

ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES

DIGITAL PLAYING: A STUDY ON THE POPULARITY OF DIGITAL
VIDEO PLAY STATION GAMES AMONGEST ETHIOPIAN CHILDREN
IN ADDIS ABABA

BY
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ADDIS ABABA

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Declaration

This thesis is my original work. It has not been presented for a degree in any other university and that all sources of material used for the thesis have been duly acknowledged.

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To be honest, for the last six or seven months I have been in disillusionment and frustration but, I received the best lessons I ever had, and it was a period when I learned how to carry out a decent academic research. It was a time of accomplishment, attainment and realization of my academic endeavors. But all of this could not come to happen without the involvement and inputs of the following individuals. My supervisors, Dr.Oyvind Okland and Dr.Mohammed Hassen come first in my listing.It gives me a great pleasure to credit my deepest appreciation and respect to these individuals, who had directed me right through the course of doing this research with their invaluable suggestions. Thank you

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Abstract

In the midst of the dissemination of digital electronic games particularly Play Station Video games in Ethiopia since the turn of the millennium Ethiopian children have been able to be exposed to different kinds of digital video games. A noteworthy part of this Ethiopian children are from lower-class section in Addis Ababa who are exposed and attracted to the Play Station Video games produced by the time leading manufacturer of video games, the Japanese owned which is based in America ,Sony Company. *Digital Playing : An Investigation into Popularity of Play Station Video Games amongst Ethiopian Children in Addis Ababa* attempts to explore how the specified children in Addis Ababa, in the midst of their everyday lived reality, make meaning out of the Play Station games contents and its technology that are produced in another setting. The study, by using focus group interviews and in-depth individual interviews, explores how Ethiopian lower-class children make sense out of digital video game contents and technology as represented by Play Station video games in the context of their everyday life.

The findings of the research demonstrate that Play Station video games have a significant role to play in the Convergence and Hybridizations of cultures between the global and the local. The convoluted responses of respondents reveal that there are differences in the level of play, as well as genre preference. For most of the children technology and cultures are most highly integrated .These enjoy multiple pleasures from the gaming experience including mastery of game-based computer related skills and competition. Some of the children play in order to cope with their real lives. These children reported taking pleasures in controlling the gaming environment or alternatively that games provide a needed distraction from the pleasure of their daily lives. Finally, some non-gamer female children who participated in the study expressed strong criticisms about game playing and gaming cultures. For female children, Play Station games are a west of time .However; female children who are gamers technology, gender and culture are mostly integrated .These children enjoy multiple pleasures as male children do in the research.

Chapter One

Introduction

Digital Playing: An Investigation into Popularity of Play Station Video Games amongst Ethiopian Children in Addis Ababa is a study that aims to investigate how Ethiopian lower -class children in Addis Ababa negotiate with technologies and contents of Play Station video games, one of the most famous digital video games in Ethiopia. In other words, this study attempts to investigate how the specified children in Addis Ababa, in the midst of their everyday lived reality, make meaning out of the played Play Station video games that are produced thousands of miles away. Simply put, the study is about the presence of the global video games in the local, and more importantly how the local deals with it.

The theoretical framework of the study is hinged to a vital approach of the media convergence theory and the media globalization concepts which claims that the technology, particularly the information communication, computer and the media technology is in the state of technological shift which in turn alters the existing relationship between technologies, media industries, markets, media genres and audiences. As the theoretical foundation of this study, I will discuss the premises of the media convergence theory in light of the broader concepts of globalization, glocalization and global media culture. I will also reflect upon some of the prime concepts of the convergence theorists' assumptions that give some insight to understand sites where important negotiations between global media producers and consumers are apt to occur.

Such being some make up of the theoretical context of this study, some of the specific questions I would like to address include whether lower class Ethiopian children adhere to the technological alter repercussions as put forward by proponents of the media convergence theory and whether there are any ingredients that come in between the interplay of technological change in the media systems and the media experience they impart, and the reception of these media messages specifically the Play Station video games by the audience, the children.

To this end, I will be navigating through some of the propositions, deliberations, debates and arguments of some of the most influential scholars and researchers that stand for and or against the premises of the media convergence theory and global media theories (Henry Jenkins 2002,2004,2006; Deuz Mark 2006,2007; Tomilson 1991; Boyd-Barrett 1998; Rantanen 2005; Negroponte 1995 and McChesney Robert2000), the genesis of which dates back to the end of the second millennium when the world was overwhelmed by the phenomenon come to be known as Digital Divide.

The rest of this chapter discusses the background of the study and the statement of the problem, highlights objectives, significance, scope and limitations of the study, and puts forward key research assumptions, methodological proceedings and thesis organization.

1.1 Background of the Study

1.1.1 *A Personal Note: Why Video games?*

My curiosity to probe in to the popularity of Play Station video games played in small -sized video game playing centers begun when I had the opportunity to participate in the lectures of Professor Keyan Tomaseli, Professor Helge Ronning and Dr. Kristin Skare Orgerate as part of the Media and Globalization course during October-December 2007.It was then that I started to be captivated by the affluent of Play Station playing centers in the city and how children play interact with the technology and make meaning from the digital games. Of course, my earlier fascinations for video & computer games and my encounter with one particular article on BBC'S Focus on Africa titled 'Virtual Genocide' were two different but related global digital culture messages prompted my interest to take the subject as my research title.

Nowadays video and computer games particularly Play Station video games are one of those brands that are impossible to avoid in the major cities of the world together with the likes of Nintendo, Sega EA, and Microsoft. I was a freshman student at the turn of the millennium when Ethiopian universities and colleges started to computerize their systems which almost immediately

made way to the overwhelming outpour and importation of computers and digital appliances and other things to major cities of Ethiopia, thus marking the country join together to other major cities of the world that feel the digital culture presence. Not surprisingly, playing Video and Computer games were one of those digital cultures to creep through.

Being placed in one of the new universities of the country, Debu University, Dilla College and get an access of computers with different computers games where the new digital culture of country was fast growing, I was lucky enough to participate in the wave of digital games that started flooding the country. Although my friends frequented to play different genres of computer games I was limited to play Marion alone. I always loved video and computer games of many genres that made me feel relaxed. I didn't have any idea what laid beyond the fun in these except that most of them are loved by my friends who sometimes cut classes just for the sake of it. In short this earlier fascination of mine on video and computer games introduced me to Ethiopian children's attraction to video and computer games.

As I have explained it earlier, my second charm to pick Play Station games up as my research title was my fall upon one particular article on BBC'S Focus on Africa titled 'Virtual Genocide' (January-March 2007 Vol. 18 No 1 pp30). The article was all about a game titled 'Virtual Genocide' which was built to lift up the awareness of the global digital community about the genocide in Darfur through digital games which could be played online as well as available on CDs. This incident corresponded with mushrooming of small game centers equipped with Play Station games across the entire territory of Addis Ababa. It was then that I was struck by Patricia M. Greenfield discussion on possible effects of new media (Greenfield, 1984). As far as I see Greenfield was one of the first scientists who drew attention to the possible positive effects of watching television or playing video games. She addressed new media as cultural artifacts which demand complex cognitive skills from the people who use them, and these skills and the related knowledge that come from using them are not obtained in instructional contexts like schools, but are acquired informally (Greenfield, 1984). In Ethiopia the situation is quite similar with the situation of 1984 of Europeans; though some of the conditions have changed in one respect i.e. schools have begun to use computers and teach pupils computer skills. But at the same time

informal experiences with computer technology have become more common for children and young people. Most pupils, therefore, have learned about computers before teachers or other educators begin instruction; sometimes the pupils' skills even surpass those of the teachers

Today, my understanding of video games is defined in different circumstances. In October-November 2007, I had the opportunity of participating in the lectures of Professor Keyan Tomaseli, Professor Helge Ronning and Dr. Kristin Skare Orgerate as part of the Media and Globalization course which would tremendously impact my academic course thereafter. In is in this way that I have come to know that the Video and Computer games belong to the new multimedia culture that is based on digital computer technology. Thus, I came to understand that the Play Station video game phenomenon in Addis Ababa could be explained by media-centered approaches and try to understand how computer games are integrated into the lives of the children and young people (Livingstone, d'Haenens & Hasebrink, 2000). My earlier fascination with video and computer games and the flourishing of Play Station games could be explained in one of the media theories.

Therefore, it is my encounter with one particular article about the use of digital games for improving the way people look at diverse matters, , my own fantasy for video and computer games and my introduction to media and globalization in my academia finally made me engage myself in this project.

1.1.2 Background of the Study

As Robertson (1990,pp.2-3) and Tomlinson (1999, p.15-30) have written, globalization is a process where by societies become more interconnected and interdependent at a number of levels through the flow of products ,people and finance, and through the establishment of international agencies ,global competition and international law . Although it is true that all forms of globalization are strongly interrelated in one way or another, the emergence of media as a powerful force of influencing other forms of globalization is the apparent feature of the world today. In Featherstone (1990, p.7). Appadurai explicitly identifies as part of these flows 'repertoires of image and

information, the flow which are produced and distributed by news papers, magazines television and film'. Together these constitute what he terms the global 'media landscape'.

The relationship between the concept of globalization and media and communication immediately impacts on the transformation of spaces of interaction between people, information, institutions and cultural traditions around the world. Today, patterns of social interaction and information across the globe flows are increasingly occurring across national boundaries to form new bases of political and cultural identity. Transnational corporations have taken advantage of new telecommunication and computing technology to expand their production and consumption network beyond national boundaries. Sreberny-Mohammadi et.al. state that '[i]n contrast to the historical tendency for communication media to be used to *vertically integrate* societies within the contours of the nation-state, emerging patterns of social interaction, political organization and information flows are being supplemented by transnational, *horizontal integration*' (1997,p.xii).

With the rise of advanced communication technology and digitalization, the media has perhaps become the most visible engine that makes people around the globe feel the presence of globalization more than ever. The intricately interrelated processes of globalization and media globalization are tightly interwoven with world economy and market forces, with political systems, and with relationships of dominance and dependence between countries and cultures as well as between rich and poor people within and between nations. This complexity gives rise to a great amount of questions about the nature and causes of globalization and global media industries – and also about the consequences or influences of these processes (von Feilitzen 2002, p.13)

Digitalization has extended the capabilities of the global media industries by adding interactivity to television. The rise and explosive growth in video game industry is associated with digitalization of television and computer technology, therefore; the video game industry is a hybrid technology (Eugene Provenzo, 1991) this hybrid technology is a new medium which fuses TV's *spectatorship* with cybernetic *play control* (Eugene Provenzo, 1991)

The emergence of video and computer games culture as a new media force gives vent to a new global audience out of which a good third of the world population are children and young people under 18 years of age. The video game culture produced for children, and media culture that children come into contact with, according to von Feilitzen (2002, p.14), constitutes 'an essential – and perhaps the most rapidly growing—part of media globalization.' Media culture produced for children include globally distributed video and computer games directed at or played by children and young people popular music produced on radio, CDs and cassettes; films and TV programmes directed at or watched by children and young people on national and satellite television, video, and in theatres; and the Internet; certain international print media; advertising and marketing of licensed merchandise worldwide, such as toys, clothes, foods, drinks and other products; as well as inter-textuality and direct convergence of much of these media, media contents and merchandise. Indeed recent studies of children's media use have documented that a global "gamer" culture focused on digital adventure is taking shape around interactive entertainment technologies (Livingstone et al., 2000).

The fact that global media contents in the forms of video and computer games presents an enormous new opportunity for the children of the world prompts stakeholders of children's rights including the state, NGO's and several different international organizations to revise their understanding of the relationship between global digital game media and children's rights and raise new questions of new dimensions.

A look at the world media landscape for children and the youth immediately presents two opposing themes: opportunities and risks. For example, globalization of media, which is represented by digital games like the Play Station brings opportunities to broaden children's outlooks and provide more equal access to "media competency," computer literacy, or ICT skills by informal and non-formal learning processes of children within their "computer gaming' culture, but it also threatens cultural identification and values. These new media were also considered as bad educators, because they "taught" children and young people things like violent behaviors (Greenfield, 1984). Technological advances bring the promise of new skills and greater youth

participation in society, but also increase the risk of child exploitation and informational divides (Gigli, 2004).

The case in urban Ethiopia is no different. Global media in the forms of digital games like the Play Station, television, radio, magazines and newspapers are becoming increasingly accessible in urban and even in small towns of Ethiopia and most noticeably in the capital Addis Ababa. With more and more video and computer game playing, and entertainment software renting houses being opened in the city and satellite television services spreading, children's opportunity for access and consumption to global media and particularly globalized Japanese computer and video games and popular culture is increasing. The fact that electronic equipments like the, computers, TV sets, and entertainment software and internet subscriptions are becoming more affordable and easily accessible consequently paves the way on investigating how global media products channeled through digital games are consumed by local audiences.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Children as consumers of the digital games make up a significant part of the local audience in Ethiopia, especially in Addis Ababa where accessibility is relatively better. Although there are a number of children's programs like films, movies, and other motion pictures that are readily available for children either in video cassettes, DVDs or VCDs or televised satellite broadcasts in the likes of DSTV, and Arab broadcasts, there is a huge interest, perhaps because of enormous availability, in the productions of digital games by the global media giant Sony which is the most popular conglomerate in the making of children computer and video games particularly Play Station games .

Together with Nintendo and Microsoft Play Station is perhaps the best known digital game brand name in the world. To today's children Play Station games like mortal combat and digital soccer games are as familiar as Mickey Mouse and Ninja Turtles in previous generation. Now days most children know of and have personal experiences with one or more of the digital games of the Sony Company. Moreover, the Sony Company is amongst the most diversified global conglomerates.

Taken together, the global reach, intensity and popularity of Sony's Play Station games makes it a unique object for studying children's contemporary reception of video games globalization, a process that is invariably situated within and shaped by patterns of family and peer interaction and cultural preferences (Fiske, 1989)

In essence, the presence and dissemination of video and computer games in Ethiopia is a quickly growing enterprise and this may give the implication that Ethiopian children are potentially consuming it or, at least, have the right to consume it.

The researcher strongly believes that an understanding of the relationship between digital games with particular reference to Play Station games and how children interact with media messages is of paramount importance for understanding the presence of global digital youth culture through digital games in the lives of children and the dynamics it plays in the make up of their world view. Furthermore, very few research agendas attempted to investigate the issue from the receiver's end or the audience's perspective in the African setting (Strelitz, 2001, 2002; Nyamnjoh, 2002).

1.3 Significance of the Study

As it is one of the first study in the country apart from raising new-fangled inquiry of facets with regard to the relationship that exists between digital games, other media formats like films, tv broadcasts and Ethiopian children and the other factors that come in between, the significance of this study is primarily hinged to its contribution of the building blocks that shed light to the perspectives, outlooks and perception of Ethiopian children on the digital games they are becoming increasingly exposed to. Children are groups of the society that we make decisions to on their behalf and understanding their views and needs from their own perspective will fortify the validity of those decisions which can impact their lives in multifarious ways. In effect, the result of this study, beyond triggering further questions about how Ethiopian children feel about their rapport with video games and raising awareness to the prominence of giving a serious attention to the views of the child, provides implications of the role of the global media to the Ethiopian child set in his/her day-to-day lived reality.

This hopefully can draw the attention of policy and decision makers that act on behalf of the child including government bodies, civic organizations, NGOs and the academia. Furthermore, the state of the lower-class Ethiopian children set in the deluge of video games and its contents, in relation to the provisions of the Conventions of Rights Child can have its own connotation that may intrigue the attention of the specified stakeholders on issues related to the child.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The research objective primarily is to investigate the factors (such as Small-sized Game Centers as emerging Environments of New Media Technology exposure for low class Children; Digital Gaming as a Gendered Technological Practice; Children and Media Literacy Issues; Play Station games as Agents of Cultural Convergence and Glocalization; Play Station games as an Extension of the Mainstream Media and other factors) that underlie the unique character of Play Station digital video gaming in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. I will achieve this through media reception research by conducting focus group and individual in depth interviews in selected primary and secondary schools of Addis Ababa. Thus, the study aims to examine the complexity of Play Station video games and its local consumer's interaction in the involvement of digital video game playing by Ethiopian children in Addis Ababa

1.5 Research Issues & Assumptions

In this research, I am guided by the assumption that the video game, being part of New Media landscape, bear significant pressure on the mainstream media in terms of income, audience attraction and time spent on playing video games. (Gaither, 2001 & Williams, 2002). Communication scholars have noted that around the world many young users spend more time on video games than television (Bloom, 1982; Funk & Buchman, 1996). Nevertheless, at the same time the reception and domestication of Japan made video game has gone largely unexamined by scholars. A review of previous research though the research is on Western consumers yields a healthy body of work on effects, mostly focusing on children and violence and

gender roles (Dill & Dill, 1998; Anderson & Dill 2000; Griffiths 1999; Dietz 1998; Funk 1993; Schutte et al 1988; Cooper & Mackie 1986) and growing interest in uses and gratifications (Sherry et al 2000), but nothing on reception and domestication and its relations with other formats of media especially in Ethiopian academia. Having placed this argument as the motivating agency of this study, I also take the assumption that the video game industries, as represented by The Play Station video game in my case, are powerful agent for the convergences of culture and or media.

1.6 Methods of the Study

The research will acquire a form of a reception study. The application of reception research methodology has got an immense importance to my research as the goal is to get thick descriptions of the inner thoughts of children on how they interpret their experiences of the video game contents and its technology.

The methodological approach I choose for this study falls with in the qualitative research tradition. Fossey et al. attribute the aim of qualitative research to “address questions concerned with developing an understanding of the meaning and experience dimensions of humans’ life and social worlds” (2002, p.717). Qualitative description primarily calls attention to what Babbie and Mouton refer as “thick description”—a lengthy description that captures the sense of actions as they occur, placing events in contexts that are understandable to the actors themselves (2001, p.272). A thick description of an understanding of children’s and youth’s inner thinking about their impressions on the Play Station video games they play and whether they accept, adapt, reshape or even reject the contents and the technology of the digital video games is at the center of this study, which is why interviews, both individual and focus group, are very essential. Group interviews are important in that they “can be stimulating for respondents, aiding recall with a flexible format” (Fontana and Frey 2000, p.652).

Because the interviews and the focus group discussions must define a narrow audience for the research, sampling and recruitment of the groups is critical. This means that the sample units that are invited to participate in focus groups have to be able and willing to provide the desired

information and be representative of the population of interest (see Hansen, 1998:264).As suggested by Ruddock (2001, p.133), guidelines for sampling within audience research are more flexible and situational, the choice of participant is determined by criteria that are appropriate for specific study and the number of participants chosen is also situational.

In this light, though the general observation was that Play Station Video games are played across different demographic variables, the researcher has given a special attention to game centers situated in Kirkos sub-city specifically around Kazanchis in Addis Ababa. I have selected the area with a prior assumption that the targets have a relatively greater exposure to the Play Station Video game scenario, both because they have a greater probability of accessing to Play Station video game centers due to the fact that there are more video game centers around the schools and they are still flourishing when I am carrying out this research. Targets for the interview will be drawn from the population by use of purposive sampling.

1.7 Thesis Organization

This thesis contains seven chapters, out of which this first chapter deals with the general feature of the paper. This chapter is a show up for the background of the research, statement of the problem, objectives, significance and methods of the study.

