

# PLAYING THE WAITING GAME: COMPLICATING NOTIONS OF (TELE)PRESENCE AND GENDERED DISTRACTION IN CASUAL MOBILE GAMING

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## Abstract

In this paper we consider the various manifestations of ‘presence’ and ‘place’ in the context of mobile gaming, arguing that the clichés surrounding young women and mobile gaming are being complicated as increasingly women start to enter the games industry as creative professionals. In order to study some of the changing modes of gendered game play around mobile and casual gaming we focus upon the growing realm of young women who are studying to be game designers. Via a sample study of seventeen young women aged between 18-30 years old we investigate the different attitudes and spaces in which casual mobile games are played and the types of engagement they afford. Complicating the simplistic stereotype that girls play casual mobile games (while boys playing ‘serious’ online games), we look at the different spaces in which these games are played—public transport, at home alone, waiting in queues—and the types of embodiment and engagement experienced by our respondents. In particular, we critically examine the complex, layered and often co-existing modes of being present, not-present and in-between when playing casual mobile games in both public and domestic spaces.

## Keywords

casual mobile gaming, gender, presence, place, telepresence.

## 1 INTRODUCTION: THE PLACE AND PRESENCE OF MOBILE TECHNOLOGIES

As mobile technologies grew from the twenty to the twenty-first century, they were marked by the transformation from mobile communication into mobile media. One of the defining features of this paradigmatic shift was the rise of the active user as playing a key role in the interactive levels of engagement and co-production of mobile media. Despite the ubiquity of mobile media with global everyday life, this all-pervasive phenomenon has only recently gained critical attention. This paucity is especially apparent in one of the biggest gendered confluences surrounding mobile media and games whereby clichés proliferate around women playing casual mobile games and males playing ‘serious’ online strategy games. And yet, as mobile media and game industries become increasingly pervasive in global popular cultures, sutures can be found in these gendered modes of playing and engagement. Moreover, by examining gendered engagement with mobile phones and mobile games, insights can be gained regarding the haptic relation between the user and their mobile phone, and the consequent modalities of (located) presence, co-presence and telepresence effected by this relation.

As Alan Beaton and Judy Wajcman observe, the social impact of the relatively nascent rise of mobile communication cannot be ignored. In their important study of Australian mobile telephony, they note the transformation and diffusion of boundaries between traditional private and public spheres [1], a trend that sees mobile telephony penetrating ‘new geographic spaces that enable the consumption and communication process to be applied in new social, cultural and psychological spaces’ [1]. In ‘Intimate Connections: The Impact of the Mobile Phone on Work Life Boundaries’, Wajcman et al. note the mobile phone ‘characterises modern times and life in the fast lane’ and has become iconic of ‘work-life balance’—or lack thereof—in contemporary life [2]. These boundaries of time and space are determined, in part, by ‘debates about work/life boundaries’ that are imbued by traditional gendered divides ‘between the separate spheres for market work (male) and domestic work (female) wrought by industrialisation’ [2]. Thus the mobile phone, and especially mobile gaming, is deeply implicated in debates around various forms of work-life conundrums that cut across gender, space, labour, technology and capital within contemporary globalisation. As a symbol of domestic technologies, the mobile phone highlights that the domestic no longer lives within the private sphere.

These debates are, in part, due to the multiple dimensions of mobile communication as metaphor, icon, culture and practice. As a consequence, it lends itself to interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary analyses. At mobile

communication conferences the rooms are filled with sociologists, media theorists, anthropologists, philosophers, new media artists, economists and IT researchers. The mobile phone can be read for its social, technological, economic, and creative properties. And yet within this burgeoning area gaps remain — most notably the role of the mobile media as a cultural index [3] and the way in which the rise of the mobile phone as a symbol and practice is imbued by gendered genealogies [4]. This is most prevalent in the changing rubric of mobile gaming that includes various forms of engagement and play cultures from games on mobile phones to mobile game consoles such as PlayStation Portable (PSP) and Nintendo DS.

In this paper we hope to arrest some of the ways in which modes of gendered engagement, play and mobility occur through a case study of young females that play various forms of serious and casual games in a diversity of ways. Whilst there has been a body of literature in Games Studies exploring gendered gaming consumption and production [5], [6] the gendered domain of mobile games has been relatively overlooked. By yielding a sample study of seventeen young women—all students in games programs (hence wanting to be game designers or programmers in the industry)—we examine this new burgeoning area of women in games and how this reflects new types of gendered engagement and attitudes to one of the biggest confluences: women as casual mobile gamers.

