THE GAME GENERATION AND ITS LEISURE CAPITAL: A STUDY IN THE TAIWAN SOCIAL CONTEXT[1]

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This article proposes that the social and local contexts of gamers should be considered to explain the significations of gamers' behaviours. For that reason, the concept of 'leisure capital' is taken as the key concept and methodology for an integrated approach linking location and social context as the major analysis structure for online game play. The framework of leisure capital in the game generation is divided into macro and micro levels. In the macro context, political forces (education policy and internet infrastructure construction) and commercial forces (low-priced promotion) are two main factors of social context to create affordable and easy access to online games for youth. In the micro context, leisure capital refers to the set of usable resources of individual gamers and contains three dimensions: economic capital, social capital and cultural capital. The volume of capital, composition of capital, and changes in these two properties are explored in this article.

KEYWORDS

cultural capital, game culture, game generation, habitus, leisure capital, social capital

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Game Generation

The population of gamers has grown so rapidly that many studies have expressed concern about the negative effects of game play on children, youth and adolescents. The effects of exposure to violent digital games are the main focus of such studies, including aggressive personality or aggression desensitization (Anderson et al., 2007; Barlett et al., 2009; Bushman and Anderson, 2002; Eastin, 2006; Kirsh, 2012; Williams and Skoric, 2005), emotional appeal (Jansz, 2005; Unsworth et al., 2011; Zillmann, 1998; Zillman and Bryant, 1985), cultivation effect (Williams, 2006), moral management (Klimmt et al., 2006) and game rating (Berker-Olsen and Norberg, 2010; Ivory et al., 2009; Funk et al., 1999; Olson et al., 2009).

Most studies consider game play from the viewpoint of individual gamers' voluntary choices and the freedom of the individual from obligation. But digital games represent an industry of culture, and the narration of playing behaviours implies an ideology that equips us with our 'natural' or 'common-sense' view of what it is. The significance of game play should therefore be articulated in a wider social context to display the facets of that ideology. This article does not consider game play as indicating the freedom of choice of young gamers; it proposes that the social and local contexts of gamers must be considered to explain the significance of their behaviours? For this reason, the concept of 'leisure capital' is taken as the key concept and methodology for an integrated approach linking location and social context as the major analytical structure for online game play.

The social context of Taiwan is chosen as the analysis field. Taiwan, China, Korea and Japan are the four important countries of the game industry in Asia, but the characteristics and advantages of each country are different. The most popular digital games in Japan are console games like Sony's PlayStation 3, Microsoft's Xbox and Nintendo's Wii, and arcade games, which Japanese adults enjoy playing after work. In contrast to Japan, online games have been extremely popular and are playing a unique role in Korea's transition toward a digital economy. In 2005, the online game market accounted for as much as 76.2 percent (US$1.4 billion) of the Korean game market (US$1.89 billion), and Korean online games make up 32 percent of the world's online gaming market (Jin and Chee, 2008). Otherwise, the highest number of players is in China. Although the developed capability of online games in Chinese companies hasn't matured yet, and most Chinese companies are only operators that primarily license foreign games, this gap between Chinese and foreign companies has begun to decrease because Chinese governmental policies have tried to increase the competitiveness of domestic online game companies to achieve economic growth (Ernkvist and Ström, 2008; Lindtner and Dourish, 2011). Taiwan has the matured information technology (IT) business and universal

penetration of broadband that are key factors in cultivating the online game industry and gamer population. As in Korea, online games are the most popular and important game market in Taiwan. But in contrast to Korea, Taiwanese online games often embrace Chinese culture, such as the Wuxia (martial arts heroes) genre, which can make their products more easily accepted by Chinese gamers. Digital game research bloomed in Taiwan recently and, over the last couple of years, articles discussing online gaming have included gender issues (Chang and Chiu, 2010; Lin, 2011; Li and Wang, 2011), gamers' behaviours and pleasure (Chang, 2011b; Chang and Chang, 2011; Chiu et al., 2010; Chou and Tseng, 2011; Lin, 2010), violence and rating systems (Chang, 2011a; Hsiao and Chang, 2011), and learning from games (Hsiao et al., 2010; Sun, 2011).