Chapter two, the literature review, deals with some of the prominent features of video games, globalization and children. This chapter also presents the chief premises of the media/cultural convergence and 'glocalization', which represents the theoretical framework of the study. Details of methodology, paradigm selection, data collection methods, sampling techniques and research procedures are the center of attention for the third chapter. The rationale for the adoption of qualitative research methods will be discussed. It also highlights a justification for the selection of Reception Research and its epistemological foundations and the process of the application in my study. The fourth chapter provides the social context within which the research is conducted by looking at the rise of small-sized video game centers in Addis Ababa and explicates some of the situations that Ethiopian children are endorsed in including the access, distribution, and mode of

Play Station Video game penetration in the local setting. The points raised in this chapter correspond with the research objectives, issues and assumptions outlined in the introduction.

In Chapter Five the first part of the presentation and interpretation of the data is discussed. This section deals with the contextual lived reality of the children and explores issues like Small-sized Game Centers as emerging Environments of New Media Technology exposure for low class Children; Digital Gaming as a Gendered Technological Practice; and Children and Media Literacy Issues.

Chapter Six constitutes the second part of the data presentation and interpretation, and deals with how Ethiopian low class children negotiate with the contents and technology of Play Station Video Games. This Chapter will address the four thematic issues like Play Station games as driving forces of globalization; Play Station games as indicators of convergence of media & extension of mainstream media; Integration of Play Station gaming: Ethiopian culture and technology fusion ; Gender and Technology . In looking at these thematic concerns, the research investigates how Ethiopian children negotiate with the technology and contents of Play Station Video games as the function of Cultural Convergence. In line with Henry Jenkins, this research investigates whether or not the consumption of digital video games by Ethiopian children has constituted the 'Cultural Convergence' its integrations or its hybrid nature of entertainment experience, interactivity, combination and extension of the mainstream media and culture and fragmentation and convergence of cultural identity.

Finally, Chapter Seven concludes the thesis in terms of the findings and results of the study. This Chapter suggests some broad conclusions on Ethiopian Children consumption of video games and its implications of the findings in light of children's rights and provides suggestions for further research.

1.8 Scope of the Study

The digital games industry is comprised of arcade games, console games, handhelds, and computer games. The most popular segment of the industry among low class children in Addis Ababa is now console systems such as the Sony PlayStation 2, Nintendo's GameCube, and Microsoft's Xbox. Hence; my research focuses on those progresses made in the console game system especially on the Sony PlayStation 2 in Addis Ababa. Although more computer (PC/Mac) titles are released each year, they are less popular amongst lower class children in Addis Ababa and they form a smaller segment of the market. Additionally, although there is crossover with some of my research subjects playing console and computer game systems, console systems especially Sony PlayStation 2 generally capture a different portion of the game-playing demographic than computer games. Computer game players are generally from well off section of Addis Ababa on average than console players and have more disposable income. However, consoles like Play Station 2 are cheaper to purchase than computers, they rarely crash. The market in Addis Ababa and elsewhere reflects the dominance of consoles over computers for gaming systems - for example in 1998, only one of the 30 top games was a PC title - the rest were console games. Although many games are released for both computers and consoles, many others are not, and the types of systems remain somewhat distinct. Hence, the scope of this research is on console game system games especially on Play Station 2

*Chapter Two***LITERATURE REVIEW: GLOBALIZATION, VIDEO GAMES AND CHILDREN****2.1 Introduction**

In this chapter I discuss literature dealing with debates surrounding globalization, global video game industry and children. Investigating and examining this is central to the study as the research deals with video games as the source of media content pertinent to the study; globalization as a process that enables video games reach audiences throughout the world; and children as receivers and consumers of video games—all strongly related to the essential target of this study, the Sony Play Station Video games company, one of the few gigantic media conglomerates of the globe and at the same time popular for its video and computer games targeted towards children and young people. The chapter goes on to introduce the media/cultural convergence theory and a related concept of glocalization, a fundamental theory to this study with direct relevance to video and computer game globalization.

The first section of this chapter deals with the concept of globalization and global media. It gives a historical background of the concept, presents attempts and challenges of defining it, and puts forward the different approaches towards globalization and global media. The role of global media as part of the process of globalization is then discussed. The discussion features a definition and description of global media debates important to the issue, and implications for developing countries.

The second subtitle of this chapter deals with the video game industry and its relations with global media and concepts of globalization. The profound integration of Japanese and US business, technology, culture and other factors are stuffs to be seen in this section. The specific role of the video game industry as part of the process of globalization is then discussed. The discussion features an account of the history of the video game industry and the descriptions of the debates

important to the industry and its consumptions, and implications for developing countries. The next section takes a brief look at children as video game consumers; and those theories which purport that children constitute a major audience of video game.

The fourth subtitle of this chapter deals with the media/cultural convergence theory which stand as the theoretical framework of the study. Historical background, definitions, perspectives and scholarly debates of the theory are illustrated and described. Other components of this section include an analysis of video games and their function with that of the arguments of the media convergence theory and the relevance of the theory in contemporary video game globalization studies. The last section summarizes and concludes the chapter.

2.2 Globalization & the Global Media

Globalization is not a clear-cut concept to define in the midst of the excess of its manifestations like global warming, global trade, global terror, global media, and many others. The idea of globalization has produced fans and cynics who have approached it according to their outlooks and assumptions. Despite many vigorous research and academic debate in the last quarter of the bygone millennium, globalization still remains—perhaps with even more vigor and presence—to be a concept of enormous interest and debate in the first decade of the 21st century. Rantanen says, “it is difficult to separate the consequences and causes of globalization” (2005, p.6). It is, however, to be noted that globalization is the catchphrase of the day although an uncontested definition for its nature is far from being reached.

Amongst the many definitions put forward by different scholars and authorities of the field, one of the most ‘neutral’ (Rantanen 2005, p.6) is that of Giddens’ who identifies the concept as:

the intensification of world-wide social relations, which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa. (1990, p.64)

In his introduction to *A Globalizing World? Culture, Economics and Politics*, David Held reinforces this view by illustrating how stretched social relations across nation-state boundaries in terms of social, economic and political processes are strengthened. However, he goes on to further outline what he calls “distinctive features” of globalization which integrate an intensification of flows and networks of interaction and interconnectedness that transcend nation states; an increased interpenetration of economic and social customs, “bringing apparently distant cultures and societies face to face with each other at local level, as well as on a global stage”; and the rise of global institutional infrastructures like that of the United Nations organization which plays a role in the political and social sectors of nation states. (2000, pp.15-17).

The last decade and a half have seen globalization acquire an all enveloping meaning, thus implying many processes and ideas. Rantanen, while interviewing Anthony Giddens about his perspectives of what she calls the ‘G’-word states that “as it [globalization] has been taken everywhere by everybody, it has lost much of its precision,” and is thus “a portmanteau term” (Rantanen 2005b, p.67).

As difficult as it is to define globalization, there is the challenge of identifying what we mean by the “global”. Sometimes it is used to describe phenomena that are not nation specific; sometimes to signify anything that involves more than one country; sometimes it alludes to general processes and sometimes to purportedly “universal” values (Sreberny 2005, p.14).

Such illusiveness of closely, if not exactly, defining the concept of globalization partly tails from the different positions and perspectives that make up the debate on the issue. Held sums up these perspectives in three categories termed as globalist, inter-nationalist and transformationalist. Globalists, he argues, are believers of the presence and process of globalization; they do not doubt its impact and network in contemporary society and see it as “an inevitable development which cannot be resisted or significantly influenced by human intervention, particularly through traditional political institutions, such as nation-states” (Cochrane & Pain 2000, p.22). In fact globalists tend to regard globalization as “the single most important fact of contemporary history” (Scholte 2000, p.17). Whereas positive globalists point to the benefits of globalization and see the

results of globalizing influences as a change to be welcomed, negative or pessimistic globalists see the world as becoming less diverse and more homogeneous. For inter-nationalists, alternatively known as skeptics, globalization is a “myth, or at any rate is much exaggerated as a distinctively new phenomenon, and emphasizes continuities between the past and present” (Cochrane & Pain 2000, p.22).

A third—transformationalist—approach goes half way to agree with the globalists and internationalists while discarding their ‘extreme’ positions. Transformationalists, according to Cochrane & Pain, believe that “globalization represents a significant shift, but question the inevitability of its impacts. They argue that there is still significant scope for national, local and other agencies.” (2000, p.23)

Diverse perspectives on globalization are not all about the debate on the definition of the concept, but also positions and attitudes towards its consequences in the make up of society. Optimism over globalization has been attributed to the hopes of justice around the globe as it can “open new avenues for solving the problems of injustice and poverty through trade technology, transfer, knowledge, and a keener awareness regarding shared values like democracy and human rights” (Carlsson 2002, p.7). According to Scholte, many credit globalization as an agent of unprecedented democratization as “multiparty politics, ‘free and fair’ elections to representative institutions and legal guarantees of civil rights have become the worldwide norm for national government” (2000, p.35). Martin Wolf (2000, pp.18-19) further argues that the dynamics of globalization today contribute immensely to the emergence of free flow of information as a result of which “a regime that wants its people to be fully engaged in the global economy cannot prevent them from gaining access to the extraordinary range of information, including that about their own country,” therefore making despotic regimes unsustainable.

Such outlook, however, doesn’t represent the comprehensive predilection of people towards the supposed sequel of globalization as it is deemed of having unfavorable ends to society. One such view is put forward by Hammond and Grosse (2003, p.286) in which they summarize the pitfalls of

globalization as being the threat of loss of national identity resulting from the homogenization of lifestyles around the world; a peril to national identity as exhibited by the reduction of the number of languages used around the world, with English striking a solid blow to all other languages by becoming the *lingua franca* of the internet while the general number of vernacular languages used in multilingual countries is declining; and a threat to national sovereignty as a result of ‘the ability of multinational firms to circumvent the powers of uni-national governments. Firms can make decisions about where to locate production, how to distribute their products, and even what information and funds to transfer across national borders—almost without regard to national government concerns. Similarly, Giddens attributes nuclear proliferation and new terrorism to aspects of globalization, which, according to him, ultimately intersect with weapons of mass destruction. He states:

...violence is very much a problem of globalization. New cultural confrontations and ethnic divisions around the world are part of these processes, and some of these processes are very acute and mostly diasporic. They happen within countries and at the same time across countries. (2005, p.75)

The global media play a fundamental role in the process of globalization. “[W]ithout mass media and modern information technology,” Carlsson (2002, p.8) writes, “globalization as we know it would not be possible.” One aspect of globalization is media globalization which refers to “the worldwide expansion of media production and distribution companies that trade on the emerging global media market” and is, therefore, “primarily the global proliferation of a small number of media conglomerates” (Hamelink 2002, p.36). Media plays an important role in the dynamics of the world’s politics, economy, entertainment, and thus the process of globalization. Media’s presence can hardly be ignored in today’s global livelihood as without it and modern information technology, “globalization as we know it wouldn’t be possible” (Carlsson 2002, p.8). In illustrating the prominence of global media as an engine of the process of globalization, Herman and McChesney state:

The global media provide the main vehicle for advertising corporate wares for sale, thereby facilitating corporate expansion into new nations, regions and markets. On the

other hand, the global media's news and entertainment provide an informational and ideological environment that helps sustain the political, economic and moral basis for marketing goods and for having a profit-driven social order. In short, the global media are a necessary component of global capitalism and one of its defining features. (1997, p.10)

A global medium is “a media organization that generates print or electronic messages or programs for dissemination to large numbers of people around the world” whereas others prefer the term transnational media corporation, meaning “an organization that has operations in more than one nation” (Demers 1999, xxiv). Global media, according to Chan (2005: p.25), are “primary modes of cultural globalization” whose foundation is laid upon transnational media who run operations across national boundaries. Today, a very small number of global media companies control the production and distribution of media items including the likes of, AOL-Time Warner, The Walt Disney Company, Bertelsmann, The News Corporation, Viacom, Sony and Universal.

2.3 The Video Game Industry & Globalization

However such being the conceptualization of the characteristic feature of the global media merely is for the film and mainstream media industry. Within cultural, communication and globalization studies the basic feature of the scale of production, the horizontal and vertical distribution and the publishing and distribution of video and computer games have also similar trends as the global film industry. Aphra Kerr and Roddy (Convergence 2003) states;

...the 1990s saw the digital game industry adopt similar commercial strategies to the cultural industry which for 80 years has been mostly associated with the process of globalization.

The prevalence of video and computer games in the world is at its heyday when it is compared the progress it has exhibited so far. The computer and video game industry is a billion-dollar business and its products have become major part of today's media landscape (e.g., Poole, 2000; Vorderer & Bryant, 2006; Wolf, 1999) The globalization of video and computer games as a global media is a very much contested concept, just as is the broader concept of globalization with some viewing it as

a phenomenon for the good of the world while others reject it as creating global cultural homogenization.

A basic history of video games involves acknowledging the profound integration of Japanese and US businesses, technologies, cultures and individuals involved. Such a history can be read as either a competition or collaboration (sometimes both). Looking more deeply, even seemingly unique or singular Japanese or US developments are not free of cross national influences. For example, one of the first video game companies in the USA, Atari, was named for a move in the Japanese game of 'Go'

The Japanese corporation Nintendo almost single-handedly revitalized the game industry in America, yet earned suspicion for its ability to mesmerize children with its colorful games featuring the character 'Mario,' named (in America) after the corporation's landlord (Sheff, 1999). The Japanese Taito corporation's arcade game *Space Invaders* was such a hit in Japan that it caused a nationwide coin shortage, and its creator, Toshihiro Nishikado, admits that inspiration for the game's aliens was drawn from the US film *Star Wars* as well as sea creatures from the local market. These anecdotes challenge us to ask where Japanese influence ends and American culture begins in understanding the video game industry. Just as technology developments have fueled the competition between East and West economies, so too have cultural influences, realized in these same techno-products, demanded that we explore this relationship.

This exploration shows that the video game industry is a hybrid encompassing a mixture of Japanese and American businesses and (more importantly) cultures to a degree unseen in other media industries, especially in regard to US popular culture. Although the term 'hybrid' has traditionally been associated with post-colonial theory and notions of identity in regards to individuals or groups of individuals, the intent here is to broaden its scope, to encompass two types of fusion: the melding of business and culture, as well as a convergence between Japanese and US interests in these areas. Just as different national identities have been mixed in the hybrid, so too the realms of business and culture are converging in novel ways. Although popular culture has always been a business, the video game industry demonstrates how interlocked these areas are,

and how the global and the local are the fabric from which they are constituted. This hybrid is not a space between 'two zones of purity' where mixing occurs (Tomlinson, 1999), but instead is a significant point at which a global media culture is created that is unlike any national media culture in its composition. The particularities of the video game industry and culture can be recognized in the transnational corporations that contribute to its formation and development; in the global audience for its products; and in the complex mixing of format, style and content within games. Further, the culture, although hybrid, avoids becoming homogenous (perhaps is incapable of becoming homogenous) because the demands of the local still shape cultural products as they travel around the world. Those demands are managed through tightly controlled technological barriers such as regional encoding and technical formats that seek to reinforce disintegrating national or geographic borders. Finally, it is important to note that this industry, heavily inflected (even dominated) by Japanese interests, is widely welcomed by global audiences. Japanese companies including Sony have successfully created such cross-culture products, and have incorporated this style into business practices, such as Sony's Play Station soccer and other genres of Play Station games. However, this fusion or 'easy migration' is not a totalizing system. Distinctions still remain between the games that Sony produces for the Japanese market, and those that successfully sell abroad.

Those products destined for global consumption are carefully localized, to ensure that their international flavor is not *too* foreign for non-Japanese tastes. Significantly, the process of 'localization' in video games is tied to the Japanese business term 'glocalization,' defined by (Robertson,1995) to mean the successful global transfer of products to different localities, by making modifications for such variables as culture, language, gender or ethnicity.

Robertson uses the term glocalization to argue that the local should not be seen in distinction to the global, but that instead both are mutually constitutive. The success of corporations such as Sony's Play Station demonstrates how glocalization is made industry specific, and how it can be profitable when carefully utilized (Morley and Robins 1995, 150). Mia Consalvo (2006) note a similar strategy employed by other video game industry corporations - that of 'global localization' which entails gaining 'insider' status within regional and local markets as it operates around the

world. Play Station has been successful in contributing to global culture as well as to the digital games industry through its global methods. That achievement by a non-Western corporation is indicative of the hybridization of the digital games industry, and it is examined here as one indicator of the complexities and challenges, as well as future potentials, of global media culture. Understanding not just Play Station games, but its business practices and role in the global video game industry, provides an important ‘reading’ of that global media culture, an understanding not available through the examination of media products.

2.4 Children ,Video Game Consumptions & Its Implications

At the other end of the global video and computer games domain are receivers of the media content—game consumers—out of which a good third are children and young people under the age of 18 (von Feilitzen 2002,14). According to Carlsson (2002,p.8), however, the ratio varies between regions; whereas children and youth account for half the population in the least developed countries, in developed or industrialized regions of the world the figure is 22 per cent. 90 per cent of the two billion children in the world live in what we call poor countries whereas the remaining 10 per cent dwell in what we know as wealthy countries.

The United Nations ‘Convention on the Rights of a Child’, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1989, states that a child means “every human being below the age of 18 years unless, under the law applicable to the child , majority is attained earlier” (UNICEF, 1990, p.45). Although such is the universal understanding of the childhood range as forwarded by the United Nations, Keyes and Buckingham (1999, p.5) suggest:

Yet childhood is not fixed or given, either culturally or historically. On the contrary, there is a constant struggle over its meaning—struggles which arguably become much more intense in recent years, as the boundaries between children, youth and adults in many societies have begun to blur.

Such contradictory approaches in constructing and defining what we mean by childhood have their own implications on how media ought to function in this regard. According to Keyes &

Buckingham (1999, p.5) “[t]he status of children as, in some respects, a ‘special’ audience is an abiding preoccupation in debates about media policy.”

The subject of children, young people and video games has been on the agenda since the turn of new millennium. With more and more advances in technology have made possible a more realistic, graphic depiction in the themes of electronic games visual electronic and digitalized media—just as with the advent of books, press, film, video, radio, etc.—video game come with both hopes and doubts. According to von Feilitzen and Bucht (2001), the ever increasing presence of electronic and digitalized media is accompanied by hopes and fears

Globalization of video games has aroused expectations of media socialization and access to information technologies. Because competence in computer games may require media literacy and technical skills, involvement with video and computer games presumably facilitates the acquisition of general computer-related knowledge and abilities (Subrahmanyam & Greenfield, 1994). Thus gaming can help users participate successfully in the information society (Cassell & Jenkins, 1998a; Lucas & Sherry, 2004), but also fear of standardization, more violent entertainment, advertising, pornography, and discriminating portrayals of gender, social groups, cultures, and nations (von Feilitzen & Bucht 2001, p.28)

As for the hopes over the globalization of video games, Rushkoff and Negroponte (1996) point out one of the positive effects of globalization of video and computer games by stating that ‘video gaming is a perfect preparation for the high-tech cybernetic future that awaits the “screenager”. Screenager will attain a greater sense of agency and control in their ever changing lives, Rushkoff assures us because they are learning to live with a changing digital environment.

On the other hand, media organizations provide video games that build global audiences in animated time, a sense of shared experience, knowledge of other audiences in other parts of the world rooting in their competitors. This awareness of the world as a single space, and globalism...encourages an attitude of reflexivity and awareness by others (Sreberny 2005, p.12).