In order to do so, we will begin with an outlining of gender and the mobile phone. We then move onto the meeting of mobile media and gaming traditions and how these challenge conventions around ‘gaze’ and ‘glance’ cultures that have subjugated other affective factors in the engagement with mobile and gaming technologies – most notably sensorial experiences such as the haptic. In particular, we examine how the activity of casual game play can be understood in terms of a phenomenology of ‘waiting’, and how it differs markedly from console or computer gaming. We then move onto our case study of seventeen female respondents that play games—mobile and immobile—in order to provide a more complex understanding into the ways in which gendered power relationships around technology, space (i.e. public/private), and modes of engagement (i.e. casual vs serious).

## 2 GETTING CONNECTED: GENDER AND THE MOBILE PHONE

Unsurprisingly, the early studies of the mobile phone can be traced to its formation and transformation from the landline. As with the landline, the emergence of mobile phone technology was marked by an appropriation of the mobile phone’s original intended use as a business tool into an instrument for social and domestic use, particularly by younger women. This transformation from male business tool to vehicle for female social ‘gossip’ [7] and reproductive/social labour has indelibly marked the history of telephony. The first studies of mobile culture around the early 1990s tended to highlight the implicit role that gender played in the emergence and transformation of the business technology into a socio-cultural practice. The groundbreaking studies into gendered mobile media included the work by Ann Moyal [8] and Michele Martin’s [7] who both explored the transformation of the telephone from business tool to a feminised social and cultural artefact.

In a similar vein as Martin’s study, Lana Rakow’s [9] lucid study investigated some of the ways in which gender has informed conventions around telephonic practices. Patricia Gillard’s research in Australia in the 1990s (particularly with the Australian government) was significant in conceptualising new models for studying telecommunications as a cultural practice. In the same year, Wajcman’s wonderfully rigorous critique of technology in *Feminism Confronts Technology* [10] hallmarked the epoch’s feminist re-examination of the socio-technological tropes of cyberspace and politics of virtuality [11], [12]. This era also saw the emergence of the concept of the ‘feminisation’ of technology/telephony [13] and debates around the gendered body politics of mobile virtuality [14].

Yet, despite the fact that during these interesting early years the rise of mobile communication was clearly invested with gendered politics and the socio-cultural economies of the domestic sphere, history repeated itself. Like the landline that started off as a business tool, to be later transformed—feminised—by women into a socio-cultural practice and artefact, the mobile phone replicated the same cycle. So why, second time around, has gender continued to be relegated to a minor field while the exciting, sexy, fun field of “youth cultures” continues to dominate?

Notwithstanding the reality of aging populations and mainstream practices, the conflation between youth and new technologies only perpetuates stereotypes about youth subcultures and the wayward role of new technologies. Just as the conceptualisation of women’s labour has been simplified around mobile media globally [15]—despite its instrumental role in the phenomenal rise of mobile media and user created content (UCC)—so too has the role of gendered engagement with new media technologies, especially gaming. Moreover, the significance of personalisation techniques integral in the symbolic and material dimensions of mobile media has been ignored [3]

or simplified as youth fashions [16]. These stereotypes are further extended in discussions about mobile gaming in which ‘young’ female players are relegated to the role of casual gamers. But just like the convergence of mobile media and gaming industries, gendered types of game play are undergoing transformation.

### 3 CONVERGENCE @ MOBILE MEDIA

As convergence leaves its mark in the first decade of the twenty-first century, the ultimate exemplar is the mobile device within the games industry. Within contemporary culture, we can witness convergence occurring across various levels—technological, industrial social, economic, and cultural [17]. Far from a mere form of communication the mobile phone has become a multimedia device par excellence—a plethora of various applications that operate across aural, textual and visual economies. It is in this space that we see an awkward transition in the history of the medium from its beginnings as a social, communicative device to its industry-hyped potential as a creative (and commercial) venture in an age of ‘participatory media’ [18]. As James Katz and Satomi Sugiyama note, ‘users’ are no longer just passive consumers; they are ‘producers’ [19] or ‘co-creators’ [16]. In short, the rise of mobile media is characterised by the rise in the active and creative user. It is not by accident that this rise in creativity has afforded avenues for women to gain employment in industries once dominated by men—such as the games industry.

