led to a very specific appropriation of gaming.

As my research showed that the first encounters of Indian video game players were completely different in an urban compared to a rural environment, I will organise my discussion around this divide to illustrate how these two differing contexts affect the shaping and emergence of a new field. I will use Bourdieu's concepts of field theory to examine how Indian game players appropriated video gaming. Video games have significant ideological and cultural influences on people (Cao & Downing, 2008). Understanding why the participants in my study were interested in video games in their first encounters helps illuminate, not only current practices of video game play, but further generates an understanding of other related practices. In my Manchester research I examined the first encounters of British participants with video games in order to provide a comparison with my Indian participants. In this way, I highlight the importance of how first encounters of video game players are interrelated with the cultural and historical environment in the perception of the video gaming field.

The First Encounters of Urban Video Game Players

As discussed earlier, despite Western video gaming materialising in the late 1970s, most video game play occurred in arcades during that period, only proliferating to the general public during the early 1980s (Sherry, Greenberg, Lucas & Lachlan 2006: 216). Therefore, public video games in the late 1970s and early 1980s profoundly influenced Western youth culture (Panelas, 1983). Arcades created dedicated video game spaces where actors interacted with one another allowing for the formation of a social field.

Playing a 1980s video game on an arcade machine is like viewing a 1930s Hollywood extravaganza on the silver screen rather than watching it at home on a VCR. It's a public rather than a private experience (Herz, 1997: 61).

It is culturally significant that public video game spaces attracted an unusually large number of older actors who, without the existence of these arenas, would not have had contact with video games (Slovin, 2009). Thus, public video gaming spaces allowed the creation of a varied demographic of individuals with video gaming experience. The placement of video games in the public forum (e.g. airports, amusement parks, arcades, bus stations and laundromats) through the popularity of video gaming cabinets in the West meant that social actors who had no previous experience with video games were exposed to them, even if they did not actively participate in video game play. This increased public exposure led to the practice of video game play becoming normalised, not only by those who played video games, but also by those individuals who were exposed to the practice of video gaming.

It followed that since the infrastructure in the West was well-established and could support an increase in the number of electrical devices in use as well as in their sophistication, home consoles came to dominate game play. There was a shift from the public video game market to the private one. This shift to private spaces took place well after most people had experienced video games in public. They were accustomed to the habitus of the field, so by the time video games entered the private space, gaming had become a part of the everyday experience of, not only the video gamer, but also the entire household (Wolf, 2001:171). Video games have been part of Western culture for two generations, and people who have grown up with video games assume they are a normal part of growing up (Wolf, 2008). This was illustrated for example by Sean, one of the research participants I interviewed in Manchester:

Sean: My first memory was playing the first level of Super Mario for the NES. It's hazy because I was only three or four years old. My older brother played video games, so I just remember playing before I knew anything. I guess the early memories of playing video games were all really happy ones. (Kyoto Lounge, video game player).

The research participants in Manchester were approximately the same age as my Indian sample group. However, the experiences of these two groups of participants regarding first video game encounters differed drastically. All the Manchester respondents had similar experiences, with similar key features. First, the Manchester interviewees had their initial video game experiences as children, typically aged less than five years old. Because their first video game encounters were at such a young age, they were unable to provide a vivid

account of their initial digital game experiences. Video gaming for them was an activity that simply had always existed. Second, their first video game experiences were not in a public venue, but rather in the home. Over half of my Manchester participants (n=55%) stated that their first video game encounters were on dedicated video gaming consoles at home, while the rest had their first encounters on home computers. As Sean states above, his memory is 'hazy' because he was so young. In his case, Sean had an older brother who played video games, and this allowed him easy access into the practice of video game play. Whether or not the respondents had older siblings, the Manchester interviewees stated that they had a strong affiliation with the memory of their first encounters and all interviewees associated happiness with video game playing.

Of course, given the small size of my sample I cannot generalise that all video gamers in the West have fond childhood memories of playing video games, but what is interesting, as will become apparent below, is the difference with the Indian participants, most of whom for which video gaming was not such an everyday occurrence and whose parents did not approve of video games, let alone play digital games with their children. It was common among the British participants that video gaming contained an element of family based sociality, as is apparent in the following excerpt from Alex's interview.

Alex: I grew up playing video games; I remember playing Street Fighter 2 with my mum on the Nintendo, in my bedroom and she used to get the instruction book and sit on it so I wouldn't cheat by reading through it as we played the game. But I found out that she used to read the book while I was asleep and then learn it all and then beat us anyway. (Kyoto Lounge, video game player).

The social play with another family member was mentioned by seven of the nine interviewees as a significant childhood memory. As Alex mentions above, he would frequently play the two-player fighting game Street Fighter 2 with his mother. Such early video game memories with parents and siblings were mentioned by the respondents with little prompting and were always highlighted by them as a significant childhood recollection. None of the parents of my Manchester sample group would have been young enough to have grown up playing video games; however all the parents were probably already to some degree accustomed to the field of video gaming because they would likely have had some encounters with video gaming public spaces, as previously discussed. It was therefore perhaps not such a leap for them to play video games with their children. Many of these memories were rooted in strong aspects of sociality. Therefore, I surmise that even though my Manchester respondents possessed the technology to play video

games at home, Kyoto Lounge offered them a greater degree of sociality where they could interact with other individuals who shared their interest in video gaming.

As child in the 1980s, my own parents did not play video games with me, perhaps because they had been socialised in India and were therefore unfamiliar with video game play. I was not allowed to own a video gaming console because my parents considered it to be a distraction from school work. I recall my first video game experience vividly. It was in Vancouver in the local market of the street where I grew up. Next to the grocery store where my mother did her weekly food shop was a florist with two arcade machines. They were old games, even for the time. My mother had popped into the florist with me while shopping for groceries. I saw the arcade game Galaga on its demonstration mode with digital insects dancing across the screen. I asked my mother if I could play, she said next time. The next time I accompanied her shopping, she gave me a quarter to play. I went to the florist with my shiny quarter eager to try Galaga. Slipping the quarter into the slot, I reached up grasping the knobby controls and pushing buttons navigating the spaceship to shoot the space insects. From what I recall, I died quickly. I remember thinking, that's it? It's over? And then proceeding to go back to the grocery store to find my mother who had only begun her shopping. I asked for another quarter, to which she responded, 'No, you've already spent enough. Next time.'

My initial video game encounter, like those of my friends, happened not in the home, but rather with arcade machines which were scattered throughout the city in various locations. Video game consoles were available but they were expensive. I knew of the Nintendo Entertainment System, but was not permitted to own one. Educational success is a key component in the diasporic experience (Waters, 2005: 359). The significance of education to diasporas is often attributed to its correlation with upward mobility (Saran, 2011). Video gaming was viewed as an activity which was counterproductive to scholastic achievement, and therefore, counterproductive to upward social mobility.

This closely mirrored the experiences of my Indian interviews.

Harpal: They [parents] see it has affecting your studies and causing problems. You might be playing late at night because you're so interested in the video game. So in the morning you're tired when you go [to school].
(Indulgence, video game player).

The first encounters among urban Indians (in the mid-1990s) were in many ways very similar to their Western counterparts in that they mirrored the early arcade based

experiences of the first generations of Western video gamers (in the early 1980s). The majority of my Indian sample (n=19) stated that their parents did not allow them to own a video game console in the home, as my parents had not allowed me one either. My data suggest that the two most significant reasons for not owning a console were the cost of the video game console and the negative influence of video games on scholastic achievement. When prompted why parents felt that video gaming would so adversely affect studying, whereas other similar fields such as going to the cinema were not seen to do so, the foremost rationale given is that parents did not understand video gaming.

Harry: Parents wouldn't really allow it because they didn't really have knowledge of those things. This is a bad thing, don't do, why are you doing it? (Indulgence, Manager).

Video games do not have a history of being available in public spaces in India, as they do in West. Consequently there was no ubiquitous societal awareness of what the field of video gaming entailed. When video gaming first came to India it was largely discouraged by parents. Not surprisingly, since the parents of my Indian interviewees had had no early experiences with the activity, they did not hold video gaming in any esteem and did not feel their children should either. Consequently, my Indian respondents' early video gaming memories were solitary and, unlike with the British interviewees, did not include any familial memories. This also positioned the video gaming field outside the social and inside an individual frame of experience, which further reduced the capital of the emerging field. 'Leisure in traditional Indian society had a communitarian flavour' (Verma & Sharma, 2003: 38), and consequently, family based activities, such as a household excursion to watch a Bollywood movie, possess more cultural capital than the solitary act of video gaming because the social family activity connected the home to the local community.

Of the 25 interviewees in India, 16 originated from predominately urban centres. However, the key difference was that the encounters of the Indian respondents occurred about 10 to 15 years later than in the West - the lack of video gaming history in India meant that the majority of people who encountered digital games did so later in life. As a result, Indian gamers were old enough to retain very detailed memories, unlike the vague childhood memories of their Western counterparts.

Ankit: There was a lane store close to my house [in Delhi]. When my parents asked me to buy after I would use some left over money to play ... We did not have video games in the house, parents were fearful of adverse effects to scholastics.

(Indulgence, video game player).

Ankit's first video game encounters mirror my experiences in the West almost exactly. However, one of the crucial differences is that he visited arcade machines in Delhi in 2002, more than 15 years later than my video game store encounters. In the West, arcade machines in stores were becoming rare in 2002, as were arcades themselves. I recall being extremely disappointed when, in the late 1990s, the video game arcade at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver closed down and was replaced by takeout shops. As home console technology became ubiquitous in the West, public arcade video games became far less attractive a pastime. A key difference, however, is that the omnipresent Western arcade experiences of the late 1980s never existed in India. The few Indian arcade machines were owned in ones or twos, generally in variety stores. The scarcity of the video gaming machines coupled with the public locations meant that participants did not play video games very frequently.

Theein: Yes, but again, once in 15 days or something. There used to be a video parlour, video game parlours¹³ you put one rupee coin into there. It was walking distance in my neighbourhood market at that time. They used to be a paan shop and along with it gaming ... See that was for a brief moment. Hardly, 15 or 20 minutes. When I used to accompany my parents or my father or my mother or my sister to the market. I used to say that I want to play a game. So they used to give me 2 or 3 rupees coins so I used to play. It was a small amount of money and time was also less. One rupee game in a Contra used to last for 7 or 8 minutes depending upon how good you play. (Indulgence, video game player).

Theein demonstrates playing video games in India in the late 1990s was, to a degree, similar to experiences of video game play in the West in the early 1980s. Video gaming sessions occurred alone in public environments for infrequent and short durations of time. A solitary activity has additional difficulty in attracting potential candidates due to India's highly social culture. Placing video game machines in stores meant that early video gaming encounters were often solitary, and therefore less attractive to potential gamers. Furthermore, according to my participants, the ubiquitous large arcades of the 1970s and 1980s of the West never existed in India, which meant that video gaming was even more solitary in India. Not surprisingly, all fourteen of the Indian interviewees who originated from urban centres stated that their first encounters were solitary experiences where they played alone. An additional deterrent to video game play was that because they were accompanying their parents, it meant that they had little control over when and what to play. If a field is not visited frequently it cannot become a dominant social arena. Therefore, in the case of first encounters in urban India the lack of frequency, short

¹³ The interviewee is referring to the general store as the video gaming parlour and not a dedicated video gaming space.

durations and a lack of sociality in the gaming field meant that video gaming failed to develop into a dominant field.

During the participants' childhoods, in the rare cases where computers were in the home, interviewees would often play socially with their friends. This social play existed even though the video games themselves were meant for a single player.

Harshdeep: Because my dad used to play Prince of Persia like 10-15 years back. It was very small; he got the game from his office. He downloaded stuff from his office as we didn't have the internet back in 2000 ... friends would come over and play. (Indulgence, video game player).

Even now when PCs and consoles have become more available in India, home consoles remain too expensive for many (Shaw, 2013). Video game consoles are relatively rare in Indian homes because they are expensive and can only be used explicitly for video game play. In contrast, computers are much more common due to their multi-functionality. Only three of all of my Indian participants had experiences with computers at home.

Harshdeep's first video game encounters took place at home because his father was a high ranking Army officer and had access to government computers at work. In addition to his computer at work, his father was given a second computer to perform work related administrative tasks at home. The home computer allowed for a social space that Harshdeep's friends could frequently access. However, in my sample group, first video game encounters with home computers were very rare.

These first encounters of video game users in urban India differ greatly from those in rural India. Rural Indians had further challenges that led to a very different gaming culture than that of urban centres.

The First Encounters of Rural Video Game Players

India's population is 68.70% rural (World Bank, 2012). With such a high population of villagers it is important to examine how the spatial and infrastructural contexts in the rural settings affect how the rural interviewees came to first encounter video games. Not including people from a rural background in my data would have led to an incomplete understanding of the variations in first video game encounters in India.

Computer technology has links to the West and modernism, which equate to a high degree of symbolic capital. This is true particularly in more remote Indian rural areas where video

gaming hardware needs to be first procured from outside the village and brought back. Therefore, in a rural context, video gaming possesses a great deal of symbolic capital because it can only be accessed by individuals who already have significant amounts of economic and social capital. Not only do they need the financial means to procure the hardware, but they also need the cultural capital required to be both aware of the technology and familiar enough with it to know what to buy in the first place. Additionally, a high degree of social capital is necessary to understand how a potential practice may be situated in the greater cultural context. In other words, an actor would need adequate social capital to understand if local actors would be interested in video gaming and have sufficient social networks in the village to attract potential video game players.



Figure 9. A farmhouse in rural India. Source: author.

Rural life offered additional challenges for video gaming, the most notable being the lack of appropriate infrastructure. All of my research participants who originated from rural areas told of the inconsistent voltage of electricity, which required expensive voltage protectors to rectify. The infrastructure in villages was much worse than in the cities. Electricity, particularly in the summer, could be unavailable for days. Therefore, where electricity was necessary, farmers would use diesel generators to supply it. The interviewees who had grown up in rural areas stated that their parents did not judge activities, such as watching television or playing video games, as warranting the use of the

backup diesel generator. Furthermore, the variation in electricity currents was likely to blow out fragile computer circuitry.

All my rural participants came from relatively wealthy agrarian backgrounds. Farmers in India have a considerable amount of wealth in the form of land. Of my rural informants, all but one (i.e. Bharat), came from families that owned a farm. Farm ownership meant that they were wealthier compared to the average village inhabitants who rented land or worked as labourers. Despite this, and in contrast to the urban interviewees, as children, none of my rural participants had access to computers at home or owned video game hardware.

Gagun: Did you have any computers on the farm?

Chodai: What would I do with a computer on farm? I tried to tell my father, pressurise him to get me a computer by telling it would make me do better at school. But he asked how and I couldn't convince [him].

Gagun: Why did you want the computer?

Chodai: Video games, obviously.
(Indulgence, video game player).

Computers were non-existent in the villages and even the village schools did not have them. Part of the reason behind the lack of computers was the lack of infrastructure, but computers had no great utility in the lives of villagers. They were seen as a novelty that lacked practical use in rural India. The parents of the interviewees were uncertain of the utility of computers on a farm. Two interviewees stated that they tried to convince their parents to buy them computers by arguing a case for how it would improve their schooling. However, both respondents failed to convince their parents of the scholastic benefit of computer ownership. It is clear from the extract above that the interviewees themselves were lying to their parents, their real aim being to get a computer on which they could play video games. Rural video gaming was, therefore, done exclusively in makeshift gaming zones.

Kamal: I never had a console and used to play in stores by paying money, wanted to play more and more. (Indulgence, video game player).

In villages all of the participants' first encounters were with crudely made video game arcade machines. These makeshift cabinets came in two varieties. The first were similar to the arcade machines from the West. However, rather than customers paying to play the game until they failed¹⁴, the players instead paid for a set amount of time. Second, the more common variety consisted of video game consoles that had been placed in homemade

¹⁴ Failing in a video game often consists of the player character dying (i.e. losing three lives) or running out of time during a race.

wooden cabinets with a television resting on top of the cabinet (see Figure 4 on the following page). They were composed of wooden arcade cabinets with knobs and buttons similar to the arcade machines in the West. These machines were kept in general stores, Paan shops and sometimes in the entrepreneur's own home.



Figure 10. Makeshift video cabinet consisting of a television on a console that is enclosed in a 'homemade' wooden cabinet.

Source: Courtesy of Brett Cole. Printed with permission.

Harry: It was in my mama ji's¹⁵ village and there it was an army retired colonel and when he was retired in his free time he kept a console with Mario. Back then there were not very many games. We started Mario mostly or Contra. It was with a gamepad. It was in a wooden box But military people never stay free, they always do something or another, open a shop, or like him, he opened a gaming zone. He might have had some knowledge about game and opened up the shop with Mario.

Gagun: How old were you?

Harry: I was about 9 or 10 when I started playing, about 1998.
(Indulgence, manager).

The makeshift cabinets were created by villagers who had either travelled abroad, or had extensive connections to family abroad, and were able to purchase the video game consoles. Creating the cabinet was simply a matter of hiring a carpenter to build it. Because labour is inexpensive in India, the associated cost of building a wooden cabinet to house a video game console was minimal. The interviewees commented on Indians having an 'entrepreneurial spirit'. In the quotation above, a retired army colonel who had

¹⁵ Punjabi for uncle.

travelled extensively to the West during his service came back to India with a gaming console and created a 'gaming zone' in his village.

This was relatively recently, in 1998. By the late 1990s video game consoles such as Nintendo 64, Sega Saturn and the Sony Playstation were already becoming ubiquitous in cities. However, in the rural areas of India, video game consoles were still very rare. Harry would travel 15 kilometres to his uncle's neighbouring village to play video games at the colonel's 'gaming zone'. The gaming zone was the open area room in the front of his house where the cabinet console was located. A shared trait among urban and rural respondents is that both groups had access to video game hardware because of their diasporic connections.

How the research participants viewed the newly emerging field was in part shaped by the nature of their first encounters with video gaming. As discussed above, these encounters differed between those participants who had an urban upbringing compared to those who had grown up in rural areas. For the urban participants, their childhood encounters with video gaming was as a largely a solitary and fairly brief activity performed while their parents were on their way to do an activity (e.g. banking, grocery shopping). As adults they were comfortable with solitary play, but still enjoyed doing so in a more social space. But rural video gaming was initially introduced by entrepreneurs monetising sociality: the initial childhood encounters with video games of my rural participants were in groups. As indicated above, rural children were likely to only encounter video game consoles in a neighbourhood household that had some kind of diasporic connection and willingness to introduce the practice to their community. In contrast, the urban experience for my participants, although in still in India, was glocalised quite differently as a sporadic and solitary activity.

The Creation of a Video Gaming Field through Glocalisation

As discussed in Chapter 2, Robertson (1995) has proposed the term 'glocalisation' arguing that it more accurately expresses the interplay between global and local. Globalisation views dominant cultural forces as large and homogenising, all embracing and disconnected from the local (Backhaus, 2007: 14). Conversely, many theorists contend that global processes are intimately entwined with the local. Global forces are glocalised in the points where they converge with the local, in their points of action and consequences (Backhaus, 2003; Latour, 1993; Robertson, 1992, Swyngedouw, 1997). The term glocalisation, thus, expresses the way globalisation dynamics are reinterpreted locally, leading to an

interaction between the local and global that creates context-dependent outcomes (Robertson, 1992; Swyngedouw, 2004). In understanding these glocalisation processes we are also mapping out how the new field is constructed in terms of positioning of actors and capital. Wherever globalisation has effects, the form of these will depend upon the particular setting or context of the local. As a result, when it comes to consumer products, glocalisation is evident in either the content being changed to suit local tastes (e.g. Hollywood reinterpreted by local Indian tastes to create Bollywood) or the product, its content and its uses being reinterpreted through the local cultural lens.

In my research, the concept of glocalisation illuminates the effects that local context have on the establishment of a video gaming field in India. Glocalisation allows for a greater understanding in how the practice of video gaming is bifurcated according to the Indian and rural experiences. Thus, it reflects how a Western practice is being glocalised differently in India. Glocalisation is essential for understanding the way Indian game players make sense of their first encounters with video games because ‘glocalisation is responsible for the transformation of people’s everyday lives’ (Roudometof, 2005: 113) through the connections with, and thus interpretations of, global technology by actors. The eventual interconnection of global video games with local culture helps us to understand how Indian gamers consume video games and why they do so. Glocalisation allows for the understanding of how Indian video game players make use of, and the meanings they attach to, the video games they play, and how we as researchers are to understand them in the context of their broader lives.

Consalvo (2006: 126 – 127) has argued that video games are a prime realisation of the glocal context. They signify where the global flow finally arrives at local markets, and how it is understood, accepted, embraced, or rejected in that locale, lacking any ‘essential’ or ‘fundamental’ national qualities. Furthermore, she contends that ‘it is foolish if not dangerous to attempt to determine with any authority the ‘essential’ or ‘fundamental’ national qualities that may be found in individual games, and how these qualities are understood by players’ (Consalvo, 2006: 127).

Consalvo’s argument aside, it is possible to discern national differences in how participants interpreted video games. However, I do not claim these to be essential characteristics, but rather produced by the differing socio-historical contexts in which my Indian and British respondents were situated. Moreover, had I sampled a broader range of participants in each country I would likely have found more variation within countries as well. This

merely points to the importance of understanding human action in its context – there is a mutually constitutive relationship between the two.

Consalvo's (2007) book on cheating in video games argues that in the 1980s, computer game magazines helped to shape the culture of gaming in the West. She reasons that gaming magazines created the sense of what an average gamer was like (i.e. young, male, heterosexual with ample disposable income). '[T]he person who is hailed successfully by this discourse has been taught 'how to be a gamer' (Consalvo, 2007: 122). Video gaming does not exist in a vacuum as players are not able to play as they wish without boundaries. Rather, 'before they even pick up a controller, their expectations are shaped to some degree about what to expect and what it means to play a game' (Consalvo, 2007: 177). Adding to the differences mentioned earlier, India does not have a history of video gaming magazines. Even in the present, there is only one Indian gaming magazine called SKOAR! As a result, Consalvo's assertion about the central role of magazines in the West is not applicable here.

Another indicator of how global companies attempt to localise their video games is advertising. Although advertising of video games is still limited, it is slowly growing as global companies position, and thus attempt to glocalise, themselves within the Indian market. Through the consideration of two video game advertisements, from two distinct time periods, I will examine how global video game manufacturers have attempted to glocalise video games. I will first analyse a Sega television advertisement from 1995 and then an Xbox One television/internet advertisement from 2015. The Sega advertisement is a very early commercial from a period when video gaming was uncommon in India, whereas the current Xbox advertisement provides an example of how current video game producers view the practice of video gaming in India.

Shaw Wallace & Co. Ltd's advertisement for the Sega Mega drive, broadcast in 1995, was one of the earliest video gaming commercials in India (Zachariah, 2011). In the commercial a child sits on a couch yawning and looking very bored while watching an Indian movie on television. Then Sega's mascot Sonic the Hedgehog walks across the screen while simultaneously pushing the Indian movie off the television screen. The hedgehog says to the boy:

'Hey kid, whatchya doing watching this stupid film? Don't you want to have fun playing Sega?'
The kid responds, 'Sega, Sega who?'

Sonic the Hedgehog replies, 'Wrong answer pal, show him!'

What ensues is a quick barrage of rock music and images of various video games. The child and the couch are blown to the centre of the wall behind him. An announcer proclaims, 'It's new, it's wild, it's Sega. International Sega TV games are now here, from Shaw Wallace.' The advertisement does not explicitly use the term 'video games', but instead refers to video games as 'TV games' stressing that they are 'new' even though the commercial was aired in the mid-1990s when video games had already been in existence in the West for two decades. The advertisers had probably chosen not to mention the term 'video game' because video gaming did not yet exist as a field in India, and therefore would have made little sense to the average Indian television viewer. Instead, the more familiar term 'television' was applied to describe the game.

This advertising was based upon the common Indian perception that Western products possess a greater degree of symbolic and cultural capital than Indian products. Goffman's (1974) frame analysis asserts that, when one seeks to explain an event, our frames of cognition and valuation guide our perceptions of the event or experience. As such, when a field is still emerging, high capital actors will attempt to influence the framing of the activity. Thus, Wallace and Shaw were attempting to frame video gaming within the context of the 'East' versus 'West' or 'traditional Indian' versus 'modern Western' dichotomy by attempting to position video games as 'international' (i.e. Western) and therefore better than Indian media. Sega is 'international' and 'wild,' whereas the Hindi movie is 'stupid' (Shaw, 2013: 191). As video games were not common in the 1990s, most video games were accessible mainly through connections to the West, often relatives living abroad. The perceived wealth of those in the diaspora and of the West further reinforced framing video games as a higher status, even exotic Western practice.

