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# LEISURE TIMES AND SPACES: THE EVERYDAY LIFE OF MOBILE F2P GAMERS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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# PLAN

- **Where do gaming practices fit in the everyday lives of those who play mobile *free-to-play* (F2P) games?**
  - Explore how **mobile technologies** as well as **time-related** and **game-related** aspects shape the gaming practices in the daily lives of players.
- The study of mobile F2P gaming practices of players (n=15)



## BACKGROUND: F2P GAMING INDUSTRY

- **F2P** = Games that can be **accessed** and **played for free**;
- The **F2P gaming industry** and the importance of play and games in contemporary culture.



# BACKGROUND: MOBILE TECHNOLOGIES AND GAMES

- Accessing multiple games through **high-performing devices**: the progressive **integration** of games in everyday life;
- Games now follow players wherever they go: creating new **spatial** and **temporal dimensions** of play;
- Scarcity of **sociological research** on mobile F2P games and gaming practices.



## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

# THEORY OF SOCIAL PRACTICES\*

- **Structure** and **Agency** → “Dispositions to Act”
- Practices → “Routinized” behaviours
- Practices → Materials & temporalities

\*(RECKWITZ [2002], COCKERHAM [2005], SHOVE ET AL. [2012] & MEIER ET AL. [2017])



## METHODS – PROCEDURE & PARTICIPANTS

- Semi-structured qualitative interviews ( $n=15$ ;  $\bar{x}=89$  minutes)
- Purposive sampling: Playing various types of games, daily, on a mobile device, in the last 12 months
- 4 men, 11 women; Aged 22 to 56 ( $\bar{x}=36$ ), 12 full-time workers, 1 part-time worker, 1 student, 1 unemployed.



# RESULTS – MIND MAP



### ***Stickiness > Daily Login Bonus***

“[...] Like, there's particular **rewards that you would get just for going in every day** and completing a set of achievements, so I would maybe play it for about ten minutes every evening just to do that and to maintain, just getting all of those rewards.”

– *Marcia, F, Love Nikki-Dress UP Queen*

## **RESULTS – F2P GAMES**

**STICKINESS**  
*(PIERCE, 2010)*





### *Slickness > Flexibility*

“If one day I forgot to play, or if I was too tired and I forget about it, **there's no real consequence**. I feel like in some other game, you're falling behind because you're being ranked or whatever [...]. This one, whether I play 10,000 times a day or 3 hours or 10 minutes, there's no consequence, so **I don't feel forced to play it.**”

– *Laura, F, Board Kings, Pokémon GO*

## RESULTS – F2P GAMES

*SLICKNESS*



# RESULTS – TEMPORAL DISPOSITIONS

## *Characteristics of Time > Time Availability*

“Since **I have a lot more time** afterwards, well **I do other things, I get ahead on homework, I start dinner, I fill the dishwasher, I do chores** [...]. Because I had just one hour between my two classes [...], I was still playing, [...]. I ended up with just a half hour really to myself. So I played like that during the days when I had school, until this summer. But otherwise, **I just stopped playing**. I allowed myself to do like **other activities or my other hobbies that normally I can't bring along with me.**”

— *Helene, F, Love Nikki-Dress UP Queen*



# RESULTS – TEMPORAL DISPOSITIONS

## *Temporal Positioning > Before Getting Up*

“The fact that it’s relatively accessible, versus like playing, let’s say, the Switch that I wouldn’t necessarily bring anywhere, [...] sometimes if it’s not in my room, [...] **I won’t necessarily get up.** In fact, **I’ll play because I’m not necessarily ready to get up**, so I’ll just play on my cell phone. [...] It’s having access to entertainment that’s accessible, actually, like 24 hours a day, because I always have my cell phone with me.”

— Cedric, M, *Pokémon GO*, *Mario Kart Tour*



# RESULTS – TEMPORAL DISPOSITIONS

## *Temporal Positioning > Before Getting Up + Time Versatility*

“I try to check in daily to get the free spin and at least catching one Pokémon a day to keep the streak going. I usually do that **as I try to wake up and procrastinate getting out of bed** (laughs). And then, yeah, maybe I’ll check in **when something’s going on at work that I’m just waiting for, 5 minutes** here and there. I might check in on my **lunch hour**. [...] And then usually **after the kids go to bed**, we’ll take it out and play a little bit **while either watching TV** or something else.”

— Fiona, F, Pokémon GO



# RESULTS – TEMPORAL DISPOSITIONS

## *Times > Interstitial\* Times*

“I’ll **choose** to play when there are **little gaps**, let’s say I’m eating dinner, well I’m not going to play while I’m eating, but **let’s say I have 10 minutes before the time I get back to work** [...] or while my son is taking a shower, but he’s afraid to be in the bathroom by himself, so I just have to sit next to him while he’s taking his shower [...]. That’s it really, **it’s in those gaps in time.**”

— *Gaelle, F, Cooking Diary*

\* *Interstitial time (Chess, 2018)*



## RESULTS – MOBILE TECHNOLOGIES

## POLYCHRONICITY

### ***Polychronicity > Playing and Other Tasks***

“I’ve left [the game] on to collect the loot **while I was cooking something before**. I just put it **down on the counter and swipe at the phone**. That’s also something you can do on Mistplay because games are time-based. So I could **play a video game on PS4 and have Mistplay running** on the TV, and as long as I swipe it, it’s still counting the time.”

– Karl, M, AFK Arena (MistPlay), Clash of Clans



RESULTS – MOBILE  
TECHNOLOGIES

CONNECTIVITY

### **Connectivity > Data-Determined Practices**

“It’s really the fact that it’s too **easy and accessible anywhere, anytime**. Because *Plants vs. Zombies*, let’s say, in the arena, it takes [an Internet connection], but if you don’t have [it], you can’t play. But here, we have **big data plans** and it makes it so that **you can play anytime**.”

— *Delphine, F, Candy Crush, Plants vs. Zombies II*



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## DISCUSSION

# TIME, TECHNOLOGY & THE GAMIFICATION OF INTERSTITIAL TIMES

- The use of mobile technologies and F2P games has the potential to redefine time;
- Technologies and games also transform interstitial times and other social rhythms (work, leisure);
- The transformation of interstitial times into “play moments” → Gamification.





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## DISCUSSION

# STICKINESS\* & SLICKNESS — TWO SIDES OF THE SAME COIN

- “Sticky Practices”: Player engagement in the game and income generation;
- No Frictions, No Restrictions: Games need to fit *your* life, not the other way around;
- Stickiness and Slickness work together to fit gaming practices in a variety of time dispositions in everyday life.



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## DISCUSSION

### TEMPORAL DISPOSITIONS

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### THE PANDEMIC AND THE CHANGES IN TIME AVAILABILITY

- Increased time availability during the COVID-19 pandemic: Dual experience
- More time = more gaming practices? Not a simple equation
- The important role of time in mobile F2P gaming practices.



# CONCLUSION

- The importance of studying F2P games and their practices from a sociological perspective
- The ubiquity of technologies and games: opening new “times” of consumption through mobile F2P games
- The role of time in gaming / gambling addiction



THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME.