Due to the availability of low-priced computers, the popularity of the internet and the commercial promotion of online games, more and more people are born into the *game generations* and they have common habitus and lifestyles. These gamers are digital-age natives who use online games as their social forum. They are more comfortable chatting with friends on the internet than on the phone or even through texting. They exchange MSN account IDs instead of telephone numbers. They are more likely to listen to music on MP3 players than on CD players, and they play digital games with each other online rather than physical games, such as basketball, in person. Following the growth in numbers of these gamers, the significance of their game-playing, how they interact with each other, and what influences their uses of online games, are becoming significant issues. Although parallels might be drawn among similar age groups around the world, the focus of this article is on the game generation in Taiwan. The two research questions addressed are as follows:

Question 1: What social forces produced the social circumstances that gave rise to the game generation? Playing digital games did not naturally exist in the world. It required material resources, including computers and internet infrastructure, and a large number of gamers to activate the game world. The wider and macro aspects of social contexts are first discussed.

Question 2: How does the physical location of gamers determine their resources to access and use online games as leisure activities? Here gamers are not conceived of as autonomous solo agents that pursue individual ends; they are recast as indelibly social actors with social characteristics. What social characteristics in which situation?

'Leisure capital' is the key concept and methodology of this article for an integrated approach linking location and social context as the major analysis structure for online game-playing. It is defined as the set of economic, cultural and social resources available to consumers for their leisure activity (see Bourdieu, 1984; Rojek, 2005).

Leisure Capital

In the narration of 'play', it is usually cast as the opposite of 'work'. Work is about pursuing efficiency and is purpose-orientated, but play is non-profit and provides inner pleasure while players seek the joy of playing moments (Juul, 2005; Kerr, 2006; Salen and Zimmerman, 2004). Dutch anthropologist Huizinga (1947) contends that the *homo ludens* (the player) aspect of humankind has been more significant in human development than the *homo faber* (the worker) aspect, because *homo ludens* encourages innovation, creativity and transcendence.

'Playing' is the central activity of online games, but gamers' behaviours are less associated with innovation, creativity or transcendence. Due to the violent and sexual content of online games, gamers are often labelled as addicts or as having an aggressive personality, while the methodology of studies inclines to behaviourism and focuses on the short-term and immediate effect of individual responses (Eastin, 2006; Klimmt et al., 2006). In the contemporary digital era, social context has created affordable and easy access to online games for youth. Thus we need a theory which does not just concentrate on analysis of the beliefs, motivations and perceptions of the individual in a particular location. In order to understand the significance of game play in the game generation, comprehension must expand to include the historical, social and cultural contexts of that generation.

Based on materialist essentialism, leisure theory (Rojek, 2005), which posits that all human beings are situated in spatial and cultural locations and contexts, would be a most suitable theory to explore the significance of game play in the game generation. Game play is the main part of leisure activities of gamers and, as Rojek (2005) stated, leisure practice should not be treated as a private resource and cannot be investigated simply as a matter of individual choice or determination. Leisure is a social activity that can reproduce societies through economic, cultural, political and social regulative mechanisms. Rojek (2005, p. 82) contended:

The pursuit of leisure function is always a mixture between the reflexive choices of actors and the logic of cultural reproduction. Following Bourdieu (1984), a key concept in cultural reproduction is habitus. Habitus equips individuals with leisure dispositions that link individual trajectories of leisure practice with collective trajectories.

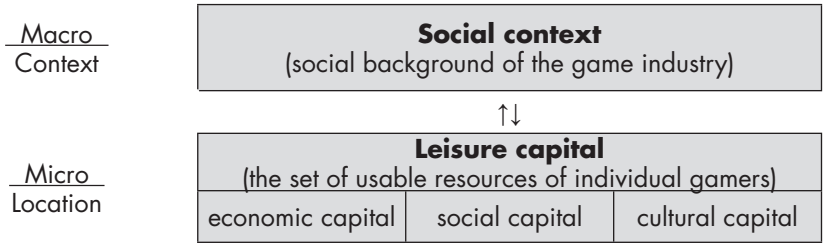
For the game generation, playing digital games exercises leisure functions like constructing markers of belonging or establishing boundaries of inclusion and exclusion that support recognition and relations of belonging. Using the methodology of Rojek (2005), this study focus on the location and context of gamers, where location refers to the immediate circumstances of causality that result in a leisure choice and action, and context is the setting in which location is situated.