Regardless of the status and exoticism of video games, video games must provide fulfilment of a need of the Indian actor in order to gain widespread cultural acceptance. I posit that one of the ways in which a practice becomes glocalised is through providing 'cultural satisfaction'. Often used in studies of work and organisation, cultural satisfaction is used to assess how satisfied employees are with the way in which their culture is portrayed and respected in their workplace (Haar & Brougham, 2011: 463). There is a strong correlation between a positive portrayal of one's culture and life satisfaction (Diener & Diener, 1995). I surmise that video games must provide cultural satisfaction in order to be successfully glocalised by making them a relevant activity in a local cultural context. The initial stage of this was the more general introduction and use of the hardware to play

the game, its form. Discussed in Chapter 6, the second stage was making the activity, and the content, the games themselves, relevant. The Sega advertisement was unsuccessful in glocalising video gaming because it framed the activity as having low cultural satisfaction. By doing so, the field of video gaming is in opposition to other established Indian fields.

Instead of opposing and ridiculing Indian culture, Microsoft's contemporary Xbox advertisement attempts to create a high degree of cultural satisfaction through the construction of an imagined historical narrative of the Indian video game player. The commercial for the 2015 Microsoft Xbox One attempts to make video game play a more social, and hence central, aspect of family play. This lends game play greater legitimacy by situating it within the acceptable frame of 'family life'. The advertisement showcases how the Xbox One reinvents the family living room. In Indian homes the living room is the room that the family and guests share. In affluent homes it will contain a large television. The Xbox One commercial uses a comedic style with male video gamers playing and interacting with their parents in the same room. Throughout the commercial, parents interact with their children and, in one particular scene a father plays alongside his son. The commercial rarely displays video gamers playing alone. This facilitates framing the practice as similar to other popular social activities in India. Nine of my interviewees had mentioned the card game *Seep* when they discussed traditional games that they played with their friends and parents. *Seep* is the most common card game in India, involving four players over many sessions and multiple hours. According to Huizinga, there can be no civilization without play and rules of fair play, without conventions consciously established and adhered to, or without clear knowledge of how to win and lose graciously (Anchor, 1978). While Indians do not interpret play as having any 'productive' value, a play-based activity such as *Seep* is considered to have an extremely high degree of social value. Reminiscent of traditional Indian games, the Xbox commercial makes indirect reference to other practices such as the card game *Seep*. Through depicting the video gaming as a socially centred practice it becomes more easily contextualised as an Indian practice.

The Microsoft Xbox commercial differs from the Sega commercial, which emphasised the individuality, modernity and Western 'coolness' of video games in the 1990s. In the Xbox commercial, there is very little focus on the actual games. Instead, the ad emphasises the voice commands as a significant feature for the Xbox One (Alwani, 2015). The commercial shows the video game console being switched on, turned off and its various media capabilities. Another notable contrast between the two ads is how the Sega

commercial from the 1990s emphasises the ‘Westernness’ of video game play, whereas the Xbox commercial places the Xbox (quite literally) in the centre of Indian home life and, thus, situates it as a practice that is compatible with Indian social and cultural practices. Furthermore, the commercial shows flashback scenes of Indian video gaming in the past. In one sequence two gamers are playing a game of Pong and commenting on the impressiveness of the graphics. One gamer turns to the other saying, ‘Dude, these graphics man, it’s insane.’ Gamer two responds, ‘I know right, amazing.’ The commercial then flash-forwards to the present with the same two gamers playing a new Xbox One with high end graphics. Sceptically, one comments to the other, ‘Seriously tell me, how is this next gen?’ The other gamer responds, ‘This is unrealistic.’

Such a sequence depicts an imagined historical narrative, mirroring that of the West, where the Indian video gamers on screen have seemingly taken part in the practice of video gaming for an extended period of time. However, as discussed earlier, India does not have a long history of video game play; therefore the emphasis on the social interaction and the fictional narrative history of video gaming in the ad can be viewed as an attempt to create a sense of tradition within the Indian context for a practice which does not yet have one. Creating a fictitious history serves to ideologically glocalise the video gaming field by presenting it as though it was already an established part of everyday life in India. The Xbox commercial presents the practice of video gaming, specifically home video game play, as an activity which has long existed as an integral part of the India social fabric.

In doing so, the field of video gaming is also presented as a one that has a high degree of cultural capital. Video gaming is depicted as a shared social activity, one where the parents will either engage game play with their children or stay in the same space (i.e. the lounge) while the children play. This serves to position video gaming as a similar field to watching movies; a family based activity that is associated with the long history of Bollywood in India. This is a much more sensitive and effective approach than the Sega advertisement, which derided Bollywood, and by extension, Indian culture. The Xbox advertisement seems more successful because it attempted to situate the Western practices of video gaming with an Indian cultural frame, that of social and family activity. Through this frame, gaming is not ‘better’ than Indian social and cultural practices; gaming ‘is’ an Indian social and cultural practice. If this positioning is successful, the attempt of the video game producers is to imbue video gaming with a similar degree of cultural capital as other socially and culturally valued activities.

Strategically, this is effective because most social activities in India are framed with greater legitimacy than individual activities. Gaming is also framed as a communal practice which unites family, thus, aligning itself with traditional Indian values. Instead of video gaming being depicted as a new individual Western activity, global companies are now attempting to globalise the practice of video gaming in India through culturally embedding the activity in a social setting. The attempt to configure the habitus of video gaming as a heavily social activity lends itself well to the practice of using the gaming parlours as social spaces where birthday parties have eventually become the primary events.

According to my research participants, there were two ways in which the video gaming hardware necessary for the early field formation of video gaming made its way into India. First, several participants stated that relatives living ‘abroad’ would often bring gifts of clothing or something that was notably Western and difficult to procure in India. It is customary for Indians living abroad to come back to visit family in India as a way of expressing loyalty towards their family. Eight of my 25 Indian participants stated that their relatives who lived abroad had brought a gaming console as a gift in the late 1990s. Second, video gaming, as an activity, also provided a shared experience between children from the West and their Indian counterparts. This shared experience was important given that many of the younger generation who lived abroad spoke little Punjabi, a factor that can easily create disjunction within diasporic communities. Anderson (1991) observes that most values are constructed to create a common union or sense of community among its members. For a generation that is not raised in India and only comes back every few years to visit with their parents, having some interest in their homeland, or expressing loyalty towards it, can be difficult. This sense of disconnection is something that I also experienced during my field research. I had no shared cultural base or shared experiences with the majority of my participants. Their childhood consisted of playing leisure outdoor games that I was unfamiliar with (e.g. cricket, gooli danda, marbles). A shared experience of playing video games provided me with a common experience that we could not only speak of, but also share together as a practice.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that computers generally, video game hardware and the activity of gaming specifically, came later to India because of infrastructural and political

challenges, and the slow opening of India's economy to international market forces. Drawing on Bourdieu's theory of fields, I have illustrated some of the differences between Western and Indian encounters with video gaming practices by detailing how established the field was in each of these spaces. Once established through the glocalisation of practices, the field contains its own habitus. Video games in India are standard international products with negligible adaptation through content or, until recently, marketing. Goffman's concept of frame interpretation illustrates how video game companies have attempted to market their products in India. The Sega commercial, serves as an example of an advertisement which frames the practice of video gaming in opposition to Indian traditional value, whereas the contemporary Microsoft Xbox One commercial attempts to create an imaginary historical narrative where video games have always been part of the Indian cultural milieu. Because video games in India were not adapted to a local Indian context, the process of glocalisation appears to have occurred by framing video game playing as a collective and social practice which is compatible with Indian cultural values centred on the family and inclusive social practices.

Examining the historically situated practices of early video game players in India I have explored the infrastructural and spatial concerns which were specific to the local contexts in which the research participants lived when growing up and which have shaped how video games were appropriated as local practices. I describe how and why the urban and rural video gaming experiences differed. While the focus in this chapter has been on the historical context of video game play, in Chapter 5 I explore the how video gaming, now a more established field, has found a place for itself in Indian culture. Based on my fieldwork data, I will show how this has been facilitated by video gaming being positioned in relation to similar fields, which I refer to as adjacent fields. I examine the creation of physical video gaming spaces called 'gaming parlours' and how high capital actors consciously create these spaces to encourage an entrance of other actors and direct their performances. Finally, I show how even these efforts by local actors have been channelled and adapted in turn to conform to social and cultural forces and the practices of their customers.

Introduction

In the previous chapter I examined how and when video games started appearing in India, and the manner in which individual Indians would have encountered them. I focused on the entry of computer and gaming technology into India, arguing that the scarcity of video gaming, due to political sanctions and infrastructural constraints, had a formative effect on shaping the first video game encounters of Indian actors. In part, this late entrance and initial scarcity of video game hardware has created a unique situation where, for most of the research participants, digital gaming is a recent phenomenon without any history. Consequently, the field of video gaming in India, unlike in the West, is a new field which is still emerging. The recent emergence of video gaming in India offers an opportunity to examine how the global practice of video gaming is glocalised, and thus, contextualised to suit local tastes.

In the present chapter I continue to develop the theme of glocalisation that I introduced in Chapter 4, and my overarching argument is that the practice of video gaming in India is becoming, to a certain extent, glocalised in an Indian context and thus more routinized and a part of everyday life. Due to the relative newness of video gaming in the country, however, this transformation from the scarce to the commonplace is still in process. Drawing upon ethnographic data, I describe how this process is taking place in gaming spaces, particularly in video gaming parlours. These fieldwork data provide important insights into the kinds of meanings that the research participants attached to the activity of video gaming and allow for a greater understanding of how video gaming as a practice is located within the contemporary cultural setting of India. I am concerned with how actors contextually position the new practice of video gaming, and how this has led to the establishment of a field-specific habitus. Gaming parlours in India are consciously curated by their owners, whom I call entrepreneurial actors, in an attempt to carve out a space, both literally and figuratively, for the Indian gamer. Through an examination of the process by which such entrepreneurial actors use their capital¹⁶ to create a physical space in which to anchor the field of video gaming, I argue that there is more conscious work conducted in the creation of this field than Bourdieu envisions of well-established fields. In creating a physical space for practices within a field that is still emerging, I maintain that entrepreneurial actors are able to intentionally influence how video gaming takes shape in

¹⁶ I use capital in a Bourdieusian sense encompassing economic, social and cultural dimensions.

India. I consider the creation of one particular Indian gaming parlour called Indulgence with a focus on how various choices in terms of its location and its material arrangement were made to attract social and to direct them to make use of the space in certain ways. Comparative data from my secondary field site, in Manchester, a video gaming space called Kyoto Lounge, illustrates that while physical spaces are related to similar social fields, they are also glocalised for local tastes and conventions. My argument is that in the establishment of a new field, existing forms of capital and cultural conventions play a large part in the construction of spaces for the enactment of the field's practices.

Habitus and the Field

As discussed in Chapter 2, for Bourdieu the social world is comprised of a number of fields, each with a specific structure that is based upon how various forms of capital are differentiated and distributed (Bourdieu, 1986). Bourdieu's model of interaction conceptualises such fields as 'sites of struggle' (1978: 317) in which actors compete to improve their social positioning. An actor's capital allows him or her to position themselves advantageously not only within fields in which they already know the rules of the game, but also when moving into less familiar fields. For example, a famous athlete may use his or her capital to become a successful politician, using various forms of capital (e.g. fame, social connections, wealth) to facilitate their positioning within the field that they are entering (i.e. making use of existing name recognition during their candidacy for political office). Thus, social actors leverage their economic, cultural and social capital in an attempt to improve their hierarchical position relative to other actors in the field 'seek[ing] to preserve or overturn the existing distribution of capital.' (Wacquant, 2008: 268). Each actor is defined by the position that he or she is able to acquire within the given field, thereby constituting a station within the hierarchy of the social field (Webb, Schirato & Danaher 2002: 21-22). As discussed later, based upon my research, my participants in the social field of video gaming in India and the United Kingdom, will inevitably attempt to define their positions in ways which are advantageous to them through the operation and organisation of video gaming spaces and the capital which they bring with them into the gaming parlours.

Bourdieu identifies habitus as an essential aspect of the operation of social fields. He states that habitus is 'internalised' and 'embodied' (Bourdieu, 1989: 18) within the actor through numerous social structures such as family and education. Consisting of our thoughts, tastes, beliefs and interests and our understanding of the world, habitus

conditions our very perceptions (Bourdieu, 1984: 170) and strongly influences our actions within a social field.

Habitus is a means of ‘ordering and understanding and helping to determine the range of acceptable actions we might take’ (Nichols, 2013: 37) and plays a central role in the reproduction of fields through the way it influences and shapes the actions of individuals (Connolly, 2004: 87). The reproduction and of habitus occurs unconsciously, without ‘without any deliberate pursuit of coherence ... without any conscious concentration,’ (1984: 170) comprising the ‘common sense’ or taken for granted aspects of the field. Implicit within this formulation of habitus is an acknowledgement that social structure is deeply ingrained within all actors and that our ways of interpreting the social world are influenced by our social milieu (Houston, 2002: 157; Jenkins, 1992). Serving to regulate an individual’s particular choices, habitus functions in response to social actor’s context and situation. In the case of video gaming in India, social actors possess their ingrained habitus based upon their cultural upbringing; however, the emerging field of video gaming has not yet fully formed a traditional field-specific habitus, which means that the field of video gaming is more culturally malleable than other more established fields.

Thus, the position within the social field for the actor is a result of the interaction between the individual’s habitus and of how much capital that person has accumulated (Caholn, 1993: 5). This accumulation of capital, coupled with habitus, determines whether an actor is in a subordinate or dominant position in a field.

The relation between habitus and field operates in two ways. On one side, it is a relation of *conditioning*: the field structures the habitus, which is the product of the embodiment of the immanent necessity of the field (or of a hierarchy of intersecting fields). On the other side, it is a relation of knowledge of *cognitive construction*: habitus contributes to constituting the field as a meaningful world, a world endowed with sense or with value, in which it is worth investing one’s energy. (Bourdieu in Wacquant, 1992: 127, original emphasis).

Due to this relationship, habitus cannot be understood to be independent of the fields in which the actor lives and functions because an actor’s habitus is legitimised only in conjunction with social structures of those fields (Bourdieu, 1989). In this way, habitus of the video gamer is impossible to remove from the field of video gaming because ‘habitus is only invoked within a particular set of social circumstances and only makes sense in relation to particular power positions’ (Nichols, 2013: 37). For the actor, habitus gives meaning to their practices, conditioning the individual’s sense of purpose and belief in the ‘stakes of the field’ (Bourdieu, 1990: 67), ensuring the actor’s continued participation in

the field and thus the field's continuation. In the case of gamers, if they do not believe in the value of the video gaming as a practice, video gaming as a social field will cease to exist.

Through the embodiment of habitus the actor comes to develop an unconscious practical sense of what behaviour can be capitalised on and valued within the field. Hence, the field is realised through the influence it exerts upon the individual, thus shaping the actor's behaviour (Connolly, 2004: 87). When the habitus of the individual is in harmony with the social field, the actor performs successfully and seemingly instinctually works towards his or her goals. For example, actors who enter the field of academia require, at the minimum, some amount of academic capital (in most cases a post graduate degree). They may attempt to increase their position, through the logic of the field¹⁷, by accumulation of capital (e.g. conference papers, books, journal publications) (Wacquant, 2008: 268). However, their ability to do so is dependent upon the alignment of habitus and field. Bourdieu seems to presume such pre-existing 'rules of the game' based upon his exploration of existing fields and their attendant habitus that are securely established. The pertinent question regarding the usefulness of this theory in the context of video gaming in India is to what degree it applies in the context of an emergent field.

Emerging Fields

Fields for Bourdieu are the context in which any practice takes place (Reay, 2010: 284) and with each field comes a particular set of rules (Hilgers & Mangez, 2015: 5) to which the actor who enters it is expected to adhere (Crawford, 2012: 117). For the sake of clarity, I call the habitus that allows an actor to successfully function within the field a *field-specific habitus*.

Actors from similar social conditions are likely to have comparable combinations of capital, a similar habitus, and are likely to agree upon the 'rules of the game' of their social field. The problematic in my research is that video gaming entered India much later than in the West. As discussed in Chapter 4, the entrance of video game technology into India encountered several unique challenges including governmental import restrictions and the poor condition of the general infrastructure. Consequently, no strong home-grown computer industry emerged, while at the same time not much video gaming hardware or

¹⁷ An actor entering the academic field must acquire a minimum amount of educational capital and abide by the rules and regulations of the academic community.

software was imported into the country. Video gaming thus arrived in India much later with a strong Western disposition and has yet to become as popular a practice as it is in the West. These governmental and technological challenges have now been overcome and video gaming is slowly becoming a more established Indian practice. I argue that video gaming is in other words an *emerging field*, the practices of which are newly forming, and is resultantly still in the process of constructing the logic or ‘feel for the game’ that is required for actors to successfully comport themselves within the field. In other words, as an emerging field, Indian video gaming as yet lacks a set, or agreed upon, field-specific habitus in India. Because of processes of glocalisation, the Western field of video gaming is in many ways being transformed as it travels to India, meaning that the field-specific habitus that is to be found in Western countries is not appropriate for the glocalised field of video gaming in India. The lack of an established field-specific habitus is evident in Indian video gaming parlours such as Indulgence, which was only two years old at the time of my field research. As I will demonstrate below, being part of the emerging field, the gaming parlour represented a site in which actors were working to develop a field-specific habitus.

Most Indian social actors encounter the field for the first time with little prior connection to or knowledge of the practice of video gaming. Therefore, they lack an embodied habitus which would help to unconsciously shape their actions in the field. Yet it is evident that actors are able to successfully engage with a practice within a new field, for example a gaming parlour, despite the lack of such resources. This flexibility poses a challenge for Bourdieu’s account because social actors in emerging fields lack an internationalised recognition of the practices of the field (i.e. an embodied field-specific habitus).

The solution to this challenge lies in exploring the role of key actors who are responsible for consciously curating the field by making reference to other established fields to which actors are well-tuned, and thus making the field, to an extent, intelligible and familiar to those who enter the field for the first time. In the West, as Consalvo (2008: 25) argues, it was gaming magazines that took on this role and taught their readers ‘how to play and what to expect from games,’ so that the expectations of potential gamers were shaped before they had encounters with the practice of video gaming. In other words, the gaming magazines helped to shape the field-specific habitus so that potential video gamers had an understanding of what the field entailed before they entered it.

Gaming magazines are rare in India and so have not had the effect of sensitising actors in the same way. Instead, according to my data, a different type of key actor has had some

responsibility for consciously shaping the field: the owners of video game parlours. I am concerned with how new fields become structured and to this end I examined what role these entrepreneurial actors play in the formation of the emerging field. If gaming parlours lack a field-specific habitus, how do actors create and negotiate the meaning of new practices? Actors who enter the video gaming field inevitably bring with them their capital and habitus from other fields. However, as Indian video gaming is still an emerging field, my participants were both unclear of the exact stakes and how to effectively deploy their capital. As evidenced in Chapter 4, many of my participants had some limited exposure to the practice of video gaming. However, access to video gaming technology was rare due to the infrastructural and economic limitations previously discussed. Thus, for my Indian participants, video gaming was largely an unknown practice in the 1990s. Bourdieu's field theory relies on actors having been unconsciously adapted to the pre-existing rules of the game, so that through use of capital and habitus they can successfully navigate their way through the field's hierarchies. As such, it cannot account for how actors interact with an emerging field that lacks such established parameters.

Goffman's dramaturgy is effective in explaining the micro-sociological interactions of actors who enter fields for the first time since it helps us to understand how actors approach new fields from within the greater context of their lived experiences and day-to-day interactions with one another. As discussed in Chapter 2, Goffman's dramaturgy and framing offer insight into how actors may go about making sense of interactions when they enter new fields. Props serve as recognisable cues for the actor to direct his or her performance in a successful way. Actors will also interpret their social world based upon frames. Goffman (197: 21) introduces the concept of frames with an example:

When an individual in our Western society recognises a particular event, he tends, whatever else he does, to imply in this response (and in effect employ) one or more frameworks or schemata of interpretation ... [which] is seen as rendering what would otherwise be a meaningless aspect of the scene into something that is meaningful.

Frames organise experiences and provide information to social actors about how to interpret their experiences. It is through frames that social actors gather a situated perspective which allows them to understand context which enabling the interpretation of the experience (Brooks, 2007: 4). For example, interpreting an event as a fight or practice fighting depends upon the frame applied.

The Creation of the Video Gaming Parlour Indulgence

Although physical spaces are not necessarily a prerequisite for a field's existence, the fact that we as human beings occupy the physical world necessitates that most of our social spaces 'are inscribed in physical space' (Bourdieu, 1996: 13). Therefore, physical spaces both support and constrain social life (Savage, 2011: 515).

The role of physical spaces is central to understanding how the video gaming field has been organised in the Indian cultural context. Crucial to this process is the relation between the social field and the material and spatial characteristics of gaming parlours. Since video gaming is an emerging field, it is not yet associated with particular ways of organising behaviour. Nonetheless, the video game parlour owners and managers are clearly attempting to encourage a particular type of interaction, and deployment of capital, in the physical space as part of their attempts to consolidate their position within this new social field. I call these high capital actors, who are actively working towards shaping the field, *entrepreneurial actors*. The goal of the entrepreneurial actors is to create a physical space and to establish a particular habitus with the intention of attracting the types of actor they would like to see inhabit the physical space (i.e. the video gaming parlour).

A method of attracting actors with the desired amounts of capital is conducted by socially positioning the practices and organising them so that they are so that it is understood to be situated closely to actors in other fields, which I term adjacent fields. By adjacent fields I am referring to fields that actors frequent that bear some similarity to emerging fields. Adjacent fields contain actors who have similar traits to those that entrepreneurial actors wish to establish within the emerging field.

Fields that are too dissimilar are unlikely to attract actors from adjacent fields. For example, in the field of education it is easier to attract actors who are already involved in the practice of post-secondary education into university. I argue that, in the case of video gaming in India, entrepreneurial actors have attempted to culturally frame the emerging field of video gaming by shaping the physical spaces of video gaming parlours so that they resemble the spatial organisation of adjacent fields, such as restaurants. If the entrepreneurial actors are successful then the emerging field will attract actors from adjacent fields who will adopt the practices.

The majority of my ethnographic research in India took place in a gaming parlour called Indulgence, which was only a little over two years old at the time. I selected it as the main ethnographic research site because it was the most popular gaming parlour in Chandigarh.

However, frequenting gaming parlours was not common in Chandigarh, which is why Manan, the owner of Indulgence and the entrepreneurial actor in this case, needed to attract actors from fields that he identified as being adjacent. Manan was twenty-eight years old, had a Master's degree from Cambridge and came from a wealthy family. He possessed high amounts of economic, cultural and social capital which allowed him to establish Indulgence.

Manan: I had all this support of my parents and that's 'cause it's not my personal money involved here. I'm 28 and I won't have that much of wealth to get a gaming place and in India loans and financing is still not that very popular. It is supposed to be a bad habit to be on credit. So, yeah, everybody is very happy and I'm thankful for them that they've supported what I had in my mind. (Indulgence, Owner).

In addition, Manan's foreign education and Cambridge degree provided him with significant amounts of cultural capital. His experiences in the United Kingdom had made him aware of dedicated gaming spaces and, as a result, he had the idea of importing the practice to India. Entrepreneurial actors such as Manan consciously attempt to create spaces that are comfortable for those with the kinds of tastes and capital that they wish to attract. In more other words, they consciously try to bring about a space that is amenable to the unconscious habitus of adjacent fields so as to attract actors into the emerging field. It is important to highlight that entrepreneurial actors are not in advance precisely aware of how actors will, if at all, adopt the new practice. They are merely attempting to utilise their capital to consciously construct the most effective physical space in order to attract actors who will hopefully adopt the new practice and, thus, establish it as part of the local culture. Below I detail the reasoning that Manan reported lay behind his decisions when he was in the process of setting up Indulgence. The first step in establishing the video gaming parlour was to select an appropriate geographic location in Chandigarh.

Manan: ... in terms of hanging out, [sector] 35C has maximum crowds, not just for shopping. (Indulgence, owner).

Indulgence was located in sector 35, which is the second most 'hi-fi'¹⁸ sector. Sector 35 contains a high concentration of restaurants encouraging customers to sit and socialise while eating and drinking. It is an affluent, busy area, largely consisting of a market, and is also in close proximity to several high schools, providing potential actors who may enter the emerging field. The main shopping district, sector 17, is substantially larger than sector 35, but sector 35 has a greater number of restaurants than clothing stores.

¹⁸ 'hi-fi' is an Indian-English term which denotes being of a higher level, modern and sophisticated

Manan speculated that individuals who are shopping for clothing are less likely to adopt the practice of video gaming than are those who are ‘hanging out’ or eating out in restaurants. Manan postulated that practices such as ‘hanging out’ and eating in restaurants were more similar to the practices of the video gaming parlour, while the practice of ‘clothes shopping’ was not. For example, an area with many clothing stores may encourage one to move from one shop to the next in a hurried fashion as the goal is not to socialise in the location but rather to browse possible acquisitions. Both ‘hanging-out’ and eating at restaurants, on the other hand, are highly social practices that are performed in groups and generally carried out over longer durations of time in one place. Manan reasoned that actors who ‘hang out’ and eat out are more likely to be attracted to the specific offerings of video gaming parlours (i.e. a similar engagement of social interaction) rather than those who are engaged in more focused activities such as shopping. Furthermore, the physical spaces themselves in sector 35 (i.e. the shopping district), are not functionally arranged to encourage potential consumers to remain for extended periods. The sector’s spatial arrangement of few sitting areas, narrow corridors and staircases between shops appeared to discourage lengthier stays. It was this reasoning that led Manan to locate Indulgence in sector 35 rather than sector 17.