Children everywhere, who significantly make up the local audience for the global video games, may appear, according to Nyamnjoh, 'to be chasing after the same media products, but they bring along with them specific cultural traits that lead to diversity in their consumption of those products. It thus appears unrealistic to assume from mere exposure cultural synchronization as if children had effectively become the consumer zombies intended in the standardized and routinised media content served them' (2002, p.51) Although the implications of digital video games to the child are yet to be studied and researched vigorously, challenges and opportunities surround the debate immensely.

In this light, children as a cultural group and as a video game consumers exhibit different tastes, interests and social, economic, and cultural characteristics although the idea that children are alike in the specified dimensions is prevalent. The latter perspective, according to Keys (1999), is counterproductive because "if children as a social group are not acknowledged as a group with diversity in interests, intelligence, taste, class, race, culture, and religion, as well as age and gender, then the particular and specific needs of children are ignored." Although the general portrayal of digital video games in the scope of the fears it puts forward can be summarized this way, Nyamnjoh (2002, p.43) points out specific challenges it poses to the African context and setting:

If globalization is a process of accelerated flow of media content, to most African cultures and children it is also a process of accelerated exclusion. While African cultures are marginalized by the streamlined information and entertainment menu served by global media conglomerates, the bulk of African children are only spared by the fact that global availability is not synonymous with global affordability.

Such view can be seen as an aspect of a phenomenon known as the digital divide, which is a manifestation of inequality and marginalization. According to Mutula (2004, p.123), The Digital Divide Network perceives the phenomenon as the gap between those who can effectively use new information and communication tools, such as the internet, and those who cannot. The digital divide 'runs a jagged course between countries, but also within countries, often coinciding with

other ‘divides’: income, ethnic, age and gender’ (Carlsson 2002, p.8). However, Nyamnjoh goes on to state that “even elite African children who can afford access to national and global media content are often reduced to consuming media burgers conceived and produced without their particular interests in their mind” (2002, p.43).

As such, the intricately interwoven concepts of globalization, global digital games and children and young people shall be addressed simultaneously in the light that children are as much potential consumers of global digital games products and thus make meanings and constructs out of these games. In doing so, however, we need to take into account the fact that “digital games globalization embraces all kinds of digital games and all aspects of the games—the production, the content, and the audience sides—and affects all cultures of the world” (Aphra Kerr and Roddy Flynn, 2003).

2.5 The Media/Cultural Convergence Theory

The arguments, perspectives and illustrations presented so far in relation to globalization, “glocalizations”, hybridizations, global media and the digital game industry culminate to what came to be known as the media convergence theory, also alternatively referred as cultural convergence theory.

The popularity of the media convergence theory begins in the mid of 1990s during which much concern about the digital-divide between countries, but also within countries, often coinciding with other ‘divides’: income, ethnic, age and gender was felt by the developing countries. The concept of media convergence, as such, has come to the focus of research and debate towards the end of the 1990s (Jenkins, 2004; Deuze, 2007) at the same time the debate on “glocalization” and hybridization of cultures and technology started drawing interest. Henry Jenkins (2004, p.34) define media convergence as a term used to describe “the technological shift which alters the relationship between the existing technologies, industries, markets, genres and audience” Jenkins typifies the emerging media ecology in terms of convergence culture defining the trend as:

[...] both a top-down corporate-driven process and a bottom up consumer driven process. Media companies are learning how to accelerate the flow of media content across delivery channels to expand revenue opportunities, broaden markets and reinforce viewer commitments. Consumers are learning how to use these different media technologies to bring the flow of media more fully under their control and to interact with other users. (2004, 37)

Jenkins' approach aims to build a bridge between two different but equally important strands of thought regarding the way we respond and give meaning to the role that ubiquitous and pervasive media play in our everyday life. The first approach suggests how (new) media enable or even force us to retreat in a personal information space, where we exercise an unparalleled degree of control over what we watch and what we hear, what we keep, discard or forward (Krishnan and Jones, 2005). Indeed, the emerging new media ecology does give users increasing control over the flow of media – using devices like the remote control, the joystick and the computer mouse, or software like internet portal sites, filtering agents, search bots and user recommendation systems.

Participatory media production and individualized media consumption are two different yet co-constituent trends typifying an emerging media ecology – an environment where consuming media increasingly includes some kind of producing media, and where our media behavior always seems to involve some level of participation, co-creation and collaboration, depending on the degree of openness or closeness of the media involved. The concepts of 'open' and 'closed' media in this context refer to the extent to which a given media company shares some or all of its modes of operation with its target audiences. A media organization can, for example, increase the level of transparency of how it works, or can opt to give its customers more control over their user experience. Yet, as McChesney and Schiller (2003) remind us, the same communication technologies that enable interactivity and participation are wielded to foster the entrenchment and growth of a global corporate media system that can be said to be anything but transparent, interactive or participatory.

However, the video game industry challenges this understanding. The Japanese dominance in video game manufacturing, combined with popular games, make them an integral part of the video game industry in the America – a part that informs, drives and often leads. Here, the 'the

dominated' has become at minimum an equal player, or more likely the dominant partner, in a system consumed by a significant portion of the American populace (an estimated 60% of Americans have played video or computer games). (Consalvo, 2006)

The digital games industry is indeed global, with game development companies in the UK (Argonaut, Climax, Rare), Iceland (CCP), Brazil (Ingis Games), South Korea (NC Soft), and elsewhere (Companies, 2004). The Russian mathematician Alexey Pazhitnov created one of the most successful games ever developed, *Tetris*.

Convergence culture thus serves both as a mechanism to increase revenue and further the agenda of industry, while at the same time enabling people – in terms of their identities as producers and consumers, professionals as well as amateurs – to enact some kind of agency regarding the omnipresent messages and commodities of this industry

The application of the terms 'media convergence' and 'cultural convergence' basically point toward an equivalent understanding, both referring to a convergence which alters the relationship between existing technologies, industries, markets, genres and audience. In elucidating the significance, implication and application of the concepts, Jenkins states:

For the foreseeable future, convergence will be a kind of kludge –a jerry –rigged relationship between different media technologies –rather than a fully integrated system. Right now the cultural shifts, legal battles and the economic consolidations that are fueling media convergence are preceding shifts in the technological infrastructure. The way in which those various transitions play themselves out will determine the balance of power with in this new era. (2004)

Another way of examining the relationship between the concepts is the view that media convergence forms an integral part of cultural convergence. In essence, the media convergence theory claims that 'we are entering an era where media will be every where and we will use all kinds of media in relation to each other' (Jenkins2004,p.7). The theory reflects two ways flow of information reflecting the values, culture, interests and agendas of both owners and moguls of the

media and consumers of the media products. According to Jenkins, 'convergence is taking place within the same appliance ... within the same franchise ... within the same company ... within the brain of consumer ...within the same company'. Jenkins (2004, p.7)

Henry Jenkins, in his famous *Convergence Culture*, states that 'most of the issues surrounding the global mass communication and digital culture have a direct or indirect connection with the theory of 'cultural convergence' or the more limited notion of 'media convergence'. (Jenkins 2006)

In summarizing the media convergence as a manifestation of the effects of technological change ,globalization and 'glocalization' when mass communication is framed from the point of view of both producers and consumers at the receiving end, Jenkins outlines some important features of the theory as follows:

- Media convergence is both a top-down corporate driven process and a bottom-up consumer driven process.
- Convergence refers to a process, but not an end point. Media companies are learning how to accelerate the flow of media contents across delivery channels to expand revenue opportunities, broaden market and reinforce consumers' commitment. Consumers are learning how to use these different media technology to bring the flow media fully under their control and to interact with other users.
- In convergence consumers and producers are fighting for the right to participate more fully in their culture, to control the flow of the media in their lives and talk back to mass market content.
- Convergence is also a risk for creative industries because it requires media companies to rethink old assumptions about what it means to consume media - assumptions that shape both programming and marketing decisions
- Convergence represents an expanding opportunity for media conglomerates, since content that succeeds in one sector can expand its market reach across other platforms. On other hand, convergence represents a risk, since most of these media fear fragmentation or erosion of their market.
- Convergence refers to the cultural phenomenon of blurring the boundaries between 'producers' and 'users' of content.

At the heart of the media convergence theory are the global video game industries which produce the digital games that overwhelmingly storming the world. The video game industry demonstrates how the digital games industry functions as a convergence of culture, media and a hybrid global

culture. The world's largest digital game industry conglomerates are all located in industrialized nations, the majority of them being in the Japan, out of which the focus of this study, The Sony's Play Station Company, is one of the forerunners of the business along with the likes of Nintendo, Square Enix, Sega and Dreamcast. In attempting to place Japanese digital game culture in the cultural convergence theory framework, Joseph Tobin states:

A common assumption of the global culture industry is that for Japanese cultural products to find a mass market abroad, it must not seem to Japanese. De-Japanization can be accomplished during the act of creation by designing a cultural text to be universal in its themes and lacking specifically Japanese images and references, and /or after the fact erasing explicitly Japanese content and reference (2002p.56).

More interestingly, Sony has been singled out as a major actor of media convergence in the work of American commentator Mia Consalvo in her study *Console video games and global corporation: Creating a hybrid culture* sought to demonstrate 'how the video game industry is a hybrid encompassing a mixture of Japanese and American business (and more importantly) cultures to a degree unseen in other popular culture. In her analysis of the video game industry she further argue that

the particularities of the video game industry and culture can be recognized in transnational corporations that contribute to its formation and development ;in global audience for its products and in the complex mixing of formats ,style and content with in the game. (Consalvo 2006,p.1)

Although media/cultural convergence as a theory of research and debate has come to the academic platform basically since the turn of the millennium, it has generated enormous interest in recent years because of numerous reasons including 'the quickly increasing global reach and speed of the internet and other forms of information and communication technology (ICT), the phenomenal growth and influence of global cultural industries (Deuze 2007, p.10). It is also equally important to note that the significance of the media convergence theory on the present day has got close ties with the phenomenal outpouring of public concern and academic research on globalization 'glocalization', and hybridization.

Mark Deuze, in his research article *Convergence culture in creative industries* summarizes why convergence is considered so crucially important at this particular point in time and how the video game industry may contribute to a research agenda on new media work within the context of creative industries.

Even to consider building a new program in media production research based on the interchangeability of media making and using requires partly letting go of some well-established, deep-rooted and arguably valid assumptions about the impact that a mass media-centric culture has had on us. To some extent a political economy of media should still emphasize the powerful hold that multinational corporations have over multiple public spheres, shaping popular reality with a deliberate focus to sell audiences as target demographics to advertisers. On the other hand, this one-dimensional view of media power has changed, as the agricultural metaphor of production and consumption is increasingly becoming an untenable assumption on which to base our understandings of media content, effects and particularly media work. Beyond corporate co-optation and audience resistance lies a new model for understanding the changing nature of media in everyday life.

Works cited to elucidate the theory have charted the nature of this new media work as unpredictable, uncertain and constantly changing, which trend can be signified by – paraphrasing Zygmunt Bauman (2000) – a ‘liquid’ media work. The liquidity of contemporary media work is exemplified by the patchwork career (Lutz, 2000) of a portfolio work life (Handy, 1998 [1989]) or rather work-style (Deuze, 2007), signaling a continuous blurring between the boundaries of work, life and play, as well as between production and consumption.

Further research could focus on how professionals and amateurs collaborate, how their roles converge, and what the results of these practices are in the emerging new media ecology, on the level of economy (new and improved returns on investment), technology (development of new hardware and software enabling open media), politics and legislation (creative commons copyright laws, audience encoding rights and open source) and global culture.

In conclusion, definitional problems, terminological vagueness, lack of empirical evidence to support the theory, as well as the belief that the world is more complex than the picture painted by convergence theorists may lead to the constant a rethinking of the theory. (Jenkins 2004:7)

2.6 Conclusion

The literature review has provided an essential presentation on the conceptual frameworks, academic debates, scholarly writings and perspectives of the important themes of globalization, glocalization, hybridizations, global media, children and media, and the media/cultural convergence theory. Definitions, debates and outlooks on the concept of globalization, video game industry have been discussed; meaning and implication of global video game industry as part of the broader context of globalization, glocalization and hybridization have been presented; and the approaches, perceptions, attitudes of children as global video game consumers have been introduced.

The final part of the chapter gave the theoretical framework of the study—the media/cultural convergence —including development, definitions, scholarly debates and outlooks, criticism, and contemporary relevance.

Chapter Three

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

If we, as academic researchers, are interested in understanding how people experience media content, we have to use a research that enables us to explore the process through which people actualize media meanings and incorporated them in meaningful ways in to their daily lives. (Schroder et al 2003, p.122)

If games are a form of [media] text, then the game players are “excessive readers” who actively interpret the [media] text in their own ways based on their life experiences (John Fiske 1989, p.32)

3.1 Introduction

In attempting to generate empirical data on the popularity of Play Station games amongst its Addis Ababa consumers, who are children, in terms of the meanings from the video game as part of their everyday lived experience, this study followed a qualitative research design rooted in the reception theory. The chapter begins with an introduction of the nature of the research design and procedure in which the philosophical underpinnings of the methodological approach of this study—qualitative research—. Also included in this section is a discussion of the epistemological foundations of reception research which derives from the qualitative research tradition and which makes up the central ground of this video game study. Later in this chapter, I have discussed the data collection methods I have employed in the study, namely observation, focus group interviews and individual in-depth interviews alongside participants’ profile, sampling and selection techniques, interview setting, etc. In each case, I have attempted to describe the methodological significance of the approaches I have used to the theoretical framework of the study.

3.2 Research Design

3.2.1 Philosophical underpinnings of qualitative research

As pointed in the first chapter, the methodological approach in this study is principally qualitative. Jensen observes that is qualitative empirical methods of data gathering which are most often associated with reception analysis (1984,p.4) Always at the heart of qualitative research is the attempt “to study human actions from the perspective of the social actors themselves,” while describing and understanding, rather than explaining human behavior are the chief goals of studies using this approach (Babbie & Mouton 2001, p.270). In essence, the purpose of qualitative studies is to describe a phenomenon from the participant’s point of view, the intention of the researcher being listening to the voice of participants or observing them in their natural environments. (Orb et al. 2001, p.94).The approach is seen as appropriate for this whose central locus is the interface between Play Station video games and children of Addis Ababa.

The methodological appropriateness is therefore fundamentally recognized to this quality of ‘attempting to view the world through the eyes (perspective) of the actors themselves’ which is strongly hinged to the epistemological foundations of qualitative research. Such is a principal feature of what came to be understood as phenomenology. The philosophical underpinnings of qualitative methodology are typically attributed to phenomenology. The point about the phenomenological position and theme, according to Bryman, is important to qualitative researchers as it takes the actor’s perspective as “the empirical point of departure” (1984, p.70) It is chiefly in this sense that qualitative research differs radically from quantitative research. The *sine qua non* is a commitment to a seeing the social world from the point of view of the actor –one’s subjects (Bryman 1984,p.77)

In this light, the qualitative researcher should become more than just a mere interviewer or participant observer. “He or she,” according to Babbie and Mouton, “has to make a deliberate attempt to put themselves in the shoes of the people they are observing and studying and try and understand their actions, decisions, behavior, practices, ritual and so on, from their perspective” (2001, p.271). Babbie and Mouton further state that the emphasis on the insider perspective or as it is called in anthropological literature, the “emic” perspective, is especially important “when there are huge (perceived) differences between the researcher and the actors being studied” (2001, p.271). This is of a significant relevance to this study as the actors or targets are children of ages between 12-15 and 15-18 whereby the worldview they exhibit, the mindset they make up and the values they favors and ignore are supposedly dissimilar and divergent from that of mine.

Qualitative methodology is much more fluid than quantitative research methodology therefore; it represents a divergent paradigm of research tradition which is fundamentally different from quantitative methodology. One key difference between qualitative and quantitative research traditions is their flexibility. Whereas qualitative methods are typically more flexible, allowing greater spontaneity and adaptation of the interaction between the researcher and the study participant, quantitative research methods are fairly inflexible (Natasha et al. 2005, p.4). Participants in qualitative research have the opportunity to respond more elaborately and in greater detail than is typically the case with quantitative methods as the relationship between the researcher and the participant is often less formal than in quantitative research.

Understanding and appliance of setting is another aspect that illustrates the plain disparity between the two paradigms. As opposed to the somewhat artificial settings of quantitative methods such as surveys and experiments which may employ setting up laboratory conditions, assuming subjects to groups and drawing samples, the appropriateness of qualitative research in studying attitudes and behaviors is best understood within their natural setting (Babbie and Mouton 2001, p.270). In the latter case, the emphasis on the “natural” is related to the “normal course of events” wherein the qualitative researcher wishes to observe events and actions as they happen without any intervention or interference.

It is also important to highlight that the focus of qualitative researchers is in the description and understanding of actions and events. Qualitative researchers primarily calls attention to what Babbie and Mouton refer as “thick description”—a lengthy description that captures the sense of actions as they occur, placing events in contexts that are understandable to the actors themselves (2001, p.272); this is contrary to the quantitative, statistical descriptions that make up the foundations of quantitative research. In illuminating such variance further, Fade suggests:

Qualitative research does not seek to show statistical associations or cause and effect relationships. Instead, the emphasis is on describing or illuminating social phenomena and human experience (2003:p.140)

Another facet that illustrates the apparent disparity between the two paradigms is on the generalizability of the research findings. The center of attention in qualitative research paradigm is primarily on understanding particular events, actions and processes in their context rather than generalizing universals (Maxwell 1992, p.296; Ang1996, p.71). In this light, Maxwell observes that qualitative studies are usually not designed to allow systematic generalizations to some wider population, rather:

[G]eneralizations in qualitative research usually takes place through the development of theory that not only makes sense of particular persons or situations studied, but also shows how the same process in different situations can lead to different results (1992,p.293)

Here, it is important to note the difference between qualitative and quantitative methods is that qualitative methods do not rest their evidence on the logic of mathematics, the principles of numbers or methods of statistical analysis. Rather actual talk, gesture and other social actions are the raw materials of analysis which lead to an in depth understanding of the question. On the subject of generalizability, Popay et al. emphasize that “the aim is to make logical generalizations to a theoretical understanding of a similar class of phenomena rather than probabilistic generalizations to a population” (1998, p.311). In another wording, generalizability, according to Horsburgh refers to “the extent to which *theory* developed

within one study may be *exported* to provide explanatory theory for the experiences of other individuals who are in comparable *situations*” (2003, p.314, emphasis on original).

Finally, the philosophical underpinnings of qualitative research have generally led to the questioning of validity and reliability of qualitative research findings by quantitative researchers. However, as Maxwell observes, there is a place for the issue of validity in qualitative research if one applies the concept primarily to account not to methods. He argues thus:

The applicability of concept of validity . . . does not depend on the existence of some absolute truth or reality to which an account can be compared, but only on the fact that there exist ways of assessing accounts that do not depend entirely on features of the account itself, but in some way relate to those things that the account claims to be about (cited in Strelitz 2005, p.65)

Therefore, it is significant to mention qualitative researches that follow the basic principles of social science are not ‘unscientific’ just because they are more interpretive than positivistic in their approach.