As Rojek (2005) stated, 'habitus' is the key point of conjunction between individual choice and collectively common activities. Hence Bourdieu's (1984)

discussion of 'habitus' can be used to expound the components of leisure capital. Bourdieu proposed his famous formula for identifying people in social space as follows: {(habitus) (capital)} + field = practice. He explained it as 'the set of agents who are placed in homogeneous conditions of existence imposing homogeneous conditionings and producing homogeneous systems of dispositions capable of generating similar practice' (ibid., 101). Habitus is hence a distinctive value, practice or life-style that is common to a particular social stratum. The game generation has grown up in a common social context, and playing online games has become the conventional habitus of its members to share with each other.

To understand the constitution of habitus, Bourdieu (1984) proposed constructing a space where three fundamental dimensions are defined by volume of capital, composition of capital, and change in these two properties over time. The overall volume of capital can be understood as the set of usable resources and power – economic capital, cultural capital and social capital. These three kinds of capital are the basic components of leisure capital in this study, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1 Research framework of leisure capital in the game generation



Based on the constructs of Bourdieu (1984) and Rojek (2005), this article identifies 'leisure capital' as the set of usable resources that consumers need for the consumption of leisure activity. The methodology of leisure research, as stated by Rojek (2005), should have two levels: location and context. The location level is an immediate causal relationship with individual choice, and includes the mind and emotions. The location level used for analysing gamers focuses on their leisure capital. Context level refers to the situation that local choice entails; it focuses on the economy and culture of society. Context influences the locality and limits the individual choice of leisure.

In the location of leisure capital, volume and composition are organized by economic capital, social capital and cultural capital, which are defined as follows:
1. Economic capital refers to material property, including money and possessions. For the game generation, economic capital refers to the allowances, income and equipment necessary for digital games (computers and internet access).
2. Social capital has been defined as the aggregate of the resources that are linked to possession of a durable network of institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition (Portes, 1998). Social capital generally refers to the ability to approach a group or a community in which interpersonal relationships based on trust, norms and feelings exist; for the game generation, social capital indicates interpersonal networks of individual gamers, which comprise families, school colleagues and partners in game play.
3. Cultural capital refers to knowledge, linguistic codes, beliefs, leisure interests and social networks that orient the individual to society and form the basis for solidarity. It is a representation of belonging when every individual internalizes symbolic master-patterns of thoughts and values that facilitate social orientation and act as markers of belonging (Bourdieu, 1984; Rojek, 2005). For the game generation, cultural capital indicates how gamers use online game play as a representation of belonging; for example, how symbolic codes or game jargon are used as gamers' identification and cyber-community markers.

Based on the macro context and the micro location of the game generation, this article shows that the social context of the online game industry can invest the behaviour of gamers with dispositions, but through exercising choice and acting, gamers have the capacity to reconfigure the hands they are dealt. Leisure capital is the main resource and power of gamers to choose and practise their leisure activities.

Research Methods

Two methodological steps were taken in this study. First, the developmental background of the online game industry in Taiwan was described and analysed to disclose the contexts of game-playing that existed on a wider socio-economic stage. Political and economic data were collected from government bulletins. This study focused on the policies of economic investment for the digital game industry and the education polices for the game generation. Furthermore, the publication history of online games was collected from the game website Bahamut,[2] which is Taiwan's most popular game bulletin board. Based on the data, the social context of online games in Taiwan was described as the cornerstone for understanding the birth of the game generation.