Figure 11. The front of Indulgence gaming parlour. Source: author.

Sector 35 also allowed for more visible signage on the outside of the storefront. Given that gaming parlours were uncommon in Chandigarh it was important to Manan that the name of the parlour was easily visible. Figure 11 (above) depicts the outside of the Indulgence gaming parlour. The sign ‘Indulgence’ is prominently displayed on the first floor. It is

located above three eateries – New Zealand Natural Premium Ice cream, Subway¹⁹ and Sher-e-Punjab. Placing the gaming parlour within close proximity to restaurants meant the majority of the actors who visited the sector came in groups and expected to stay in one place for extended periods of time. Actors came to sector 35 to ‘hang out’, or in other words, to spend social and leisure time together.

As an entrepreneurial actor, Manan, in his desire to create a physical space for the practice, is restricted by the amount of capital that he possesses. In the quotation below, Manan highlights that even though the ground floor is the most desirable location it is not economically feasible for him to hire a space:

Gagun: The ground floor is more expensive?

Manan: See one thing was space was the biggest constraint I would say. Ground floor was not affordable, one thing ... Obviously, it is hell expensive. And then sector 17, why not sector 17? They always want sector 17. One thing is space. Secondly, they don't have their fronts like over here. They're hidden. They go through the corridors and are not really seen outside. That's one thing. And 17 and 35 were the only two markets which had the maximum number of crowds. (Indulgence, owner).

Manan states that a ground floor location would afford greater visibility but both the cost of the space and availability renders a ground floor venue prohibitive. As a compromise, Manan explains that the gaming space in sector 35 has a front window where both its interior and game players are visible. And because the video gaming field is not established, Manan wished to have a location where he could display a large ‘front’ or signage to communicate the existence of the physical space to potential actors and demonstrate the kinds of practices involved²⁰. Greater visibility becomes even more integral to setting up a parlour so as to make passers-by aware of the emerging field. The size of the physical space was also an important consideration. The gaming parlour was large, about 2000 square feet, slightly smaller than the total combined space of the three restaurants beneath it. Hence, Manan sacrificed certain requirements (i.e. the ideal location on the ground floor) in order to retain other factors he deemed more critical in attracting potential actors to the space (i.e. sector location, visibility, physical size). In this way, Manan can be acutely conscious of how they are creating a physical space within an emerging field.

¹⁹ Western fast-food restaurants, although inexpensive and common in the West, are expensive in India. Consequently, they tend to be located in affluent areas. Thus, placing Indulgence in an affluent market meant that the emerging practice could potentially attract actors with high economic capital.

²⁰ I found Manan's explanation of the importance of signage peculiar because, as discussed in Chapter 3 and again below, I was unable to decipher that Indulgence was a gaming space. Nonetheless, Manan had emphasised the importance of having visible signage to make it clear that Indulgence occupied the physical store front.

Figure 12 below shows the stairs leading up towards the Indulgence gaming parlour. The intentional graffiti with playful colours and non-symmetrical patterns greatly contrasts with the entrance of Indulgence at the top of the stairs where one is greeted by the front desk, the name of the parlour prominently displayed, and by the upscale parlour interior including the illuminated glass flooring.

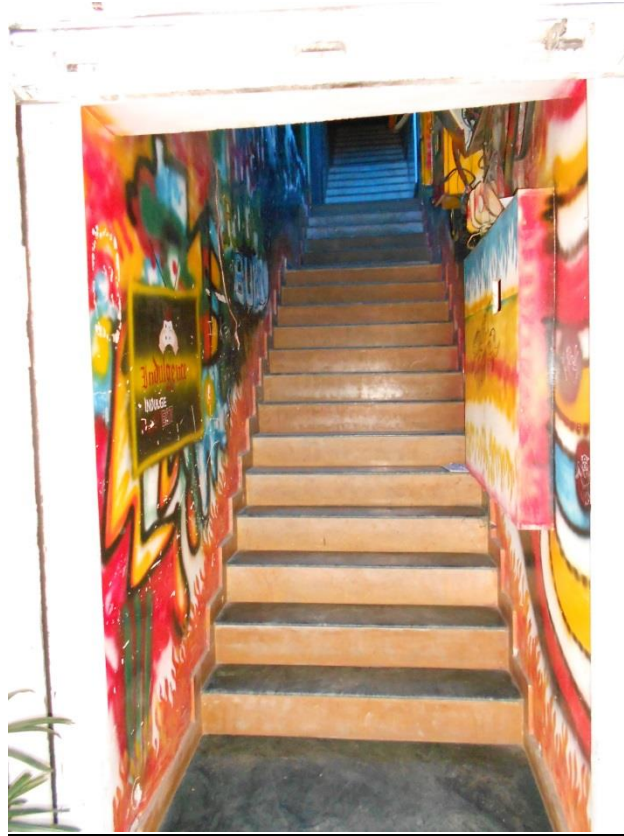


Figure 12. Stairway to Indulgence. Source: author.

I found Manan's selection of the name 'Indulgence' counterintuitive because it did not indicate any connection to the field of video gaming. I assumed that given the negative connotation surrounding gaming in India (i.e. as a childish activity), a neutral name was more likely to invite the occasional passer-by who was perhaps searching for a café and happened to stumble upon the gaming parlour. Investigating further, I asked Manan why he chose the name Indulgence.

Manan: And the Indulgence came to my mind. Why just keep gaming for gamers? Why just keep gaming for gamers, it's something that anybody and anyone can enjoy. And look for gamers as your bread earners when you can make gamers out of normal people. So that's when Indulgence came to my mind. It was purely out of the curiosity that people need entertainment and people need to be fed entertainment in this manner ... Coming back to the gaming that's how Indulgence came to my mind I

want a gaming place that spells gaming I would have called it Game Drone or maybe Federation of Gaming or maybe anything which spelled game. I said no, I wanted a place where people could come, hang out and play. Even though I wanted people to play I never promoted it just to play. Okay you're here to hang out and experience gaming. And that's why the Indulgence name appeared. (Indulgence, owner).

Manan states that in order to attract more customers, he has tried to remove any reference to video gaming in both the name and the general organisation of the space. The purpose of the unobtrusive name 'Indulgence' was to dissociate the physical gaming parlour from the practice of video gaming. Manan feared that a name associated with video gaming would not attract an adequate number of actors into the space. Of course, his motivation was driven by his desire to increase his profit as much as possible by attracting the widest range of actors who have the requisite economic and cultural capital. Rather than create a child-centric space (i.e. making parlours a space in which video gaming can be practised by children) Manan attempted to create a space that attracted a wider demographic, hoping that the practices would be welcomed by a broader range of consumers. It is significant to note that he stated that he was consciously attempting to create gamers out of 'normal people' as he called them. In other words, he was aware that he was creating the physical space so that actors would adopt the practice and become gamers. He believed that he could successfully persuade an actor who had limited previous exposure to video gaming to take up the practice.

Organisation of Physical Space around the Habitus of Adjacent Fields

Manan's decisions related to the organisation of the interior space of the gaming parlour also reflected his wish to attract actors. An emerging field must establish a field-specific habitus, and one of the ways in which this occurs is through entrepreneurial actors organising physical spaces in such a way that it communicates something legible and familiar (and attractive) to potential social actors entering the field. When actors initially enter the physical spaces of the field they must rely on cues, including the physical layout of the space and the props positioned by the entrepreneurial actors. These cues are used by the actors entering the field to make sense of the space and to direct their performance within it.

The guiding principle behind the décor of Indulgence was neutrality; so much so that there were no feminine, masculine or video game related furnishings, such as video gaming posters, in the venue. Some of the shelves had bags and other memorabilia for sale. Again, I want to emphasise that none of them were associated with video gaming. Manan viewed

the neutrality of the décor as essential because he felt that a ‘clean’ neutral look was necessary in order for Indulgence to be attractive to the greatest number of potential customers. Furthermore, the parlour contained a distinct lack of Indian aesthetic markers, which initially struck me as odd. Reading through my initial ethnographic field notes I recall that I was struggling with my own preconceived notions of the constitution of how interior spaces in India ‘should’ be organised. I expected, in my own neo-Western Indian sensibility, to see pictures of men with moustaches and turbans riding elephants nestled next to tapestries of monkeys and earthen oblong pots containing peacock feathers. Rather, I was greeted by a waving and grinning Chinese ‘lucky’ cat annoyingly waving at me while smiling incessantly. Even the window blinds were neutral white with a sleek modern floral pattern.

These interior design choices must be interpreted in light of the fact that upper class Indians tend to have a modern Western aesthetic sensibility. I learned over time that my initial reactions to the look and feel of Indulgence were due to the particular Western lens that I was viewing these spaces through. I realised that I had little first-hand knowledge about contemporary Indian life and habitus. This was made particularly clear to me through some of my interviews, such as in the extract below where it becomes clear that Sajin gets annoyed at what he sees as my pre-conceived notions of the cultural habits of Indians. In this segment of the interview I had inquired about Sajin’s identity as Indian pertaining to his tastes and cultural aesthetics.

Sajin²¹: Well why Indians are not enjoying burgers and chips? Do you think we sit in villages playing with goats?

Gagun: No that’s not quite what I meant. I was referring to what is Indian, um...ya know the notion of Indianness?

Sajin: No I do not know what you are meaning. Who are you to tell me what Indian is?

Gagun: Nobody, absolutely nobody.

Sajin: Good, now you understand.

(Indulgence, video game player).

Sajin mocked my assumption that he, living in India, did not consume Westernised goods (i.e. burgers and chips) because he interpreted my assessment of him as someone from a village, or lacking cultural awareness or sophistication. Certain products and practices have become globalised and through this process tend to be associated with the West. Coffee, for example, is believed to have originated from Ethiopia but is now a universal beverage found almost anywhere in the world but is mainly associated with the West and

²¹ It is important to note that on print it may appear to the reader that Saijin is angry or upset. However, he made his statements in a joking light-hearted tone.

contemporary capitalism due to the popularity of franchises like Starbucks. The same can be said to be true of burgers, chips and pizza thanks to companies such as McDonalds and Pizza Hut that have restaurants across the globe. The outcome of this process is that access to Westernised, globalised practices can become a marker of living a modern, affluent or successful life. This association affected how Manan tried to shape the space in Indulgence, particularly its aesthetic character, in order to attract a particular kind of Indian consumer from adjacent fields. The Indulgence Cherry Beans Café pictured in Figure 13 below was located to the right of the entrance. Decorated in a modern style it served a few Indian items such as chai²² and pakoras but largely its menu consisted of Western food (e.g. burgers, chips, coffee). My surprise over the ‘Westernness’ of India stemmed from my own, perhaps imperialistic, notions of how India and Indian culture should be represented, not with pizza but with daal²³ and tandoori chicken. When I asked one of the gamers why daal was not included on the menu of Cherry Beans Café he laughed at me and said that he could have that at home. I lacked an understanding of the degree to which Indians consume globalised products and of how Indians covet Western products. Initially therefore I did not understand the habitus around which Manan was attempting to shape Indulgence.



Figure 13. Mothers waiting for their children at the Chery Beans Café Indulgence.
Source: author.

²² Chai, which is Indian in origin, can now be found at many cafés in the West.

²³ Daal is a staple lentil dish common in all houses – it could be termed the ‘pasta’ or ‘macaroni’ of Indian food.

In terms of ambience, Indulgence, as well as Oxide (the other Indian video gaming parlour I visited), was always well lit, quiet and served no alcohol. These markers made it conducive to being deemed a family orientated space. Furthermore, as pictured in Figure 14 below, Indulgence offered seating areas away from the video game play where parents could socialise and enjoy food while their children played.



Figure 14. Parents and grandparents enjoying soda pop while the children play video games. Source: author.

In India public spaces tend to be created to be open, welcoming, and family friendly environments where acceptable activities are sanctioned and enforced by staff. In the West the staff in gaming spaces provide little enforcement of how the space is used, something that is instead largely dictated by the atmosphere of the venue itself. My observations in other Indian spaces, like shopping malls, are similar. Shopping malls are also family orientated environments where one is greeted by armed security guards carrying large automatic guns. India is not a violent society and Chandigarh has no social unrest. The large guns are strictly for display to keep out undesirable actors (i.e. the impoverished). The guns function as props which possess symbolic capital communicating that only a certain type of actor is permitted into the space. The use of armed guards with guns is thus a way of attempting to delineate who can feel comfortable within the field. Manan actively sought to construct Indulgence as a space that attracted actors wishing to demonstrate their social position by ensuring that the space appealed to actors with certain forms of capital related to the adjacent fields of leisure and consumerism:

Manan: Chandigarh is a market, you need to give people something to brag about. It shouldn't be like okay fine. You need to give something to brag about it. May otiya

see ga²⁴. They need to tell. A sense of superiority that okay fine the place should give you a sense of superiority that you've been there, you're sitting there. (Indulgence, Owner).

Bourdieu (1996: 13) states that 'there is no space in a hierarchical society, which is not hierarchized and which does not express social hierarchies.' For Manan, to succeed in obtaining his goal of creating a home for the practice of video gaming that would attract actors with high degrees of capital, it was necessary that the décor of the physical space resembled other similar high capital fields. Therefore, the chairs, flooring and tables were all similar to those one would find in a high-end restaurant. The 'hi-fi' furnishings of Indulgence are also demonstrated through its gaming hardware – high-end Razer and Cyborg gaming mice, Saitek gaming keyboards, and computer towers with neon lighting. Manan's efforts to communicate to actors who entered the gaming parlour that Indulgence was a high capital space were very effective, as evidenced by the initial reactions that Harry, the manager of the parlour, had to the space:

Harry: When I was first here, I wasn't into going around and when I came here it seemed hi fi. The lighting on the floor, the first time that I stepped on it, I was scared, what place have I come to it's kinda hi fi. I was feeling nervous. What, how will I start here? (Indulgence, manager).

Harry was from a rural village 110 km from Chandigarh. Even though he had lived in Chandigarh for a few years prior to entering the parlour, Harry's first foray into Indulgence for a job interview made him quite nervous. He described how he gingerly stepped onto the raised glass floor. The glass glowed when illuminated by the fluorescent lights placed in it. Harry said that he not seen anything like that floor before and wondered if he was able to work in such an upscale venue.

Harry's experiences help demonstrate the effectiveness of Manan's attempts to create a gaming parlour space that communicated very specific messages about the kind of social actors that were welcome there. Harry's rural village background meant that he did not possess the economic capital required to become a customer of the video gaming lounge. The gaming space proclaims itself as an establishment for an upmarket clientele. Harry's rural background and lack of any substantial computer knowledge further made him doubt his ability to perform managerial duties in a video gaming parlour. Therefore, the conscious entrepreneurial actor, in this case Manan, was successful in creating a space that conveyed a sense of being at the top of the Indian social hierarchy. Manan had created such a physical space in the hopes that it would attract actors with high amounts of

²⁴ Hindi for 'He was there.' In this context the expression is used to boast about a place where someone has been.

economic as well as cultural and symbolic capital. He was attempting to attune the space to a particular habitus that could be found in adjacent fields such as restaurants. In doing so, he was also hoping to put off those without the appropriate habitus. The following passage from my field notes makes it clear that Manan was successful, at least on some occasions:

It's about 4pm, nothing important to report. I'm sitting in my usual chair. Harry [the manager] is at his desk and seems to be texting on his phone. The boys [housekeeping staff] are about doing some mostly unnecessary light dusting at this place [Indulgence gaming parlour]. It's always clean and it seems unnecessary to dust it every day. A man walks in. He seems to be in his mid-20s dressed in jeans, sandals and a half sleeved button shirt. Harry looks up at him as he enters walking slowly on the glass floor. When he enters he seems to first look at the glass floor, then the large LCD televisions and finally me sitting in the chair. Then he simply smiles at Harry, waves and says 'Okay' and leaves. As this has been the only excitement in the last few hours I turn to Harry and ask, 'Why did he leave?' Harry responds, 'Because he didn't belong here.' 'Yes, but why?' I ask curiously. Harry looking at me with a puzzled expression further states, 'Because he just didn't, I knew it and he knew it too. If he had belonged, he would have stayed.' (Fieldnote entry).

Indulgence, as a field of social interaction, is arranged with numerous cues that assist new actors in making sense of the nature of the space upon entering it for the first time. These cues are what Goffman calls 'props' that help inform actors who enter the parlour how the interaction should proceed. In the field diary excerpt above, the LCD televisions in Indulgence were physically impressive. They were new and their size dominated the physical space of the gaming parlour. Also, the elevated glass floor in the entrance further expressed the elite status of the space because unlike the televisions that are necessary for video gaming, the glass floor lacks any practical application (i.e. it is purely aesthetic). Both the television and the glass floor communicate to an actor entering the field that there is a significant degree of economic capital required to partake in activities in the parlour. Furthermore, the actor must possess enough cultural capital to be knowledgeable of computers, something that is not necessarily common in India. This, of course, is no different than how most social fields communicate through the use of props. For example, expensive hotels will usually contain large ostentatious foyers. These entrance spaces are the first physical areas that actors enter and serve to communicate both what kind of actor and performance is expected or deemed appropriate for this space. As noted, the video gaming field is only emerging in India, and thus video gaming parlours play a crucial role in communicating to potential actors what type of performance is expected and who is the 'right' kind of social actor to participate in the emergent field. Conversely, the organisation of the physical space also acts to keep out the 'wrong' kind of actor. To use Goffman's terms, it is likely that the man who entered the gaming parlour only to turn around and

swiftly exit did not think that he could provide a successful performance. He chose to leave the field rather than risking embarrassment through a discredited performance.

The Organisation of Space in Indulgence and Cultural Situatedness

The props in Indulgence served to communicate what the appropriate field-specific habitus was for that space, and could therefore be used by actors to determine not only whether they ‘belonged’ there, but also how they should direct their performance. One way of making these signals as clear as possible in an emerging field is to emulate the practices and the organisation of space in established fields. Therefore, it is not surprising that Manan drew upon India’s strong tradition of both board games and card games when organising the physical space in Indulgence. ‘Play has always formed a central part of the sociocultural experience of Indians’ (Mukherjee, 2015: 35). As noted by Topsfield, India has a rich tradition of play, having given rise to many traditional games:

It is not commonly known that several of the world’s most popular board games were conceived in the Indian subcontinent, including ludo, snakes & ladders and not to forget chess, the greatest and most universal board game of all (Topsfield, 2007: 3).

Board games would sometimes be etched on the granite floor slabs in old temples and public spaces (Dharmendra, 2015). Figure 15 shows participants gathered around the classic Indian board game Chaduranga with many spectators.



Figure 15. Participants playing a game of Four Handed Chaduranga.

Source: Courtesy Brett Cole Photography. Permitted with permission.

The activity of playing cards is reputed to have originated in India (Riddell, 2013: 6). Even in contemporary India, card playing is a common leisure activity (Pal, Chaudhury, Sengupta & Das, 2002). Growing up in Canada I recall my father countless times sitting outside with his friends on a picnic bench in the lane playing the popular Indian card game Seep²⁵, just as the men in Figure 16 below, until my mother came out and shouted at everyone to go home to their wives.



**Figure 16. Men playing seep in the street in Chandigarh.
Source: Courtesy Sarbjit Kaur. Printed with permission.**

Seep is always played by social actors forming a circle around the central play area. This is a practice that is culturally embedded in the field of ‘game play’ in India, and thus a circular play area has a very strong cultural connotation for Indians. As depicted in Figure 15 (on the preceding page) and Figure 16 above, a circular sitting area is a strong symbolic prop which sets the performance for a ludic social space play area which is instantly

²⁵ Seep is a popular northern Indian fishing card game played with four people divided into two-player partnerships. The partners sit across from each other and the first set of partners to score 100 points win. Fishing card games are a style of card games in which a player matches a card from their hand with one or more of those lying face-up on the playing surface.

recognised by observers. It is not surprising that the gaming computers in Indulgence were arranged in a layout that resembled how traditional card games are played, thereby emphasising a similar social experience.



Figure 17. Circular table in Indulgence gaming parlour. Source: author.

The circular table in the centre of the gaming lounge (see Figure 7 above) was the most coveted sitting area for participants. Gamers played LAN games where they competed with each other in teams. The circular arrangement serves as a prop mirroring the style of interactive play in Seep, where players have and expect a high degree of sociality. Material objects and their arrangements are inevitably imbued with cultural significance understood by social actors through culturally situated behaviour and thinking (Deetz, 1977: 35). The use of the recognisable circular prop provides culturally established organisation of space which affects how video gaming is viewed, i.e. as a practice that feels familiar. In the gaming parlour gamers recognised, as I had, that the space was organised in a similar configuration to how their fathers would play cards, but instead of taking part in the traditional field of card games, they were participating in the newly emerging field of video gaming. The analogous physical organisation of space thus had two functions: it provided a familiar experience but also provided clues to proper behaviour. The props in the gaming parlour serve to convey information about how the owner would like the performance to be conducted, but the active performance of the actors who enter the field is central in the formation of a field-specific habitus.

Popular Indian games tend to have an element of both cooperation and competition. By creating a physical space that mimics the arrangement of how space is arranged during traditional game playing, the entrepreneurial actor invokes the attributes of the traditional activity. This association functions to locate the emerging field as adjacent to established fields, communicating to actors the similarity between the fields. Actors are, in other words, subtly informed that they can expect a similar social experience in the emerging field as the ones they are already familiar with, which serves to lower the threshold of the new field while simultaneously increasing the chance they will return in the future. It made perfect sense then, that Indulgence positioned video gaming as a social activity to be performed in groups allowing players to mirror familiar Indian activities such as board and card games. However, even though Manan wanted to create an inclusive environment where both women and men played, the physical modelling of the gaming parlour to a traditionally male leisure activity may have fostered a field-specific habitus which configured the parlour as a male space. As such, the practice of video gaming would have also been associated as a male practice. Women rarely played in Indulgence, and when they entered the gaming spaces (usually for brief periods of times), they spectated rather than played. For example, during birthday parties mothers rarely played and simply observed the children playing. I use the term observation here in relation to their children and not the video games. The mothers did not seem to understand the video games and expressed little interest in them. They were interested in observing their children. It was more common for fathers to engage in video game play with the children during birthday parties. Furthermore, when the fathers watched their children play they also were observing the actual practice of video game play. The organisation of Indulgence starkly contrasts with how space was structured in the Kyoto Lounge in Manchester, which I will now examine.

The Kyoto Lounge: A Video Gaming Bar in Manchester

I selected Manchester (see Figure 18 below) as my secondary research site in order to assist my examination and identification of the cultural aspects of the emerging field of video gaming in India by providing a point of comparison to my ethnographic data from India. Kyoto Lounge was the only dedicated video gaming venue in Manchester. It was established 2010 by Arj when he was 29 years old.



Figure 18. The last day of Kyoto Lounge – 10 August 2013.

Source: Kyoto Lounge staff. Printed with permission

The Kyoto Lounge and Indulgence had many similarities. Both were dedicated video gaming spaces located near the city centre. Arj, the owner of the Kyoto Lounge, stated that he had selected a ‘fantastic location’ situated near four universities (i.e. Manchester Metropolitan University, the Royal Northern College of Music, University of Salford and the University of Manchester). His choice of location was informed by the existence of numerous pubs and bars nearby, which mainly served university students. The clientele reflected the location, as according to Arj and the other staff members, the customers mainly comprised men aged between 18 and 28. Furthermore, the majority of them were closer to university age (about 18 to 24). However, despite the similar functions of the two venues, that is, to provide actors a physical space in which to engage in the practice of video gaming, the actors who frequented Kyoto Lounge and Indulgence perceived and used the spaces very differently. In no small part, some of these variances were due to differences in what the two entrepreneurial actors, Arj and Manan, perceived to be the most effective way of attracting gamers. Even though the purpose of the two spaces was the same (i.e. to attract actors to partake in the practice and thus spend money), each was configured slightly differently in recognition of local cultural tastes. In contrast to Indulgence, which attempted to emulate a family friendly environment more reminiscent of restaurants and shopping malls, Kyoto Lounge was configured as a bar.

Whereas Indulgence could be loosely described as a video gaming venue that served snacks and drinks, Kyoto Lounge was a bar that offered the opportunity to play video games. Arj believed that he could create a physical space that would attract actors by

offering video games as an additional practice in the already established social field of drinking. Bars, given their long history, are associated with established props and a well-cemented habitus. Actors recognise bars as environments with high degrees of sociality, even amongst strangers.

Arj: We decided to open the Kyoto Lounge because we thought there was a niche in the market where people can play games with each other in a social environment. It didn't have to be people who just know each other. It could be random people playing with each other, and that's when we thought that having an area where you can just walk in and play major games would be a good business idea for us. (Kyoto Lounge, Owner).