3.2.2. *Epistemological foundations of reception research*

The theoretical standpoints of the research methods discussed in this chapter shows how reception studies ought to be done. Therefore, it would be necessary to briefly reveal the epistemological foundations of reception research. Reception research is the empirical study of the social production of meaning in peoples’ encounter with media discourses. It grew popular in the 1980s giving a special emphasis upon the ways that audiences receive media messages; how they react to their reading, listening and viewing; and what audiences do with that experience, and what meanings they make of it (Watson & Hill 2003, p.246).

Reception study combines a qualitative approach to media as texts producing, and circulating meaning in society with, an empirical interest in the recipients as co-producers of meaning (Jensen 1988, p.3). In highlighting the blend of qualitative approaches notable in the reception analysis tradition, Jensen is referring to the *uses-and-gratification research* (U&G) which deals with what

people do with media, and *textual analysis* which draws on the forms of semiotics and discourse analysis. Although reception analysis shares an interest in *uses-and-gratification research* and *textual analysis*, he notes that the former “seldom moved beyond the psychological relevance of media content for the individual and, further, that these studies have hardly paid sufficient attention to that which is the origin of audience gratifications,” whereas the latter has limited its scope to “the text” with the ambition of “drawing conclusions about the ideological and other social implications of media texts” (Jensen 1988,p.3).

The method then, does not study media use as it happens in natural situations of every day life like ethnography, through in some instances the two research approaches have been seen as related to a point where they have used interchangeably (Schroder et al.2003). Reception research also differ radically with the research methodology of audience survey research as it does not expose people to a finite set of questions with pre-given response options .Rather, it explore audiences’ media experience through the medium of extended talk (Schroder et al.2003).

The input of reception studies to media research, according to Jensen, is as diverse as other research traditions. Jensen has identified two aspects that are chiefly manifested. To start with, as reception is a relatively open activity of making sense, “so that audiences reformulate or perhaps, oppose what is arguably the dominant meaning of the media text” (1988, p.5). This implies that audiences may create their favorite connection between media discourses and everyday discourses that deviates from the ‘expected’ text meanings. Secondly, reception can be characterized as “an ongoing and complex process of affirming or reformulating categories of understanding,” in which media and their contents “are not just accounts of reality but *resources* for daily living and for situating oneself in relation to a range of social and political issues and, possibly, acting on them” (1988,p.5).

As described earlier, reception analysis is associated with the qualitative empirical methods of data collection. According to Jensen, participant observation has been in use to text the daily exercise of media in anthropological approaches, but “it is the *in-depth interview*, in different varieties, which has most frequently been employed to probe the audience experience of media” (1988,p4). Jensen further highlights that group interviews have proven relevant for the decoding of reception studies.

It is worth noting as well that as with other methodologies in audience research the data and findings of reception study should be seen as discursive constructions produced jointly by the researcher and informants' interaction in the research encounter and by the researcher interpreting the interview transcripts. The interpretation of data is done with reference to the surrounding socio-cultural system, which again conceptualized as a historical configuration of social practices, context of use and interpretive communities (Jensen & Rosengren 1990:p.218).

It is imperative to cite that in the same way, as any other qualitative methodologies reception research is adamant about securing good, *valid and reliable* data (Schroder et al 2003:p.147) (*emphasis mine*). Primary data gathering methods of reception research are in-depth interviews and focus group interviews. The next section discusses and describes these specific reception research methodologies, their purpose, relevance, application and the sampling procedures that will be implemented in the study.

3.3 Research procedure and sampling

The research adopted a three- stage design which allowed inferences amongst the stages or the stages are linked to one another in such a way that one would offer a lead or draw inferences from the other. These three stages are:

- (i) Observation
- (ii) Focus Group Discussion
- (iii) Individual in depth Interviews.

The section below discusses these three stages of the research process and the sampling procedure, however prior to discussing these stages of the research process I will discuss my sampling selection the sample size and requirement of groups.

3.3.1 Sample Selection, Size and Recruitment of Groups

The qualitative research tradition has a strong correlation with non-random sampling methods. Sampling in qualitative research is chiefly concerned with “information richness” (Kuzel 1992:p. 22) in which two essential considerations—appropriateness and adequacy—take central stage (Morse and Field 1995). In other words, sampling in qualitative research needs the significance of identifying appropriate participants who can best report to the study and also the need to recruit adequate sources of information to successfully address the research question and develop a full-fledged description.

Because interview and focus group discussions must define a narrow media product consumer for study sampling and recruitment of the groups was critical. This means that individual invited to participate in focus groups had to be able and willing to provide the desired information and be representative of the population of interest (see Hansen 1998:p.264). As suggested by Ruddock (2001:p.133) guideline for sampling within media product consumer research are more flexible and situational, the choice of participants is determined by criteria that are appropriate for a specific research and the number of participants chosen is also situational. In this light, since the general observation was that Play Station game is played across demographic variables. It was not deemed essential that the sampling of focus groups takes into consideration the demographic, occupational or other similar dimensions of the participants.

In line with this, I chose purposive sampling and ‘snowball’ sampling to select the participants for the group discussions and individual in-depth interview. I pooled this two sampling modes, since qualitative sampling operates “within contexts which will have been pre-selected, like the ‘populations’ of quantitative studies, according to theoretical criteria” (Jensen 1982:p.238) the concern of quantitative research to have sample that is representative is not critical (See also Deacon *et al* 1999:p.50) As it has been observed by Hansen *et al.* (1998: p.242), having representative samples in qualitative research may be neither necessary nor desirable because the object of the study is simply to test a particular theory or hypotheses, such as the Media Convergence theory in this case

I have employed 'snowball sampling' in which initial contacts with an informant generates further contacts (Jensen 1982:p.239).Deacon *et al* (1999) explain that snowball sampling is mainly used where no list of institution exists that could be used as the basis for sampling. Following Deacon's arguments I have used this method in the research since the Play Station game centers provide 'informal social groupings, where the social knowledge and recommendations of initial contacts are invaluable in opening up and mapping right social network (1999:p.53)

In isolation, after I have recognized the children's schools and their grade levels of my subjects, I selected children whom I thought would provide rich inputs to the group. Thus, I asked the owners of the video game centers to provide me with a list of names of children who regularly visit their game centers, which I then compared to the list of names of children from their respective schools during the course of the observation. For this reason, participants were purposely selected using convenience and snowball sampling, placing particular focus on their residence and schools in Kirkos Sub-city around Kazanchis: shared cultural characteristics and their symbolic connection in the regular playing of Play Station game (See Schroder 2001:p.13 and Ang1990:p1.60)

This shows that my sampling is not random as is usually the case in quantitative research methods, but rather 'purposive' or 'judgmental' in that "selection of participants is made on the basis of their ability to provide relevant data on the area under investigation" (Horsburgh 2003:p.311).Thus, the informants were selected non-randomly because they possess particular common characteristics- the playing of digital Play Station video games and their residence, their social class and their schooling. Of considerable importance however, in sampling was the need to ensure that participants felt comfortable and uninhibited with each as much as possible through ensuring homogeneity in the groups (see Macun & Posel 1998:p.119)

Along the lines of the United Nations 'Convention on the Rights of a Child', adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1989, a child means "every human being below the age of 18 years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier" (UNICEF, 1990:45).However, all the children from Addis Ababa interviewed fall under the age range of 12

and 18 .All of them live with their parents. The respondents for this research included 6 participants in nine focus group discussions. Hansen *et al.* (1998: 268) argue that one should have a minimum of six focus groups, until comments begin to repeat and little new material is generated.

Accordingly, I had initially decided to compose the focus groups out of six participants based on the recommendation of Hansen et al. (270:p.270) who suggest that it may be difficult to generate and maintain a dynamic and lively discussion with fewer than six participants in each group. While identifying some key characteristics of focus groups, Kruger (1994) on the other hand argues that focus group may involve 4-10 people. However, the turnout of the invited participants for focus group discussions was totally thirty six children despite cautiously addressed invitation which were originally fifty four children might be considered as low. However, the focus group discussions were conducted with the reduced participants (from four to six in each focus group) and groups (eight established focus groups) because it could be considered as a valid membership and number of focus groups.

As a final point, in qualitative research, sampling is an on going process and is thus not pre-determined. Fossey et al. argues, “Sampling in qualitative research continues until themes emerging from the research are fully developed, in the sense that diverse instances have been explored, and further sampling is redundant” (2002: p.726). This condition is occasionally referred to as ‘saturation’ during which patterns are recurring and no new information emerges (Kuzel 1992; MacDougal and Fudge 2001). In this light, after completing the focus group discussions with eight focus groups I had established, I decided to look for other groups perusing new information and knowledge. In order to get the subjects like female gamers and parents, I employed similar sampling method—the snowball sampling technique—which helped me makes up three other focus groups in a relatively shorter period of time. I have employed snowball sampling to get my additional subjects for focus groups (1) not to conduct another simple observation sessions (2) because there are now initial contacts to begin with who can draw other subjects with the desired characteristics from their community.

As noted in the introduction session of this section, my research used a three -stage design of data collection methods to examine the attraction of Play Station games among the Ethiopian children and the meaning they take out of this digital games and its technology. The following part discusses these three stages of the research process and data collection methods. I will begin with Observations

3.3.2 *Observations*

Since Reception Research primarily uses in-depth interviews for the empirical study of how people interact with a media, it follows that the researcher must obtain a certain amount of knowledge about this interaction, in order to be able to conduct a meaningful and focused conversation with the informants about it. (Schroder et al 2003:154). Attempts to observe how Play Station gamers in Addis Ababa interact is required as suggested by Morley and Silverstone observational research:

The observer's task is to 'go into the field' and, by way of observation and interview, attempts to "describe - and inevitably interpret - the practices of the subjects in that cultural context, on the basis of her/his first-observation of day-to-day activities" (1992: 153).

Thus,I have used observational methods to examine the process of consumption/reception of Play Station games in Addis Ababa. This has enabled me to gain insights into how children in Addis Ababa speak about the games they play and how their conversations and interactions with each other impact on the meanings they take from theses games encounters.

It is however, important to point that for this research as advised by Deacon et al. (1999:258), it is considered necessary to gain first-hand insight and just familiarize oneself with the practice of Play Station game playing enough to be able to pursue the cultural research that motivate this research. The preliminary observations thus constituted of simple observational research with the sole purpose of preparing the researcher sufficiently for the role of interview facilitator in the succeeding focus group discussions and individual in -depth interviews. To this end selected game playing centers were observed in terms of representations that are prevalent in Addis Ababa.

Simple observation is a form of qualitative research, different from quantitative research such as survey. By definition simple observation is being a 'fly in the wall'. The observer has no relationship with the process or people being observed who remain unaware of the researcher's activities (Deacon et al 1999). This involves exploring the research location which is a natural or real-life situation. Certainly simple observational researches are perfectly possible in communication research.

Simple observation thus helped in identifying some common practices of digital game players inside small-sized Play Station game centers around *Kazanchis* in Kirkos Sub-City and set the backdrop for subsequent in-depth analysis of the gamers' attraction to the Play Station video games as I proceeded with a clear picture of practices of the game centers requisite for focus group and individual interviews.

To conduct a simple observation, I visited nine selected Play Station game centers in *Kazanchis* area in Addis Ababa. I observed and took notes on how Ethiopian children, mostly from poor families, make use of the digital game messages and technology they consume at the Play Station game centers and the meanings they take from the digital games they play. During my observations, I was allowed access to the video-game centers because I was first introduced as video game players. I was accompanied by two children who are students of grade nine each time I visited the centers.

However, by being present in the centers, I had the advantage of witnessing the group dynamism among the male children and recorded the process of playing Play Station game centers. Furthermore, by becoming a simple observer in the centers, I was able to gain first-hand insight into the practice of Play Station game playing. As Deacon *et al.* (1999: p.258) have argued, one of the strongest points made for observation research is being physically there, actually witnessing the events being researched. Observational study gave me an opportunity to produce an independent assessment of events and processes (Deacon et al. 1999: p258-259).

I have attempted to spend a relatively long time (up to one hour) in each center per day, since the activities undertaken by Play Station game consumers in the playing centers are processes rather than static.

From the observations in nine Play Station game centers, the research recognized that all the centers provide most popular soccer games as well as combat Play Station games all the day from 2:00 am to 8:00pm; for an entrance fee from 0.50cents to 1.00 Ethiopian Birr. All of the visited centers had nothing but Play Station games. The queue was always long for Play Station games. The regulars who visit the Play Station video game centers during the game playing, which begins at 2 o'clock, are mainly children with a few students who cut classes. The centers are influenced by the rules, languages and behaviors of the worlds of the lower class, the martial arts and the underground, the making of game jargons and rules by Play Station games players in Addis Ababa demonstrates the fact that playing console games, like watching soccer, is largely a subculture for lower-class male children .I also established that most of the respondents own a Play Station games or a TV in their own homes and all the children prefer playing Play Station games.

3.3.3 The Focus Group Discussions

According to Lunt and Livingstone, focus group research “involves bringing together a group or more often, a series of groups, of subjects to discuss issues in the presence of moderator” (1996:8) Focus group are typically defined as bringing together a small group of people to participate in a carefully planned discussion on defined topic, the aim of the technique being to make use of group interaction to produce data and insights (Morgan in Macun & Posel 1998:p115).Lunt, alternatively, states that the focus group method “involves bringing together a group or, more often, a series of groups, of subjects to discuss an issue in the presence of a moderator”. (1996: 80). The method allows participants to talk ‘naturally’, make sense of ,reason about ,and generate meaning in relation issues ,topics and phenomena -but these should limited to ‘representative illustrations (Hansen 1998:281)

The main benefit of focus group interviews is the deliberate and purposeful use of interaction in order to generate data (Merton et al. 1990, Kitzinger 1996, Morgan 1996). Focus group interviews encourage participants to influence each other through their presence and their reactions to what other people say. Focus group interviews are better than individual interviews in such a way that they offer dynamics and ways of “eliciting, stimulating, and elaborating audience interpretations” (Hansen et al. 1998: 262). Fontana and Frey recapitulate the reward of focus group interviews over individual interviews by highlighting that group interviews “are relatively inexpensive to conduct and often produce rich data that are cumulative and elaborative; they can be stimulating for respondents, aiding recall; and the format is flexible” (2000: 652). Nonetheless, as every other method, group interviews have their weak point which researchers need to watch out:

The results [of group interviews] cannot be generalized; the emerging group culture may interfere with individual expression, and the group may be dominated by one person; and “groupthink” is a possible outcome. The requirements for interviewer skills are greater than those for individual interviewing because of the group dynamics that are present (Fontana and Frey 2000: 652)

Particular deliberation was given the fact that focus group studies in media research have rarely required to obtain groups representative of general population as is characteristics of most qualitative research (Hansen *et al.* 1998:265). Although Hansen *et al.* (1998:268) argue that one should have a minimum of six focus groups, until comments begins to repeat themselves and little new material is generated, for this study seven group discussions with participants ranging between four and six were held. This was mainly due to the resources available to me and the number of Play Station game players willing to participate in the session. It is perhaps necessary the fact that in qualitative research scientific validity is obtained through systematic collection and interpretation of data not by generalizing findings to other groups nor quantifying into an overall truth. In other words ‘it is not necessary to know everything in order to understand something’ (see Greetz in Pitout 1989:74 Drotner in Pitout 1998:74 and Ruddock 2001:133).

Attempts were made to pick ‘natural’ and convenient interview settings where every participant felt relaxed. As a result, I managed to conduct the focus group interviews with the children in one of the classrooms upon permission in Lebbe Fana Primary and Junior Secondary school

In conducting the focus group discussion, I worked from a list of broad thematic questions revolving around the research’s objectives highlighted in Chapter One. The focus group discussions suggested ‘new’ research themes which necessitated further interrogation of parents of my research subjects (children) and software shop owners through individual in-depth interview discussed in the following section.

Before, discussing the individual in-depth interview I have used to collect the remaining research data, however, I will discuss the profile of focus group discussion participants, my interview guide and my role as a moderator in the subsequent sub- sections.

3.3.3.1 Profile of the Focus Group Participants

From my observational investigation in nine video game centers in Kirkos sub-city around Kazanchis, I have established that all my subjects for the focus group interview are students in the vicinity of public schools in the sub-city (Berhan Guzu, Misrak Gohe, Urael, Tensa’e Berhan, and Ethiopia Andent & Lebbe Fanna). Deacon et al. categorize as ‘preconstituted groups,’—“social and professional groups that already exist” (1999: 56)—in this case are urban poor children who attend their education in the poor section of city.

In order to recognize where my subjects with the particular grade level groups are positioned in their respective schools, I managed to discuss with concerned officials of the schools (Berhan Guzu, Misrak Gohe, Urael, Tensa’e Berhan, and Ethiopia Andent & Lebbe Fanna) who had let me glance through my subjects’ school records (their age& grade level). I have categorized the sample units of the research into two groups taking grade levels as a parameter with the first set containing children who belong to grade 7 &8 group whereas the second are in the range of grade 9-10. I have set this for ease of conducting my group discussions and individual in-depth interview.

Drawing participants from ‘naturally’ existing communities, according to Hansen et al. (1998:256), is a common practice among audience researchers using the focus group method as these are people who “already lived, worked, or socialized together” (Kitzinger 1993: 272).

My investigation of the students’ academic records in their respective schools discovered that the first group of children largely falls between grade levels 7 and 8 and their age range falls between 12-15 while the second group is predominantly available in the range between grade levels 9 and 10 and their age range falls between 16-18. Such being the framework, however, some participants out of the range of the specified grade level slipped through the focus groups. I predicted that as long as the children’s age is not older than 18 (the oldest age of the sampling frame) and not younger than 12 (the oldest age of the sampling frame), there wouldn’t be a significant variation that would affect the group interaction and dynamics. Only few children with grade levels of 5 and 6 slipped in the first group.

3.3.3.2 The Interview Guide

In order to pile up my data, I outlined an interview guide to make sure that the focus group discussions are rigorous on the themes relevant to my research. According to Dilorio et al. (1994) the purpose of the interview guide is to direct group discussion and to stimulate conversation about the research topic, as well as to ensure that all the desired information is sought.

Focus groups, although they present flexibility and openness, must have a ‘center’ and it is the trade of the researcher to “draw up—on the basis of the definition of the research problem and issues and phenomena to be investigated—a guide or manual for the moderator to work from and follow” (Hansen et al. 1998:24). In sequence, to spotlight participants to remain focused on themes relevant to the research; I designed a set of thematic questions that served as an interview guide. The thematic questions were drawn up partly from the preliminary observations sessions and partly from the discussions of chapter two (the Media Convergence Theory, Glocalization, hybridizations, digitalization, etc.).

Although the interview guide is meant to maintain focus, I did not firmly go after its procedures and grasped new themes and topics that emerged from the group discussions.

3.3.3.3 *My Role as Moderator*

As the moderator my role was to ensure that the conversation in the group did not stray from key themes in the research in illustrating the role of the moderator in focus group interviews, Hansen et al. state that his/ her task is essentially to “‘facilitate’, ‘moderate’, and ‘stimulate’ discussion among the participants, not to ‘dominate’, ‘govern’, or unduly ‘lead’ such discussion” (1998: 272). In other words, my role as the moderator was to interrogate how children from poor section of the society in Addis Ababa interact and receive the message from these digital Play Station games. In this respect, I saw my involvement in the group as an agent that makes sure the discussion is going in agreement with the topics and issues highlighted in the interview guide. I maintained a steadiness in the group discussion so that neither participants are dominant nor are passive; and ensured that dialogue occurs among group members rather than between them and the moderator. I was able to establish an excellent relationship with them as I myself enjoy playing digital games like Play Stations and other computer games.