Second, the volume and composition of leisure capital in individual gamers became a focus to investigate through interviews and field observation. Thirty gamers were interviewed from the game generation in Taiwan. All were born in the 1980s; the average age was 22 years; they had played digital games from elementary school. Most were students; 9 were female and 21 male. They played

digital games, including video games, portable games, PC games and online games. On average they had played online games for 6.43 years, and males had three more years of experience than females.

All the gamers were interviewed three times. In the first interview we talked about the gamer's background, family and playing experiences, while we built a basic relationship of understanding between researcher and interviewee. In the second interview, gamers could choose their favourite online game, showing how they played it and how they interacted with other gamers. Real interactions with others in the online game world could display social relationships that were not necessarily revealed in the interviewee's narration. The third interview discussed my findings from the earlier two interviews, and gamers were invited to reflect on their game behaviour and their relationships with online/offline friends. All the interviews were conducted in the Media Culture Laboratory,[3] which contained concealed cameras and microphones to record each step in the interview process, including the computer screen when gamers played their favourite games.

Two field observations were undertaken to explore interpersonal interactions and relationships among game partners. One was in an internet café on Orchid Island, a remote island in the southeast Taiwan. The other occurred during information literacy lessons in a sixth-grade of an elementary school in Hsinchu, Taiwan. Joining in interactions with gamers in their actual location helped the researcher to understand more clearly the interpersonal relationships and the influence of game play on real life.

Context: The First Game Generation in Taiwan Society

New forms of popular culture that involve the use of computers and online games have developed so quickly that a gap has evolved between younger and older generations. The 'game generation' refers to the generation that was born in the digital age, grew up along with the internet, uses technological communication tools and plays digital games as a common leisure activity. According to Prensky (2001) and Laird (2003), members of the game generation changed their cognitive characteristics in several ways: they prefer to randomly access course components rather than to follow a sequential order; they expect rapid delivery of information; and they demand immediate feedback.

The birth of the first game generation in Taiwan was based on local contextual facts, including education policies, construction of an internet infrastructure, and commercial investment in online games. Education policies of information literacy cultivated the basic skills of the game generation to use and become familiar with technological communication tools including computers and the internet. Van Dijk (2006) stated that the skill to access communication technology is one of the necessary conditions to overcome the digital gap. Taiwan's compulsory education raised the basic skills of information technology, helping children to conquer the digital gap.

Computer lessons were subsumed in compulsory education from 1996 and expanded to include information literacy and internet lessons in 1999. In other words, all citizens who were born after 1985 in Taiwan had information literacy included in their compulsory education. According to Chang (2009), 81.9 percent of Taiwan gamers are 11 to 34 years old, and younger users would have played more games when they first accessed the internet. Therefore, the cultivation of skills in information use would have simultaneously increased access to playing online games. Children prefer to play games because they are more fun than practising with computer software. Hence, online games became a popular leisure activity for the first game generation. Table 1 shows the growth background of the first game generation.

Table 1 Social context of the first game generation in Taiwan

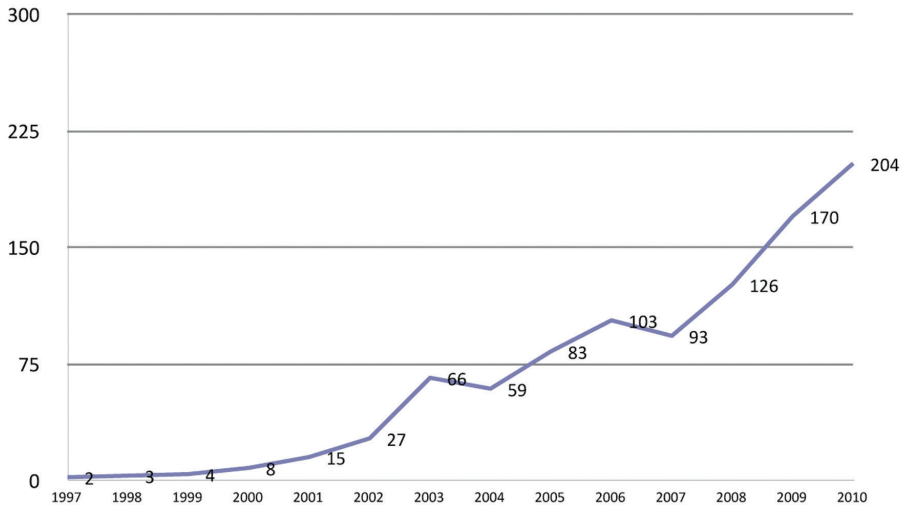
Online game publication		*King of Kings*	*Lineage*, *Stoneage*	
Internet infrastructure	Basic internet completed			High speed completed
Education policy	Computer lessons	Information literacy		
1985	1996	1999	2000	2001
Birth	11 years old elementary school student	14 years old middle school student	16 years old high school student	17 years old