The décor and ambience of the Kyoto Lounge reflected the fact that it was first and foremost a bar. It was underground, dark and often had loud music playing. Indulgence made the majority of its revenue from actual game play, while in contrast Kyoto Lounge relied on alcohol and food for its income. Thus, the aim of Kyoto Lounge was not to attract players, but rather it used video games to attract customers who would consume food and beverages. Indulgence, as described above, was specifically designed as a venue that would attract would-be gamers into the new field of video gaming. At Indulgence, gamers rarely ever drank or ate when playing video games and such consumption mostly took place in the designated eating area. Contrarily, at Kyoto Lounge, customers would eat and drink, and be encouraged to do so, at all times, even while playing video games. Below, Arj explains the importance of the consumption of food and alcohol to his business:

Arj: ... without the bar, it [Kyoto Lounge] would not survive. A gaming lounge on its own would not survive any more than a takeaway with two very basic food options. It needs variety. It needs a reason for people to go. On the gaming side of it, there is a great reason for people to go, but there is not enough spent for that kind of market ... Alcohol is extremely essential. Food was essential. I think people who went there thinking that gaming was a bit geeky, the alcohol maybe calmed that down a little and they felt they had a reason to be there, and very shortly afterward they'd partake in the games themselves. So it wasn't just a case of it needs alcohol just to survive, but it needs alcohol for people who are maybe a little standoffish about gaming, but initially to go down, so they have a reason to be there. And we were confident that eventually they'll start participating which was true, and in 99% of the occasions it happened. (Kyoto Lounge, Owner).

Not only was the food and alcohol central to revenue at Kyoto Lounge, but it also encouraged video game play. Alcohol was viewed as a necessary social facilitator allowing people to relax in the gaming bar environment. It is noteworthy to mention that Arj switches from the present tense to the past when discussing the Kyoto Lounge because it closed down in 2013, three years after it opened. Even though Arj had attempted to glocalise his video gaming space according to British sensibilities, nevertheless, he was

unsuccessful in attracting a sufficient number of social actors required to warrant keeping the Kyoto Lounge open.

In the United Kingdom, the symbolic capital associated with alcohol is counter to that of India. In India, alcohol consumption is viewed almost exclusively as a male activity, and never one that is family friendly. Therefore, if Indulgence had chosen to serve alcohol it would not have been seen as a safe environment for children and women, as Manan explains:

Manan: I would fear having a bar at a gaming place because I would fear somebody might just break something. Which is not the case in UK because you know that they are responsible, they're doing it. Over here they are not really responsible for their actions. That is the problem. (Indulgence, owner).

Manan was concerned that serving alcohol could lead to customers becoming intoxicated and either becoming disruptive to the other players or breaking expensive gaming equipment. He also drew a contrast between how he perceived people in India and in the United Kingdom consumed alcohol, with the former portrayed as irresponsible drinkers whose behaviour could as a result become unpredictable. He is here perhaps referring to what is a more established and widespread drinking culture in the United Kingdom, and his assumption that this means that bars in the United Kingdom come with a field-specific habitus that helps regulate customers' behaviour. However, in Manchester Arj described the customers who regularly came to Kyoto Lounge as different from what he terms the 'typical bar customer':

Arj: We found the customers were not the usual typical bar customers. They were a lot quieter, so they were a lot easier to deal with. It's just a fantastic, very friendly, homely place where people who didn't know each other could come in and become friendly within a very short period of time. So for me personally, I love the place. (Kyoto Lounge, owner).

By saying that his customers were 'quieter' and 'easier to deal with' than typical bar customers, Arj is indicating that the latter tend to be rowdy and difficult to deal with – the kind of customer that Manan above feared he would have to deal with were he to serve alcohol. Arj decided to locate Kyoto Lounge close to other bars in the hope that actors who frequented bars would also find their way to the Kyoto Lounge because it provided a similar social experience with the additional attraction of video games. Therefore, as an entrepreneurial actor, he positioned Kyoto Lounge as a type of bar. While essentially a pub with the added capability of video game play, it distinguished itself adequately from other bars as being part of the field of video gaming. Consequently, the field-specific

habitus attached to Kyoto Lounge ended up being a *keyed* version of the habitus attached to a regular bar. As Goffman explains, a key refers to ‘the set of conventions by which a given activity, already meaningful in terms of some primary framework, is transformed into something patterned on this activity but seen by the participants to be something quite else’ (Goffman, 1974: 43-44). The actors entering the Kyoto Lounge were aware that the primary framework for the setting was a bar, however, the venue was able to communicate, through the various props used (i.e. video gaming hardware, posters and memorabilia), that it differed from a regular bar. However, since Kyoto Lounge was patterned on a bar, it lent itself well to keyed versions of activities that took place in other non-video gaming bars. The ‘culture of pub sporting’ - that is the usage of a pub as a sports spectator venue – is a popular pub activity (Martinez & Mukharji, 2009: 24). Similarly, Kyoto Lounge held monthly Barcraft events where people would come specifically to watch a streamed video game competition of the game Starcraft II (see Figure 19 on the following page). Barcraft is a term used to describe an event (usually in a bar) where people gather to watch a showing of a professional competition of Starcraft II.



Figure 19. Barcraft at Kyoto Lounge. Source: author.

In this way, each physical space can be patterned after something that already has meaning for the actors. For the Kyoto Lounge, bars served as a model, a primary framework, or a foundation which keying then transformed or modified. The props and the arrangement of the physical space communicate this transformation. Indulgence was a keyed version of restaurants. It contained many physical similarities – the food, the large open social spaces and eating areas. Kyoto Lounge was set up in the West, where video gaming is an established field. However, the field of video gaming is one that is in transition. As

discussed in Chapter 4, video gaming in the West began as an activity that took place in public spaces such as arcades and later also pubs, but has increasingly become something that is done in the private space of the home. In this way, Kyoto Lounge was set up within an established field but one that is in decline -- again in contrast to the situation in India where public gaming spaces are only now in ascendance. That being said, in both cases the entrepreneurial actors sought to constitute the space and business by reference to adjacent fields as a way of attracting as many of the 'right' type of customer as possible.

Restricting Actor Behaviour in an Emerging Field

In addition to establishing the status of the new practice through the usage of props, the entrepreneurial actor may also attempt to restrict how actors behave in these spaces. This may serve to keep away undesirable practices from the physical space which would lower the status of the emerging field. In the case of Indulgence, one of the ways in which activities were curtailed was by discouraging the association of the video gaming space as available for general computer use. One reason for the restriction on the behaviour of video gamers might be that the connection of the practice of video gaming, which is far less frequent than general computer use, may have caused confusion among actors who entered the unfamiliar space, leading them to be unsure of how to interpret the space and the field of which it is part. Manan actively safeguarded the primary purpose of Indulgence as gaming. For example, when my friend David, visiting from Canada, used a computer to access his Facebook account, the manager Harry whispered to me to tell David to 'keep his time short as this is a gaming parlour and not a cyber café'.

Gagun: What do you think of customers using the computers for email and Facebook?

Harry: It's not allowed as it's not a cyber café it's a gaming parlour.
(Indulgence, Manager).

Intrigued by the differentiation between a video gaming parlour and an internet or cyber café I asked Manan to shed some light on this matter:

Cyber cafés in India are duds! And why is this is because a gaming lounge and a cyber café at the same place cannot fit. Just because somebody is using a PC for doing business doesn't amount to also having a gaming lounge simple ... Yes, plus I am cautious about the nature of emails because of viruses. Plus, cyber café and gaming lounge is a totally different concept. (Indulgence, Owner).

Manan's desire to differentiate a cyber café from a video gaming lounge indicates that because video gaming is an emerging practice, and video gaming parlours are new physical

spaces, he wished not to confuse the two practices. Furthermore, his assessment of cyber cafés as ‘duds’ denotes that the social field associated with them comes with lower amounts of social capital and, therefore, he wished to disassociate the practice of video gaming from cyber café culture. For comparison I visited several internet cafés in Chandigarh. The Guru Cyber café had computers used to access the internet along with two consoles (an Xbox 360 and PS3). The Raj Cyber café (see Figure 19 on the following page) was a higher end café with no gaming space. Despite possessing the ability to play video games, both cafés generated the majority of their revenue from internet use and printing. Cyber cafés differed from gaming parlours in that their use of space was strictly functional (see Figure 10 on the following page). I had visited approximately four cyber cafes, and all of which were quite sparse with bare interior designs with an absence of the plush furnishings of video gaming parlours such as Indulgence or Oxide. Indulgence and Oxide were clearly designed for leisure (e.g. comfortable seats, food) to attract and accommodate longer stays, while the cyber cafes were not planned for leisure, and thus, the surroundings did not encourage this. Furthermore, there were no high classed markers to indicate who and who was not welcome, no markers or distinction such as those that were clearly and deliberately visible at Indulgence and Oxide. Manan wanted to distinguish his video gaming parlour from cyber cafés, elevating the gaming parlour as high class environment. Thus, where cyber cafés were intended to be used by anyone, Manan attempted to posit Indulgence as an environment meant only for high capital actors.



Figure 20. The front of Guru Cyber Cafe.

Source: Courtesy Guru Cyber Café. Printed with permission.



Figure 21. Interior of Raj Cyber Cafe.

Source: Courtesy Guru Cyber Café. Printed with permission.

In Indulgence, the staff and manager became gatekeepers who only allowed a limited range of behaviours within the space even though the technology allowed for a wider diversity of practices. In this way, the entrepreneurial actor attempts to dictate or enforce particular performances in order to create a gaming parlour habitus where actors can only come to participate in a specifically authorised practice. Conversely, during my ethnographic work in the Kyoto Lounge in Manchester I observed that patrons were welcome to use the computers for any activity (as long as it was legal) whether it be video gaming, accessing the Internet or a work related task such as word processing.

The staff and owner at Kyoto Lounge stated that they viewed the customer as hiring the computer for any activity they wish. However, even though Facebook, word processing and internet browsing were performed on the Kyoto Lounge computers, due to the high costs involved in using them, customers typically limited their activities to video gaming. As the following quotations below demonstrate, in this respect, Kyoto and Indulgence were similar:

Surjit: When I am gaming I am here with buddies but we are paying money so we are not just chatting all the time but we are playing and chatting. If we are just chatting we can go elsewhere where we do not have to pay to chat. Even at a restaurant your rate is not hourly. (Indulgence, video game player).

Sean: When I pay for time to game at a café, I don't engage in distractions on the computer like Facebook like I would at home. It's like going to the library, you go there to focus, but in this case, to game. You can play with friends and share your hobby with other people, but when you are in front of the computer you are there to game. (Kyoto Lounge, video game player).

How the actor enters into an activity changes the way that he or she frames it. The actor's framing of a practice directly influences their behaviour. In the cases of Indulgence, Kyoto and Oxide, paying for time at an hourly rate alters how actors frame the practice. This, in turn, affects how they engage with both other actors and the physical space itself. Hence, actors will interpret and modify their participation within the video gaming venue because they are paying for their hardware time. At Indulgence, Kyoto and Oxide performing non-gaming activities that could be carried out at home, or at another 'free' venue, were considered wasteful. Nonetheless, although non-gaming computer use was not the norm, it was still comparatively common at Kyoto. Additionally, to ensure the maximum number of customers and to compete against other non-gaming computer cafés, the owner of Kyoto Lounge offered a reduced rate to non-gaming customers to access the computers:

Gagun: What if someone came in and wanted not to play video games on the computer but rather check Facebook and email, what would your reaction be and why?

John: We just let them on guest accounts. They were charged a cheaper rate, £1/hour. People used to come in all the time to just use the internet, print stuff off etc. Didn't really treat them as different to other random game-playing customers. Ones that did only use it for Internet tended to come in repeatedly but sporadically, usually with months between visits. (Kyoto Lounge, staff).

However, a stark contrast existed between the two venues regarding how gamers' practices were regulated by staff: Kyoto did not discourage non-gaming computer use while Indulgence staff actively dissuaded it. Thus, the regulation of practices was not simply a case of enforcing behaviour in the physical space so that it fit a certain habitus, but rather it was also about creating a set of explicit rules to constrain certain kinds of practices in order to maintain the 'correct' type of frame and ensure that only actors with sufficient amounts of capital would enter these spaces. In India, cyber cafes were not associated with high capital, thus, entrepreneurial actors wished to differentiate the new video gaming spaces that they were fashioning from the lower capital cyber cafes. Consequently, Manan was attempting to control how his customers used the space to accomplish his broader goal of attracting high capital actors to adopt the practice of video gaming. Conversely, in Kyoto, enforcing behaviour was not important because video gaming in the West is already a commonly established field with a field-specific habitus which is not associated with being upper class. As long as the actors were entering the space to eat and drink, other factors of cultural capital were less important. In this way, the habitus of an emerging practice can be attuned differently according to the kinds of practices to which it is adjacently positioned. The entrepreneurial actors which I encountered attempted to socially locate their venues so that they are associated with practices that facilitate the attraction of actors

with the desired amount of capital by glocalising the practice so that it contextually makes sense to local actors. However, the glocalisation of practice is not reliant solely upon the entrepreneurial actors; rather it is a mutual process which also involves the non-entrepreneurial actors.

Non-Entrepreneurial Actor's and the Shaping of Practices in Video Gaming Parlours through Birthday Parties

Entrepreneurial actors are able to create physical spaces which help to direct the performance of actors who enter these spaces. As discussed earlier, one of their strategies is the use of props as a way of communicating to actors which performances are desired. Whilst the entrepreneurial actors which I encountered could only ever hope to guide performances, they were not capable of commanding precise behaviour from the actors. Consequently, despite Manan's efforts at dictating the behaviour within the physical field, he was unable to predict how the field of video gaming would be culturally received, and ultimately glocalised, by the Indian actors. Manan had encountered the video gaming field during his time in the United Kingdom and attempted to glocalise the practice to suite Indian cultural tastes. As exemplified in the advertisement for Indulgence that he placed in the local newspaper Chandigarh Newslines (see Figure 22 below), Manan had a very specific view of the type of practice that would be suitable in the physical gaming parlour. The advertisement depicts a video gamer playing games on a high end PC. The caption 'As we bring the ultimate gaming experience' also underscores that the venue is for video game play. Actors will, however, consume global products and practices in order to suit local tastes. As a consequence, the way that Manan had imagined the space to be used did not correspond with how some of the actors who entered the parlour desired to use it. As I will now go on to discuss, these actors altered the use of the space to suit their local tastes, and thus also managing to transform the space into something that Manan had not intended.



Figure 22. Advertisement for Indulgence gaming parlour. October 2010.

Source: Courtesy Indulgence. Printed with permission.

When a physical space is created it can be difficult to predict which practices actors will take up within the venue and how. Significant examples of this process are the birthday parties held at Indulgence. By the time I started my ethnography, children's birthday parties had become the main source of revenue for Indulgence. Manan had not anticipated that holding children's birthday parties in a video gaming parlour would become so popular among Indians.

Manan: And no, I had no clue about birthday parties being so popular back then when I had formulated Indulgence. (Indulgence, owner).

Manan had created the physical gaming space with a particular intention for how it would operate. Through the use of props he attempted to communicate that Indulgence was a venue for high capital actors, thus seeking to mould a field-specific habitus of the actors

who entered the space. However, the actual field-specific habitus that emerges is ultimately created as social actors engage with the framework that the entrepreneurial actor has put in place. Despite the entrepreneurial actor's best efforts, actors taking part in the field may themselves also define how spaces are used through their actions and the meanings they attach to the space. This process of becoming is exemplified by how the customers, not Manan, shaped the practices of Indulgence to such an extent that children's birthday parties became a core feature of the parlour's activities:

Manan: I still remember a Sikh guy coming over randomly with his daughter, as we were still in our first 15 days of launch. He knew about our place as we had put in a lot of advertisement via newspaper prior to our launch as a marketing strategy for Indulgence as an upcoming gaming lounge. Well, coming back to the Sikh guy, he just came in and showed his intention about holding his kids birthday party and there it was our first birthday day party! And then another came up in a few days' time. I remember that kids name as well, it was 'Precious' the girl's name. And as the name suggests the party to this day remains very precious to me because after that there was no looking back as after that party the word was spread through word-of-mouth. (Indulgence, owner).

Manan was successful in creating a space in attracting actors whose habitus fit the physical space as it had been set up. Indulgence still attracted high capital actors, but on the other hand, the actors who frequented it reconfigured the practices by reframing them. Through the process of keying social actors reframe experiences by adopting frames so that they can interrupt the experience in a way which makes sense to them (Baptista, 2003: 205). In the case of Indulgence, as discussed above, the social actor, 'a Sikh guy', keyed the video gaming venue away from Manan's intended frame of a video gaming venue, to that of a birthday party venue, that contextually made sense to him. Certain frames are more resistant to negotiation than others (Manning & Hawkins, 1990: 213). However, in the case of an emerging practice, how the participants frame the experience has not yet been established. It follows that video gaming in India, as a new practice, is open to greater debate regarding the behaviour of social actors who participate in them. Therefore, social actors are able to more easily reconfigure practices through glocalising the frame in ways that culturally makes sense to them. Indulgence's popularity as a site for holding children's birthday parties was the result of word of mouth.

Mother: My daughter's friend told me that it is a really nice parlour and that I must take Tanisha [daughter], she would enjoy it. And then there are French fries and smileys²⁶ that they serve here, all the more attractive. (Indulgence, mother of birthday girl).

²⁶ Smiley is a fried spiced potato formed in a shape of a smile. .

Birthday parties became such a significant part of Indulgence that they accounted for up to 70% of the gaming parlour's revenue. Often, during busier months, there would be multiple birthday parties held at the gaming parlour, sometimes as many as three in a single day on weekends.

Narinjit: It's for birthday parties, gaming lounges are for birthday parties. They [parents and non-gaming friends] do not take it seriously. (Indulgence, game player).

As this quote from Narinjit demonstrates, some participants perceived children's birthday parties as analogous to video gaming parlours. Ironically, as stated earlier, Manan was attempting to distance the practice from a childish activity by using a neutral interior design scheme. It is difficult for me to gauge how effective the decorating was in attracting adult actors into the space. There were many adult video game players who played on a regular basis, but there were rarely more than six or seven in the gaming parlour simultaneously. In contrast, birthday parties involved a greater number of players at any one time.

In order to gain access to birthday party events I volunteered as a photographer at five different parties (see Figure 23 on the following page). Even though the number of children and parents who attended the events varied slightly the overall framework of the birthday parties was always the same. Below is a sample schedule of a birthday party:

- 4:50pm – 5:00 pm – Parents arrive with birthday child
- 5:15pm – Within the first 15 minutes the majority of the children have arrived and are playing video games. Housekeeping staff serve snacks of French fries with mayo, tomato sauce, cola, sprite and water.
- 6:00pm – Children are herded out of the video game playing area. Chairs are moved to block off the area. A cake is cut.
- 6:15pm – Dinner is served consisting of more pop, noodles, pasta and occasionally sandwiches. Noteworthy that none of the food is Indian (nor is it very good)
- 6:30pm – Dinner is over. The staff clean up. Children are running, screaming and waiting for their parents to come and collect them. The video game area is opened for other paid customers or for another birthday party to start.
- 7:00pm – All the birthday children have left.



Figure 23. Children and adults cutting the birthday cake in Indulgence.
Source: author

Manan's desire to create a space within the field to which high capital actors are attracted was successful, but not in the fashion that he had envisioned. His aim of creating a gaming parlour which people would 'brag about' frequenting was fundamentally met primarily by parents who gained status by having their children's birthday parties at Indulgence rather than by playing video games themselves. In a culture of one-upmanship, these parents were able to demonstrate their wealth to other actors, as explained by one mother:

Mother: Society has become such, you know. Nobody wants to be left behind in this race. And, for children, parents are responsible for that. We are getting them branded things, we are responsible. And, some schools are branded schools here ... children from big families are coming there, and they discuss in which car did you come today. Did you come in a Mercedes, and if the child is getting the Mercedes in the afternoon also, they go 'Oh! You repeated your car, you have only one car?' You have to have branded bags, tiffins, bottles, everything, otherwise they think that, you are not 'their' type. Brand is, they are really brand conscious. That way. Simplicity is not there anymore. (Indulgence, birthday party).

I spoke to several parents while working as a photographer about why they decided to have their party at the gaming parlour. A common response was that their children wanted to have their party at Indulgence because they had friends who had had their party at the venue:

Angat: One of my friends had a birthday party there so I really liked the place so I decided and asked my parents that I should also have it there.
(Indulgence, birthday boy).

As Angat demonstrates, in addition to the parents, the children had a strong contribution in shaping Indulgence and the practices of video gaming since they were the ones who were

persuading their parents to have their birthday parties held at the video gaming parlour. Since the field of video gaming was so new in India, parents had very limited knowledge of the specific activities involved in video gaming.

Harry: Parents ask what is about the game that the kids are saying come here or go there to each other. And I explain to the parents that the kids are playing LAN gaming where everyone has an individual PC but play one game together and that's why they are excited. Some parents have awareness of gaming but they are not aware of LAN gaming. The parents are a bit shocked by that, everyone playing together.
(Indulgence, manager).

Of course, the final decision was up to their parents, but the initial idea of holding a birthday party in a video gaming parlour was suggested by the children. Therefore, Indulgence was an attractive venue for birthday parties because it appealed to both the parents and the children. An attraction of organising a party at a video gaming parlour was that it set limits on the length of the party. Rather than have a party at home where guests may linger for a long period of time, birthday parties were limited to an hour and a half.

Mother: Mothers do not want to take the headache now. It is much easier, convenient, your house does not get dirty, there is no work to do once your guests have gone. Moreover, the time is limited and guests do not stay for long periods. It is bad manners to ask guests to go from home. Here, we have fixed timings so they must go. (Indulgence, mother of birthday girl).

Since Manan had not conceived video gaming as a practice that would attract children's birthday parties he had not advertised or promoted Indulgence as such a space. However, in hindsight, Manan stated that the family-friendly layout of the space lent itself well to accommodating fairly large family events.

Manan: As I said with the name Indulgence I wanted a place where people could come and hang out and play. I never promoted play, but I wanted them to come to play. But also, I wanted a place where people could come and hang out and socialise, where they felt comfortable. And then they didn't want to send their children out also to any other place. They were worried about what kind of elements will be there so I wanted a very conducive lounge. People can come and leave their wallets also and it's perfectly okay. But also a place where they could come and hang out and that is why I had spaces with chairs, magazines and to watch TV and not only game.
(Indulgence, owner).

Manan created the physical space with an emphasis on comfort, safety and 'hanging out'. Indulgence was organised so that parents, or other non-gamers, could sit and socialise. Indulgence, with its emphasis on sociality, was organised into two separated areas for video game play and socialising. As indicated above, by not allowing people to check email and Facebook Manan was disassociating the practice of video gaming with

undesirable, and potentially adjacent, practice of cyber cafés rather than being a purist about video gaming.

During birthday parties the adults, particularly mothers, spent the majority of their time socialising amongst themselves in the eating areas amongst. Figure 24 below depicts mothers socialising while their children are playing video games in the play area also shown on the following page in Figure 25. During birthday parties, gamers rarely came to the eating area, while parents rarely ventured into the gaming space.



Figure 24. Mothers enjoying drinks and snacks during an Indulgence birthday party.

Source: author.



Figure 25. Children playing video games during a birthday party at Indulgence.

Gagun: What do the parents do when they come here?

Harry: Some parents they read magazines in their free-time. Some ask how their kids play games and ask and watch, some stay in the cafeteria side and read magazines and read books. We keep some books on the side for them to read so the parents don't get bored. Yes, the kids are here for entertainment but we don't want the parents to be bored. In one hour duration it can be very boring for parents so we keep books and magazines for them. (Indulgence, manager).

This delineation of space contrasts with gaming parlours in the West, which tend not to have a designated and separate eating space. Kyoto Lounge had no spaces that would have been completely separate from the practice of video gaming. Each area in Kyoto Lounge contained video gaming hardware with the exception of the bar. Typically, eating spaces in Indulgence are either occupied by customers who are eating or drinking or, in case of birthday parties; by parents who are not participating in video game play. The adult space as separate closely mimics how birthdays are celebrated in homes or in Indian palaces²⁷ where children socialise in different areas than the adults. In both cases, video game parlour owners and gamers must position the practice of digital gaming with the distinct cultural context of Chandigarh or Manchester. The impossibility of separating the practice from the culture requires the entrepreneurial actors to frame the practice of video gaming in a way that suits the local culture. Sociality is culturally more significant in India than in the West (Banerjee, 1983). Consequently, Indulgence, in order to foster a social environment, must accommodate a large number of individuals through the use of eating and social spaces. Kyoto Lounge, in contrast, is framed more akin to English pub culture

²⁷ Indian palaces are modern venues that are used for large parties and weddings. They contain a sizeable courtyard and a building.

thus focusing on the importance of music and alcohol in the United Kingdom. By means of this framing, the practice of video gaming is glocalised in both cities differently. However, no single actors are solely responsible for the shaping of a field. As Goffman's concept of misframing highlights, social actors may use keys to reconfigure experiences through the adoption of frames. The process of rekeying allows social actors to change their interpretation of a practice, and as a result, the behaviour of the activity itself in a way which culturally makes sense to them. In this way, the process of glocalising video gaming within a particular context entails keying the practice so that it becomes culturally embedded. This has manifested through the establishment of a video gaming parlour frame as a venue primarily for children's birthday parties in India, while in the United Kingdom they are adjacently located to bars, however with the additional activity of video gaming.