3.3.4 *The Individual In-depth Interviews*

To be sure, as with most social research, focus group data should as far as possible be pooled and juxtaposed with a series of data gathered from different sources and using various research techniques, in the interest of as complete and reliable an answer to the research question as possible (Macun & Posel 1998:132) .It is for this reason that individual in-depth interviews were deemed important as follows as a follow-up to focus group discussions and observations.

In-depth interviews are handy for knowledge about the perspectives of individuals, in contrast to, for instance, group norms of a community, for which focus groups are more appropriate (Natasha et al. 2005:30).As a consequence, in-depth interviewing is defined as “conversation with a specific purpose-a conversation between researcher and informant focusing on the informants’ perspective

of self, life and experience and expressed in his or her own words” (Minichiello *et al.*, 1995:61). According to Beale *et al.* (2004:141), in qualitative research, “in-depth interviewing is an egalitarian approach to interviewing which develops research relationships and rapport with participants by focusing on the participant’s experiences from their own perspective.

As far as the selection of the participants of the individual-in-depth interview concerned, as Wimmer and Dominick (2000:181) note, in one-to-one interviews respondents are selected based on pre-determined set of screening requirements hence candidates for individual interview were purposively selected from the participants in the focus-group interviews. Particular attention was given to the most articulate and enthusiastic participants.

My purpose of using in-depth interviews to my study results from some of the responses and reactions I got from the focus group discussions. As a result as a follow up mechanism, I selected one participant from each focus group who exhibited better knowledge of the Play Station video games they play.

In conducting the interview an open, dialogue relations with the interviewee was recognized at the preliminary stages of the interview so as to accommodate the interviewee feel relaxed with the speech event of the interview thus giving the researcher way in to relatively unfiltered and spontaneous meanings the interviewee’s life world as suggested by Schroder *et al* (2003:112) .On each session the informants were set to play games of their interest , an input for the methodological advance of reception research. The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured format in which the interviewees were encourage to speak freely to the thematic questions of the digital games making associations from their Play Station game behavior to aspects of their everyday lived experiences (Schroder *et al.*2003:112)

3.3.5 The Research Procedures

All the interviews were written out and translated into English. I tried to keep the sense of the meaning rather than the literal translation so that the cultural vigor of the conversations was not lost. The data were interpreted & their analysis was followed. With the support of my advisors, Dr. Mohammed Hassen & Dr. Oyvin Okland a list of thematic questions was compiled preceding my embarking of focus group and individual in-depth interview in Addis Ababa. The subsequent section describes the whole procedures of my research.

Observations were one of the first methods used for collecting the research data; therefore I gained access to the Play Station game centers. I made a list of Play Station centers in the *Kazanchis* area and introduced myself to the owners of the centers. Moreover, I showed my school identity card and I gave a lofty explanation stating the purpose of my research to each of the centers I visited. I know that these gaming centers are business entities and require payment to gain entrance and play games. On every occasion, I went to the centers for the observation; I made sure that I paid the fee (0.50 cents to 1.00 Ethiopian Birr) for playing games though there were occasions when I paid for my subjects, especially for those that are chosen for individual in-depth interview for the sake of familiarity with the my subjects. Though it was long before my approval of my project title I had an opportunity to take my external advisor, Dr. Oyvind Okland from Kristiansen, Norway and his thirteen year old son to one of the playing centers in Addis Ababa when he was in the School of Journalism and Communications, Addis Ababa University. This has helped me my course of research to be understood easily and simply.

Up on the foundations of the observation research and my interviews with the owners of the centers, my subjects and school officials, I proceeded to conduct the focus group discussions with the respondents. From the responses I gained from the thirty six participants, I selected six respondents to conduct the individual in-depth interviews in order to clarify and gain more insight into their Play Station gaming practices. This way I was able to obtain most of the information I required

It was essential to arrange an appointment for the group discussions ahead of time, since I had to conduct the group interviews in the school compound. Then I went directly to hold seven different sessions of group discussions. The duration of the focus group discussions lasted from one to one-and-half hours. I used two types of recording methods, written notes taken at the time of the focus group discussion and a tape recording. The need to employ two kinds of recording is to provide a back up copy in case a mechanical failure or human error occurs. I asked each of the respondents to identify themselves at the start of the group discussions or interviews

Throughout the course of the study, there were some methodological and ethical questions to consider. To include children in the research would raise methodological questions like: Do children's cognitive abilities sufficient to understand the questions of an interviewer? Are their linguistic (verbal) abilities adequate to express what they want to say? On the whole it seems doubtful that results from empirical studies with children could correspond to scientific standards like objectivity, reliability and validity. At first glance these methodological questions appear to be reasonable. However, some of the underlying assumptions have become subject to criticism, the core of which being the construction of childhood in terms of deficiency (Prout & James, 1990; Shantz & Hartup, 1992; Zinnecker, 1996; Honig, Leu & Nissen, 1996). The critics claimed that a paradigmatic shift was necessary: childhood should no longer be defined as a developmental stage but as something in and of itself. This implies that children cannot be reduced to "not yet grown-ups" but they have to be seen and respected as subjects in their own right who develop their own and unique cultural milieus. In the 1990s considerations like that have been prominent especially in discussions of sociologists and other social scientists. As a result, this argument tied me up with my investigation on the popularity of Play Station games amongst lower class children in Addis Ababa.

The second question that keeps impending to my brain during my investigation of the attraction of Addis Ababa lower class children towards Play Station games was the ethical one. Fontana and Frey (1994: 378) say that traditional ethical concerns have turned around the topics of 'informed consent' (consent received from the subject after he or she has been carefully and truthfully informed about the research), 'right to privacy' and 'protection from harm'. I have addressed to all them. At every session of the interviews, I explained the purpose of the study to the respondents

and their consent was acquired in each cases. But, a problem arose with this study; since the Play Station centers are ‘informal’ and some of the activities undertaken within the houses (like cutting classes, gambling using the games and on some cases chewing chat) are illegitimate. Consequently, in the beginning some children scrutinized my purpose with distrust, fearing that I might cause them trouble with their respective schools’ law and teachers. Therefore, I guaranteed the respondents that their privacy was unbroken. Then, I established rapport and gained their trust, all of the respondents were willing to give every thing I require for my research even to use their names in my report. Yet I have used pseudonyms in this study. The duration of the interview ranged from 45 minutes to one hour. The length of the discussions and interviews depended on the information provided by the interviews.

3.3.6 Data Processing and Analysis

The thematic questions for the focus group discussions and individual in -depth interviews guided the respondents to generate information on the topics selected for my inquiry. I took notes in English to remind me of the theoretical topics I needed to address. Though I was interviewing the respondents in mother tongue, Amharic, and I was not confronted with the “difficult task of asking questions cross-culturally” (Fontana and Frey 1994: 366), it was obvious that there was a problem of capturing the exact meaning of their statements from Amharic into English. Each interview and group discussion was transcribed and translated into English. I used thematic coding as the mode of analysis. Jensen explains this approach as:

[a] loosely inductive categorization of interview or observational extracts with reference to various concepts, headings, or themes. The process comprises the comparing, contrasting, and abstracting of the constitutive elements of meaning. (1982: 247)

After they were categorized and labeled the responses were analyzed. The responses fell under the categories that were spelled out in the thematic questions. Nevertheless the focus group discussions and individual interviews produced unanticipated responses and I sorted them out and crosschecked accordingly. There were cases that were difficult to establish the most frequently

occurring response and the answers generated different statements, they were used in the analysis and interpretation of data. When I used quotations, I used them verbatim so that they could be used as representative illustrations.

The problem that the researcher usually faces when dealing with the analysis of a large amount of textual data as in the case of focus group interviews and individual in-depth interview is whether to select 'striking' or 'typical' quotes which illustrate, confirm, and enhance the researcher's pre-conceived ideas of the processes and phenomena which are being investigated, or to remain open to new ideas, unanticipated responses, unexpected conflicts in the statements of participants and so on (Hansen et al. 1998: pp.278-279).

Accordingly, my analysis of the data followed the model noted by Lindloff:

[i]n the final analysis, qualitative reports are all about perspectives of lived experience. The researcher must decide what kind of author he or she will be, and what sort of story to construct of the 'facts' of the case...Qualitative research involves the production of knowledge, not its discovery. (1995: 24-25)

3.4 Conclusion

I have tried to give the methodological structure of the research. The philosophical underpinnings of qualitative research and the significance and relevance of reception analysis are described in the beginning of the chapter. While the three stages of my research process as well as the sampling procedures and modes of data analysis, interviewing techniques, both focus group and in-depth, employed in the study along with other relevant information including sample size and sampling technique are discussed later on. I have exposed that the selection of group discussions, individual in-depth interviews and observational study were appropriate to the rationale of the reception research.

To contextualize Ethiopian children's' consumption practices of video games at the Play Station games centers in Addis Ababa, the next Chapter will give a short background of Ethiopia's digital culture and how the video and computer games are evolving in a country right now. A preface to the context of this research, which provides an overview of Ethiopia's contemporary history which has led to the influx of the digital games in Addis Ababa and a profile of digital game consumption practices in Ethiopia, follows.

Chapter Four

THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

4.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a general background of the context in which the study is made. After providing a general context of the country, I will highlight brief history on emergence of digital game play. This can serve as a set up for the further discussions that will follow in chapters 5 and 6.

The global digital games penetration to Ethiopia is a recent phenomenon and has close ties with some of the important historical events that I feel the need to discuss briefly. The contemporary presence of global digital games and its manifestations, particularly that of the Play Station also makes up a good portion of this chapter. To contextualize the Ethiopian children's use of Play Station games in small-sized game centers and the conditions under which they consume global Play Station game, this chapter gives a brief background to Ethiopians' digital game consumption practices

4.2 Ethiopia: General Country Context

Ethiopia, one of the oldest nations in the world, covers an area of approximately 1.13 million sq. The Central Statistical Authority Estimated the Population of Ethiopia at 80 million as of 1 July 2008, making it the third-largest country on the African continent behind Nigeria and Egypt.

A multi-ethnic and multi-lingual country, Ethiopia is made up of 260 ethnic groups or sub-groups, speaking over 210 languages or dialects. Amharic, Tigrigna, and Afan Oromo are the most common, spoken by roughly two-thirds of the population. Although the total number of languages is vast, fourteen are spoken by 93% of the population. Amharic and English remain de facto languages of state.

The Ethiopian population is “young”. Nearly 18% of the Ethiopians are below the age of five, and almost half (48.6%) are under the age of 15 years. The overall population density, at 45 people per square kilometer, is not high. However, the pattern of population distribution is uneven and not well matched with the distribution of resources. More than 85 percent of the population is concentrated in barely 45% of the total territory.

4.3 The Emergence of Digital Game Play : A Brief Overview

Japanese arcade games, home console games and handheld console games have dominated the world market since the mid-1980s. But in Ethiopia the history of Japanese arcade games has quite poles apart from the rest of the world in its feature. In Ethiopia people were hardly able to enjoy the right to own media devices such as satellite receivers and VHS players, arcade games, home console games and handheld console who otherwise would have been considered as having western imperialistic tendencies. Individuals with tendencies of extravagant living including owning media gadgets were labeled as “opportunist” or “one who lives on the shoulder of others. Although there is no empirical data that suggests the exact time of the rise of availability of digital video & computer games in Ethiopia, it is widely believed that digital games, especially Japanese made arcade games, started penetrating and reaching the Ethiopian audience after the collapse of the Socialist Derg Regime that ruled over Ethiopia from 1974 to 1991.

In the 1990s, Japanese games became dominant in major hotels though available only for the children of well-off section of Addis Ababa. Of course this was just because of the proclamation of the Press Freedom Bill which was introduced in 1992. These proclamations combined with the deregulation programs set in the country saw Western media products, especially Hollywood films together with the Japanese made digital games make their way abundantly to the Ethiopian audience in the past 5 years or decade.

Nowadays, small game centers which can be found within a range of 500 to 1000 meters equipped with different types of digital arcade games, home console games and handheld console games

mushroomed across the entire territory. Amongst this Play Station became an instant success. Software and game houses in Addis Ababa where different types of games mainly Play Station games in DVD and other formats are sold as cheap as 15-25 Ethiopian Birr (\$2-3). Addis Ababa game players and young businessmen have been turning globalized Japanese games for the most part Play Station games into Ethiopian-style globalized Japanese games and other forms of hybrid culture in terms of the rule of playing, the making of crossover cultural products. There are more two hundred agents in the metropolis which offer software and game sells services. Home console games including Play Station can be purchased for about 1,200-1,300 ETB (\$125-135) a very affordable price for many young businessmen and entrepreneurs in Addis Ababa, which is why it is very common to see small-sized game centers across the entire territory.

4.4 The Ethiopian Digital Game Consumption Practice Profile

My observation of a media phenomenon peculiar to Ethiopia, wherein children from the urban poor in the capital city of Addis Ababa attracted by Play Station games and visit small-sized game centers situated in the poor section of the city. This importance of the game centers in the consumption practices of the urban poor, specifically male children can be best explained by looking at different group dynamics of Ethiopian children.

I tried to get some information from my research subjects about the group context of the children's digital gaming cultures using questions like "Where do you get the information about a 'good' game?" or "Whom do you play with?" Video and computer games are mainly connected to peer relations, while parents or other adults only participate in the margins.

"Friends" are the most important advisers and mediators in game-related matters. It is friends who know about new games which might be of interest. There are two relevant means of communication which may supplement and permeate each other: One option is that the children are *told* there is a new game (verbal channel); another, more comprehensive option is that they *see and try* a new game at a nearby game centers.

Socio-cultural environments do not only consist of (more or less) relevant others, they also consist of different media. With regard to the problem of being informed about 'good' new games the children also to some degree rely on what they find in other media the children for instance said they were "often" curious about or liked games which had protagonists they knew from films or television. Commercials are quite successful in drawing the children's attention to new games, too.

4.5 Small-sized game centers

The reach of this study is limited to the capital city of Ethiopia, Addis Ababa, where over 100,000 street children live on the streets (Ethiopian Census Report). A way in point, for this research is therefore that the urban poor children, having little or no access to private entertainment spaces pass their leisure time by playing Play Station games at small-sized game centers.

In Ethiopia digital game playing audience is flourishing at this time (Sub-Saharan Informer 2007). The expanding interest digital videos games and the rise of the small-sized game centers corresponded with the sharp downfall in the number of video-houses which shows American and Indian films, raise in subscriptions foreign broadcast like GTV, DSTV, and Showtime which shows live transmissions of European soccer leagues and different films. This interest was not a matter of coincidence, but was related to the deregulation programs set in the country's media laws. The game centers mainly provide for the predominately poor, male, urban children who cannot afford to have electronic appliances' to play digital games or visit decent places like children's amusement park. These centers offer a unique, shared, cultural space for the poor, male, urban children in Addis Ababa.

These game centers are a new phenomenon in Ethiopia and are run by young males living in poor households who make quick commerce. They provide a range of services, primarily gaming Play Station games, some times screening movies which are being changed into video games like Tarzan ,Lords of the Rings and others ,and football matches mainly European soccer leagues showings at 0.50 Ethiopian cents. The majority of combat game-related jargons borrow from the languages of the lower class and some are considered indecent and coarse by the society. The background of the

players and the running of game centers are accounted for the influx of the lower-class language into the arcade game culture in Ethiopia. Small-sized game centers are financially weak. They preferred Play Station games because of their small size and high return rate. They are mostly located in the old and shanty districts of Addis Ababa, where rents are cheap. Hence, most players came from the lower class living hereby including students, manual laborers and even juvenile delinquents. The image of game centers perceived by the officials, teachers, parents and the press was relatively negative, associated with smoking, excessive noise, gang activities, and 'Chat' chewing. However, my study established that families from lower class recognized the educational and cultural values of electronic games. Playing at game centers is regarded by the public in Addis Ababa as a form of entertainment for lower-class and uneducated males .As young people from poor families could not afford a game console or PC, they played at game centers. To my best knowledge there is no responsible body for granting licenses to small-sized game centers.

4.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed some important issues that make up the social context of the study. As such, the chapter provided a brief illustration about the general context of the country, the emergence of digital game play in Ethiopian and some factors related with its penetration .The Ethiopian digital game consumption practice profile with regard to its social groups amongst Ethiopian children are demonstrated .Finally small-sized game centers and their characteristic features as a new media phenomenon in the city is demonstrated.

In the next two Chapters, by drawing on observation, the focus group discussions and interviews with the respondents, I will look at the way Ethiopian children use the Play Station video games in their everyday contexts. The next Chapter presents and discusses the findings of the study according to the theoretical assumptions addressed in Chapter Two

Chapter Five

PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS: SOCIAL DYNAMICS AND CHILDREN'S BEHAVIOR IN DIGITAL PLAY STATION GAME PLAY

5.1 Introduction

The research's focal point is how Ethiopian children, mainly from poor section of the society; at the small sized game centers in Addis Ababa currently make meanings out of Play Station game messages and its technology. It endeavors to give Ethiopian perspectives on the subject matter using the media convergence theory, glocalization and hybridizations as it is the first academic research on digital games in Ethiopia. With the intention of doing this, Play Station game consumption practices and factors which underlie the distinctive nature of the children in Ethiopia are investigated.

Therefore, some prominent themes emerged from the focus group and individual in-depth interviews I had with selected lower - class children and their parents from Addis Ababa. This chapter provides a description of how the specified children are socially set amidst their exposure to the Play Station games and how the social setting and the dynamics they find themselves determines their digital game playing behavior. I will discuss these themes based on three themes namely; *Small-sized Game Centers as emerging Environments of New Media Technology exposure for low class Children*; *Small-sized Game Centers space for Gendered Technological Practice* ; and *Children and Technology and Media Literacy Issues* .

The context, complexities and dynamics of the Ethiopian children exposure for the new media technology in the form of Play Station video games and the children's identity discourse with in the small-sized video game centers can be best understood through the verbatim of the interviewee. In order to take hold of the centers' unique feature and comprehend the functions they play in the

children's lived reality; I will start the analysis with the description of the small-sized video game centers as told by one of the respondents. Abraham, a fifteen year old eight grader, has described the video game centers in the following way:

Many children come to the Play Station game centers frequently .Many of the centers are found around public schools, where usually children from low class families go for their education and in the shanty and dirty parts of city . Many of the children who come to the centers including me are from poor families. Our families could not afford a game console or computer. We go to the Play Station centers to get pleasures from playing soccer games, car race, karate, or other forms of games. We usually play soccer games by being Arsenal, Manchester United or we change the name of the teams, players to our own national side or to major clubs of Ethiopia like FC.Coffee and St.George. We also enjoy playing karate. By the way we can also insert our own name as a players .I know that children from wealthy families have their own Play Station or computer and they spend many hours engaged in solitary Play Station games, but we do not have such opportunity. I am always envious of these children. To play a game we pay from 0.50 cent to 1.00 Ethiopian Birr. Here in these centers, we can play games, we can watch others gaming, we can gamble without any restrictions. Most of the time funny and tragic incidents happen in theses game centers.