The game generation received education in information literacy from the elementary school period and more training as middle school students. Besides the influence of education policies, the construction of an internet infrastructure and the increasing publication of online games were two other factors that groomed the game generation in Taiwan. Seednet and Hinet were both crucial elements of internet infrastructure in Taiwan, Seednet being built in 1992 and Hinet in 1994. They were initially used for academic and government purposes. In 1996 they opened up to commercial use and became the basic internet. In 2001, more private internet service providers joined to construct the internet infrastructure that brought high-speed internet to users.

Meanwhile, the first online game made by a local company, *King of Kings*, was

published in Taiwan in 1999. It was an important milestone which indicated that the population of gamers was sufficient to attract local companies to invest more than 2 million NTD (New Taiwan Dollars) to invent a new online game. The publication in Taiwan of international online games began in 2000, while the imported Korean *Lineage* and Japanese *Stoneage* lured huge numbers of local gamers to play. After 2000, the number of online games published in Taiwan grew rapidly. Figure 2 shows the growth of online games in Taiwan.

Figure 2 Online games published in Taiwan, 1997–2010



An important transition occurred in 2005. In contrast to the previous subscription model, many companies began offering their products without charge or eliminating subscription fees, instead basing their profits on sales of virtual props and equipment (Lin and Sun, 2011). For young gamers, the economic burden of entering the game world was reduced when online games became free to play. After that, most online games changed from the subscription model to a free game model, and the amount of online game publication increased rapidly. In 2008, when the financial meltdown occurred in Taiwan and many in the labour force had to accept unpaid leave, playing online games at home became a cheap and low-cost leisure pursuit for non-income workers.

On the basis of political-economic data collected from the government and game industries in Taiwan, it can be stated that political forces (education policy and internet infrastructure construction) and commercial forces (low-priced promotion) were two main factors of the social context that created affordable and easy access to online games for youth.

Location: Leisure Capital of the Game Generation

Leisure capital refers to the set of usable resources of individual gamers. Three dimensions of leisure capital are considered: economic capital, social capital and cultural capital.

Economic Capital

To play online games as a leisure activity, gamers need basic material equipment (including a computer and internet access) and a budget for the subscription fee to online games or for purchasing necessary virtual equipment for free games. Thus the material equipment and the budget are the required economic capital for gamers. Most gamers are high school students or university students in the period from late adolescence to early adulthood (Santrock, 2007). Economically, they are dependent on their parents and families. Most families with children possess the material equipment, computers and internet access for doing homework or playing online games, because computers are low priced and the internet is convenient in Taiwan. In comparison with other leisure activities, such as watching movies or singing at karaoke establishments (commonly referred to as KTV), online games tend to be lower priced. For example, a movie ticket costs 350 NTD and the monthly fee for the highest-priced subscription game, *World of Warcraft (WOW)*, is 450 NTD. Hence, paying for watching a movie with a soda and a hot dog is almost equal to paying for playing *WOW*. The leisure time needed to watch a movie is an afternoon, but the leisure time for playing an online game is a month.

Furthermore, most online games are free to play since subscription fees (except for *WOW*) have been cancelled since 2005 and gamers can play without extra expense. One college female gamer who came from a single-parent family told me that the economic burden on her family was heavy and she needed to earn money for paying tuition fees, so she chose to play *MapleStory*, which was the first free online game in Taiwan. The absence of a charge was the main criterion for her choice of game.