Conclusion

The central theoretical question of this chapter has examined how an establishing field, specifically considered through the emergence of gaming parlours in India, is able to acquire a field-specific habitus when the 'rules of the game' and the specific practices are unknown to the actors involved. I examined the process and implications of the creation of a physical space within the field of video gaming, emphasising how entrepreneurial actors consciously utilise their various forms of capital to create a space that is physically structured in such a way as to attract particular actors from adjacent fields. The entrepreneurial actors identified in this study do so by staging the scene using aesthetics and props, as well as by attempting to control the types of performances that take place. In doing so, they try to position their business as being similar to established practices and other businesses within adjacent fields. In the case of video gaming parlours, entrepreneurial actors tried to lend the emerging field a sense of both familiarity and aspirational status.

In this way, entrepreneurial actors are involved in the process of glocalising the field of video gaming through the creation of physical gaming spaces where social gaming is possible in a way that is modified to suit local Indian tastes and long-standing cultural practices. This adaptation is done consciously, through marketing and purchasing as well as the use of implicit or explicit rules. Therefore, in an emerging field the entrepreneurial actors identified in this study engage more consciously within the field than Bourdieu considers possible. These entrepreneurial actors are aware of how they create and govern

these physical spaces to attract actors from other adjacent fields. Integral to this process is how they use various forms of capital to work within the cultural context to both create a successful enterprise which attracts actors but also serves to further their own social standing. Another important finding is that, despite the best efforts of the entrepreneurial actors, they were unable to unequivocally predict how actors would take up the new practices, use the spaces, and help to construct the field's emergence. The study demonstrated that actors will uniquely glocalise practices within their cultural context. Thus, the initial performances of an actor in the gaming parlour are also to a large degree deliberate and conscious²⁸, but over time, as the 'rules of the game' are established in terms of props and performances, a field-specific habitus emerges. The gaming parlours that I studied in India have gradually become popular birthday party spaces, accounting for a large portion of their revenue. This suggests that that how a field materialises in physical spaces and in relation to other practices is thus worked out within the cultural situation. Bourdieu and Goffman, combined, have helped to show how existing practices, adjacent fields, habitus, props and frames feature in the emergence of a field.

²⁸ In order to present a convincing front, the actor has to fill the duties of the social role and demonstrate its activities and characteristics in a consistent manner, especially because '[w]hen an actor takes on an established social role, usually he finds that a particular front has already been established for it' (Goffman, 1959: 27).

Introduction

In this section I turn my focus to the manner in which video game players make sense of the practice of video game play within an Indian cultural context, extending my previous discussion from the physical gaming spaces, to the gamers themselves. In Chapter 4, I focused on the development of video gaming as a field in India. I investigated the historical context of video gaming by exploring when, how and why video games first entered the country. Specifically, I examined how certain macro-level factors, such as government policies and material or infrastructural concerns hindered the field's emergence by delaying video gaming's arrival in India until after its maturity in the West. I argued that one inadvertent consequence of this restricted access to computer technology was that a cultural frame to comprehend and aid the usage of the technology did not develop. I found that the context of where and how video games surfaced in India had a profound effect on the manner in which social actors took up the practice. Particularly, there was a pronounced difference in how social actors from the urban centres engaged with video gaming in comparison to their rural counterparts. Beyond this, for my Manchester interviewees' first engagements with the practice of video gaming differed from Indian gamers because of the age they encountered them and the ubiquity of video games in the West. My Manchester participants experienced video gaming in childhood as a practice that had seemingly always existed, but my Indian participants encountered them later in life.

In Chapter 5, I turned to examining video gaming as a practice within the context of video gaming parlours. Chapter 5 revealed the way in which video gaming as a practice was positioned by social actors relative to other leisure activities and how the physical gaming spaces also gained symbolic meaning. Examining video gaming as a practice within the context of the video game parlour allowed for detailing some of the ways in which key actors with sufficient cultural and economic capital sought to encourage potential consumers into the emerging video gaming field by linking video gaming practices to more established practices such as birthday parties and the consumption of food and beverages. I argued the social actors' practices were regulated by the entrepreneurial actors²⁹ in an

²⁹ In Chapter 5, I defined entrepreneurial actors as individuals who possess sufficient degrees of capital in order to establish physical spaces where other social actors can participate in the activity (e.g. the physical spaces of video gaming parlours).

effort to create a field-specific habitus – though these efforts were not always successful. In the present day, as demonstrated in my discussion of the physical spaces of gaming parlours, a social frame of interpretation is slowly being adopted to make sense of the new practices. I investigated how video gaming had found a space and a place for itself in Indian culture. In this chapter, I again use Goffman's concept of framing, but this time as a way of exploring the implications of the glocalisation of video games in India.

Video games are globalised products which are primarily made in the West and East Asia. Although Asian companies are producers in this market, their products are largely representative of Western characters and themes. As such, most digital games are Westernised and circulated through the global economy as a standardised consumer good. However, as video games travel from these producers to locations in international markets they may not always appeal to specific consumers because they do not fit local, culturally-specific frames. In this chapter, I argue that the spread of video games to environments outside of the culturally-specific frames in which they are created can lead to the rejection of certain video games or to actors seeking to adapt games to such culturally-specific frames. For that reason I look closely at how video games are framed and interpreted by culturally situated actors. Game players must frame digital games so that the practice makes sense within their broader cultural context. This framing must include the adoption and interpretation of video games as 'real' to the video gamers, so that they warrant emotional and personal investment. My research suggests that there are two ways in which social actors seek to adapt games. First, they 'read' video games through their cultural frames in order to make sense of games according to their own cultural norms and preferences. Social actors glocalise video game play so that they can connect with the video game's theme and content through the actor's culture. Second, video gamers increase the level of connection with the video game through further glocalisation by tangibly altering the game. This latter practice of adaptation is called 'modding' the game and represents an instance of the wider phenomenon of 'glocalisation'. In the next section I discuss how the concepts of framing and glocalisation are useful in understanding how gamers make sense of video games in culturally situated ways.

Framing and Glocalisation

For video gaming to be a successful practice in India game players must inevitably be able to make sense of not only the practice of gaming, as noted in Chapter 4, but also the video

games themselves. Social actors must organise their game play experiences in a way that they are able to reflect upon the activities in which they engage. In this instance, Goffman's frame theory is useful because of its attention to the specificity of how social actors make sense of events in their lives. For Goffman, frames are the basis of how actors select, emphasise and present what exists, what happens and what matters (Gitlin, 1980: 6). They are the 'schemata of interpretation' inherent in all mental processes (Goffman, 1974: 21) and, therefore, constitute the most basic element of how actors make sense of events. As such, frames render 'what would otherwise be a meaningless aspect of the scene into something that is meaningful' (Goffman, 1974: 46) and are crucial to how social actors interpret and understand experiences, providing essential context to answer the question of 'What is going on here?' (Goffman, 1974: 46). As Entman (1993: 52) states,

to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation.

Actors categorise and identify what is taking place through the ordering of the experience through frames. Frames are contextually bound, socially shared and culturally specific (Rettie, 2004: 117), existing within particular social contexts and the interactions within these settings. Frames define and designate sets of possibilities and interpretations that are not yet realised but available to the social actors (Hanks, 1990: 195). In my research, the analysis of frames consisted of examining events through the individual's embeddedness in his or her social world (Scheff, Philips & Harol, 2006: 22). Video gamers reflect upon their actions in a relatively new activity through their framing of them as extensions of the known ones, and this in turn effects their interpretation and performance of the activity itself.

In addition, frames are not restricted only to the conscious performance or the activity, but both precede and extend well beyond the 'doing'. Goffman uses the term 'strip' to refer to any arbitrary slice or cut from a stream of an ongoing activity (1974: 10). Strips of activity are organised in frames well before social actors are involved in any action and serve as templates or scripts for activity. Goffman calls these first points of experiential organisation 'primary frameworks' and believed that 'we need to perceive events in terms of primary frameworks, and the type of framework we employ provides a way of describing the events to which it is applied' (1974: 24). Primary frameworks precede any interaction and thus govern the social actor's understanding and involvement in any interaction or practice. All acts of daily life are only comprehensible due to some primary framework which provides background for understanding how experiences are to be

understood (Goffman, 1974: 22). Because frames are a priori they can function unconsciously, which can cause an actor to reject or accept an activity depending on whether the framing of it is culturally compatible.

As well operating as an unconscious element, frames may operate in conscious ways in how social actors contextualise the activity. It is this duality of framing that was useful in my analysis because it allows me to examine what might be the extent of both the actor's cultural predisposition and his or her reflexivity in the engagement of practices. Video gamers, inevitably, are both aware and unaware of attributes of social life. Frame analysis takes into account both of these perspectives and the influence they have when interpreting a practice. For example:

The same reader can enjoy Karl Marx and Frank Richards in separate compartments, bringing a different frame to each ... It is equally possible for the same reader to adopt different frames for the same story, relishing it on one level while seeing through the claptrap on another. (Rose, 2001: 332).

As with Rose's example above, when the reader frames the book differently, it changes the reader's interpretation of it and this in turn affects the experience of the activity of reading the book. The practice of video gaming exists within the larger social field of video gaming. In order to make sense of the practice of video gaming, social actors must invariably realise the practice through its organising and interpretation. In this way, frames are embedded in a field associated with a particular set of roles and practices (Mayes, 2003: 63). In the emerging field, the frame, or 'schemata of interpretation', is not as solidified as it otherwise would be if the field was already established. The gamers' experiences of the practice of video game play are affected by the frames he or she employs, but due to the developing nature of the emerging field, frames become even more important due to their utility in organising an experience which the social actor has limited experience with.

The social actors position their experiences operating at both a conscious and unconscious levels which, in turn, affects how the actors interpret and interact with the activity. The conscious and unconscious framing, however, as I demonstrate later through the examples of science fiction and military themes, do not occur at segregated levels (Fairlie, 2014: 46). Video gamers will frame their experiences both consciously and unconsciously in attempted sense-making and to globalise their experience in their particular cultural context. How video gamers frame their video game play experiences alters their perception of those experiences, and therefore their involvement in the experiences.

Furthermore, game players do not frame the object of video games in isolation from both the practice of video gaming and the context in which video games are played. Rather, in addition to being the precursor to an activity, frames also function subsequent to an experience allowing social actors to reflexively consider what they do and the effect that their performance has on the activity itself (Lanigan, 1990: 99). Thus, when examining video game play in differing cultural contexts, the frame's usefulness is in its ability to allow the social actor to make sense of the culturally specific information which ultimately gives rise to the practice. This is particularly significant in the case of India, where video gaming is an emerging field.

When actors enter a hitherto unfamiliar social field, they must apply frames to make sense of the field and the practices that take place within it. This is markedly different from the above example where the actor may employ frames to an established practice to change his or her interpretation of that event. As I have mentioned, frames are necessary for social actors to organise their experiences in every circumstance, but become even more essential when they are involved in a practice that is new to them. In a situation where the practice has no or little existing history, the frame is particularly necessary for the actors to organise and interpret video gaming in a local context. I contend that the process of glocalisation, whereby Indians make sense of a new field which they have some contact with (either through direct participation or observation), can be understood as a *process* by using the concept of framing.

Glocalisation is essential for understanding the way Indian game players make sense of their encounters with video games. Thomas Friedman defines glocalisation as

the ability of a culture, when it encounters other strong cultures, to absorb influences that naturally fit into and can enrich the culture, to resist those things that are truly alien, and to compartmentalise those things that, while different, can nevertheless be enjoyed and celebrated as different. (Friedman, 1999: 295).

Glocalisation views the local and the global not as distinct and separate forces, but rather as mutually constitutive. Glocalisation is a 'neologism, meaning the combination of intense local and extensive global interaction' (Wellman, 2002: 13) where the global is simultaneously universalised and particularised in the local (Robertson, 1997: 74). Most commonly attributed to the modification of products themselves, glocalisation is the adaptation, by either companies or individuals, of foreign products to conform to a particular location and culture (Brei, D'Avila, Carmargo & Engels, 2011).

For example, McDonald's, the world's largest beef-based food chain, glocalised its burgers in India by replacing beef with 100 per cent lamb and vegetarian substitutes. In addition burgers are served with mango pickles and Indian sauces instead of ketchup (Mendis, 2007: 3). But the conceptual form of the burger remains. Therefore, the process of glocalisation essentially creates a blend of global forces with local culture. This hybridised form attains a balance of assimilation and appropriation. But glocalisation strategies do not always, or do not only, lead to the actual change of the product; they also influence how the product is marketed to a local audience. In the case of McDonald's entering the Japanese market, McDonald's changed its Japanese promotional campaign to replace Ronald McDonald with fashion models (See Figure 26 below) because Ronald McDonald's white face denotes death in Japan (Luigi & Venerean, 2010: 154).



Figure 26. Japanese McDonald's advertisement depicting a fashion model holding a 'Tomato McGrand' burger. Source: Wikipedia.

The socio-cultural influences on how a product or practice is interpreted and received are immense (Doole & Low, 2008: 7). In these examples, a foreign product which was originally framed for its cultural origin was altered to suit local standards; in other words, to suit a culturally accepted frame. I will later discuss video game modding, where the content of video games is changed to suit local framing.

I am interested in how glocalisation operates in relation to the actors' interpretation of the practice of video gaming in the culturally unique context of India. In this instance, it is not the global product that is altered for Indian tastes, it is rather the forces of the local culture which affect how the local production is situated and interpreted. The interpersonal and socio-cultural context emerged as important themes in my data. Yet notably absent from most contemporary game studies scholarship is analysis of how video games are situated, that is, the manner by which game-playing experiences are positioned and culturally understood in the socio-cultural context of the players' lives (Crawford, 2012).

In Chapter 5, I discussed how the arrangement and use of the physical spaces of video gaming parlours are culturally specific; glocalising how Indians situate the field of video games within their cultural context (i.e. as a family venue) and how this micro level glocalisation it is markedly different from Western gaming venues that are more akin to bars with video games. Extending that, I now turn to, how the Indian actors' perceptions, interpretation and behaviour of the practice is affected by the framing of game play itself. A field of gaming cannot exist unless actors accept as legitimate the practice of video gaming. Thus, how actors perceive the practice of video gaming affects the formation of the social field. Through glocalisation I will demonstrate through my data how the global practices of video game play are appropriated or rejected in terms of a local cultural context through three distinct possibilities.

First, I provide an examination of the importance of understanding how Indian video gamers as consumers frame, and subsequently reject, the science fiction theme in video gaming. My Indian interviewees derided science fiction, whilst nevertheless still engaging with similar themes - military and fantasy world games - which share many of science fiction gaming's central narratives, game play, and tropes. But science fiction is a culturally incompatible frame which causes a disconnect between the consumer and the media within the Indian context. I argue that my data strongly suggests that, if a frame is not culturally compatible, then the practice that is associated with that frame will also be rejected because the activity cannot be successfully glocalised. Second, using another example of a Western game, I discuss how if a video game is themed by a culturally acceptable frame then social actors will glocalise it through how they make sense of it. The cultural acceptance of military themed video games – namely Call of Duty- is, I argue, due to military themed games' correspondence with a culturally accepted frame. This acceptance contributes to the broader adoption and recognition of the practice of video gaming in India. However, the military video games are global products only localised in the way they are consumed and not in terms of their content. They lack an Indian narrative. Third, I explore modded Indian video games, that is Western video games made to specifically fit into an Indian context. In this case, the majority of the ludic elements of the video games are unchanged. However, video game themes are altered to suit Indian tastes. I argue that modding video games changes the framing of the practice, which then has effects the social actor's interpretation and experience of video gaming.

All three of these possibilities demonstrate how video gamers are both consciously and unconsciously engaged in the process of glocalising the practice of video gaming within a

cultural context through the use of culturally-specific frames. The field of video gaming is interpreted through the social actor's positioning, and if actors are unable to successfully culturally contextualise the frame in which the practice is situated, then the practice is rejected as it is culturally incompatible. For Goffman, frames construct the reality that social actors imagine and accept as normal (Miztal, 2001: 321). Consequently, an acceptance of the video game is conditional upon the gamers' ability to imagine themselves within the context of the video game; failure to do so results in the immediate rejection of the video game. I will now indicate through my two sets of sources, in Chandigarh and Manchester, how social actors will either reject or accept video games through the example of science fiction video games.

The Rejection of Science Fiction

Video games are rooted in the West; consequently many are often themed after common Western motifs (Tringham, 2015: 4). A very common Western frame for video games is science fiction. Even historically, one of the earliest video games, SpaceWar from 1962 (pictured below in Figure 27), is a science fiction themed two player game where each player takes control of a star ship and attempts to destroy the other. A star in the centre of the screen pulls both ships inward and requires the players to manoeuvre so as to avoid plunging into it.



Figure 27. Screenshot of SpaceWar from 1962. Source: Wikipedia.

Cultural frames are not restricted solely to a specific type of media. Thus, science fiction is also a popular theme in other forms of Western media such as novels and movies.

Science fiction is a branch of fantasy identifiable through its accomplishment of the ‘willing suspension of disbelief’ on the part of its audience (Moskowitz, 1963: 11). It does so by utilising an atmosphere of scientific plausibility for its imaginative speculations in the physical sciences, social sciences and philosophy. By virtue of its speculative features, science fiction can draw upon various hypothetical and philosophical themes and narratives. However, science fiction can be an effective frame only if social actors are able to believe its constituent elements. In addition to a suspension of disbelief, science fiction typically includes, but is not limited to, elements of futuristic or alternative timelines, spatial settings in outer space, non-human characters such as aliens, mutants or robots, futuristic technology such as teleportation machines and spaceships, as well as other dimensions and universes (Card, 1990; Fredericks, 1976; Gregwell, 2001; Harwell, 1996). The science fiction frame lends itself well to various forms of philosophical speculation because it can posit hypothetical features that reflect present concerns. Aldous Huxley, for example, used his novel, *Brave New World*, as a vehicle for social criticism in its depiction of a dystopian world state led by benevolent dictatorships (Stableford, 1981).

Growing up in Canada, I was raised on a diet of films and TV series like *Alien*, *Star Wars*, *Star Trek*, supplemented with novels such as *Dune* and *Necromancer*. Surrounded by science fiction media, I took for granted the cultural embeddedness of the theme and its use when framing an experience. As exemplified previously by the above quote from Rose (2001), where the reader may adopt different frames for the same story which changes his or her experience of consuming it, a frame provides ‘an interpretive key that can be layered over another type of an event, in order to change the expectations’ where frames, which are inextricable from cultural information, invoke the social actor to interpret the experience (Warner, 2013: 30). In other words, the interpretation of an experience is inseparable from the cultural context in which it is framed. These frameworks enable users to ‘locate, perceive, identify, and label a seemingly infinite number of concrete occurrences defined in’ the terms of the frames they choose to apply (Goffman, 1974: 21). My exposure to science fiction at a young age meant that it became one of my culturally accepted frames. I am socialised to consume media framed by science fiction as a culturally accepted frame of Western culture. Some of my favourite video games are science fiction based (e.g. *Halo*, *Starcraft*). Similarly, during my field research at the Kyoto Lounge in Manchester, all nine of my interviewees said they enjoyed science fiction in any form of media³⁰.

³⁰ There are, of course, many individuals who live in the West and do not enjoy science fiction. Nonetheless, science fiction exists as a frame which is culturally acceptable. The majority of social actors will be exposed to the frame and may accept or reject it to varying degrees.

Wing: I guess the themes in a movie for me are a lot more important than the themes for a game like themes for a movie for me is like, I like the kind of futuristic films ... But sci fi games, I like them too. Well, Halo for me, the main thing that grasps me about Halo the whole sci-fi thing for me, but you really worked really well with story line as well, that the story line for me was like really intriguing the way it was literally like out of this world, if you know what I mean. (Kyoto Lounge, video game player).

The people I interviewed in Manchester stated that they enjoyed science fiction because it allowed for innovative storylines. Video games based on science fiction, such as Halo, attracted these video gamers initially because they brought with them the experience of ‘suspending disbelief’. My data indicate that when participants accept a frame they are conscious of the frame’s subtle nuances. When respondents employed the science fiction frame they were able to articulate subtleties within the frame itself. This was most evident when two different types of media used the same cultural frame. For example, movies, such as *Aliens* or *Starship Troopers*, share many aspects with action movies, such as heroic characters and scenes of violence and destruction. Both *Aliens* and *Starship Troopers* could just as easily be primarily framed as action movies. Nevertheless, even though the research participants were consciously aware of how other frames of interpretation could be applied to these cultural products, they chose to use science fiction as the dominant classification. At the same time, the participants were often able to deconstruct the frame into its various and nuanced fragments.

Palava: I like sci fi but it depends. I love Giger’s art in *Alien*, but don’t usually like sci fi action films. I don’t like sci fi action games either, but I did like *Metroid Prime*.
(Kyoto Lounge, video game player).

As demonstrated above, Palava was able to discriminate science fiction from action movies and video games. In Palava’s explanation of science fiction, she delineates science fiction into the subgenre of science fiction-action, and later in the interview, into the subgenre of science fiction based drama. My Western participants were extremely aware of the nuanced differences and combinations of how science fiction themes related to a wide array of media.

I have argued that science fiction is a common interpretive frame in the West used extensively in multiple forms of media and that actors who adopt the frame are able to do so in a very conscious and nuanced way. However, science fiction is not limited to the West, and is also popular in many other countries such as China, Japan (Aoyama & Izushi, 2003), Russia and South Korea. In recent years there has been some academic scholarship conducted on the video game *Starcraft* in South Korea (Chee, 2012). *Starcraft* is a science

fiction based real-time strategy game developed and published by Blizzard, a video game developer based in California. Starcraft is more popular in South Korea than in any other country in the world. The cultural significance of Starcraft in Korea is not the game as such, but how the game is culturally received and consumed by players (McKee, 2007). Starcraft has been glocalised by Koreans into a competitive form of entertainment. Thus, even though the game has not been physically altered for content, South Koreans actors have framed Starcraft so that it is uniquely situated in a culturally compatible frame as a competitive sport. Taylor (2012), in her book on esports³¹, states that competitive video gaming in South Korea is distinctive, not only because video gamers have become active in the competitive game scene, but also because of the extent to which esports has become integrated into people's daily routines. Professional video gaming in Korea has become as popular as professional poker leagues in the United States.

As a result of this widespread popularity of science fiction in video games, I anticipated that science fiction themed games would also be popular in India. However, my empirical data demonstrate that science fiction is not a popular theme among my Indian participants. In the excerpt below, Harry, the manager of Indulgence, discusses his observations of how science fiction video games were received by the gamers who frequented the gaming parlour.

Gagun: Do many customers who come to Indulgence play science fiction themed games?

Harry: India we don't have very much science fiction and it's not popular. There are some people like them but not really. Games also that are science fiction aren't popular.

Gagun: Why is that?

Harry: I don't know why. I don't really like it and in India people don't like science fiction. (Indulgence, manager).

Harry, in his response to my question about the absence of science fiction games in his gaming parlour, simply states that Indians do not like playing video games based on science fiction themes. The brevity of his reply indicates that this is something that does not require further elaboration and hence that he takes this state of affairs for granted. This in turn reflects a complete absence of science fiction as a cultural reference point in India at the time of my research. Such responses were common among the Indian research participants. All, except two, expressed a dislike towards science fiction based video games. Like Harry, they merely stated that science fiction was not popular in India.

³¹ Esports are a form of sport in which competitive tournaments of video games often played by amateur and professional video game players.

Furthermore, in their answers, they consistently rejected science fiction as a general theme and did not specify any form of media. It was not that science fiction was popularly consumed in one form over another (i.e. enjoying science fiction novels but not science fiction video games) but rather that science fiction was dismissed outright across all forms of media.

Although my inferences of Indian social actors' rejection of science fiction are based upon a limited number of interviews, and therefore my results cannot be generalised, their aversion to science fiction appears to extend beyond my interviewees into the larger Indian cultural zeitgeist. Recently, the highly anticipated movie *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*, had its release date in India pushed back by a week from December the 18th to December the 25th as to not compete directly with two Bollywood Indian blockbuster movies which were being released on the same day (Sean, 2015). Another example, the movie *Avengers: Age of Ultron*, was released in India a week before the United States as to avoid competition with a large Indian production. It appears that science fiction may not be a preference for Indians in all media forms; it is a culturally incompatible framework and any form of media which was identified as science fiction was immediately dismissed as 'not good'. Consequently, when I asked my Indian participants about science fiction they also expressed their aversion to science fiction movies. Although my sample group was small and mostly male, the rejection of science fiction was also evidenced among the few women whom I interviewed.

Gagun: Have you seen any science fiction movies? *Star Wars*, *Star Trek*?

Sarbjit: No

Gagun: Why not?

Sarbjit: Because they're all action or something like that, I don't like that.

Gagun: How about science fiction which has drama?

Sarbjit: I just watch and like *Grey's Anatomy*, that's it.

Gagun: How about *Star Trek*?

Sarbjit: No, I don't watch it. I just watch *Grey's Anatomy*, that's it.

Gagun: That's not science fiction.

Sarbjit: Yeah, that's not science fiction; it is based on something like medical sciences.