The convergence of the mobile phone with multimedia—thus becoming part of new media discourses—has seen the formation of a discursive space around mobile media in which various histories, genealogies and cultures combine. Thus mobile media have gained much interest in terms of new media debates, particularly those focusing on one of the dominant phenomena of globalisation, convergence [17], [3]. Why convergence has been so instrumental in mobile media is undoubtedly linked the latter’s deployment of the personal and intimate, thus we would argue convergence needs to be conceptualised within broader, historical processes of mediated intimacy. As Hjorth argues, for example, SMS re-enacts nineteenth century letter writing traditions [20]. Clearly, the intimate co-presence enacted by mobile technologies should be viewed as part of a lineage of technologies of propinquity [21], [20], [22]. Moreover, mobile technologies need to be seen as further eschewing the distinctions between public and private, work and life, an effect begun by older domestic technologies such as TV and radio [23], [24]. For Timo Kopomaa [22], mobile media creates a new ‘third’ space in between public and private space, while David Morley observes that the mobile phone has further disdained the distinction between public and private, as it no longer brings the public into the private as was the case for TV, but inverts the flow so that the private goes out to the public.

It is this transposed interweaving of the public/private and work/domestic domains in mobile phone use, combined with the mediatisation of the mobile phone as imaging and game device that lends itself to a different understanding of the gendered use of communication and media technologies. The domestic, private and personal become quite literally *mobilised* and *micro-mediatised* via the mobile phone—an intimate ‘home-in-the-hand’—effecting at the same time a transformation of experiences of presence, telepresence and co-presence in public spaces. In what follows, we aim to identify some of these transformations in the context of young women’s experiences and perceptions of mobile game-play, using a phenomenological approach to describe individual micro-practices that contest clichés around female ‘casual’ engagement of mobile gaming.

### 4 THE BODY-IN-WAITING: NARRATIVES OF DISTRACTION AND CASUAL MOBILE GAMING

The participants in our study—seventeen young women living in Melbourne (Victoria) and Perth (Western Australia), all studying to be games designers, artists and programmers—can be seen as having a good, in-depth knowledge of various forms of game-play. For these respondents the mobile phone is important and deployed frequently, as is the usage of broadband facilities from stationary computers both at home and at school, with many accessing the Internet for a variety of services—from online games, SNS (Social networking sites), emailing—for up to five hours per day. These female students are examples of highly active users of technologies both professionally and creatively. As gaming increasingly becomes mainstream within Australian culture it is these young women who will become some of the first to enter the industry as creative professionals rather than administrators. However, it is interesting to note that while they are studying to be employed within the games industry and hence play up to five hours of games daily (from online massively multiplayer role-playing games [MMORPGs]) to console games and classic ‘casual’ mobile games such as *Tetris* and *Snake*) they still tend to speak about gameplay as a ‘non-productive’ form of leisure pursuit.

We will briefly turn to outline some key examples of respondents’ attitudes and practices of various technologies and media and how this fits into their employment and deployment of games. For these respondents technologies as

the mobile phone were important and deployed frequently, as was the usage of broadband facilities from stationary computers both at home and at school, with many accessing the Internet for a variety of services—from online games, SNS (Social networking sites), emailing—for up to five hours per day. These female students are examples of highly active users of technologies both professionally and creatively. However, it is interesting to note that while they are studying to be employed within the games industry and hence play up to five hours of games daily, they still tend to speak about gameplay as a form of leisure pursuit with terms such as ‘relaxing’ or a good way to ‘de-stress’.

For one games student, aged 18, her mobile phone is used predominantly for texting (60%) with friends, and then creatively for games/entertainment (20%) and camera phone images and movies (20%). Her Internet usage was mainly for SNS (70%), then information searching (19%), games (10%), followed by email (1%). She mainly accessed the Internet at home. She didn’t play console games, only online games such as *Warcraft* and *Counterstrike* and mobile games such as *Tetris*, *Bounce* and *AlreadyThere*. Interestingly while much of her game play of online games was conducted at home, her deployment of mobile games ran the gamut of different spaces — public transport (20%), waiting for someone (50%), at home (20%) at school (10%).