The other thing that I should tell you is that though there is a full freedom of coming to the centers as long as you pay a fee for playing a game which is usually 0.50 to 1.00 Ethiopian Birr there is no age or sex barrier but all of us are male children but sometimes there are older guys who usually plays games. The majority of combat game-related jargons borrow from the languages of the lower class and some are considered indecent and coarse by society. The background of the players and the running of game centers are accounted for the influx of the lower-class language into the arcade game culture in Addis Ababa. Most game centers in Addis Ababa are small-sized and financially weak. They preferred Play Station games rather than subscribing DS TV, GTV, or SHOWTIME because of their small size and high return rate. But I know people who both have GTV and Play Station .Most of my friend like to go such centers because they will enjoy live transmissions of the English Premier League or different kinds of films while they play games. They are mostly located in the old districts where rents were cheap. Hence, most players came from the lower class living hereby including students, manual laborer like shoe polishers and even juvenile delinquents. The image of game centers perceived by the officials, teachers, parents and the press was relatively negative, associated with smoking, excessive noise, gang activities, and Chat chewing . But on excellent side, the game centers provide us with an opportunity to find out about the technological advances made in the outside world. I heard people saying that children who are good at Play Station gaming could become computer engineers.

The above excerpt endowed with a loaded description of how these small –sized game centers have become environments of new media technology exposure and cultural spaces for low class male children in Ethiopia. Abraham explained that these game centers are found in shanty sections of Addis Ababa, signifying that they represent places that are frequented by the urban poor children. Abraham explanation on watching English Premier League soccer matches and films in the shanty parts the city echoes with the Ethiopian children subculture.

As discussed in the literature review section, the notion of ‘glocalization’ and ‘hybridizations’ , these centers correspond to these children who play Play Station games is repeatedly recapped by Abraham’s comments that the game players could change the game setting in to their local situations. He said “We go to the Play Station centers to get pleasures from playing soccer games, car race, karate, or other forms of games. We usually play soccer games by being Arsenal, Manchester United or we change the name of the teams, players to our own national side or to major clubs of Ethiopia like FC.Coffee and St.George”. As such the children localize the contents of the games. Hence, consuming Play Station games in Addis Ababa is not a form of cultural imperialism, because we have witnessed the making of a dialectical nexus between global (Japan , the English Premier League and others) and local (Addis Ababa, changing names to Ethiopian setting) in terms of ongoing cultural hybridization (Tomlinson, 1997).

Abraham’s discussion about the image of these game centers in the eyes of the officials, teachers, and parents was relatively negative, associated with smoking, excessive noise, gang activities, and Chat chewing (which is a view widely apprehended by most of the children in this research). This theme was further elaborated when Abraham associated the game centers with male children came from the lower class, students, manual laborer like shoe polishers and even juvenile delinquents. Hence, influenced by the rules, languages and behaviors of the worlds of the lower class the underground playing of gambles, the making of game jargons and rules by Play Station players in Addis Ababa demonstrates the fact that playing digital games, like watching soccer, is largely a subculture for lower-class males. Gupta and Devernesky (1996) noting the high incidence of gambling among school children, argue that video games and gambling activities have similar features and intermittent reinforcement schedule which may lead to a relationship between them.

Abraham also talked about there being no ‘sex or age barrier’ as long as they pay the requirement fee to play every kind of game be it is violent or not. Though Abraham gave a clear indication that women are not present in these houses; his description of there is a ‘full freedom’ of coming to gaming centers with out any restriction is unintended but represents his agency to the patriarchal discourse in Ethiopia where the absence of women in these houses is taken for granted, is part of the ‘natural’ order of things and is seen as ‘unchangeable’ (Hall 1982: 65).

Further the notions of media and technology literacy and digital cultures are touched upon when Abraham describes how the games provide him “with an opportunity to find out about technological advances” made elsewhere. Moreover, the centers are places where students are exposed with computer technology and English language. Though the children’s attraction to play digital games in these small sized game centers could be traced back to Greenfield’s (1984) observation that "media competency," computer literacy, or ICT skills is preceded by informal and non-formal learning processes of children within their "computer gaming culture." His descriptions of the small sized game centers and the main themes highlighted above are resonated throughout the stories told by the interviewees and focus groups. Although the narrative’s main points are many and varied, stories related to self-esteem of low class children tend to aggregate around a number of themes: digital gaming culture stories, identity characterizations of low class children, convergence of culture and media, video games as an extension of the mainstream media through the consumption of Play Station games. The stories themselves are presented in different themes and take shape and resound in the different voices of my research subjects in a narrative form under different major themes in this Chapter and Chapter Six:

5.2 Small-sized game centers :New environments for new media technology exposure

Along the lines of the focus of the research, I explored how the these small-sized game centers function as emerging environments of new media technology exposure for low class children and shared male cultural and technological space where local meanings of global video games’ content and technology are consumed, shared, discussed and appropriated by a group of male children in Addis Ababa. The consumption practices of Play Station games are shaped by the cultural and

socio-economic contexts as press forward by the media convergence theory. This section will look at the some of the excerpts that might show the nature of these game centers under investigation and the routines and unique space they provide to Ethiopian male children.

Speaking of the attraction of Play Station games to the children and asked why they prefer coming to Play Station gaming centers all said that it was a matter of cost and access, and because the centers provide them with a space which they do not normally find some where else. The game centers offer an alternative, a comforting space to get an acquaintance with new media technology in the form of video games for the low class children. They help to encourage a particular world-view amongst the game centers' players. To offer some examples, here is what Solomon, 16, an eight grader who started visiting the game centers before one year when he was at grade seven and has no TV, VCD/DVD and console game at home "because we are poor" had to say:

I visit the game centers so that I can play video games and watch movies. I don't like to go to my relative's houses who are well off and posses computer games at their home because I like to operate, hold and choose my joystick by myself and this choice is not there at other people's place. I could not get a pleasure there.

For Zewdu, 15, a single father and a grade seven student, Tomas, 17, currently employed as 'Weyala' or as an assistant driver for a taxi after he dropped out of grade eight and Tewdros, 16 a seven grader, the centers provide them with a space to acquaint with new media technology and hang around while they are not going to school or idle.

Zewdu: The cause why I come to these game centers is just to be equal with my friends. My friends in the school always talk about their skills on joysticks at times my coming here even if I could not play games gives me satisfaction because I could watch others play. I like watching how some of my friends take control of the situations using their joystick I like soccer games because they are filled with players I know on DSTV >V. Here in these centers I feel free.

Tomas: I come here since I don't have an access of any kind of video games now. I am really addicted of playing digital games especially video games of karate because it will teach me how to protect myself in case I will fight with someone. When I am idle, I hang around in the video game centers all day long. If I have an access at my home why

would I appear here? I do not know, but these places will give you an opportunity of making friends.

Tewdros: I come here because I prefer playing with my friends as well as watching others play games. I can't touch even the remote control of our television set at home. My mother never allowed me to put on our TV. She never trusts me, for her I am always a kid who could damage our TV set but, I am not. Here as long as you pay the required payments you will have the control unit at your hand at least for ten minutes. Then I satisfy myself. There are times I come here just to pass time, where I can sit and relax, even though I have already played a game. I hang around here.

These discussions mirror the Ethiopian children from lower class detached from mainstream cultures are exposed to the new media in the form video games, Play Station games in my own case. An important thing to note from the excerpts is that 'the game centers', the centers that are out of the control of the children's parents, is perceived by the children themselves as "a place of freedom" and the space of the "opportunity". The persistent mentioning of "*control of situations*" is an indication that the children from poor section of the society consider the technology of video games, their involvement with the technology of games though joysticks, or incidents they face inside these game centers as opportunity to their welfare and safe for their personal growth. In other words, these small sized game centers are considered as harmless and entertaining by the Ethiopian children who are from poor section of the society. These children are made to believe that the centers are the spaces of 'freedom' and 'opportunity'.

Small-sized game centers are attributed as 'the new environment of new media technology' and spaces of opportunity and education is not limited to the children alone, but interestingly to individuals and contacts the children identify as parents, elders or seniors. An interview with some of the parents of the children reveals that the children's responses are the reflection of their parents' views. Though some claimed that the image of game centers perceived by the officials, teachers and parents is relatively negative, associated with smoking, excessive noise, gang activities, and Chat chewing The parents of the children are clear in their description that though they want their children to play Play Station games, they do not welcome when their children become

addicted of digital games and Chat chewing, partly for the directly conveyed reason of keeping the children away from danger:

Int: Do you allow your children to go to Play Station games centers and play with their friends?

Dejene: It is ok to let children play digital games in game centers that will help the kids to learn how to deal with computer education and develop a sense of confidence later in their life. The problem is, we do not have the economic capacity to provide our kids with digital games like Play Station so we should allow the to get this chance in theses centers .Do you know that children who are lucky enough to be born in affluent family will have these at their home or at least may be taken to public places with this facilities? But, since kids may not be able to identify what is good for them and what is not, they may inherit some characteristics from these centers that may be harmful to them. I prefer to get the children the things they want rather than letting them go the game centers to play Play Station with their friends. But it is up to the family members to give guidance and control when they go out for game.

Int: Do you permit your children go to video game centers in your area?

Tayeich: Why not? One of my elder sons used to have a Play Station center for the sake of commerce. He used to give me money for a household .He is good in his character the Play Station kept him busy .My younger son started playing these things at that time because he was playing it for free. Now his brother sold the Play Station and gave his TV set to us because as you can see everyone started the same business, you can find these centers in every corner of the county. Now he has to pay for playing. Actually I don't want him to stay all the day in the centers as I am afraid this may tempt my son not to concentrate on his education.

What drew my interest in the above discussion more than the children's longing to go to game centers and obsession with Play station games is the fact that children's parents identify the game centers as 'safe' form of entertainments for their children. Though Fiske has argued in relation to the video arcades as "focus of vandalism and hooliganism" (1989: 77) the Play Station centers in Addis Ababa were transformed as centers of 'safe' entertainments for the children of lower class sections of the society. However if the children go frequently to the centers the children's actions are also subject to cynicism in the eyes of parents.

Such indifference of parents for the children's actions of visiting game centers from the ultimately drew me to another question which has a direct relevance to my study: If the children are allowed to visit Play Station game centers with little supervision of parental control, what do the parents think about their children's elongated respite in the game centers. An implication for this question is put forward by Dejene who believes that "game centers will help the kids to learn how to deal with computer education and develop a sense of confidence later in their life"

As a result, the probability of the children's exposure to the new media technology in the form of Play Station games is further complemented by the fact that the parents prefer their children to play video games in small -sized game centers are 'safe' for children's entertainment. My discussion with Dejene and Tayech asserts this claim

Int: What kind activities do you think your children are engaged in the game centers?

Tayech: Haven't you seen them in the centers? They play video games. That it is. I am not worried of the activities my children engaged in the centers because there is a very limited chance that these games engage my children with morally wrong things which may destroy my children

Dejene: I do not see a corrupt behavior that may be inherited from playing Play Station games alone. Even the educated people with a very nice character do play as my children do it. They love it very much. These games are free from bad language and sex. They are also educational and funny. It is better to allow them to Play Station centre than video house, which is very bad for children.

Furthermore, the socio-economic factor of the lived reality of the children is a reason why the Play Station game centers become an open ground for new media technology in the form of Play Station video games. As children from poor families could not afford a game console or PC, TV set they play Play Station at game centers. By visiting the game centers the children want to belong culture of to dominant well-off section of the Ethiopian society that can afford to have game consoles or a computer and TV set since the children do not own television sets and game consoles or a computer in their homes. As such, this study has found out that the children's

impoverished lived reality, on top of the inability to afford Play Station game consoles ,computer or playing games at decent places , has prevented them from enjoying video games in decent places like children's amusement park.

Tomas: To enjoy video or computer games at your home or at decent places like children's amusement park you have to have a deal of money and you have to be from well-off section of the society. Let alone owning this great deal of money to have computers and console games; for guys like me it is becoming difficult to fulfill our basic needs like food. We don't have the economy capacity. If I am lucky, I might earn up to 15 Ethiopian birr per day as a Weyala, an assistant taxi driver.

The major theme that can be dragged out from the discussion of the children and their parents is the sense of the society for small-sized Play Station game centers as perceived safe grounds for children and economically affordable form of entertainment.

5.3 Small-sized Game Centers :New Spaces for Gendered Technological Practice

Along the lines of the focus of the research, I investigated how Play Station gaming function as gendered technological practice .The integration of gender into gaming culture is best understood in its ‘most complex whole’ (Greetz 1973:299).As recommended by Greetz, this study strived to create a ‘thick description’ of how males, female and their parents blend, negotiate and negate digital gaming and gender. Though I come to discussed about these issues in detail in the next chapter now I will talk about how these small-sized game centers become new spaces for gendered technological practice.

As many African countries, Ethiopia is a patriarchal society that keeps women at a subordinate position, using religion and culture as an excuse. These excuses have for many years been supported by laws and legislation that uphold patriarchy and women’s subordination. This has brought about and maintained disparities between men and women, in division of labour, share of benefits, in law and state, in how households are organized, and how these are interrelated (Sida2003:p10).

Such stereotyping of gender based roles, although is very much visible on adulthood, is something that children are exposed to. In the interviews I had with the lower-class Ethiopian children, there is a clear reference by them to the society’s patriarchal tendencies; I was able to get some intriguing reflections which may show that the small sized game centers provide space for gendered activities like gaming which is stereotyping on sex based roles.

Therefore , I examined how the small sized game centers, function as space for shared male technological practice –digital video gaming, where local meanings of global video game –Play Station games are consumed, shared, discussed and appropriated by a group of male children in Addis Ababa. Beside to this; the focus group discussions suggested ‘new’ research subjects, which

necessitated further interrogations through individual-in depth interview with female children of the same schools of my prior research subjects who were male children.

Hence I have interviewed Tigest who comes from a traditional family and an eight grader, discussed an example which illustrates how sex based roles are pertinent in the society is forwarded by Tigest.

Once I asked my mom for permission to go to the nearby video game playing center. She then called me 'Wondawond'I begged her but she would never pay attention. I know she may allow me to play other games like hide and seek with my female folks but never video games with male friends.

The response Tigest's mother gave when she asked for permission to go to the nearby video game center, [i.e. *Wondawond*] is very interesting that it shows how deep sex-based roles are rooted in the society. Tigest's mother called her girl literally "a man" when she asked to play video game in the nearby video game centers indicating how seriously the society attributes roles based on gender.

As I stated earlier in this chapters, the game centers are a shared male children's cultural and technological space. Female children rarely attend this video game playing sessions.

Testimonies from interviewees give an indication that girls who visit these video houses are considered 'bad' or *duruwe* (a term which is normally used to describe boys and therefore is very unflattering to women). Asked if they had ever seen a girl to these centers, the children's responses were full of surprises. The subsequent verbatim show that the children who have low class status accept the dominant ideology of patriarchal society.

Tezera: I can't imagine girls in Play Station game centers holding the joystick and games sitting beside me. Girls are not allowed to visit the game centers. I am not sure whether the girls themselves want to go to Play Station centers and play games. However it is not OK for them to come to Play Station girls because they might get offended by the way we talk and play. It is not a decent place for girls.

Henok: No I haven't seen one .I have been playing for almost two years but, I haven't encountered a single girl .Of course once my little sister was sent to the Play Station center to tell me that my father wanted me to give me some task in our home .However she has stayed in the centre because she was really amazed by the game I was involved in with my friend .It was a game called Hitman. She had forgotten to get back to home. Then my father came to the centre because my sister and I stayed longer than my father expected. Then he quarreled with me. I remember what he has said to me .He has said that you are man and you can be whatever you want to be but this little girl doesn't know the good and the bad so you shouldn't have permitted her to stay even with you. And he warned me not to allow my little sister to go to the centers again. Actually my father convinced me that it is not OK for girls to go to the centers.

There is a definite reference to the society's patriarchal facet when Tezera and Henok highlight some conventional perceptions upon the roles women and men should presuppose in the society which should be principally distinct.

On the other hand, there is additional reason to why girls do not visit these Play Station centers and this has to do with the stereotypical role women play in the Ethiopian patriarchal society as caretaker and providers in the household.

Tezera: Our culture prevented the girls not to go to Play Station games. However girls might visit the centers if the population of the game centers are dominantly girls .Even this might not happen and girl might not appear in the centers because the society may look down up on these kind of girls and label them as a bad person.

Tewdros: No, no, I do not agree with Tezera's argument .No one has prevented girls from visiting Play Station game centers .But girls are responsible to take care of their families. Girls do not have the time nor the money to spend for game .Unlike boys they don't even have spare time to hang around. So the problem is lack of money and time.

At glance, the above descriptions presented in the earlier section and in this one seem to indicate that sex-based roles subsist in the social contexts of the subjects of this study, lower class children of Ethiopia. Setting up this perceptive is very important as I am going to refer to the issue of

gender once again later in the next chapter when I deal with how Ethiopian children negotiate with Play Station game contents and technology.

5.4 Lower-Class Addis Ababa Children and Media Literacy

The subject of media literacy is one of the theses that have occurred during my group discussions with the children especially with regard to the use of joysticks, narrating the contents of the game and language. And this necessitated further embellishments through definitions of the concept of media literacy, historical background and individual-in depth interview

Beyond cultural and social significance of Play Station games in the lived reality of Addis Ababa children, I suggest, also is pedagogically relevant, because any educational or teaching effort which aims at mediating so-called "media competency," computer literacy, or ICT skills is preceded by informal and non-formal learning processes of children within their "computer gaming culture." (Greenfield: 1984). But at the same time informal experiences with computer technology have become more common for children and young people. Most pupils, therefore, have learned about computers before teachers or other educators begin instruction; sometimes the pupils' skills even surpass those of the teachers.

Informal experiences of Play Station games in small-sized game centers do not only influence children's private values and attitudes towards new media, but they also have an impact on their educational concepts and actions. Here the concept of media literacy comes to the picture. As Suzuki and Takahashi (2003:69) observe, as we enter the 21st century, we find ourselves in a society saturated by a variety of media including terrestrial television broadcasting, satellite broadcasting, newspapers, magazines, the Internet, CD-ROMs, video games, and so on, all employing digital technology. In Ethiopia, chiefly in Addis Ababa there is a media-saturated community which is fast growing, that calls for the development of media literacy for both children and adults.

The concept of 'media literacy' was established in the US "during the 1980s and was, at first, closely tied to children's media environment, where media violence and commercialism were

under scrutiny” (2006:308). Yet media literacy is a considerably broader concept than ‘media education’, Carlsson (2006:08) argues, which only refers to the mission of the schools. Zacchetti defines media literacy as “the ability to communicate competently in all old and new media, as well as to access, analyze and evaluate the power of the images, sounds and messages with which we are now being confronted in daily basis” (2003:65). Alternatively, media literacy, in accordance with Carlsson’s definition “having an understanding of how mass media work, how they produce meaning, how the media are organized and knowing how to use them wisely” (2003:8). Therefore, it is seen to empower people to both be critical thinkers and creative producers of an increasingly wide range of messages, using images, sound and language.