Gagun: How about some science fiction dramas? Have you seen any?

Sarbjit: I don't have interest in them.

Gagun: Why? Why not?

Sarbjit: Because I don't like it.

Gagun: Why not?

Sarbjit: Because I don't have interest in it, that's it.

Gagun: Why do you not have any interest in it?

Sarbjit: Because I have more interest in like fashion, clothes.

Gagun: Why more interest in your clothes?

Sarbjit: Because I like wearing funky clothes.

(Indulgence, video game player).

As demonstrated by Sarbjit above, the science fiction frame invalidates any form of media with which it is associated. Unlike the Manchester participants, who expressed nuances in the types of science fiction that they enjoyed, my Indian interviewees were unable to articulate why they rejected science fiction. The science fiction frame is well known to Western actors and this permits them to recognise nuances within the theme, thus allowing them to further demarcate the frame; acceptance of the genre is often accompanied by nuanced knowledge. Conversely, if science fiction is framed as an invalid or irrelevant category, then there is no need for actors to create further differentiations. The 'predestined' cultural rejection of the genre does not allow for any nuanced demarcation because it is immediately dismissed at an unconscious level. It is important to mention that while it was true that science fiction was a rejected frame among my participants when I conducted my research, culture (and thus cultural frames) is in a state of flux, and therefore as time passes and more familiarity with the genre occurs, science fiction may find a more comfortable location in the conscious tastes of the Indian people whom I interviewed.

Thus, science fiction, for the Indian research participants, is a culturally incongruous frame which is rejected unconsciously without any deliberation. Frames provide tacit and practical knowledge which enables social actors to attribute meaning and normalcy to a situation (Goffman, 1974). For a practice or experience to be accepted among my Indian interviewees, the experience must be positioned within a culturally acceptable frame, and in the case of my data a non-science fiction frame. As a result, how my interviewees defined a dominant frame, which is the frame which defines the activity or experience, differed from my Manchester participants. For example, I would classify movies like Iron Man as science fiction/fantasy, whereas my Indian interviewees understood such movies as action based. Iron Man's suit to my interviewees seems plausible. Of course, the science fiction fantasy of Iron Man is in many ways not at all realistic (i.e. the g forces of the suit would kill a person who piloted it in flight, an energy source for a mechanical suit is impossible, and so on). Nonetheless, despite these impossibilities, according to the Indian participants, Iron Man still exists within a familiar contemporary world where his technology is possible, whereas the worlds of Star Wars and Star Trek defy the everyday world in a fundamental way. The action frame for my Indian participants is natural; the frame is accepted and individuals behave in 'a way to convince others that the apparent frame is in fact the actual one' (Goffman, 1974: 487).

Consequently, science fiction in a contemporary situation is more likely to be validated if the object or experience can be reconfigured by the Indian research participants from the invalid frame of science fiction to a related and culturally accepted frame such as action or fantasy.

Gagun: Okay so science fiction, you do not like it, why not?

Atara : Just like that, no interest.

Gagun: Why?

Atara: I have not watched sci-fi in about 5 - 6 years.

Gagun: Why not?

Atara: I don't feel like it.

Gagun: Why not?

Atara: It is like, we all know that some things are not possible, so why make a movie on it, it is just deceptive, from the truth.

Gagun: But, what about the fantasy of it? No? Why not?

Atara: No. What do we do with fantasy?

Gagun: Is it not entertainment? No? Okay.

Atara: *We know what is true.*

(italics added for emphasis – Indulgence, video game player).

It is difficult to hypothesise why the Indian participants are so completely disconnected from the science fiction frame. As Atara above demonstrates, it was challenging for the interviewees to articulate an account of the cause or motive behind their selection. Bara had similar problems explaining what it was about science fiction that put him off.

Bara: There is no interest. I don't feel like watching them.

Gagun: Why don't you feel like? Have you seen a little bit?

Bara: Yes, a little bit but not a lot.

Gagun: What did you not like about it?

Bara: Like it seems *fake*.

Gagun: Why does it seem fake?

Bara: Action is not good.

Gagun: Why does it seem fake?

Bara: Fake actions. Action was not good.

Gagun: How? Please explain.

Bara: [Long pause] Sword of a tube, the tube sword.

Gagun: The light sabre? It seemed fake to you?

Bara: Yes. It is *not reality*.

Gagun: How about Star Trek, have you ever seen that?

Bara: No.

Gagun: Why not?

Bara: I don't know about it.

(italics added for emphasis)

(Indulgence, video game player).

The immediate dismissal of science fiction as illegitimate and valueless from my interviewees meant that it was impossible for me to argue in favour of any legitimacy for the genre. In one of the interviews, in an attempt to garner some legitimacy for science

fiction, I used the explanation of the acclaimed graphic novelist Alan Moore, making a case that science fiction can serve as a vehicle for discussing problems of the present in the future. My explanation was met with disapproval as Vee, in the excerpt below, felt that the illegitimacy of science fiction would taint any serious discussion and even contaminate the issues themselves.

Gagun: Yes, but what about discussing possible issues of now, the present, in a future setting? Wouldn't science fiction allow opening the debate for such discussions?

Vee: Why not discuss in the present? Instead they make a world that is not real to talk about real issues. That take away importance for what is real and important. (Indulgence, video game player).

As demonstrated by Vee above, the perceived dishonest nature of science fiction means that it cannot be used as a narrative device to explore contemporary philosophical concerns because it denigrates those issues by categorising them as fraudulent through association. Each individual, when negotiating a situation, such as being confronted with a science fiction themed game, does not create a frame of reference on the spot but uses such socially given frames to interpret what is going on and what they think about the situation (Smith, 2006: 68). The process of this negotiation is however difficult to articulate, as the above quotes show. Science fiction is experienced as invalid because Indians are unable to draw a cultural connection to the frame. I was unable to ascertain what factors have led to the invalidation of science fiction, but it became apparent to me after persisting with the respondents that it was common for Indians to perceive science fiction as a fraudulent genre which they construed as attempting to deceive them with untruths. As mentioned by Atara, when prompted several times regarding his rejection of science fiction, he stated that 'we know what is true'. Similarly, in the second excerpt, I asked Bara to elaborate on his misgivings about science fiction. Using Star Wars as an example, he stated that the light sabre does not exist so the depiction of a light based sword seems ludicrous. When I questioned the interviewees about the creativity of science fiction, the fantasy make-believe facet of the genre, the response was again one that referred to the perceived untruthfulness and deception of science fiction narratives. There were two exceptions in my participant group of twenty-five who enjoyed science fiction. However, they were both notable exceptions to the rest of my participants because they both had extensive experiences travelling abroad. This meant that they had been exposed to science fiction in the West in an environment where the science fiction frame was culturally accepted by other actors around them.

The interviews showed that for the Indian participants to recognise a frame as culturally viable they must believe it to be 'real'. Although Indian actors rejected the Western science fiction frame because it made little sense to them, they readily accepted other frames such as racing based frames. As mentioned previously, the movie *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*, was not popular in India in comparison to Bollywood movies. However, the Indian love for vehicles also carried over to movies, and the respondents frequently mentioned *Fast and Furious*³² as a popular film franchise. *Furious 7*, released in India in April of 2015, trumped its competition, the Indian movie *Detective Byomkesh Bakshi* (McLain, 2015). My interviewees highlighted the reality of the cars, emphasising that they were 'original cars, not like space cars, which nobody's ever seen' (Chay, Indulgence, video game player). Interestingly, even though the *Fast and Furious* movies contain exaggerated action sequences which appear rather unrealistic, my Indian respondents perceived the movies as truthful. As Chay above indicates, *Fast and Furious* contains cars that everyone has seen in reality. Conversely, 'space cars' are removed from his daily life and he will not be able to encounter them because they do not exist. This means that the Indian participants felt they were able to place action movies into a realistic interpretative frame which science fiction defies. Furthermore, I speculate that the chaotic style of *Fast and Furious* mimics the tumultuous roads in India which makes the movies appear even more realistic. In addition, cars are viewed as a significant status symbol in India and many individuals strive for the ownership of expensive automobiles with greater symbolic capital, perhaps also lending some of this capital to video games that are centred around cars. While Chay has no aspirations to own an X-wing fighter from *Star Wars*, he may someday hope to drive a BMW. Dundwala similarly noted that it was important for him to be able to imagine himself in the action of a movie or a game:

Dundwala: We do not connect with it [science fiction]. Nothing like this happens over here. No movies are based on these kinds of games, I mean even the people over here, they do watch movies that are connected like war movies or comedy movies, drama, action. They do not relate to such kind of movies. So that is why I have not seen in my last 10 years any of this type of movie at a theatre.

Gagun: So, why do people not connect to science fiction?

Dundwala: Because we are not made to, we never study these things, we never fantasise these things, so this is the reason.

Gagun: Why not?

Dundwala: Because we never see it on television or read in the books. Our normal regional books or anybody who is into reading, he has never seen such kind of books in the bookstore so nobody can connect with it. I mean, whenever a person sees a movie, whether it is a hero or a heroine, he connects with it, he feels like I am the hero of the movie, what is science fiction? What would he be, an alien? Or a

³² *Fast and Furious* is an American franchise of vehicle based action movies which focus on street racing and heists.

starship or a ship or captain? What kind of role would he play or fantasise in his mind? There is none. (Indulgence, video game player).

This excerpt from Dundwala shows that the process of frame rejection is highly selective and somewhat inflexible. He appears to suggest that because the possibility of becoming a starship captain does not exist, then Indian actors cannot relate to the science fiction frame. The research participants in Manchester, however, indicated that they were able to connect 'science fact' with 'science fiction', thus lending the latter some form of potential credibility, which in turn allowed them to picture people living in space.

Craig: But themes do affect the audience; for example, Counter Strike, a vast majority of male audience, guns, and men like things like that, they like shooting people. We are the protectors; we are the people who used to be out hunting for food and things like that ... If you look at the West, things like science fiction are very popular. It is also where a lot of the science and innovation and technology comes from because the people who like to advance science and the like tend to be interested in science fiction because if you are interested in science fiction, you would want to say 'Well, actually I want to put a person on Mars or on the Moon' and stuff like that because you dream about that. Other cultures, this doesn't appeal to them. (Kyoto Lounge, video game player).

Craig's explanation as to why science fiction is popular in the West appears to mirror Dundwala's interpretation of science fiction's unpopularity in India. Craig believes that the possibilities presented in science fiction can be realised. Hence, Western actors, or at least the society from which they are drawn can aspire to send a person to Mars. Of course, based upon my interview size, I am unable to make definitive statements as to how widespread the rejection of science fiction as a frame is in India, but I have been able to present an argument as to why my research participants did so, and why this might be a common approach to the genre of science fiction. My data suggest that Indians do not have a history of space travel and consequently they are not exposed to the possibilities of science fiction and, thus, lack the desire to pursue such goals, even in games.

Military Themed Video Games and Glocalisation through Consumption

I have discussed the rejection of the science fiction frame by the Indian game player. Next I examine a culturally accepted frame – that of military themed games. This contrast helps me illustrate how the socio-cultural context of the gamer plays an important role in the interpretation of a particular type of game, and how the game becomes glocalised when it is accepted as a game that fits the cultural frame of the video game player. Comparable to science fiction based games, the military themed video games played by my Indian interviewees were also global products created by Western game companies for Western

consumption. However, because military based video games were framed in a way that was culturally compatible, they were easily accepted by the Indian actors. The most popular video game played at Indulgence was Call of Duty (COD0). COD is a first-person shooter game with a strong multiplayer element allowing the gamer to play as a soldier from various factions including the United States marines, British special air services, and Russian ultranationalists. The majority of video gamers who played COD at Indulgence did so as a group (over 80% based upon my observations). When asked why it was so popular, most of the interviewees expressed their connection to the contemporary military theme of COD. Below, Harpal explains how he views war as a universal phenomenon which everyone in the world encounters.

Gagun: But there is that connection, why is that connection there with COD?

Harpal: Because it is more or less same in the whole world. I mean every country has its tsunami and wars are very common, and the generation which we are part of and the type of things happening around the world, I mean somebody poking into US, somebody poking into India, India poking into somebody else's territory. These kinds of things do happen, and you read certain kind of things in newspapers, see the news war is going on, somebody attacked some country, some country attacked some country. These kinds of things are going on, and recently this has happened in more or less all the Asian countries. I mean whether it Iran, Iraq or U.S. or Afghanistan. Moreover, so many movies have come up in last 10 years regarding these, all the movies starting from Rambo, they also intruded into Afghanistan in Rambo 3. (Indulgence, video game player).

In his description of COD (see Figure 28), Harpal references movies – Rambo, specifically - which contain a similar war-based theme. It is important to note that the popularity of a movie like Rambo has no bearing on the legitimacy of COD; however, his association of two different, but relatedly-framed types of media supports my previous assertion that similarly-framed media will be interpreted in analogous ways. For the reason that both Rambo and COD are war-themed, and because the contemporary war frame is considered 'legitimate', and therefore representative of reality among my Indian participants, both media within these frames will be similarly accepted.



Figure 28. Call of Duty screenshot. Source: Wikipedia.

According to the online retailer Amazon, the five top selling video games in India in 2015 are: Call of Duty: Ghosts (military), FIFA 16 (sports – football), Grand Theft Auto V (action), Counter-strike: Global Offensive (military), and Call of Duty: Black Ops (military). For contrast, the bestselling video games on Amazon for the United Kingdom in 2015 are: Tom Clancy’s The Division (military), FIFA 16 (sports – football), Grand Theft Auto V, Star Wars Battlefront (science fiction). Although the list of the top five bestselling games has some resemblance, the top selling games are quite different. In Call of Duty: Ghosts, the top selling video game in India, the gamer plays as part of an international strike force carrying out missions all over the world. On the other hand, Tom Clancy’s The Division plays out in a crisis filled setting in New York. I would assume that then an international setting of COD would be more desirable to the Indian video game players than New York.

India has a long and complex military past, littered with numerous wars and invasions (Sandhu, 2013). This is particularly true of Chandigarh, located in the state of Punjab, which is comprised of rich agricultural land and is the gateway into the Indian subcontinent through the Indus valley. Consequently, Punjab became the battleground for many of these wars (Cohen, Stephen & Dasgupta, 2010). In addition, Punjab is the birthplace of Sikhism, which has a long military history. For example, the first Anglo-Sikh wars were fought between the East India company and the Sikh empire in the Punjab between 1845 and 1846 (Sidhu, 2013). At present, Chandigarh is home of the Chandimandir cantonment military station and the Chandigarh Air Force Station. During my field research, I frequently observed military personnel practicing marching and numerous exercise drills

on the various military grounds located throughout the city. Unlike in the West, where military occupations generally are perceived as lower status jobs (Ganzeboom & Treiman, 1996), military jobs in India are seen as distinguished, high status government careers with guaranteed pensions (Mazumder, 2003).



Figure 29. Military in Chandigarh. Source: Wikipedia.

The differences in status of the military in many Western countries compared to India means that how social actors engage with the frame of the military will also be very different. For example, the British army faces recruitment shortages (Farmer, 2013), as do the Canadian armed forces (Berthiaume, 2014). In order to draw a comparison to my Indian data, I questioned Dan about whether or not he had ever considered a job in the military.

Gagun: Have you ever thought about joining the British Army, or military?

Dan: What are you bonkers? Hell, no. Why are you even asking me this? I thought this was about video gaming? (Kyoto Lounge, video game player).

As Dan demonstrates above, joining the British Army has never been an ambition of his. Moreover, he was surprised that I had probed him about military work. As mentioned previously, a military career in the United Kingdom is not commonly pursued, whereas in India a government job which has a regular guaranteed income and a pension is difficult to attain but much sought after. Consequently, a high ranking officer in the military is also a position which has significant social status. Many of my Indian research participants had applied to join the army but had been rejected due to the extreme competition. I believe that India's long military history (particularly in the north) coupled with the relatively high economic and cultural capital attached to military occupations makes the theme of military video games relatable to the average Indian social actor. Furthermore, the cultural capital associated with the military lends legitimacy to army themed video games and, ultimately,

also aids in attracting gamers into the newly emerging field of video gaming in India through that stream or genre.

In contrast, Halo, a video game with similar ludic game play mechanics to COD, is science fiction based and hence culturally rejected by Indian actors. Only two of my Indian participants (8%), opposed to all of my Manchester interviewees, had played Halo. The *conceptual form* of first-person shooter games has an analogue in the lives of my Indian participants, and this provides an avenue for its adaptation and acceptance. The lack of an analogue for science fiction makes it 'alien', and leads to its rejection.

Wing: Well, Halo for me, the main thing that grasps me about Halo was that it was on the first Xbox, like I played on the first Xbox, the whole sci-fi thing for me, but you really worked really well with story line as well, that the story line for me was like really intriguing the way it was literally like out of this world, if you know what I mean. For me if that was, if it was the same concept like ... it is more like as long as there is something to grasp me. (Kyoto Lounge, video game player).

When asked why they enjoyed Halo, many of my Manchester interviewees responded similarly to Wing above, namely, that it was the storyline that was of consequence and the theme (i.e. science fiction) did not matter. This, to a degree, diverged from their earlier accounts that they enjoyed science fiction. But as Craig, elaborates, the initial framing of an experience is merely the entry point.

Craig: But themes do affect the audience; for example, Counter Strike, a vast majority of male audience, guns, and men like things like that, they like shooting people. Getting back to your question, I enjoy science fiction and fantasy, but just because a video game is a science fiction game doesn't mean that it is going to be a good game. Maybe I'll give it a try because I like science fiction, but that doesn't mean if the game is poorly made I'm going to keep playing it. Why play a bad game when there are so many good games? (Kyoto Lounge, video game player).

Goffman's frame analysis provides a conceptual tool for understanding how actors organise and digest information both consciously and unconsciously (Goffman, 1972: 21). Whereas the Indian participants rejected the frame of science fiction but were unable to communicate explicitly why or how their rejection of the frame developed, they were able to explain why they enjoyed COD and other war themed video games and movies – akin to the way that my participants in Manchester had been able to explain their affinity towards science fiction based games. Once a frame is culturally accepted it appears that social actors can then consciously interact with games that fall within this frame by consuming them and offering nuanced interpretations of what is occurring in the video game. In this way, when social actors consciously use frameworks they must wilfully exert 'an intelligence, a live agency, the chief one being the human being' (Goffman, 1974: 22).

It follows that Indian actors are aware at some level that most mainstream video games, given their design for a Western audience, are framed in a way that is not entirely culturally compatible. As discussed in Chapter 2, the narratological view of video game studies claims that digital games can be understood as narrative (similar to novels and cinema) and part of a tradition of representation designed to tell stories. For my purposes, the key importance of narratology in understanding the video game play experience is its association with the context of the player. Narratives are representational structures which draw upon socio-cultural symbolism. Thus, frames may organise an experience through the symbolic importance of the game elements. As demonstrated above, the military frame carries meaningful importance of the Indian video game player far outside of the game itself. The military frame carries with it historical and, in some cases, contemporary importance which is both culturally situated as real, but also as a part of cultural identity and traditions.

‘Modding’ or the Modification of Global Games

Glocalisation involves the simultaneous penetration of the global into the local context so that the global becomes manifested and adopted through cultural identity. Thus, as a process, glocalisation must allow for social actors to have the means to influence local conditions (Teo, 2002: 467). In this way, video gamers interpret video games through culturally specific frames, by which the local cultural conditions engage to make sense of the practice and ultimately glocalise video gaming so that it becomes part of the local cultural fabric. Science fiction is completely rejected as a theme by the Indian video gaming community and a military theme is more culturally compatible (and therefore more accessible). However, Western video games, such as COD, are constructed for a Western audience and, thus, not culturally specific to the Indian gamer. Therefore, some gamers seek video games that are more thoroughly culturally adapted. It is to this form of glocalisation that I now turn to, that is, to the modification of games to suit local tastes.

I extend my discussion now into the pseudo creation of domestic Indian video games by examining Indian video gamers’ use of modified or ‘modded’ video games. Specifically, I investigate two video games: Bhagat Singh, a locally produced game, and Grand Theft Auto: Gadar, a modified Western game. I argue that while the game mechanics or the ludic nature of the video game remains the same in these modded Indian video games, the

aesthetic changes to the video game help create a greater connection between the player and the video game, ultimately leading to a much deeper association and experience between the actor, the game and field of video gaming.

Prior to conducting my field research I was initially expecting India to have a large domestic video gaming market. My hypothesis was based upon the local production of movies which gave rise to India's indigenous movie industry called Bollywood. I surmised that it would be likely that a similar localisation of the Western video game market was taking place, one where a localised 'Bollygames' would arise paralleling their Western counterparts in their own culturally unique way. I did not know in what form the glocalisation of video games in India would take place (perhaps in the guise of Bollywood themed characters, as well as the inclusion of song and dance numbers that Bollywood has become so famous for). Upon arriving in India, I found my hypothesis to be incorrect. The majority of video games created in India were manufactured for the Western mobile phone market, often contracted by larger international companies. This is similar to any other outsource model, such as the manufacture of sports shoes in Vietnam. A significant number of my respondents (14 out of 25) were unaware of the existence of any Indian made video games.

VeeDo: I do not think India makes video games. We are not hi fi. India make movies, music and other things. Bollywood, you know, is too much popular here. (Indulgence, video game player).

Other video game players were unsure about whether they had encountered Indian video games because they were uncertain of the origin of most video games. Generally, the interviewees assumed video games to be produced in the United States. Given that some of the largest video game companies (e.g. Blizzard, Electronic Arts) have their headquarters in the United States, this was a reasonable assumption.

Gagun: Are there any games that you play that are made in India?

Balvarat: Actually I haven't gone that far finding out what game belongs to what country. I think I haven't played any Indian games. If I have played then I don't know.

(Indulgence, video game player).

However, those players who had encountered Indian video games described nationally produced games as inferior in production quality (i.e. graphics, sounds, game design, and so on) to their Western counterparts. The few games that are made in India for the local population were generally not popular among my participants. The substandard quality of

the digital games led to an inferior play experience; therefore, there was no reason to play nationally produced video games.

Gagun: Do you play any Indian video games?

Raja: No. Not really. There is hardly a one good Indian game.
(Indulgence, video game player).

It is not that India lacks a history of video games. There were several attempts at creating domestic Indian video games, but few people remember these games and they received very poor reviews (Mukherjee, 2015: 237). Nonetheless, 6 participants mentioned the Indian video game Bhagat Singh (2002). Bhagat Singh is a video game based on the eponymous Indian freedom fighter who assassinated the British officer, John Saunders, in 1927. After the assassination, Bhagat Singh was convicted and hanged at 23 years of age. His death is attributed was symbolic of or spurred the youth in India to begin fighting for Indian independence against British rule (Reddy & Prakash, 2014: 35).



Figure 30. . Screen shot of Bhagat Singh. Source: Youtube.

Pictured in Figure 30 above, Bhagat Singh is a first-person shooter where the player assumes the role of Bhagat Singh and fights against the British Empire. The game is an adaption of the Indian movie Bhagat Singh. The video game was the most popular Indian-made game among my interviewees. However, the popularity of Bhagat Singh was not attributable to its production quality.

Harpal (Indulgence): I played a local game some time ago called Bhagat Singh which was made in India. It was very okay but needs to improve in graphics. It was an action game.

Gagun: First person shooter?

Harpal: Yes, a first person shooter. It was also related to Bhai Bhagat Singh's story a little with what's happened in his life through the different stages. It also wasn't a very long game.

Gagun: Was it good?

Harpal: Not much. It wasn't long enough and it needed more graphics improvements.

Gagun: Why did you play it?

Harpal: (long pause). I was interested in first person shooters and it was the first time that a game had been made in India.

...

Gagun: What about Bhai Bhagat Singh?

Harpal: I played Bhai Bhagat Singh because it's related to real life and it relates to Punjabis a lot. The game is patriotic.

Gagun: Okay. You said it [referring to previously in the interview when Harpal had stated that content in video games is not important] doesn't matter but it does in Bhai Bhagat Singh?

Harpal: I like it but it doesn't matter. I liked Bhai Bhagat Singh because it relates to me/us ... I knew who Bhagat Singh was in real life and I wanted to see how the game makers made the content relate with Bhagat Singh and how it relates in the game's different stages.

In the interview excerpt above, Harpal stated that although he enjoyed playing Bhagat Singh, the graphics and general production value of the game lacked in comparison to other Western made video games. Yet, regardless of the game being of poor quality, Bhagat Singh was referenced by my interviewees because of how well the game was glocalised as part of their cultural frame. The character, Bhagat Singh, carries important implication as an historical figure in India. Thus, the video game Bhagat Singh is contextualised as action based, historical, Indian and real which influences the organisation of the game play experience for Indian video gamers before they have actually played the video game. But regardless of how effectively the video game was framed, Bhagat Singh was not able to recover from the poor quality of the video game itself.

Some interviewees were surprised that Indian games existed, indicating the lack of popularity of nationally produced games. During my field research, I went searching for Indian video games and found several that were themed after Bollywood movies. In Chandigarh's main shopping mall, I had seen a poster for the video game Ra.One based on the Bollywood superhero movie.



Figure 31. Screen shot of the Indian video game Ra.One. Source: Wikipedia.