Another high school male gamer, who also came from a single-parent family, said he wanted to upgrade his avatar but he didn't have sufficient allowance to buy the necessary equipment. So he spent a lot of time earning the cyber-cash to afford it. His case indicates the other side of leisure capital – available time in the schedule of everyday life. As a student, his everyday schedule was fixed and he had a surplus

of time and energy to play the game. To obtain enough economic capital to play the online game, he exchanged available time for cyber-cash in the leisure activity, as illustrated in Figure 3.

Figure 3 The exchange between money, time and economic capital in an online game

Economic capital is a basic necessity for playing online games as a leisure activity. If gamers lack the money to exchange for economic capital, they can offer their available time to earn cyber-cash, and the cyber-cash can be exchanged into economic capital, just like real money. Young gamers might not have the stable income that allows them to afford the necessary cash for leisure, but their surplus time can make up for that disadvantage. As Lin and Sun (2011) explained, gamers who are unwilling to buy virtual products must endure long stretches of boring, restricted, and handicapped gaming experiences. In my observation, experiences that come from available time can become the sources of economic capital.

Social Capital

Social capital for a gamer means that the gamer has the aggregate resources that are linked to the network to which he or she belongs. The resources of social capital are based on the trust, reciprocity and norms in the network (Coleman, 1990) and contain effective information, interpersonal relationships and affective support (Putnam, 1995). Online games can serve as a central activity for interpersonal interaction, providing an activity for friends to share. Thus gamers, who might appear to an observer to be playing alone, can interact with others across the game network, establishing new friendships through the computer-mediated communication offered by the game (Lucas and Sherry, 2004).

For the game generation in the real world, the most important resources of social capital are families and colleagues, who are the major sources of inclusion and affection. Due to the low birthrate and the collapse of traditional community in Taiwan, most families are nuclear families, and childhood for the game generation is characterized by a lack of brothers or sisters. This relative isolation from interpersonal relationships reduces their amount of social capital. One interviewee was a lonely gamer who was a senior high school student and the only child in his family. Both his parents worked in high-technology companies as engineers and were released from work duties to go home after 10 p.m. Every day after school, the teenager ate some simple food alone, went to a tutoring centre for extra classes, and came home to an empty house where there was no one he could talk to, share, interact or even fight with. So he entered the online game world that was always noisy, crowded and fascinating. In contrast to his silent and isolated life, he became kindly, humorous and enthusiastic. As a teenager, he could barely talk to girls or even make eye contact with them – that would make his heart beat too fast. But in the virtual world, he was a popular prince with lofty status, a lot of money, sharp swords and shiny armour. Most importantly, he liked to listen to people tell their secrets and nurse their grievances. He was a loyal friend who stayed in the same place every night and had endless patience. Finally, in cyberspace he metamorphosed successfully from the lonely boy to a virtual prince.

This case illustrates the complementary relationship between offline social capital and online social capital. In the real world, gamers who lack an adequate network to fulfil their desire to interact with others, or to develop close relationships with interpersonal warmth and love, can enter the cyber-world of an online game to build a network that can provide resources of social capital such as inclusion and affection. Many gamers who were interviewees in the studies described the loneliness and isolation of their everyday life. Because of Taiwan's reduced birthrate, families with singleton children have become common, and the urbanized environment causes parents to worry about public security, so they do not allow the child to leave home to play with friends. These population ratios reduce the social capital of the game generation. Yet the social capital that builds in the online world might make up for the deficiency of offline social capital. Gamers who are disappointed with their parents or have failed to interact with friends try to reconstruct new interpersonal networks that could offer complementary social capital.

But not all the relationships of social capital between online and offline are complementary. Reinforcement is another important function that online games could provide. Online games can serve as a social forum, providing an activity during which friends can interact, similar to playing cards, board games or engaging in physical recreation. The online games create another place in which gamers can strengthen and expand their networks to obtain more social capital. Here is a case of the friendship of three young gamers from the same high school, all of whom had a strong and tough masculine appearance. They reported that they planned to build a cold-blooded killer-guild in the online game world. The systematization and organization of the building process were surprising. They said:

We recruited new blood to assign them different jobs and give them training. To achieve our common goal, we gave up our original avatars that were at the top grade of the game and accompanied them from the beginning. We had a deal that no one could practise his skills privately. We are buddies. We should help each other to nurture our guild.