Media literacy is linked with information literacy a lot. However, Carlsson (2006) argues that media literacy has been defined and developed in relation to audiovisual media, while the information literacy has been developed in relation to various new digital systems for representing and distributing information. “Media literacy,” Carlsson argues, “has tended to focus on cultural expression and is marked by a critical dimension. This critical dimension is often missing in the current concept of “information literacy”, which focuses more on “technical skills”, such as using ICT to find and gather and to distribute information” (2006:309-311)Media literacy is also associated with technological literacy which encompasses three interdependent dimensions – knowledge, ways of thinking and acting and capabilities (Sutton: 2006).

Such being the theoretical considerations of the concept of media literacy. I tried to provide a broad account of children's use of Play Station games in their everyday life and its implications for media literacy issues .I interviewed the children themselves as experts of their media culture, and I assumed that the children were capable of providing relevant and valid information, especially with regard to the use of joysticks, narrating the contents of the game and language.

Since the design of the new education and training policy in 1995, the situation obviously has changed in Ethiopia that school especially high schools have begun to use computers and teach pupils computer skills. Furthermore, English is a learned language for almost all Ethiopians who are born in the country and is thus their second language in many instances. As Carlsson (2006)

points out that media literacy clinch everything from having the knowledge needed to use old and new media technology to having a critical relationship to media content in a time when the media constitute one of the most powerful forces in society. Proponents of media literacy view increased media knowledge in society as contributing to participation, active citizenship, competence development and life-long learning.

Considering this, as the children's are primarily exposed to globalized Japanese Play Station games, the children inevitably face the challenge of the technical skills to play video games and understand the English language as the medium of communication between themselves and the games they interact. In this regard, I have asked them how they deal with the requirement of the technical skills of Play Station games and the English they are exposed to the Play Station games.

Int: Do you configure the TV set and the game console by yourself?

Zewdu: Yes but sometimes the owner is afraid of kids so he does not allow us to start the game by ourselves. Of course, children may damage his property. However, when he is out for his private matters. I could operate the game by myself .I will change the type of the game .I will customize different types of teams .I can change names of soccer players if the game is Play Station soccer game.

Int: What do you do when you fail to start games or play games using joystick?

Tezera: I ask the owner of the game, or my friends or a person sitting next to me in the centre. But what you have to know is that we have already known how to start Play Station video games .This is a problem for new comers to the centers. It is not a problem for me as well as for my friends who usually visit the game centers. But when we begin to play games almost before two years .I had some problem with using the joystick. It was difficult to move the ball or the players when you play soccer games

In my earlier discussion of media literacy, I have quoted Carlsson who attempted to define media literacy as “having an understanding of how mass media work, how they produce meaning, how the media are organized and knowing how to use them wisely” (2003:8). Some of the issues that the children reflected is related part of Carlsson’s definition of media literacy—having understanding of how mass media produce meaning. The children expressed their own way of dealing with the technical skills requirement of Play Station games they play. Hence; new media technology in the form of Play Station games as cultural artifacts which demand complex cognitive skills from the people who use them, and these skills and the related knowledge that come from using them are not obtained in instructional contexts like schools, but are acquired informally (Greenfield :1984).

Speaking of technical skills in computer and its relationships in the contexts of the Play Station game technology in games he plays, Abraham says he is liberated by the educational aspect the game technology have on making him ready for real life situation.

Playing games using joysticks could go straight to my educational backdrop; they can drive me to use my eyes, hands and coordination skills effectively if I continually play them. This habit could even be useful to my computer skills. May be I am playing these kind of games to learn how to use keyboard or mouse of a computer then I would find myself one day become a professional in computer technology. I enjoy playing them. I like watching people playing games

Henok also sees the educational value of playing digital video games, interestingly Play Station video games

Video games have positive impact here, for example, when it comes to your computer awareness. If I were a knowledgeable in how Play Station games operate deep inside the console, I can feel that I have a chance to be a computer engineer or just a game designer. So more time to play, more time to get into it.

The above narratives remind us of Rushkoff and Negroponte’s (1996) observation of positive effects of video and computer games by stating that ‘video gaming is a perfect preparation for the high-tech cybernetic future that awaits the “screenager”’. As I have stated in the chapter two of this thesis ‘screenager’ will attain a greater sense of agency and control in their ever changing lives,

Rushkoff assures us because they are learning to live with a changing digital environment. This, by the way, was significantly more important for the matured children of my sample (the 9 to 10 graders)

Moreover these testimonials' interaction with the actions of the characters ,music and visual effects in the game corresponds with what Zacchetti has got to say about media literacy—"the ability to...analyze and evaluate the power of the images, sounds and messages with which we are now being confronted in daily basis" (2003:65).

The interviewees also deliberated on the issue of the English and Japanese language as the medium of communication between themselves and the games they play and generated some interesting ideas.

Int: Do you understand the language when you play the games?

Abraham: I understand the English one partially but when I play soccer game and if the commentary is in Japanese I can not understand it. The English commentary is because the words are almost known, I mean the sentences are repetitive that is the reason why the English commentary is preferable .About the Japanese commentary you may know the general context of the game because you have already known the game in its English version.

Solomon: I also understand it partly. But most of the times I prefer an English language commentary to understand my game. Japanese commentary could not be understood through its sentences or words even the names of the characters are completely different from the English commentary but even the Japanese commentary could be understood from the actions and pictures of the characters in the game.

Another very interesting point worthy to note is that Solomon employs some techniques that he uses to understand what is going on in the game when the game commentary is Japanese. His interaction with the actions of the characters , other visual effects and music in the game corresponds with what Zacchetti has got to say about media literacy—"the ability to...analyze and evaluate the power of the images, sounds and messages with which we are now being confronted in daily basis" (2003: 65). Solomon had competently interacted with the game he played through

when the commentary is in English language but for Japanese commentary through the actions of the characters to make meaning out.

5.5 Conclusion

In this Chapter, I have presented the findings of the research under three different themes namely small-sized game centers as emerging environments of new media technology exposure for lower class children; small-sized game centers space for gendered technological practice ; and children and Media Literacy Issues .

I have demonstrated how Ethiopian children from impoverished part of the society are attracted to small-sized game centers and video game playing which are perceived by the community as ‘safe’ spaces and ‘safe’ form of entertainments. Moreover, as a male only cultural space and technological practice, female children hardly ever visit these game centers. I have also demonstrated how the issue of media literacy and technological literacy are constituted through the video games the children play and how this determines the way the children communicate with the video games they are exposed to. The use of the small-sized game centers and the practice of consuming Play Station games are surrounded by factors such as poor access to and non-availability of game console, computer, TV set and the impoverished condition of the children’s lived reality. With the assumptions and contexts set up in this chapter, the following chapter discusses how Ethiopian lower -class male children in Addis Ababa negotiate with technologies and contents of Play Station video games one of the most famous digital games in Ethiopia

Chapter Six

PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS: HOW ETHIOPIAN CHILDREN NEGOTIATE WITH THE TECHNOLOGY AND CONTENTS OF PLAY STATION VIDEO GAMES

6.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the presentation and interpretation of findings of the study by analyzing how Ethiopian children negotiate with the technology and contents of Play Station games. Rationalized with the core concepts of the cultural convergence theory, and glocalization the chapter analyses the reception of Play Station video game technology, messages and contents by Ethiopian lower - class children categorized in four sections, namely Play Station games as driving forces of glocalization ;Play Station games as indicators of convergence of media & extension of mainstream media; Integration of Play Station gaming: Ethiopian culture and technology fusion and Gender and Technology .

6.2 Play Station games as Driving Forces of Glocalization

According to Tomlinson (1999) one of the most known scholars in the field of media globalization the video game industry is a hybrid encompassing a mixture of Japanese an American businesses and (more importantly) cultures to a degree unseen in other media industries. He argues this hybrid is not a space between ‘two zones of purity’ where mixing occurs but instead is a significant point at which a global media culture is created that is unlike any national media culture in its composition. Tomlinson further argues that particularities of the video game industry and culture can be recognized in the transnational corporations that contribute to its formation and development; in the global audience for its products; and in the complex mixing of format, style and content within games. Adding to his argument he further states, the culture, although hybrid, avoids becoming homogenous (perhaps is incapable of becoming homogenous) because the demands of the local still shape cultural products as they travel around the world.

Addis Ababa game players and young businessmen have been turning Play Station games into forms of hybrid cultures in terms of the rule of playing, the making of crossover cultural products as well as specific languages translated, used or created. As I have already described earlier, the subjects of my study are lower class children who attend their education at public schools in old districts of Addis Ababa. They are wonderers in that they rarely pass their leisure time in their house. Children from lower class are allowed to visit game centers because Play Station gaming is considered as a 'safe' form entertainment by their parents. Therefore, the children play the games a lot and adapt the games in to their own context. They also associate themselves with these games because of its adaptability in to Ethiopian contexts and what happens is that they start interacting with their game heroes. One of the interviewees of the study, Solomon, 17, compares his video game skills of driving a car to the machine's skills, which is represented by game/software of which he thinks, is the most perfect example to teach one's deriving skills:

When I become a driver, I think it will be easy to me to drive a car. In video games like the Play Station games when I drive a car I deliberately choose the most difficult level because it will test my ability to drive a car even in a very difficult situation. When I grow up I will drive a car in the busy streets of Addis Ababa, which most people think that the most difficult place to drive a car, I am sure that I will drive the car as if I had driven a car before. I will not be perplexed by the traffic.

Solomon is predicting his ability of driving a car in the framework of his training he has taken informally from video games. In other words, he is critically looking at the traffic situation of Addis Ababa, an aspect of his lived reality in the context of his informal training in video game centers, a global media image, which, according to Thompson (1995:175), provide a resource for individuals to think critically about their own lives and life conditions. This also represents a kind of localization of Japanese Play Station game culture from below (consumers, not producers), the adaptation of Japanese Play Station games in Ethiopian real life situation is the localization of Japanese game culture from outside.

For some of the respondents who expressed pleasure in being able to exercise control over an environment or situation, Play Station games appear to be useful as a rehearsal for the challenges of life. Solomon, for example, faced an intimidating cultural adjustment when he came to Addis Ababa two years ago. When I specifically asked him to compare the difficulties of his real life and the challenges that he finds in Play Station games, he replied:

I think it's almost the same thing ... Because I tried the game [that] I can do ... [In] real life I can do the same thing. I think, almost the same. Whatever I put my effort, I can do in real life and the game.

Abraham shares a characteristic with several other gamers who played in order to control an environment – a need to think through problems. Abraham prefers war (strategy) games:

Because I have to think what I should do ... how can I move ... how I can improve my characters ... how I can win. I have to think.

Another interesting aspect of the study is the reflection of the children on how they adapt global Play Station games to local or Ethiopian situations. Players alter the name of the characters in the game they choose to play considering their everyday lived reality fancying the things their favorite characters in the games think and do. Drotner stresses that “children’s reception is selective and not least with young children it seems motivated primarily by problems that are focal in their own lives” (2006: 116). For example, Zacharias thinks that wearing uniforms everyday at school is boring at times and he envies a jersey of Samuel Eto, Cameroonian football star who plays for the Spanish football club Barcelona. Zacharias chooses Eto jersey of Barcelona Football Club because he usually play soccer Play Station games by being Barcelona Football Club and has won many games using Eto as a striker watched some time ago.

Zacharias: I like Sami because I always scores when I use him as a striker. He is magical striker when I use my joystick to move him forward with his ball Sami moves simply so I like him very much .I wish I could have his jerseys of Barca. On top of that he is an African.

Int: Why do you want to have it?

Zacharias: I wear it .Here in our schools no one is allowed to wear his own clothes in school days except uniforms. I could wear that jersey under my sweater when I come to school so that I will put off my sweater when I am outside the compound of the school. I will wear it openly on parent's day.

Zacharias's response signifies the 'problem that is focal in his life'—wearing the same clothes everyday as a requirement of the school—and how he wishes to get hold of Samuel Eto's Barcelona jersey . Zacharias chosen the jersey as the thing he loves most not because there are other things to choose from, but because the jersey represents something that he desperately desires but misses in his everyday life. As John Fiske points out that just as readers can become "active readers" by adding new meanings to cultural products (Fiske 1989:32), Zacharias gives new meanings to games by interacting with Play Station games.

If Zacharias has the opportunity to wear Eto's jersey, then he will satisfy his longing of imitating Samuel Eto .However, Zacharias might not have stopped his desire of using Samuel as a model for his life. Zacharias verifies this when he describes his creation of the dream team of his best players around the world.

Zacharias: I would include Samuel Eto in my own best players selection .But my dream team will never be a collection of players from Europe alone .I don't like this kind of selection. I don't like it at all .I would consider Ethiopian players even though they are not included in the default programs of Play Station.

Int.: How do you consider Ethiopian players in your team if they are no available in the original programs of the games?

Zacharias: Oh it is quite easy .You can simply customize it.

Int: What do you mean?

Zacharias: I will insert an Ethiopian player and shape his face and his color in to specific Ethiopian standard using my experience of an Ethiopian player physique .By the way there is an option of making your own team out of a blue with all its qualities of the original Play Station games.

A recurring subject that was recited by many children is how Play Station games could be adapted to Ethiopian context. Those products destined for global consumption are carefully localized, to ensure that their international flavor is not *too* foreign for non-Japanese tastes. Significantly, the process of ‘localization’ in video games is tied to the Japanese business term ‘glocalization,’ defined by Robertson (1995) to mean the successful global transfer of products to different localities, by making modifications for such variables as culture, language, gender or ethnicity.

Although the cases of Solomon and Zacharias signify how the children translate the thoughts and deeds of their favorite game character and actions through glocalization, they also understand that it is not always the case that they would perform well at Play Station gaming or imitate the lifestyle of their beloved game heroes. The children realize that their lived reality, their cognition, and their societal make up can be very different from that of their game heroes. Dagim’s example illustrates this point.

Int: Which games do you like most?

Dagim: I guess it is a soccer game.

Interviewer: why?

Dagim: I like soccer game from all Play Station games because it is very easy and everyone knows it. I have been playing soccer representing my school for the couple of years and I think the game helped me to improve my skills in the field. Although it was difficult at times, I managed to imitate Argentinean and Barcelona star Lionel Messi so that I will entertain the spectator and win the match. I really wish I can have some of his skills and his patience in the pitch. Whenever my team mates pass ball to me, I try to show off my skills of passing players with the techniques I have studied from Play Station games. However, my team mates always complain to our trainer. My trainer says I am too immature to take the skills from Play Station games to the pitch and always tells me to forget to try it during real match. But I remember trying to beat two or three players after playing Play Station game, I said to myself if I did it on Play Station game, would it be difficult for me to repeat what I did in playing Play Station? The truth is, I barely succeeded [laughs]. Still I couldn’t do what I did on the video game and I know for sure that imitating the skills of Lionel Messi is beyond reach. But I always imitate Messi at least while I am playing Play Station game

Hence, consuming Japanese Play Station games in Ethiopia is not a form of cultural imperialism, because I have shown the making of a dialectical nexus between global (Japan) and local (Addis Ababa) in terms of ongoing cultural hybridization Tomlinson (1997). Robertson uses the term glocalization to argue that the local should not be seen in distinction to the global, but that instead both are mutually constitutive. The success of corporations such as Sony's Play Station demonstrates how glocalization is made industry specific, and how it can be profitable when carefully utilized (Morley and Robins 1995: 150).

6.3 Play Station as Indicators of Convergence & Extension of Mainstream Media

As discussed in Chapter Two, the central premise of the cultural convergence theory revolves generally around the technological shift that alters the relationship between existing technologies, industries, markets, genres and audiences. According to the theory, 'we are entering an era where media will be every where and we will use all kinds of media in relation to each other' (Jenkins2004:7). The theory reflects two ways flow of information reflecting the values, culture, interests and agendas of both owners and moguls of the media and consumers of the media products. According to Jenkins, 'convergence is taking place within the same appliance ... within the same franchise ... within the same company ... within the brain of consumer ...within the same company'. Jenkins (2004:7)

As I have discussed in the social context of this study socio-cultural environments do not only consist of relevant others, they also consist of different media. This includes television, films, books, internet and others. With regard to the problem of being informed about new games the children also to some degree rely on what they find in other media the children for instance said they were "often" curious about or liked games which had protagonists they knew from films or television. Commercials are quite successful in drawing the children's attention to new games, too. According to the theory, we are entering an era where media will be every where and we will use all kinds of media in relation to each other. Hence; Tariku first has heard about Play Station games

on TV commercial which was broadcasted on DSTV and some time went by he started playing it in his nearby game center.

A closely related concept to the media convergence theory –cultural convergence –is discussed by Henry Jenkins in his work *The cultural logic of media convergence*. Convergence, he writes, represents an expanding opportunity for media conglomerates, since content that succeeds in one sector can expand its market reach across other platforms. On other hand, convergence represents a risk, since most of these media fear fragmentation or erosion of their market.

The children also revealed how other forms of media are important for their introduction and consumption practice of Play Station and other forms video games. Tariku's story is a very interesting one in this regard.

I come to know about Play Station games first on one commercial which was broadcasted in DSTV during the European Champions League final in 2006. Though the commercial is still fresh in mind; but I didn't understand what Play Station is. One year went by and my friend told me that Play Station is a video game. He also told me that Play Station game centre has been opened in their county. When I went there to look what Play Station looks like I have seen people playing soccer game by being Arsenal and Manchester United.

Convergence, according to Jenkins, is characterized by a process, in which media companies are learning how to accelerate the flow of media contents across delivery channels to expand revenue opportunities, broaden market and reinforce consumers' commitment. Consumers are learning how to use these different media technology to bring the flow media fully under their control and to interact with other users. As such, convergence is both a top-down corporate driven process and a bottom-up consumer driven process.

At the center of the convergence are the global video game industries which produce the digital games that tremendously raiding the world. The video game industry demonstrates how the digital games industry functions as a convergence of culture, media and a hybrid global culture. More interestingly, Sony has been singled out as a major actor of media convergence in the work of American commentator Mia Consalvo in her study *Console video games and global corporation:*

Creating a hybrid culture sought to demonstrate ‘how the video game industry is a hybrid encompassing a mixture of Japanese and American business (and more importantly) cultures to a degree unseen in other popular culture. As arguable as they may be, these characteristics of convergence described by Consalvo went unnoticed by the children who consume movies, games and other media products. A good case in point is my interview with Tafesse who both watched the animation movie called Tarzan and played it as a Play Station game.

Tafesse: I played a video game called Tarzan which I like most from all video games .It needs you to handle the joystick very carefully .Then I heard from a friend that the game I loved most original was an animation movie. Then I need to watch the movie just to know how the character I love to manage using my joystick would act in a movie.

Dagim: The films that I always love to watch are the like Lords of the Ring and others .Because this kinds of films taught me not to lose hope in the things I do. These kinds of films are set to be video games. When I heard that there is this kind of games in the nearby video game center I would never miss it Because I know how the story in the films ended but in the video game I would change the story of the film that I didn't like when I watched the film. Here when you play the game it is all about using the joystick effectively.

Technological shift is an idea related to convergence of culture and media is streamlined with the central premise of the cultural convergence which, according to Jenkins implies “[results in] emerging new media ecology does give users increasing control over the flow of media - using devices like the remote control, the joystick and the computer mouse, or software like internet portal sites, filtering agents, search bots and user recommendation systems.” (2004:34).In relation to this, Newman (2002:2) argues that "the pleasures of videogame play are not principally visual, but rather are kinesthetic". This idea can be applied to Play Station games. Many types of Play Station programs, character designs and graphics, won the hearts of the players with an innovative control system such as the use of separate keys for punching and kicking and the joystick for choosing direction, jumping or hiding. The children, in many instances, portrayed that while they are playing games their real pleasure comes from the interaction they have with control system through joystick keys for punching and kicking and for choosing direction, jumping or hiding.