Curious about the poster I had seen, I asked one of my participants about the video game Ra.One when inquiring about Indian made video games.

Gagun: What about Ra.One?

Stara: (laughs). It's terrible. Somehow they cannot make ... Graphics are not good, probably. Not a good experience I guess. The graphics, I didn't really like them. There was a point where they started to promote them a lot. They started coming with PS2 consoles but they weren't really a hit in the market. Nobody liked playing them (laughs).

(Indulgence, video game player).

As with the Indian video game Bhagat Singh, Ra.One suffered from low quality production values. During my field research, I queried the owner of a media shop about who purchases and plays Bollywood-based or Indian games and he replied 'only little kids' play those games because their parents will buy them as gifts. It appears that a video game's connection to an Indian theme is enough for a non-player (the adult) to purchase the game because the frame is culturally compatible. But for the experienced player, the theme, although significant to the play experience as established above, is not enough to prevail over the importance of production values and execution of the game mechanics. At the time of writing, no triple A Indian video games exists. I have been unable to gather any information as to why no high production value Indian video games are made. I hypothesise that because video games cost millions of dollars to create, there is simply not a large enough market in India to sustain the production of high quality video games due to

both limited hardware availability and the high rates of piracy³³.

Indian games which contain the specific cultural connection to attract Indian gamers suffer from poor production values. Although the theme of the game is accepted, in most cases, the actual video game is rejected. An alternative approach to glocalising video games in India is to modify existing video games that are already popular among Indian video gamers, so that they aesthetically relate to Indian cultural tastes. A modification or 'mod' is an alteration of the content of a video game, which makes it different than the original version. The mod can either consist of altered game mechanics (e.g. a different set of movements, new abilities) or aesthetic changes (e.g. different characters, graphics or storyline). An aesthetic alteration to a video game means that the game play itself is unchanged. For example, visually changing Pac-Man so that the player character is blue instead of yellow does not change the actual mechanical game play for the gamer. The object of the game, to eat white dots while avoiding the ghosts, remains the same, as does the actor's control over the player character (i.e. up, down, right or left) through the maze.

Although video game modders can completely change the game play of an existing video game, modded games in India are typically only aesthetically altered. The practice of modding video games is in most cases illegal because it is unlawful to alter a company's intellectual property (i.e. their video game) without their approval, and because it is rare for modders to ask for such approval. Enforcement of software piracy laws in India is almost non-existent, which perhaps explains the existence of numerous video stores that allow customers to purchase illegally made and distributed video games and movies. It is from one of these video stores that I purchased a copy of Grand Theft Auto: Gadar. Modder's do not get financial compensation for their altering of video game content because the games themselves are proprietary. As such, the modders do not have permission from the video game producer to alter the game's contents. In India, modded video game are sometimes distributed over the internet, but due to slow internet connections, illegal copies are also sold in media shops which sell pirated video games and movies. I was informed about the game by one of my respondents. Gadar is a modified version of Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas which has been aesthetically altered so that it visually appears to take place in India. Modding a popular foreign game addresses many of the difficulties involved with local production. Far fewer resources are needed to alter an already produced game than to create a new video game. Thus, modded games provide

³³ According to a survey conducted by the British Software Alliance (BSA), the piracy rates in India in 2013, for personal computers, were over 60% and accounted for a loss of approximately 2.3 billion US dollars

a middle ground where Indian players can avoid the poor graphics and mechanics of Indian games while still situating the game in a culturally valid and easily recognisable frame. These modifications have a dramatic effect on how the Indian player frames the video game, which, in turn, transforms the overall video game experience for the gamer.

Academics have argued that modding allows for user participation, empowerment and democratisation of video game production (Crawford, 2012). In a local context, it provides modders the opportunity to create video game content that has a local flavour. In video games like *Gadar*, (see Figure 32 on the following page) the desire to actively mod a video game may be fuelled by motives of self-representation as there is no financial reward for illegally modifying and freely distributing an already existing videogame.

Gagun: What is Grand Theft Auto *Gadar*?

Balvar: It is a modified version of Grand Theft Auto San Andreas.

Gagun: *Gadar*, really? Wow! That is fascinating.

Balvar: It is like we have Sardars³⁴ over there, Indian cars in that ... *Gadar*, it was actually a Punjabi movie, *Gadar*, Sunny Deol³⁵.

Gagun: The fact that the game is Indian, how does that change your experience of playing the game?

Balvar: More familiarity is there, and we get a feeling of being 'apna'³⁶.

Gagun: Okay, explain that feeling.

Balvar: We are all of our own, the majority. Patriotism. We are our own in the game.

...

Gagun: What if we had *Gadar* and the original San Andreas here, which one would you pick?

Balvar: *Gadar*.

Gagun: Okay. Why?

Balvar: Everything is the same, we have modifications in that, like super health, the person even if he is shot, mostly the cheats, they are like default in that and Super bike, we do not fall off the bike and high jumps, we can reach the sky in just one jump and we get the cars right in front of us, we do not have to search the whole town. *But more* we have Indians in the game and three-wheelers, it is *more familiar*. (italics added for emphasis - Indulgence, video game player).

As mentioned earlier, narratives are representational structures carrying socio-cultural symbolic importance which are organised through cultural frames. The process of modding entails changing aesthetic elements of the video game so that they fit a culturally specific frame. These changes serve as dramaturgical props which aid in understanding the performance of the video game. The modders alter the video game by inserting props to

³⁴ Sardar is respectful Hindi, Punjabi and Urdu term for an individual wearing a turban

³⁵ Sunny Deol is a famous Bollywood actor

³⁶ The use of the Indian (Hindi, Punjabi and Urdu) word 'apna' is difficult to translate because it does not have an exact English counterpart. An approximate English equivalent might be oneself, own, mine and ours. However, unlike the English words that I have listed, apna connotes a sense of belonging and identity to a culture and a place.

convey information as to how they want to video game to be interrupted. Even though the modding to Gadar has no effect on the ludic aspect of the video game, the props (e.g. beard, darker skin, turban, rickshaws, etc.) bring the video game within a closer cultural distance creating an association between the cultural context and the video game player which resonates far beyond the video game itself.

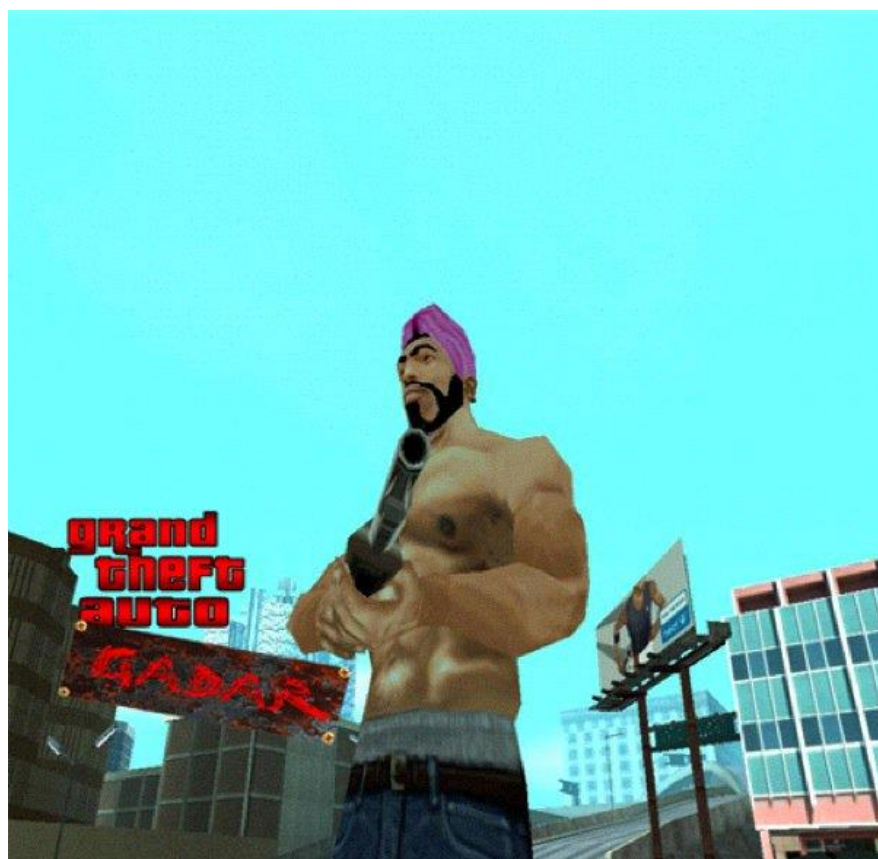


Figure 32. Screen shot of Grand Theft Auto: Gadar. The main player character is shown wearing a violet coloured turban. Source: Gadar Facebook page.

In the case of the Indian video game player, as Balvar states, the modded game Gadar provides him or her with a feeling of belonging, of being ‘the majority’, a sense of ‘patriotism’ and of being ‘our own’. To Balvar, Gadar is apna and this is a connection that he does not have with any other globally created video game. Other players expressed that the Indian protagonist and certain altered vehicles made them ‘feel’ different while playing. The Gadar modification alters the way GTA is framed so that it is contextually situated as a video game social actors can more easily connect with. This is because gamers feel ‘like the game was made for them’ (Sola, Indulgence), which it indeed is. In this way, the Indian notion of apna serves as a frame which keys an activity so that the activity is associated with a specific social significance. In other words, an already meaningful activity is patterned which changes the participants’ interpretation, and

therefore, how they make sense of the given experience (Goffman, 1974: 43). For an experience to be apna it implies ownership, but in the context of a practice ownership infers a cultural and historical relationship between the social actor and the activity or medium itself. As such, the concept of apna is a glocalising frame which takes an existing practice and, for the social actor, attaches significant contextual meaning. The modder's of GTA Gadar have successfully framed GTA through graphical modifications making the game apna, and therefore, culturally meaningful.

Due to the popularity of GTA Gadar among Indian video game players, a collective of Indian modders calling themselves the Himanshu Group have been producing a sequel called Grand Theft Auto Punjab. Punjab is the northern state in which Chandigarh is located. The group has stated on their Facebook page that the game will be released on the internet sometime in late 2015 when the modification is complete. The latest update on the 19 of December 2015 stated that the game would be delayed, but did not provide any specific date-related information. Unfortunately, my attempts at contacting the Himanshu have failed. Most likely they have not responded to my requests because modding a video game is illegal. Regardless, they have stated on their Facebook page that the modding for GTA Punjab has taken almost three years and that it is more extensive than the mods implemented in Gadar. The organisation and commitment of the modding group shows how actors work together consciously to help create video games that fit culturally-specific frames better than by consciously altering the existing video game, and as such how the video game is framed. Modding practices represent an important way in which actors consciously seek to make the world fit their culturally-specific frames. This is part of the wider phenomenon of glocalisation.

The web poster for GTA Punjab (see Figure 33 below) depicts a montage of several images that are ubiquitous with the state of Punjab.



Figure 33. Internet Poster of GTA Punjab. Source: Gadar Facebook page.

The poster shows several tractors, a farming canal, trucks hauling merchandise (commonly wheat), and a Sikh musician in a turban who is most likely playing Bhangara (folk music of Northern India). To reiterate, the purpose of these pictures is to represent what one of the interviewees referred to as 'apna'. Punjab is known as the 'bread basket' of India due to its agricultural land.

DuoDoy: Of course, it is more belonging. Patriotism you could say to see yourself. Not yourself, but you know others that are like you and your culture is there in Gadar. So, it is better. I see the rickshaws and the turbans and it is more, it is like my life. I feel like yes, this is me, it is my game, I feel patriotic. It is like passion for your country. (Indulgence, video game player).

In the excerpt above, the DuoDoy describes his sense of ‘apna’ in relation to the video game. Because the video game represents him and his culture it provides a greater sense of inclusion which ultimately leads to a greater degree of immersion. As stated before, the mechanics of the video game are largely unchanged. Rather, the aesthetic changes provide an experiential change to how the Indian video game player encounters the video game. Furthermore, the patriotism element that DuoDoy mentions is an extension of seeing his cultural representation within the game. Feeling a sense of belonging to the game, one where the game is an obvious cultural reflection of the player means that the Indian video game player feels more invested in the outcome of the video game. As mentioned previously, my Manchester interviews did not focus on game modding, most likely because the majority of the video games they played were already framed using a cultural specific frame which would be accepted in the West. However, Indian gamers did not have access to high quality video games which were also contextualised in local tastes. In absence of high quality domestic video games, modded video games offer gamers high quality video games which have been aesthetically changed so they are framed in a culturally accepted frame of representation.

Conclusion

In this chapter I focused on the video games themselves, exploring how social actors make sense of video games as part of their existing culture. An aspect of that glocalised sense-making was illustrated through a discussion of science fiction. I cited the prevalence of science fiction as a frame in in the West, specifically, that it permeates all forms of media, as well the Western research participants’ receptiveness to science fiction in whatever form it appears. Conversely, my Indian interviewees’ rejection was equally consistent as they dismissed science fiction in all forms of media such as movies and novels. Thus, any media which the Indian actors *perceived* as science fiction was dismissed offhand without any thought to its deeper content, such as characterisation or narratives. Video games are globalised products – primarily made in East Asia and the West. Although Asian companies are major producers in this market, their products largely represent Western characters and themes. As such, most games are Westernised and are circulated through the global economy as a standardised consumer good. However, as video games travel from these producers to specific locations in international markets, they may not appeal to consumers because they do not fit local, culturally-specific frames. This, I argued, can lead to rejection of certain video games or to actors seeking to adapt games to such culturally-specific frames. Video gamers may seek to adapt the practice of video gaming through

'reading' them through their cultural frames in order to make sense of games according to their own norms and preferences. And second, by physically modifying the video games themselves so that they are better situated in the local cultural context. Modding video games represent a more obvious and profound instance of the wider phenomenon of glocalisation. The implications of glocalisation for the game is that unless the video game can be glocalised successfully, either through its consumption or physical modification, it will not be make sense to the social actor and, therefore, be rejected because the practice exists in a culturally incompatible frame. In three cases, among my Indian interviewees, some basis of 'reality' was an important element in the rejection or acceptance of video game play. It was essential for interviewees, in both my Indian and United Kingdom interviews, to be able to imagine themselves within the frame used; failure to so meant that the medium, regardless of content, would be rejected on the basis of it frame. The Indian notion of *apna*, the sense of ownership and belonging which is both personal/experiential and historical/cultural serves as glocalising frame providing greater connection between the video gamer and the video game. *Apna* is a culturally specific concept, therefore, it demonstrates that contextual factors have a strong influence on the experience of video game play. If Indian social actors were to accept the science fiction frame, it would force them to leave their own *apna* and enter a world which is foreign to them in all senses. In all three of these cases, I have highlighted the importance of situating the video gamer in cultural context, for the reason that the interpretation of the video game by the player is contingent upon how effectively the frame in which the game is constructed makes sense within the specific culture.

Introduction

This thesis has examined the role of video gaming as an emerging practice in the cultural context of India. Using Crawford's (2012) research on video gamers as the groundwork for my research, I undertook to address gaps that he had identified in the current digital game scholarship – namely, the lack of video game research outside of the West, and the game-centric approaches in academic scholarship which have examined video gaming as if it were removed from everyday life. Through a mixed methods qualitative approach, I explored how Indian social actors establish video gaming in their lives through a process of glocalisation. Through this process, the practice of video gaming is interpreted and shaped so that it makes sense within the context of the actors' lives.

Even though video games have slowly gained in popularity in India (Nath, 2013), research on video gaming in India has been scarce (Mukherjee, 2015; Shaw, 2013). This thesis constitutes one of the few studies focused specifically on video games in India (see Erhardt, 2010; O'Donnell, 2008; Shaw, 2013). My field research took place in Chandigarh, India, over a period of four months, using a comparative method with more limited fieldwork in Manchester. The latter's contrasting data enabled me to better discern cultural factors in India which I might have overlooked or has been obscured. My research is underpinned theoretically by using primarily Bourdieu's concepts of social field, habitus, and capital, and Goffman's concepts of dramaturgy and framing. Together these concepts provided a theoretical framework through which I was able to achieve a greater understanding of my data and the sociocultural processes it revealed.

In the first section of this final chapter, I draw out the broader theoretical and scholarly concerns, and highlight how my research illuminates the adoption and interpretation of the emerging field of video gaming in the non-Western context of India. The second section of this chapter provides a summary of the main issues and themes that have emerged in my study. In particular I emphasise the research questions about the emergence and contextualisation of the field of video gaming, and about the everyday practice of video game play as enacted by Indian video game players. Finally, I reflect critically on the gaps in content and the problems that I encountered with my methods of data collection. I discuss the limitations of my work, as well as what might be done differently if this work were to be replicated or extended.

The Player and the Socio-Cultural Context

Until recently, the early academic literature on video games most notably focused on categorising video games by either their narrative or their ludic elements. The narratological view claims that digital games are best understood as forms of narrative stories. The ludologists argue that video games cannot be understood simply as texts because they are dependent upon the active engagement of the player (Juul, 2000). Today, however, most scholars recognise that video gaming cannot be wholly reduced to either the play or storytelling (Mayra, 2008: 10), and therefore the analysis of digital game play must include elements of both. The problem with basing research on the terms of this debate is that all sides tend to treat video game play as a practice removed from the broader social context. The failure to address the specificity of the video game medium has led to the misapplication of principles taken from other disciplines such as literature or film (Wesp, 2014), and to a failure to connect the field of video games to the greater network of human connections in which the practice subsists. Furthermore, focusing on the game itself has meant that video game studies scholars have largely treated the player as a homogenous entity, Western by default, with little attention to how culture—in all its diversity—affects the social actor's video game play experience. Methods of analysis that disregard cultural specificity have the effect of ignoring and/or marginalising the voices of non-Western individuals.

In his book *Video Gamers*, Crawford (2012) calls for a socially oriented study of video games. Essentially, he makes a case for positioning the practice of video gaming within the wider culture, rather than viewing it as an activity that functions in isolation, in one specific location, at one point in time (DiGRA, 2011). Consequently, Crawford seeks to understand gaming culture by shifting the focus of his lens from the object of the video game itself, and instead considering video games within the complex of quotidian social and cultural patterns. He also observes critically that the majority of video game research to date has been conducted in the West. The fact that the context is typically ignored certainly both contributes to and conceals the fact that most video game research is Western-centric. My research is informed by Crawford's criticisms. It begins to address the gaps that he has identified within game studies scholarship by examining Indian video game players as culturally-situated social actors who make sense of video games and the act of video gaming through specific cultural frameworks.

Research Questions, Location and Theory

Again, without regard for the broader historical and cultural milieu that video gamers inhabit, it is impossible to fully appreciate why actors attach particular meanings to their participation in the practice of video game play. Thus, my three key research questions were developed to facilitate an understanding and contextualisation of video gaming within Indian culture:

1. How has video game play emerged in India?
2. How do actors work creatively to bring about video game play in India?
3. How is the practice of video game play adopted and situated in the broader context of the players' social world?

I developed these overarching research questions as a result of paying attention to cultural factors at both the macro and micro levels. I wanted to understand how social actors engage with video gaming as a practice within their lives. I wanted to know what micro-sociological interactions were performed within the physical gaming spaces, as well as how players interpret the video games. My intention was to know how Indian gamers are shaped by their surroundings and video game play, and also how they actively interpret and shape those things. I assumed that gamers in India, due to their unique cultural context, would inevitably glocalise video game play differently than their Western counterparts. The research I conducted in the United Kingdom served as a smaller secondary dataset that helped illuminate culturally-specific factors which might have otherwise have escaped notice.

Theoretically, my research draws on the work of Bourdieu and Goffman, as well as Robertson's concept of glocalisation. All of these theorists highlight the significance of cultural context. For Bourdieu and Goffman, the relationship between the social actors and the culture in which they are embedded is central to understanding human behaviour. Envisioning social interactions as occurrences within the social field allows for the conceptualisation of the influences of these social relations and social structures (Martin, 2003: 10). Bourdieu's model of social practice in particular yields a complex understanding of game studies in relation to how social actors relate to the field of video gaming.

Bourdieu's theory expands on and refines simplified and un-nuanced accounts of cultural creation, which depict it as dependent merely on economic exchange (Nichols, 2013: 35). For Bourdieu, actors possess varying degrees of cultural, economic, and social capital,

which they deploy within the social field in order to gain more advantageous positions in the field. Additionally, the habitus of social actors influences their decision making process. A social actor's habitus is not a result of free will, but rather is shaped by the interplay between past experiences and social structures. Social actors thus behave according to their habitus, which in turn reveals their process of socialisation and the social structures in which they are embedded (Nash, 1999). This means that video gamers are influenced by past experiences and social structures that form their social context outside of the field of video gaming, such as their family and education. As such, it is impossible to remove the practice of video gaming from the social actor's cultural environment, because their habitus shapes their experience and understanding of video game play. It follows, then, that video gamers in different social locations will have unique interpretations and interactions of the field of video gaming.

A frequently-voiced criticism of Bourdieu's theory is that it presents an overly socialised view of the individual (Goldthorpe, 2007: 215; Jenkins, 1992; King, 2002: 418). Furthermore, it is not entirely clear how the concept of the practice could be applied before a particular field has been adequately developed (Warde, 2004: 4), for instance the emerging field of video games in India. It is possible to interpret Bourdieu as being socially deterministic, which would make it difficult to envision how his theory would explain the emergence of a new field which is not adequately developed (lacking a 'feel for the game', and thus a field-specific habitus). If an individual's disposition was set by the experiences constituting habitus, how could any new practice ever be established? However, for my purposes, I find this stance does not take into account how productive Bourdieu's theory can be. His theory of the social field offers significant insight for my research because of its consideration of the importance of how multiple contextual variables (i.e. capital, field and habitus) interrelate to shape a social actor's behaviour. The interaction of those variables can contribute to the establishment of a new practice.

To supplement and expand on Bourdieu's theory in this regard, I have used Goffman's micro-sociological concepts of dramaturgy and frames to address the mutual influences amongst social actors and actor's daily interactions with each other and their social setting (Jacobsen & Kristiansen, 2015: 68). This supports my understanding of how video gamers are affected by their everyday socio-cultural complexities when participating in the practice of video gaming. In Goffman's framework, everyday life is understood in reference to theatre, which provides a template for how a performance is organised. Specifically, through impression management, the identities and behaviours of social

actors are dependent upon the audience that they are performing to. Individuals attempt to control their performances through impression management, that is, by managing the impressions of themselves that they project to others during their performances. Social actors may use props, and other such aids, to assist their performance and to make clearer to their audience the meaning of the performance. A core tenet of dramaturgy particularly relevant to my research is the central role that Goffman assigns to audiences, because how video gamers interact and relate to each other, as performers to audiences, strongly influences their behaviour within the field of video gaming. How video gamers relate to each other and their social environment is particularly important when attempting to comprehend how the physical settings are used to establish specific types of behaviour.

Additionally, Goffman's notion of frame analysis allows for a conceptual way in which social actors perceive reality and make it salient in interpreting and communicating experiences (Entman, 1993: 52). Goffman's frame analysis extends and unpacks the idea of context in the subjective experience, emphasising the importance of context in how social actors use frames to make sense of situations. Although frames pre-exist the individual, and thus to an extent pre-determine how individuals will interpret the world around them, frames allow for more room to manoeuvre than Bourdieu's habitus. Framing can suggest an active process (Reese, 2001: 7): social actors may use pre-existing frames to make sense of situations, or they may attempt to create new frames (Gitlin, 1980: 6). For Goffman, framing is an innate property of all social processes, which can be either unconsciously employed or deliberately adopted by the actor. Framing assumes more creative flexibility in the actions of individuals and sees actors as consciously constructing the sense of a situation, even while they use routines and habits that are less readily available to their reflexive consciousness. In both cases, framing relies upon a consensual interpretation by social actors of a practice. In my research, video gaming in India is an emerging practice which is finding a place for itself within the Indian cultural milieu. Framing helps to elucidate how video gamers make sense of the practice of video gaming in their relationships to each other, to the physical spaces, and to the video games themselves. This is also the true of the more established field of video gaming in the West, where gamers must still frame experiences. However, in the West, the frames used are more 'solidified', and carry with them a prearranged, yet still fluid, consensual agreement.

Finally, glocalisation has provided me with a framework in which to view my data as a process of the amalgamation of the global and the local—a process in which culture is neither isolated from global processes, nor erased by global, Western frames. Providing a

more nuanced view of the world than globalisation, which emphasises a homogenised conceptualisation of social forces dominated by a single culture, glocalisation envisions social processes as a synthesis of the global and the local recognising that actors and social relations at a local level are important to the consumption and production of global culture. The implication of this local consumption is to effectively conceptualise glocalisation as a process, not limited to a specific locality, but that is inextricably connected with and influences global transformation (Castells, 1988; Wade, 1996). The notion of glocalisation has been particularly useful in my research because of its emphasis on duality, that is, the mutual importance of global pathways and the local culture in which a practice takes place. Thus, glocalisation has allowed me to consider strong local cultural elements alongside global processes, at the levels of the field, of the everyday practices in video gaming parlours, and of the individual's creative engagements with video game products themselves.