The three big boys showed intimate friendship when they were interviewed together. They hit and pushed each other all the time. They tried to steal the mouse or push the keyboard to disturb their colleague when he showed his favourite avatar to me. The one who was attacked hit back immediately, wringing the others' necks or pulling their ears. For these male adolescents, playing online games together was like playing basketball – a social activity that allowed them to interact with buddies. As Taiwan becomes increasingly urbanized, outdoor activities are replaced by more accessible activities through the internet, and these adolescents presented a new type of friendship based on an interwoven virtual and real social network. That illustrates another approach to aggregating social capital, an approach that could offer affection and inclusion supports.

Among female gamers, however, it is rare for an interpersonal network to become the extension of the real world's social capital, as female gamers have few female friends that play online games. Most female gamers play online games alone or with male friends because online game play is not considered a girl's activity. Many female gamers reported that they liked to play online games, but they seldom told their friends. If they announced that they were gamers, they would be viewed as freaks or oddities. In contrast, many male gamers told me they liked to play online games with buddies, male gamers. One of them told me that half of his male classmates played the same online game and could discuss their game enthusiastically. It was evident, therefore, that gender differences influenced the social capital in the online and offline transition.

In sum, there are two relationships between online and offline social capital. One is complementary and the other is reinforcing. As an interpersonal dynamic among players, online game play can alleviate the insufficiency of real-life interpersonal networks and can extend friendships from the real world to the cyber-world. For the game generation, the cyber-world in online games has become an alternative source for aggregating social capital to acquire more resources.

Cultural Capital

Cultural capital is the representation of belonging for gamers. Within the 'magic circle' of the game world and in the outside world of society, different rules apply, creating paradoxical effects for gamers. In the magic circle, the game world is governed by definite rules, and gamers' efforts achieve variable and quantifiable outcomes; outside the magic circle, there is a real world where the normal rules of life hold sway (Castronova, 2005; Juul, 2005). Daniels (1995) explained that play suspends the normal rules of life and substitutes its own rules, which allow violence, deception and destructive competition. Because play in the magic circle usually transgresses society's values and moral standards, blame from others and personal feelings of guilt from self could place gamers in the middle of paradox and contradiction: they enjoy the pleasure of play in the shadow of guilt.

Most gamers are students in the age range of 15 to 24 years. In the moral version, they should be studying diligently and working hard for their future. But playing online games is the antithesis of work for the future. It takes considerable time to create avatars in the favourite games of young people – massive multiplayer online role-play games. Different gamers described the same disordered schedule in everyday life. They joined a guild to play difficult high-level missions, and it took 5 to 10 hours to achieve a hard mission. An extreme case recounted that he generally got up to join the team at 10:00 a.m., didn't eat lunch but took a break to eat dinner at 5:00 p.m., and continued playing until 1:00 a.m. The gamers knew that spending a lot of time playing would influence their achievements at school, and the gap between the online and offline worlds would make them feel upset. One said:

I walk back and forth in two different worlds. In the game world I'm a tough guy, but in the real world I am a weak nobody. The feeling of being a hero in the game world can't extend to the real world. I know I spend too much time playing games and it's impossible perform well at school. Even when I go to school, I still don't understand what the professor is talking about.

Not only the disorganized schedule, but also the negative stereotypes and dominant judgments purveyed by mass media, parents and educators contribute to the pressure to make gamers feel guilty when they play. When gamers leave the magic circle or game communities, they must explain and defend their play behaviours to non-gamers who do not understand the game world ecology. Royse et al. (2007) observed that non-gamers had critical, negative perceptions of gaming, which they rejected as a waste of time; they were also concerned about the sexualized and violent content of games.