For another games student, aged 22, her mobile phone was viewed as essential using it mainly (88%) for texting friends and to a lesser degree voice calling (5%), MMS (3%), camera phone images (2%) and mobile games (2%). Having used the Internet regularly since 1998 for two hours minimum everyday, this respondent actively used the Internet for SNS (30%), emailing (27%), information searching (40%) and games (3%). She played PC games, one average 2 hours per week, such as *Harry Potter* series, *UT 2004*, *Dark Forces*, *Jedi Knight* and *Mysteries of the Sith*. She mainly accessed the Internet from work/school (60%), followed by home (30%) and then on her laptop (10%). When asked about her first gaming experiences she noted:

On the old Atari and Commodore 64, in 1990-1 ish. I played *Adventure* and *pong* on the Atari, and *Mouse trap*, *Winter Olympics*, a ninja game, a maths game where you explored the space ship solving puzzles killing things and collecting crystals. Then I moved to the Lucas Aarts adventure games e.g. (*Indiana Jones and the fate of Atlantis*) and *Dark Forces*, *Wolfenstein 3D*.

Like many of the other girl games students, she preferred playing at home despite easy access to games at school. Her favourite games included *Adventure* ‘I like to explore and grow as the character does’, *Puzzle* ‘I like to flex my mind’ and some RPGs and FPS ‘I like fun story driven games so those of these styles that are I love’. For mobile games she played *Snake*, *bounce* (phone), *vortex* (circular pong, i-pod) on transport (airplanes 50%), waiting for someone (30%) and at home in her room (20%). She viewed mobile gaming is a last resort and something she did whilst waiting for someone or something.

Another 18 year old female game student mainly used her phone to remain in contact with her partner (70%) and, to a lesser degree, her friends (20%). She used her phone for SMS (65%), voice calling (15%), MMS (5%), Internet (5%), games (5%) and camera phone images (10%). Regularly accessing the Internet since 1997 she predominantly used it for games (60%), searching for information (20%), SNS (10%), emailing (8%) and peer to peer sharing (2%). A voracious user of online games she played MMORPGs five times per week, flash games (strategy, puzzle, tower defence, platform) once or twice and browser based strategies games at least once a day, and browser based RPG five times per week all predominantly at home (90%). As for consoles, she had a Nintendo DS that she played RPGs, adventure and platform games usually twice a week. When asked to reflect upon her first experiences of playing games she stated:

The first game I can recall playing was *Prince of Persia* in 1994 on an old Macintosh. Other early games I recall playing are *Sim City 2000* and *Sim Town* on PC. I also recall playing *Tetris* on a friend’s original PlayStation. The first console I got was a Nintendo 64, and since then a PlayStation 2. I seem to have gone back to PC games however.

When asked what games she preferred playing and why, she observed:

MMORPG’s because there is always something to do, people to talk to and I play with friends from real life. There’s always something going on, so it never seems to get boring. Although, that depends on how often the game is updated. I also consider the graphics important as to whether I’ll play the game or not. I enjoy the graphics in *World of Warcraft* the most because they’re cartoonish and seem to work the best. The graphics that try to be more realistic, such as *Lord of the Rings Online* or *Age of Conan*, I feel try to imitate real life too much, which ends up being to their disadvantage, because they can never actually look real. This frustrates me, and I haven’t continued playing the latter games at all.

Playing games both by herself and with friends she predominantly viewed game play as a fun activity that allowed her to interact with friends in different ways and to make more friends. When asked about mobile games she mainly played *Solitaire*, *Ducky Tiles* (matching corresponding tiles), *Casanova* (simulated dating game), *Insaneaquarium* (saving fish from monsters). Like the other respondents she mostly played them on trains or bus to pass the time during the ride (80%) and, to a lesser degree, avoid eye contact with ‘drunks and weirdos’. She also played them whilst waiting for people in cafes or at uni (15%) but preferred to either play her DS or ‘people-watch’, and, lastly, she on occasion (5%) played games at home to sleep. When asked to reflect upon how playing mobile games compared to other activities such as reading, watching TV, or playing games on PCs she noted:

Mainly a time–filler, which is why I play mobile games on public transport and very rarely at home. I don’t see gaming time as a productive use of time, so in the time I do play games, I’d rather play far more enjoyable PC games... For me, it really is just a time–filler while out and about. *Playing Vegas style Solitaire* (where cards are only presented once and can’t be shuffled) is both incredibly frustrating because it’s statistically impossible to win most of the time. But it’s a very good feeling to have won the game!