These have given me insight into the ways in which Indian video game players make sense of and engage with the practice of video gaming. This engagement is shaped by a multitude of contextual factors, and these form a framework in which the field of video gaming is either accepted, modified, or rejected. As noted in Chapter 3, the purpose of the secondary fieldwork conducted in Manchester was to better explicate the particular social processes surrounding the cultural context of video gamers. A cross comparison between video gamers in Chandigarh and Manchester revealed what culturally-specific frames they used to make sense of video games, what the differences were between these contexts, how those social arrangements differed, and how all of those differences were reflected in the way the field of video gaming was constituted in the two cultures.

Empirical Findings

In Chapter 4 I explored the history of how video gaming arrived in India, and I argued that the practice of video gaming is partly shaped by an actor's initial encounters with the practice. The social actor's first experience can be decisive in whether or not video games become adopted as a permanent activity in the actor's life. I examined the macro socio-economic factors that made the history of video gaming in India differ so markedly from that in the West. In contrast, I surveyed the introduction of video games to the West. Discussing the relatively long history of video gaming in the West, when compared to India, I used video gaming in Manchester to contrast the experiences of Western gamers of

approximately the same age. Computer technology has historically been much cheaper and available earlier than in the West than in India. This shaped how the field of video gaming was established in each and led to substantial differences in the first encounters with video games.

Prior to the 1990s, India had restrictive economic policies that limited access to foreign technology (Brass, 1994). The government implemented these policies in order to regulate the majority of consumer services (e.g. transportation, radio and television, etc.), with the aspiration that national economic expansion would follow (Sato, 2016). The hope was that such regulation would lead to increased and more diverse manufacturing, which in turn, would stimulate employment (Brass, 1990: 289). During this time, because computers were not considered a priority of either the Indian government or the domestic private sector, the production of domestic computers remained undeveloped (Rajarman, 2012). Among the consequences of India's restrictive economic policy was that it limited access to imported technology, including video game hardware. After 1991, India began adopting free-market principles and liberalised its economy (Wise, Armiji & Katada, 1995), leading to the gradual entrance of computers and video games.

This is the background against which I interpreted my interviewees' accounts of how they first encountered video games. I discovered that the unique macroeconomic and infrastructural factors in India led to specific conditions which constrained the emergence of video gaming as a practice in India until quite recently. Due to the restrictive economic policies which hindered access to video games, the practice did not become widely available until the 1990s, almost two decades later than in the West. None of my interviewees in India had grown up with video gaming and, in all cases, it was an activity that they encountered while they were already often already in highschool. This meant that Indian gamers were not raised in a culture of video games, and their first encounters occurred during the early years of video gaming in India, before it became an established field. I also showed how the restrictive foreign policies together with both the poor infrastructure and the absence of any local computer production meant that many players' first encounters with video games were with video gaming hardware that had been imported, usually from the United States, by family members who had travelled abroad or lived outside India. Consequently, in these early days in the 1990s, video gaming was an exclusive practice with strong ties to the West. Video gaming was wholly associated with Western culture because it was usually only accessible through Western connections—in the 1980s, due to economic restrictions, and in the 1990s, due to the prohibitively high

price of video gaming hardware. Therefore, the field of video gaming was viewed as a Western field, not understood in a contextually Indian glocalised manner. Even upon the eventual entry of video games into the Indian market, infrastructural obstacles, such as limited electricity, meant that there were substantial difficulties involved in video gaming becoming an everyday practice as it has been for quite some time in the West.

Due to its late introduction, Indians had little childhood exposure to video gaming- few magazines³⁷, no arcades, few older gamers to observe and emulate. Bourdieu's emphasis on an existing habitus is insufficient to explain the emerging of video gaming in India. In circumstances where fields are not glocalised, I argued that social actors are unable to strategically deploy their capital within the field. This contrasted greatly with my Manchester data, where individuals had been video gaming for most of their lives, and often had video gaming interactions with their parents, which meant that that Western gamer's possessed a more developed 'feel for the game' and were able to implement their capital with much greater efficiency. Goffman's notions of cultural frames of understanding allows for an illustration of video gaming where social actors will interpret a new experience on the basis of frames of interpretation. In the case of video gaming in India, my research showed that first encounters of video game play in India were framed as a wholly Western activity due its association with a Western cultural frame. This meant that early advertising focused upon the Westernness of video games through an East versus West dichotomy where Western practices were viewed as 'cool' and Indian as 'boring' and 'stupid'. As video gaming began to be glocalised, recent advertisements have framed video gaming completely differently, as a social Indian activity being part of the Indian milieu rather than in opposition to it.

Thus, in Chapter 4, I argued for the importance of paying attention to policy, infrastructure and culture, because these shape how gamers interpret and situate video game play within their everyday lives. Viewing video game play through an historical lens has further facilitated an analysis of how gaming practices form and adapt, and how they have since circulated in the players' lives. Without giving consideration to the historical and cultural milieu which the actors inhabit, it would be impossible to effectively understand how the contextual positioning of social actors in India influences their initial adoption and interpretation of video game play.

³⁷ Consalvo (2007) argues that video gaming magazines in the West led to the creation of a gamer habitus which conditioned social actors disposing them to an expectation of what video gamer culture should be like.

I explored the differences between the Indian rural and urban areas in terms of how the contrasting infrastructures and access to resources shaped how video gaming entered their lives. The manner in which video gaming initially entered the Indian culture influenced how the activity was framed. An urban environment mirrored the early video gaming encounters of Western actors where video gaming was initially much more of a public practice, framed as an activity which occurred for sporadically for a short duration outside of the home. For rural people, the infrastructure in the villages was technologically inferior to the urban infrastructure, and the utility of computers was questioned by parents on the farm, where computers added no value to either agriculture or schooling. Thus, my data and discussion illustrated how contextual differences (in this case, urban/rural) shape and vary the process of glocalisation and the establishment of a field-specific habitus.

In Chapter 5, I continued to develop the theme of glocalisation that I introduced in Chapter 4 by examining how the practice of video gaming in India continues to be glocalised in the physical space of video gaming parlours. I argued that the entrepreneurial actors who own and run video gaming parlours and the gamers who frequent these video gaming venues are actively engaged in shaping the spaces and the practices that take place within these physical spaces so that they are glocalised in order to suit local tastes.

Through my research in the Indulgence gaming parlour in India, I examined how entrepreneurial actors used various techniques in order to attract customers into the gaming parlour to take part in, and ultimately to adopt, the practice of gaming. I highlighted the importance of paying attention to the physical layout of gaming spaces, because they already presume a set of practices—for example, the way that gaming consoles are organised. How the entrepreneurial actors construct the physical space for video gaming creates an environment that guides participation in particular ways. I explored how a variety of conscious choices, in terms of the location and material arrangement of Indulgence, attracted customers and directed their actions. The entrepreneurial actors attempted to organise and influence how social actors who entered these spaces conducted themselves; the physical organisation of the space provided clues to ‘appropriate’³⁸ behaviour. Further, the use of selected locations (such as near restaurants) and specific props (including high end keyboards and mice, glass floors, leather chairs) helped to convey information about the kind of customer that was welcome and direct the performance of the social actors who entered the space.

³⁸ As noted the field does not have a field-specific habitus thus appropriate behaviour has not been fully established

Despite the high capital entrepreneurial actor's, Manan, attempt to create and regulate the physical space (i.e. the video gaming parlour) so that the practice of video gaming took a particular shape, social actors would eventually adopt the new practices in unpredictable ways. Children's birthday parties became a central feature of the activities of the gaming parlour, not because the owner or manager had decided to market the parlour as a venue for birthday parties, but because parents decided that the parlour was an ideal place to hold them.

Additionally, I studied another Indian video gaming parlour, Oxide. As the first video gaming parlour in India, Oxide provided an example of an initial, failed attempt at setting up a gaming parlour. Oxide closed because it was unsuccessful in glocalising video gaming within a cultural frame that potential gamers were used to. For example, it lacked a strong element of social play, and even though the owner of Oxide added some provisions for glocalised practices, such as birthday parties, they were an afterthought and seen by most attendees as insufficient because of the lack of space and the absence of networked game play. Because of its ability to glocalise video gaming to suit Indian tastes more appropriately, Indulgence was more successful than Oxide.

My comparative secondary field site in Manchester, the Kyoto Lounge, in turn was glocalised within the context of the culture of the United Kingdom. Like his counterparts in India, the entrepreneurial actor employed strategies to attract customers, though these were somewhat different in the two locations because of cultural differences. For example, Kyoto Lounge served alcohol, had loud music and dark lighting, which was the precise opposite of the atmosphere of the video gaming parlours in India. However, because video gaming is an established field in the West, the entrepreneurial actor in the Kyoto Lounge had a deeper understanding of the more developed field-specific habitus of in the West, a greater awareness of the expectations of the social actors within the physical gaming parlour. Even so, in the Kyoto Lounge it was evident that the customers were not using the space exactly as the entrepreneurial actor intended, though this disparity was not to the same degree as in Indulgence. I argued that this difference between the two field sites is due to the fact that in India the field-specific habitus is less formed. Each social field comes with a particular set of rules (Hilgers & Mangez, 2015: 5), but in the case of an emerging field these rules are not established. In other words, emerging fields lack a field-specific habitus and, therefore, many of the customers are visiting a gaming parlour for the first time, and many of them have a very limited experience with video gaming. Thus,

many Indian social actors were entering a physical space within a social field that they were unfamiliar with and a physical space with which they had no prior contact. Without an established field-specific habitus, they were unaware precisely how to use the physical video gaming space. This, in turn, had dual consequences. On one hand, the entrepreneurial actors had a greater degree of agency in the formation of the field-specific habitus and, on the other, social actors entering the video gaming parlour had a greater potential to reconfigure the space. I thus argued that the field-specific habitus is also shaped through the active performance of the social actors that enter these spaces.

The process described above, involving both entrepreneurial actors' and customers' attempts to shape the field and its habitus, illustrates the process of glocalisation of the Western field of video gaming to conform to already established Indian cultural and social practices. The field of video gaming may have arrived as a Western field-specific habitus, but was glocalised as Indian social actors adopt and adapt the practice. The practice must be framed in a way which is suitable for the specific cultural context, or else it will be rejected outright because it makes no sense in the local context.

In Chapter 6, I extended my discussion of glocalisation by exploring Indian gamers' interpretations of video games themselves. I stated that because video games are globalised products which are primarily made in the West and East Asia they tend to represent mainly Western tropes and characters. Regardless of their origin, digital games are globally distributed and thus travel from producing countries to other international markets. In the case of India, digital games, as global products, are not altered by the producers for domestic consumption. This means that the commercial success of a particular game depends on how it is interpreted by gamers, and, as I argued, these interpretations are influenced by the wider Indian cultural context. My analysis made use of Goffman's concept of frames wherein frames are schemata of interpretation and mental processes that emphasise certain phenomena while rejecting others (Gifflin, 1980: 6). Goffman's intention was to try to isolate the basic frameworks of understanding of how actors make sense of events (Goffman, 1974: 11). For my purposes, frames were useful in understanding of how Indian video gamers make sense of the practice of video gaming and the greater field of gaming itself.

My research demonstrated that if an emerging practice is not framed in a way that fits the local culture, the actors will be unable to make sense of the practice, which in turn means that the emerging field will likely be rejected. I argued that video gaming was generally

framed by Indian actors as a Western concept. This is exemplified through a discussion of local responses to the science fiction frame, which is a popular frame in many forms of Western media (Tringham, 2015: 4). As a branch of fantasy it is identifiable through its use of future technologies. Despite its popularity in the West, for my Indian interviewees, the frame of science fiction made little sense. Science fiction was a culturally rejected, or culturally nonsensical, frame for my Indian interviewees and was not consumed in any form, of media, including video games. When questioned about science fiction, the interviewees provided brief responses simply stating that it was something that did not make sense to them; it was rejected on an unconscious level that they had difficulty articulating.

Conversely, the people whom I interviewed in Manchester enjoyed science fiction, and mentioned the innovative storylines and speculative technologies as some of the reasons why they appreciated games and other media that were framed this way. Furthermore, my Manchester participants maintained the requirement of the ‘suspension of disbelief’ in order draw upon the speculative philosophies within science fiction. The significance of the comparison is that my Western participants were very aware of the nuanced differences of media which was framed by science fiction. Thus, my research suggests that when social actors are interacting with culturally accepted frames they are able to interpret the framed experience in distinct ways. In the case of the Indian video game players, because science fiction was a culturally invalid frame, any medium which was framed by science fiction would be culturally rejected regardless of the form of media, or its characterisation, plot, or storyline. Science fiction, being culturally invalid, once rejected by the actors, did not warrant further thought or analysis.

In contrast, the military frame was readily accepted by Indian actors. I used the example of military-framed video games to illustrate how the socio-cultural context of the video gamer plays an important role in how he or she glocalises a product by using culturally situated frames. Whereas Indian interviewees rejected the science fiction frame and were unable to communicate why, they were easily able to communicate why they enjoyed playing military games. A central theme was that they were able to imagine what it would be like to be a part of the military and, thus, such games had a strong element of realism for them. I speculated that the source of this cultural validity may be due in part to India’s strong military tradition. In addition, the majority of the interviewees had a personal connection with the military, perhaps because they had a relative who was in the military (typically a father or an uncle), and/or because they had themselves aspired, at one point or another, to

join the military. This meant that the Indian participants had a strong connection with the military because as a cultural frame it was embedded within their cultural context, in contrast to the science fiction frame, which was largely absent.

Regardless of the acceptance of the military frame, the military video games played by my interviewees are exclusively produced in the West. Thus, the video games are not created as culturally specific for Indian video game players. These military framed video games still bridge a void because the games, even though culturally compatible, are not culturally specific enough. It is therefore understandable that some of these more popular games have been modded that is, physically changed to better suit local frames. In this way, a global product - the video game - is altered to suit local tastes. This is particularly important in India where those few video games that are locally produced lack the high production value of foreign-made video games. Thus modding is the only way for gamers to have access to high-quality video games with 'Indian' content. This contrasted greatly with my Manchester research, where modding was rarely mentioned by my interviewees, and in the few cases where it was, never in the context of altering a video game to make it more representative of local culture. It was a given that most if not all video games are already created with a Western audience in mind.

Theoretical Implications

In Chapter 2 I examined the existing scholarship in video game studies which draws upon psychological, cultural, and literary sociological research and theories. A significant portion of this literature is concerned with whether video games are better conceived through a narrative or ludic lens. However, in focusing on video games, the scholarship has failed to adequately contextualise video gaming as an embedded practice. Recently, Gary Crawford (2012) has sought to extend the analysis of the field video gaming, its associated practices and products to a more holistic viewpoint which situates video gaming as an everyday practice, and therefore, does not treat it as somehow separate from the broader culture. In this vein it is important to understand video games as consumer products that are social practices situated within networks and relations that extend far beyond the field of video gaming. In this regard, video gaming needs to be understood, as Crawford notes, within the broader context of the everyday life of the video gamer. Developing on these recent shifts I have sought to contribute to this new approach of contextualising digital games by exploring the emergence of video gaming as a field in

India, a novel non-Western context in which cultural specificities have shaped what the field of video gaming has become, and how social actors participate and interpret the practice of video gaming.

My exploration of the differences between the field of video gaming in India and the United Kingdom, and between the urban and rural environments in India, has enabled me to identify how video gaming as a field is configured differently according to local specificities in cultural, political and economic history. I have also highlighted the important role that different actors – entrepreneurial actors and gamers – play in the particular spaces in which the field is being anchored. In the case of my study, these spaces comprised video gaming parlours. Examining these spaces and how they are organised so that they produce revenue has been useful in demonstrating that the video gaming practices that have emerged in them are related to other, more established, practices, such as birthday parties or the card game seep. It is this ‘borrowing’ of aspects from these practices that are already familiar to customers that has allowed video gaming to take root and has galvanised repeated consumption. The physical spaces were organised, or staged, in such a way that video gaming as a practice could be ‘read’ by social actors of the specific cultural context. The field of video gaming, if it is to be successful, has to be manifested through the embedding of practices of video gaming alongside pre-existing practices within everyday life. This is the complex negotiation of glocalisation.

Lastly, the Indian context further elucidated how Western video game products are glocalised, both through interpretation and the process of modding, in order to fit into local practices and to better align with video gamers’ everyday lives. In this regard, my thesis has tackled the question of how video gaming as a field and practice and video games as cultural products are made sense of through the everyday dimensions of Indian life in Chandigarh. The comparison with Manchester has helped to highlight specifics of the Indian context as regards to cultural history, the particular characteristics of video game parlours and the tastes of video game players.

Through this examination of the field, practices and products of video gaming, my thesis has explored the theoretical utility of combining aspects of Bourdieu’s and Goffman’s theorising in order to investigate the role of cultural contextualisation in the field of video gaming. It has demonstrated that in combination, these two theorists are useful to understanding dimensions of glocalisation. Bourdieu offers a robust model to understand the relationships between fields, practices and individual habits, but under-plays the

creativity of actors in the process of negotiation that is required to bring new fields, practices and habits into alignment. Goffman is a useful addition in that his theory of habits and unconscious framing is complemented by his view of subjects as creatively and consciously working to frame everyday life and adapt to changing situations. Furthermore, Goffman's micro-sociological approach focuses on interpretive analysis of human social behaviour rather than concerns of broader social structures. Such an approach highlights the component parts of the interactive process of group relations and the impact of the environment and interaction on the production of meaning. The focus on individual identity as a function of interaction with others through the exchange of information allows for a much richer understanding of the link between context and practice. Therefore, theoretically, using Bourdieu and Goffman together has enabled me to provide a more holistic understanding of how existing habits, structures and interactions have helped to shape the emergence of video gaming in India and how certain actors have worked creatively to help bring about a particular glocalisation of the field, practices and products of video gaming.

Limitations and Future Research

In coming to the end of this thesis, it is useful to reflect on some of the limitations of this research. This study engaged with video game players focusing upon how they situate and interpret video gaming as a practice within the cultural context of their lives. Culture is such a broad and large phenomenon that isolating the gamer from the practice of video gaming in order to understand how the broader cultural context affects the experience video game play is problematic. In examining culture the ubiquity of socio-cultural conditions makes it difficult to understand the magnitude and nuanced influences that culture has on shaping the experience of video game play. On a practical level, narrowing the research area to video gaming parlours provided a more effective and straightforward way to investigate the complex social forces that actors undergo when participating in the field video gaming. Investigating video game players in physically isolated space of the video gaming parlour allowed for a honed understanding of how the practice of video gaming was glocalised within different cultural contexts. Video gaming parlours, however, are only one element, albeit a multi-contextual one, within the larger field of video gaming. This study cannot offer an exhaustive account of how video gaming is situated in the entire Indian cultural context. In this sense, it merely serves as an entry point, albeit an important one, into the social field of Indian video gaming.

Through the interviews that I conducted, I was able to gain a holistic picture of how my interviewees had first encounters with video gaming and of their general experiences of video game play. However, the limited sample size means that I cannot offer empirical generalisations about what video gaming means to 'the' Indian gamer. What my thesis has instead aimed for is theoretical generalisation, namely an investigation of how new fields emerge and the socio-cultural processes that are likely to influence how they form as well as the role of different actors in this process.

My study is also missing the key component of gender diversity, because most of my research participants were men. This was a facet of my study that I was unable to address due to the limitations of my being male, and Indian gaming parlours having an almost exclusively male clientele. Nonetheless, these limitations are also fruitful, since they say much about how video gaming parlours are located in the greater cultural relations of gendered power where women rarely take part in public gaming venues. Video gaming, in this way, is impossible to study removed from its context as the practice and the culture in which it is positioned demonstrate a reciprocal relationship. As I am missing the gendered aspect in my study, a more deliberately gendered perspective would provide a more complete picture in a further study, one that more fully articulates the entanglement of video gaming and local culture in India.

The gendered nature of gaming parlours further highlights the importance of a multi-sited project in illuminating cultural specificities. I am able to reflect upon the male dominated gendered space of Indian gaming parlours because the clientele in the comparative video gaming space in Manchester was more equally balanced between men and women.

Further research, in multiple locations, may provide a greater understanding of video gaming as a global practice and how it is uniquely situated within different contexts. Nonetheless, this research has provided a multifaceted and culturally situated understanding of how the field of video gaming has become glocalised in India. My research will help to illuminate how important it is for video game researchers to situate video gaming within a cultural context because a practice cannot be removed from the culture in which it is embedded.

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Appendices

Appendix One – Ethical Practice in Conducting Research



School of Social Sciences
Arthur Lewis Building
The University of Manchester
Oxford Road
Manchester
M13 9PL

tel: +44(0) 161 306 1340
fax: +44(0) 161 275 2450
www.manchester.ac.uk

28 January 2013

Mr Gagunjoat Chhina
Sociology Discipline
The University of Manchester

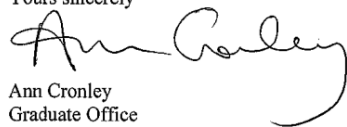
Dear Gagun

Re: ETHICAL PRACTICE IN CONDUCTING RESEARCH

Title of research: The Subjective Experience of Gameplay in an Indian Context

Thank you for submitting your Ethical Declaration form in line with the Graduate School's guidelines. Your declaration has now been considered and approved by the School of Social Sciences' Ethics Panel.

Yours sincerely



Ann Cronley
Graduate Office
School of Social Sciences

Appendix Two – Ethical Practice in Conducting Research



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Arthur Lewis Building
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Oxford Road
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Appendix Three - Semi-Structured Interview Questions for Video Gamer Study

Grounding Questions:

4. Why, as video game players, do we play? How is the process of video game play negotiated and framed in the player's life?
5. How are notions of meaning articulated through the act of gameplay?
6. How do differing cultural and social conditions affect the player's game experience? How are these conditions articulated through game play?

Semi-structured questions for Participants:

1. How old are you? What do you do?

(Demographic questions considering age and social-economic status)

2. What is a video game to you?
3. How often do you play video games?
4. Do you identify yourself as a 'video gamer'?
5. What types of video games do you play?

Probing questions – why do you play them? What themes, what genre?

6. How do you play?

Probing questions – at the café? At home? Online? In groups? With friends?

* expand and clarify

7. What do you think of the representation of figures/avatars in video games?

Probing questions – how does this make you feel? (Perhaps draw upon a comparison with another entertainment medium such as film)

8. Why do you come to a gaming café to play video games?
9. How did you get involved in video game play?

Probing question – What was the first video game that you played? How long have you been playing for?

10. Do you read about/research new video games? New video game technology?
11. How do your 'non-gamer' friends view or interrupt your gaming?
12. What does your family think of your video game play?
13. What do your friends think of your video game play?
14. What are your other leisure activities?

Appendix Four – Participant Information Sheet

**University of Manchester
School of Social Sciences
Participant Information Sheet**

Title: The Subjective Experience of Gameplay in an Indian Context

Principal Investigator: Gagunjoat S. Chhina

Supervisors: Dr. Tej Purewal

University of Manchester

Aim of Research

This research project aims to explore the experiential dimensions of video game play as a dynamic process of creation, consumption and articulation. The main objective of my research is to analyse the subjective experience of game play in an Indian context focusing on how the experience is framed through different cultural and social conditions. This project is undertaken through the Sociology Department at the University of Manchester.

Your participation in this research is voluntary. I would like you to consent to participate in this study as I believe that you can make an important contribution to the research. If you do not wish to be involved you may withdraw participation now. Furthermore, you may also withdraw from the study at any time. If you are happy to participate in the research I will ask you to sign the consent form and return it to me.

All information provided by you will be audio-taped and transcribed using pseudo-names to protect your privacy. The transcripts will be kept in a secure location where only the primary researchers will have access to the documents.

Although there are no direct benefits to your participation in this project, the information that you provide will allow for a better understanding of the much neglected aspect of game play in a non-western context. The results of this study can be obtained by contacting me, Gagun Chhina, gagun.chhina@manchester.ac.uk. Additionally, results from the analysis may be published in peer reviewed journals.

Sincerely,

Gagun S. Chhina

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Appendix Six – List of Interviewees

Indulgence gaming parlour

Number	Name	Age	Sex
1	Harpal	25	M
2	Balvar	29	M
3	Theein	28	M
4	Kamal	36	M
5	Suhohil	29	M
6	Balraj	18	M
7	Narinjit	21	M
8	Gaur	24	M
9	Ankit	19	M
10	Balvarat	19	M
11	Harshdeep	18	M
12	Bara	21	M
13	Dundwala	43	M
14	Choidai	23	M
15	Aditya	26	M
16	Saijin	28	M
17	Raja	26	M
18	Atara	25	M
19	Sarbjit	18	F
20	Vee	28	M
21	Mother	38	F
22	DuoDoy	26	M
23	Bharat	18	M
24	Harry	24	M
25	Manan	28	M

Oxide gaming parlour

Number	Name	Age	Sex
1	Oxide Owner	29	M
2	Oxide Staff	26	M

Kyoto Lounge

Number	Name	Age	Sex
1	Alex	28	M
2	Sean	29	M
3	Dan	23	M
4	Arj	27	M
5	John	22	M
6	Wing	23	M
7	Palava	33	F
8	Alice	22	F
9	Craig	38	M