Only when gamers enter the magic circle, face to face with other gamers like themselves, can online game play be a method to accumulate cultural capital. The valorization of outcome is very clear in the game world, and thus gamers' efforts achieve fair rewards that depend on the time and energy they spend. An avatar grade in the game world ranking system equates to a new identity: the gamer can shed fixed material real-life covers like age, gender or education and rebuild a different character from the beginning. Thus the grade of avatar is the first piece of cultural capital with which a gamer makes an identity in the game world. One gamer, whose performance at senior high school was poor, told me that he practised hard to be a strong in the game world so that he could help others and earn their respect. He was at the top of the ranking system and the number after his avatar (which showed his grade) displayed his status. Other equipment like armour, weapons or special properties exhibits the hierarchical status of a gamer and

becomes the representation of his/her cultural capital in the game world.

The status of a gamer in a guild is another representation of cultural capital, which orients the gamer to game society and forms the basis for solidarity. The population in a guild generally ranges from 40 to 200 persons. It is a large organization with a leader who commands his/her staff, manages who should attend, when they should gather and where they should congregate to achieve the guild mission cooperatively. They need to allot different positions and take care of each other when they fight the giant monster to achieve the common mission. The cooperative experiences create strong affection and a sense of belonging, such that gamers would give up private business to join the game team.

Conclusions: Translation within Leisure Capital

The volume of capital can change from one form to another. It is not fixed. It can flow among the three kinds of leisure capital. Just as economic capital can offer more educational opportunity and more consumption choices to change one's cultural capital, the three types of leisure capital can convert and transform each other.

The most obvious translation is from economic capital to social capital. Here is an example that can explain how economic capital can transform into social capital in the interactions among game partners. Observations were made on Orchid Island of young Aboriginals playing online games and their interactions with each other. There was a youth playing online games and three other youths watching him play in a crude internet café which was just a corner in an old grocery store. The watchers just stood behind the player, talking to him and cheering for him. I chatted with them when the player took a recess and found that an economic gap was the main cause of the situation. The player was the only one who had enough money to use the internet and play an online game. None of the watchers had sufficient allowance to play, because their parents worked away from home and left a grandparent to foster the children. The player was clearly the leader, often stating their ideas and experience as a representative. Due to his economic capital he was respected as the key figure in the network of game partners. His economic capital had been transformed to social capital.

Cultural capital in the online game world can be converted into social capital in the offline world. Cultural capital denotes the identity and belonging of a gamer; the grade of avatar indicates the gamer's controlling capability, and the relationship with a guild reveals the status of a game community. Five gamers were interviewed in the same class and their relationship illustrated the transformation from cultural capital to social capital. The leader of the small group was a young boy who was in a social minority in the real world due to the disadvantaged economic status of his family (low-income, social relief receivers, only a grandmother at home). He was also a trouble-maker at school and his teacher was concerned about his addictive inclination to online games. But he accumulated great cultural capital in the cyber-world. Just like the king of a kingdom, he had a strong avatar with a large amount of cyber-cash and deadly weapons. He could help others achieve the hardest missions easily and earned high esteem from his classmates. His social capital was based on his cultural capital from the online game world.

Based on discussion of the game generation and its leisure capital in the Taiwan social context, this article demonstrates the significance of game play in the real physical world where gamers' behaviours and their meaning are interwoven with their everyday life. The findings of this article resonate with Consalvo's (2009) statement that players exist or understand 'reality' through recourse to various frames (their daily life, the game world, their characters' alleged knowledge and past) and we should conceptualize gamer activity as movements between these frames. The leisure capital of the game generation not only flows among economic capital, social capital, and cultural capital, it is also fluid between the real offline world and the cyber online world. Furthermore, the influences on the game generation are multi-dimensional; engaging in online games as a basis for social activity is not just about individual gamers' voluntary choices, or their economic capital and social capital, or the influences of the game industry and social transition, but all of these things at once.

1.
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2.
See URLS (retrieved 15 January 2012): http://www.gamer.com.tw/, respectively.

3.
The Media Culture Laboratory is in the Communication and Technology Research Center at National Chiao Tung University. It has a focus group interview room, an in-depth interview room, and an observation room, which facilitated the conduct of research.

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