Though much has been made of the possibilities of location-based and context-aware mobile gaming in current discussions about mobile media, none of our participants had played these types of games on their mobile phones, though eight (out of seventeen) respondents regularly played casual mobile phone games. Almost without exception, however, such games were not considered ‘real’ games—both by those who played them and those who didn’t—and the practice of casual mobile gaming was trivialised as ‘wasting time’ when ‘there’s nothing else to do’. Indeed, the old adage of mobile games as a way to fill in time whilst waiting remained constant throughout the sample group. However, it is interesting to note that this ‘waiting’ happened in various places (home, work, school, on public transport). Yet despite the apparent insignificance of casual mobile games in the everyday lives of our participants, there are some critical insights to be gained from closer analysis of casual game play, both in terms of emergent micro-practices of ‘distraction’ in today’s hyper-mobilised society, and in light of the rise of casual gaming more generally.

While the young women in our study are not indicative of dominant gaming gender norms, they can be viewed as innovators in an industry increasingly embracing ‘casual’ gaming in a period marked by a blurring between casual and serious gaming (as evidenced by the popularity of the Nintendo Wii as a ‘non-expert’ family-friendly game interface). So how do these young women define mobile gaming and what are the prevailing attitudes? How is this transforming casual gaming as a consequential mobile media practice, and as an indicator of women’s experience of mobile media use? How can we articulate the casual mobile phone game as an integral part of the performance of ‘waiting’ and ‘distraction’, and in terms of its effect upon one’s ‘environmental knowing’ [25], or the spatial and sensorial awareness of one’s surroundings? Though of course not an activity exclusive to women’s use of the mobile phone, the case study serves to highlight the imbrication of the mobile phone as a device to manage the body-in-waiting [26] a practice that deserves some critical attention.

Our interaction with mobile screens is rarely marked by the dedicated attentiveness we give to other screens; indeed, our ‘turning towards’ them is usually momentary (checking for a text or missed call) or at most can be measured in minutes. In fact, even in the seemingly committed practice of game-play, mobile phone engagement is characterised by interruption, and sporadic or split attention in the midst of other activities, a behaviour quite distinct even from handheld console game-play on the Nintendo DualScreen (DS) or PlayStation Portable (PSP). This is recognised by the growing mobile phone game industry and its labelling of the ‘casual gamer’, who plays at most for five minutes at a time and at irregular intervals.

In his analysis of the console game, Chris Chesher [27] distinguishes between ways of looking specific to cinema, television and console games—characterised by the gaze, the glance and the glaze respectively—yet the ill fit of mobile phone conventions of viewing within this schema perhaps highlights the need to theorize a cross-modal ‘regime of vision’ specific to both game and nongame use of portable micro-screens. In fact, the mobile phone device crosses over each of these ways of looking if only because we can—and do—watch movies and live TV, and play games, on our phones at varying levels of immersion and distraction. Chesher suggests that console games are ‘sticky’, holding the player to the screen via both a quasi-visceral immersion in depth-perspective virtual space, and a haptic attachment to the hand-controller and peripherals: ‘In glazespace... players suspend their awareness of their day-to-day world to become cybernetically suspended within a virtualised sensorimotor space of the game world’ [27]. Casual gamers, on the other hand, must deliberately avoid this ‘stickiness’ so that they are perpetually ready to resume their temporarily interrupted activities.

It has been argued that both mp3 players and mobile phones afford the auditory privatisation of public space, changing our co-proximate behaviour and evolving different ‘micro-acoustic ecologies’ [28] in different ways. While mp3 players provide discrete ‘sound bubbles’, the mobile phone is a discontinuous device, puncturing time and intervening in the soundscape, as users intermittently fill urban space with their own ‘noises’ of familiarity and intimacy [28]. As Michael Bull notes: ‘Mediated isolation itself becomes a form of control over spaces of urban culture in which we withdraw into a world small enough to control’ [29]. It is this notion of ‘mediatised isolation’ in the context of casual gaming that is of particular interest here. As we will suggest, the way in which the mobile phone as ‘third screen’ and casual game device is used to effect a mode of non-communicative co-presence when one is ‘alone’ in public, is quite distinct from the much-discussed telepresent effects of talking or texting on the mobile, or from our telepresent immersive experience of first and second screens (TV and computer).

The term telepresence refers to the kind of ‘distant presence’ enabled by telecommunication devices. Thus the very condition for telepresence—a ‘presence at a distance’—speaks of our capacity for ontic dispersion beyond the neat physical limits of the body, and our open-ness to the embodied distraction of televisual and telephonic spaces. The term *distraction*—originating from *distrahere*, or to pull in different directions—aptly describes how our attention becomes divided when we speak on the phone, text message, or play a game on the mobile. It suggests that the locus of our perception is divided between the ‘here’ and ‘there’, such that we can *know* different times and spaces simultaneously, an effect which shifts the boundaries of what immediacy is, and how it is defined and experienced.

The contexts of casual gaming, however, point to how the mobile phone is often used not as a telepresent medium, but as a device for managing situations of both collective co-presence and solitary ‘waiting’. As suggested by the comments above, for the women in our study when the mobile phone was used as a game device, it was frequently purposed for offline or casual gaming in particular circumstances and periods of fixed duration: waiting for friends, during journeys on public transport, to fill in time at home, to alleviate boredom, or as a break from other less desirable activities (such as study). Common answers to the question—‘*What motivates you to play mobile games?*’—included:

‘They are trivial time-wasters for when you have nothing else to do (but can be pretty fun sometimes)’

‘Generally, I play mobile games if I am bored somewhere, and have my phone on me, but don’t have anything else to entertain me.’

‘I play while waiting for my queue number to be called in a super crowded building; playing mobile games is the only interesting thing to do in order to distract myself from the pain of waiting.’

‘I can switch off from what’s going on around me but not totally — I can still pay some attention.’

‘They are ok when you have nothing else to do.’

These responses indicate a number of contexts for mobile phone game play—‘waiting’, ‘boredom’, ‘time-filling’, and ‘switching off’—each of which describes a form of delay or putting ‘on-hold’; that is, not telepresent but rather co-present or co-proximate distraction when with unfamiliar others, or otherwise a solitary ‘in-the-meantime’ or ‘time-out’ activity. Thus, casual gaming takes place in the interstices of everyday life, in the gaps between productive and telic or goal-oriented activity.

From a phenomenological perspective, a body-in-waiting discloses a particular kind of being-in-the-world that demands a certain kind of corporeal ‘labour’ — for many of our respondents, the mobile game became co-opted into this labour, filling and suturing the ‘dead’ or ‘fractured’ times and spaces that are ‘folded into everyday corporeal existence’ [26]. Such work—categorised by what David Bissell refers to as the various ‘species’ of waiting [26]—can be understood in terms of the ‘micro-bodily actions’ and ‘corporeal attentiveness’ of specific modalities of waiting [26] identified above by our participants as ‘waiting for a friend’, ‘on public transport’ (waiting for the journey to end), ‘filling in time’ or ‘switching off’ (before commencing another activity), and ‘alleviating boredom’. Clearly, when these modalities are combined with mobile media use, where the ready availability or ‘handiness’ of the device is easily deployed in the fissures of everyday life, complex choreographies and mobile-body relations ensue. We will describe two situations here as they appeared most commonly in our survey—waiting in a public place and boredom or ‘time-filling’.

The activity of casual gaming while waiting for a friend or at a bus stop becomes another way of managing the corporeal intensity of impatience and alone-ness in public spaces, while at the same time maintaining an ‘environmental knowing’, or crucial peripheral awareness of one’s spatial surroundings in readiness for the busyness of life to resume. The transient and non-dedicated attentiveness required by the small screen and casual game—you can ‘switch off’ but ‘not totally’—allows the user to both remain alert to the ‘arrival’ which marks the end of waiting, yet able to avert their gaze from others and so cooperate in the tacit social agreement of non-interaction among strangers. For some of our respondents, this kind of engagement with the mobile screen provided

a means of safe seclusion from unwelcome interaction in potentially risky situations of co-present waiting, yet allowed them to remain 'open' or attentive to the proximity of that risk. One commented, for example, that mobile game play enabled her to avoid eye contact with 'drunks and weirdos'.

Thus, far from the reputation of mobile casual games being about a distracted type of gameplay, for this respondent she would concentrate solely on the mobile game when playing. She did not play them as a distraction or break from other activities, despite viewing their role as not only pleasurable but also a way to occupy time. She viewed mobile games as easy to access and always 'on hand'. Here we see the contradiction between mobile games as time-fillers and as an activity that has its own forms of pleasures and modes of engagement.

When asked to speak about the role of playing mobile phone games in public places or while other people are present and how this affected (if at all) game play, this participant observed:

Yes, usually a public place. There are usually people present, but they are only strangers. This doesn't affect game play for me at all, because I'm usually on a train, the games aren't difficult so they don't require much concentration. The main reactions I get are people looking over my shoulder at the game I'm playing. I also get strange looks when I pull a baby pink coloured Nintendo DS with a big puffy spider sticker on top from of a handbag. This is generally pretty amusing.

For this young respondent, the act of playing a gaming in public is very much part of a spectacle, rather than creating a form of 'electronic individualism'. She often plays in public places, immersed at the same time of being 'aware' that people are watching. This type of watching is, on one hand, an extension of the newspaper reading (whereby intimate strangers sneak a look) and, on the other hand, it creates a spectacle of subculture in which the respondent's bricolage customisation provides a source of interest from others that she is mindful of whilst playing the game. This activity can be seen as of what Kenichi Fujimoto called '*nagara* mobilism' [30]. In 'The Third-Stage Paradigm: Territory Machine from the Girls' Pager Revolution to Mobile Aesthetics', Fujimoto evokes Williams' 'mobile privatization' through the distinctly Japanese practice of *nagara* mobilism.. *Nagara* means 'whilst-doing-something-else'.

One of the underlining motivations for playing and partaking in a form of *nagara* mobilism was to overcome feelings of 'in-between-ness'—signified by in-between spaces such as transport. An important part of occupying-and-yet-not these in-between spaces was avoiding boredom. The need to fill-in time and postpone boredom was a big motivation for much of the *nagara* mobilism of mobile gaming. The experience of boredom in solitude was also frequently given as a 'motivation' for casual game-play, yet it poses somewhat different phenomenological conditions.

Boredom is usually experienced as a corporeal irritation or restlessness, an agitated inertia in response to a current situation that holds no interest—both temporally and spatially. As post-Heideggerian theorist Lars Svendsen [31] suggests, time slows (confounding the regular continuity and linearity of time) and/or one wants to escape from the place where one is located; consequently, relief or distraction from boredom is often sought by occupying both the gaze and the hands. In other work Richardson [32] has noted the perpetual 'handiness' and habitual 'handling' of the mobile phone even when not in use, and it is clear from our case-study that the intimate familiarity of hand-eye-screen couplings in mobile game play effectively works to temporarily defer, suspend or assuage the feeling of boredom. A number of our mobile game-playing respondents commented that they played casual games 'while cooking', suggesting that the boredom which crept into the brief hiatuses of solitary domestic activity could be effectively 'time-filled' by the ephemeral distraction of the casual game. This short-lived escape from one's present time and place, we would suggest, is neither a telepresence or a co-presence, but rather an 'in-between' or transitory non-presence. In these various contexts, such active 'performances of waiting' problematise the notion that the body-in-waiting is a compliant and immobile body, suggesting instead that the mobile phone becomes co-opted into micro-practices of corporeal resistance and resilience.

## 5 CONCLUSION

In this paper we have examined both the genealogy of gendered use of the mobile phone, and the changing modes of game play among young women who are soon to enter the game industry as creative and technical professionals. In particular, we have focused on casual mobile game-play as it was experienced and corporealised by our sample of respondents, offering a more complex and nuanced interpretation of the simplistic stereotype that women play casual games because they are 'easy' in comparison to the more difficult and challenging 'serious' games that males play. Although the participants in our study viewed their own casual mobile gaming as 'trivial' and 'non-productive'—an inconsequential activity scattered throughout the 'fractures' of more important everyday

happenings—we suggest that such play is an indicator of emergent micro-practices of ‘distraction’ in today’s hyper-mobilised society. In these contexts, using a phenomenological approach, we identified the ways in which casual mobile phone games are co-opted into the individual enactments of the body-in-waiting, and the various modalities of presence manifested by such practices.

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