This has consequences in the children's lived reality have changed their attitudes dramatically. For instance, Dagim and Tariku narrate how playing video games using joystick made them to think critically and revise about some of the things they met in the real life situation.

Dagim: When I start playing video games before two years I was struggling to hit a ball or change a direction of my players or characters using the joystick. However, during the time I become an expert in using the joystick .Now when I compute with my friends or with the computer itself I know that I will become out victorious. You see, this makes me happy. I feel that I could do anything if I keep on practicing like I did for Play Station games.

Tariku: Last year, when I and a couple of my friends went to the nearby game center to play soccer games, we didn't know how to play a game .I used to score an own goal and made people laugh .I thought I shouldn't have gone to the centre but my friend kept on dragging me to the center . I made this habit quite a routine until one day when I dared to play against the most skillful player in the center and won him with out much practice. Since then, I keep on visiting the game center .I enjoy playing games using joysticks .It is good I love it .That gave me one big lesson to dare something challenging even difficult than video games.

6.4 Integration of Play Station gaming: Ethiopian culture and technology fusion

I did not see Play Station game that shows Ethiopian cultural heritage games or, sports like athletics as a default game, but I don't care. I can enjoy any kind of games .You might think I am a little unusual ... The games with foreign contents have a wide option of adaptability to Ethiopian culture, so I don't think it matters. (Girma, 9 grader from Misrak Gohe School, Addis Ababa)

The children place high importance on gaming and engage in it frequently; it is not surprising, then, that these gamers appear more comfortable with gaming technology and game themes and that gaming is better integrated into their lives. The degree of integration is demonstrated not only by the frequency with which they play, but also by their facility with the technology and their revelations that they enjoy multiple genres. The children that were interviewed tended to distinguish between the various pleasures that gaming provides and astutely recognized that different genres promote different pleasures. The children were technologically adept, and

consequently reported that they actively choose specific genres to fulfill their desires for particular pleasures, such as sociability, intellectual stimulation and competitive challenge. For example, Ermias said:

It depends on my feeling to select one particular type of game .I play role-playing games to relax and enjoy, because they tell thrilling stories. I play fighting games like soccer games when I feel the ‘urge’ or when someone challenges me. I play strategy games like Tarzan to work out my logic.

One particular pleasure which power gamers emphasized is the challenge that certain games provide; these children take pleasure from mastering the skills required by the game and from competing with other players. If you become very good at different genres of games, you earn the respect of everyone who visits the game center. In one of the game centers there is one child nick named as a ‘computer’ just because he is skillful in a lot of genres of video games. But just because of it is availability in most of the game centers, many children practice soccer Play Station games. For the children who play this game, pleasure also stems from their accomplishments in successful competition. Tsegaye, who has played digital games since 2004, finds soccer Play Station game to be ‘an exhilarating competitive exercise’, which he compares to ‘scoring a goal in soccer’. Despite the fact that, many soccer Play Station games are played by the children and do not have a typical Ethiopian content or feature, several of the participants indicated that they consciously choose this genre for its universality and adaptability to Ethiopian culture. Tsegaye who has played Play Station soccer games for two years, said:

Sometimes, if I won a National Side of Brazil by taking a part as Ethiopian National side well, that just makes me smile because in real situation we Ethiopians have won any major international trophy.

Competition provides an arena in which children are able to define and extend the definitions their self identity.’ For the children, digital games are not a problematic technology. Even as they themselves admit to the fact that Play Station games do not have Ethiopian content originally as a default programs, they have defined games successfully for themselves as being about identity, pleasure, mastery and control. Technology here is not a problem but an integral part of life.

To the extent that Play Station games can provide children with a choice of characters, combined with control of their representation, games function as technologies for explorations of the ‘westernized’ or ‘Japanized’ content and gendered self, producing paradoxical enactments that challenge cultural norms. Furthermore, when children voiced their concerns about the lack of a typical content or feature, power level in the games, they cited on the lack of characters, colors genres of sports that may represents a typical Ethiopian culture or identity ; this observation signals their desire for more choice and control within the context of game play. The following exchange occurred during focus group discussion and illustrates how their concerns are tied to their desire for control:

Abraham: I wish there were more games with characters, which they actually do an Ethiopian stuff, like for example a game with characters like Haile Gebre Silasie

Kebede: Oh, Haile Gebre Silasie, game developer should have considered him for a kind of Play Station games because Haile is a kind of icon for the world of sports.

Furthermore, when the children voiced their concerns about shortage of Ethiopian features in games, they cited the weaker power levels of stock characters; this inspection of the games hints their wish for more option and control within the context of game play. Lemma commented about a character called “Growling Chicken” which is found in the second *Lord of the Rings* game:

The second *Lord of the Rings* has a Growling Chicken, which is nice, but she is a weak character. Like her power level is lower and she just can’t do as much and she dies faster and it’s kind of weird. Just like, she can’t do as much as some of the characters can. I wish it wasn’t that way, but that’s the way they program it.

Tsegaye: I hate that one. Just like, ‘Oh, save me Marion’. I just wish there [were] more words, like you could actually be the person controlling all this stuff.

The desire for control of a character's representation is linked to the pleasure sought from the gaming experience. Powerful characters might also promote player identification and enhance children's pleasure in this regard.¹ As Behailu reported: 'I use my characters to reflect my being Ethiopian and the way I wish I had the courage to be.' It is clear that for Behailu, control of the character's representation increases his pleasure and enjoyment. It is significant then, those in role-playing games where he is able to create his own characters, he chooses a combination of Ethiopian identity and masculine strength. For the children, technology encourages them to enact new definitions of based on their desire.

6.5 Gender and Technology : Relevant Theory

As I have discussed in previous chapter towards the end of my focus group discussions I have come across with very small number of female gamers. The integration of female gamers into gaming culture is best understood in its 'most complex whole' (Geertz, 1973: 299). As recommended by Geertz, I have decided to include female gamers in my research so that the research will create a 'thick description' of how female children blend, negotiate and negate digital gaming and gender. This suggested 'new' research themes, which necessitated further interrogations through focus group discussions and individual-in depth interview with female children groups with a diverse group of participants in terms of the level of expertise in gaming - from non-players to players. The section below discusses the relevant theory on gender and technology in relation to Play Station gaming.

Many, if not most, feminist theorists of gender and technology would argue that these two concepts are socially constructed in specific historical, political and cultural contexts. Further, these two concepts are theoretically intertwined, informing each other in important ways. One classic example of such mutual shaping is Rakow's (1992) social history of the telephone and her explanation of how it became gendered (as a female medium for socializing) in a specific way and led to particular ways of defining what is (and is not) 'women's work' in relation to family and

group communication. Here, gender helps to define a technological medium and a technology is (re)configured gender-wise, to the feminine.

Rakow's inquiry into telephone use mainly focuses on the differences between men and women and does not examine deeply how various women might use the telephone in different frequencies. Although such critiques of differential use are usually related to identity factors such as ethnicity or class, it is also important to look at the level of use of a technology and determine how women who are invested in differential use patterns or practices may come to understand a technology differently and therefore have different attitudes about it, and how they also may see the technology as 'gendered' differently. Perhaps such concerns can be addressed usefully by integrating Foucault's 'technologies of the self' into the feminist model of 'technologies of gender'. Doing so allows for greater understanding of how individual women, or groups of women, may experience video game play and help us to understand how different women come to have very different patterns of use and attitudes concerning games and game culture. This model solves two problems: it allows researchers a way in which to understand differential play patterns and interests among women (and men), and gives us a more useful theoretical tool for understanding how women negotiate particular technologies and how their various work of negotiation can produce different results and different interpretations of the consumption of technology as a gendered practice.

To this end, I have examined women's experiences of games and gaming from their perspectives, as they seek to integrate (or reject) gaming technology into their lives, in various ways. It examines how games and gaming function as technologies that help them to define their gendered selves. This can be through negotiation or rejection. This investigation looks at women with different levels of play, as well as different interests in genres and individual games. These differences (and their consequences) offer a better picture of both how women define themselves in terms of gaming, and how gaming culture responds

In the subsequent section I will discuss negotiation and rejection of gaming as it is manifested in the female children's choice of genre and characters, their attitudes toward the representations of women in game texts and their exercise of control in negotiating and rejecting gaming technology.

6.5.1 *Negotiation of gaming: gender and technology in an edgy harmony*

As it has been a major factor for male children gamers, control is once again a salient factor related to the particular pleasures of the gaming experience. However, as Mahelet's comments suggest, the nature of control is radically different for female children gamers. Whereas control for male children relates to the characters that they use to explore new definitions Ethiopian identity and masculine strength, control is largely environmental. Mahelet's comment illustrates this:

I just started playing Play Station, where you get to control the way you play. I think that's fun and the one that I recently acquired was Tarzan. I like games where you can control the world. Just controlling them where it's a controlled environment, where in real world environment you cannot control everything. But you can control everything that happens in video games. It's like an escape, you get to just control it and not worry about other stuff you cannot control in your life. (Mahelet, a participant in the female children's group discussions)

For female children who participated in this study, games provide the pleasure of an ultimately controllable environment. This type of gratification is the reason that Rebeka, a 16-year-old a tenth grader, prefers to play *Tarzan*. As she explains, 'If you make the right moves, it is simply a winnable game.' By playing games like *Tarzan*, Rebeka is able to control even the very experience of gaming in order to ensure that it provides the particular pleasure that she seeks. Because control is configured differently for female children gamers than for male children gamers, I have to tease the data in order to understand how gaming functions as a technology of gendered self for female children gamers. One set of data provides at least two clues to this end. The first I have briefly mentioned already: female gamers seek control and/or distraction from their real-life pressures. The second clue concerns the ways in which female children gamers tended to draw a line between the genres that women play and those that men play. Thus, while these women emphasized control

and distraction as their pleasures, they negotiate gaming in ways that tend to define traditional gender divisions. For example, many female children gamers assign fantasy games and violent genres to men. Selamawit, a tenth grader who frequent Play Station centre unusually, said:

Most of the men I know play Play Stations that are violent like Hitman or competitive like soccer games and they are more into it. The regularly visit Play Station centers .If I'm going to Play Station centre, I will play games which are not violent if it is available other wise I won't. I will play games just to pass time. Games are not so serious matters for my life as they look for men.

According to Selamawit, women play games for passing time. She perceives that men become more fully immersed in the video game world – they regularly visit game centers and so series to their life and tend to devote more time to games. This line between so serious and easy matters helps to explain other remarks made by the female children gamers such as Mesert, who said: 'I am kind of annoyed by people who talk about video games like real life.' The distinction between women and men and reality and fantasy carried over to a focus group discussion about the representations of women in games:

I think that most Play Station video games are focused towards males. People who design just don't think that there's an audience, like, female. You do not find soccer Play Station games for female characters. Anytime you find a female character, she is always ugly with huge breasts and a flat stomach and long legs. They're geared more towards the man than woman.

Being skeptical of such representations might be empowering for women. Female children have said a lot in denying any identification with the game's characters, and they provide a clue about how they define gender and self. In so far as 'self and gender' remain tied to the female children gamers' realities and their habits of negotiating game technology seem to define a game technology or gender division for these female children. So even as they admit to playing games and having fun doing so, the culture of gaming overall is largely seen as a male domain.

For some of the female children who expressed pleasure in being able to exercise control over an environment or situation, Play Station games appear to be useful as a rehearsal for the challenges of life. Regarding this Mahelet said:

I think challenges you face in real world and challenges you encounter through Play Station games is almost the same thing ... Because I tried the game [that] I can do ... [In] real life I can do the same thing. I think, almost the same. Whatever I put my effort, I can do in real life and the game.

The desire for control and pleasures that are derived from this bracket the female child gamer's position. These indicate that the female child gamer is situated at an intersection where the video game world intersects with their reality. The female children gamer negotiate gaming technologies in order to help cope with the routines of their daily life, yet they are not quite fully immersed in the gaming world. This particular negotiation of gaming technology enables 'care of the self' (Foucault, 1988). Nonetheless, this self appears to be gendered within the conventions of traditional social norms.

6.5.2 Rejection of gaming: gender coups over technology of gaming

To be sure, as I have explained in the methodology section of this research, focus group data should as far as possible be grouped and juxtaposed with a series of data gathered from different sources and using various research techniques, in the interest of as complete and reliable an answer to the research question as possible (Macun & Posel 1998:132). It is for this reason that female children non-gamers were deemed important as follows as a comparative to focus group discussions and individual in-depth interviews of female children of my research subjects.

The female children who are non-gamers had critical, negative perceptions of gaming. They refused gaming as a waste of time and were quite vocal about asserting other priorities. In the focus groups, non-gamers expressed the strongest opinions about a perceived 'gaming culture'. They were concerned about the men's cultural space small-sized game centers sexualized and violent content of games, but acknowledged that this is a problem with other media products as well. Non-gamers

also speculated that players become addicted to Play Station games. These women viewed gaming as an asocial activity even for male gamers and believed most gamers to be interpersonally incompetent in their school. By their implied and expressed comparisons to players, non-gamers define themselves in ways that might be considered more traditionally female: completely grounded in reality, interpersonally competent and with their priorities set on things that really matter.

For non-gamers, the refusal of gaming was expressed as control over time and the assertion of other priorities. The amount of time required to play was discussed at some length in the non-gamers' focus group. Senayit comments in the following way;

We females usually have more things to do. We have to help our mother in doing house keeping. We are expected not only to go to schools and does well out there, but then we come in home and have to make dinner or lunch, ... We don't have any time for games. After all the society do looks down on those who hung out with guys around Play Station game centers.

While Senayit's comments demonstrate the practical consequences of limited leisure time, they also suggest that the society's attitude is configured in relation to their established gender roles and responsibilities.

According to the non-gamers, their rejection of gaming is not simply a matter of daily responsibilities limiting their available leisure time. While several of the women indicated that they might play games if they could get Play Station game at their home. The choices that non-gamers make appear to align with the society's traditional female expectations. This particular choice is centered in the way that non-gamers define themselves and is positioned in opposition to their perceptions of players. Non-gamers viewed gaming in small-sized game centers as a 'Duryea's' activity which reflects the society deep rooted attitude for those who hung out with men around men's space. Wodasie perceives her own sister, who is a frequent visitor of Play Station game centers, as 'Duryea'

She is not very good at like doing things at home, my family respects her just because she is good at her school work, [but] if you give her one feminine task she is not sure how to act up on it .The society does not respect such women and me ether .I know other females who go to play station centre and when you ask them specific questions about, you know, why women are here, what is their purpose in life, why do they play game? They do not know the basics of being females. Even though video games might help for academic performance for the likes mathematics and computer they should not play at game centers with guys whose opinions about women is not good.

We might conclude that non-gamers are playing another game by real-world rules .But Wodasie's comments, looks a paradox. While non-gamers seem to define themselves in ways that align with traditional ideas of femininity, she insists that she does not believe that gaming in gaming centers is not good. She also appears to feel the real effects of sexism most acutely.

6.6 Conclusion

I have attempted to present and interpret the reception of technology and contents of Play Station games by lower class Ethiopian children based on some of the basic assumptions of the media convergence theory. Results of the analysis show that if the world is becoming a "global village", this global village must include different tribes and this possible media convergence and glocalization. Play Station games have gained global popularity, but they are interpreted and played differently by players according to their own social and cultural backgrounds. It deepens our understanding of three important issues regarding cultural consumption and localization of Play Station games in an Ethiopian context.

The first issue involves looking at how individual children consumers interpret and consume Play Station games to add new meanings to them. The second issue involves looking at how game players make use of Play Station game technology to create their own, pleasure and culture. The third issue was about gender and technology .The analysis showed how female gamers and non-gamers enjoy but negotiate technology in a way that define the gender divisions that we traditionally define.

*Chapter Seven***CONCLUSIONS****7.1 Introduction**

This chapter summarizes some of the most important issues and findings that come up in the discussion so far. Firstly, I will try to recapitulate what this research has been all about, how it was undertaken and the prevailing themes that came out at the end of the endeavor. Then I will propose some subjects and themes that have a potential for further research.

7.2 Summary

As the research was exploratory in its nature; it examines the popularity of Play Station video games among the poor urban children in Addis Ababa, particularly how the meanings and the video game technology produced by and entrenched in the cultural industries of the Japan and West are appropriated by Ethiopian children in the context of their day-to-day lives.

This study has been conducted with the chief aim of exploring how Ethiopian lower class children in Addis Ababa negotiate with and make meaning out of the global video game messages they are exposed to as represented by the Play Station video games produced by the Sony Company. Exclusively, the research investigates how and why the specified children accept, modify, or even reject the contents and the technology of Play Station video games they encounter amidst the context of their everyday lived reality. Accordingly, I explored some of the relevant societal systems that have contributed to the exposure of Ethiopian lower -class children in Addis Ababa to Play Station video games. My investigation in this regard demonstrates that small-sized game centers as emerging environments of new media technology exposure for low class children. Ethiopian children from impoverished part of the society are attracted to small-sized video game playing centers which are perceived by the community as 'safe' spaces and 'safe' form of entertainments.

Moreover, as a male only cultural and technological practice space, female children hardly ever visit these game centers. In this manner, small-sized game centers become ignorant mediators of Play Station game contents and its technology and unconsciously make easy Play Station games' introduction to the children from poor section of the society in Addis Ababa. I have examined factors such as poor access to and non-availability of game console, computer, TV set and the impoverished condition of the children's lived reality that Ethiopian children, embedded in the Ethiopian lower class economic formation, use Play Station games as part of their own ongoing attempts to make sense of their lives. I have also investigated that how these video game centers contribute to the children's informal experience of new media technology in the form of video games. I have also shown that informal experiences of Play Station games in small-sized game centers do not only influence children's private values and attitudes towards new media, but they also have an impact on their educational concepts and actions. In this way, I have highlighted how the attraction of Play Station video games has created a children culture with differentiated meanings for different social categories in the Ethiopian society.

Since the study is about the consumption of the global Play Station games in the local, I believed it valid to discuss concepts like 'glocalization', hybridization, media convergence theory and globalization or concepts of global media as the theoretical framework of the research. The foundations of the media convergence lies on the premise of technological shift that alters the relationship between existing technologies, industries, markets, genres and audiences . Results of the analysis of my research show that if the world is becoming a "global village", this global village must include different tribes and this possible media/cultural convergence and glocalization.

In order to explore how lower-class Ethiopian children negotiate with the video game contents and technology of Play Station, I have used qualitative research methods such as observation, focus group discussions and in-depth interviews. These interviews have led me to appreciate the complex manner in which the Ethiopian children are attracted to Play Station games and how the meanings they appropriate depended on their lived reality. The methods used have allowed me to understand the reception of children from their own perspectives; hence, I understand the reasons

why children are either attracted to, or reject, the global Play Station game contents and technology.

One of the major outcomes of this research is that Play Station players have borrowed terms, rules and techniques from Play Station games, and thus domesticating Play Station games so that they can fit in their mode of thought and behavior. Players cannot change the system, but can modify the rules and vocabulary (Cerdeau, 1984). This is called glocalization. The idea of passive mass as the slave to cultural industry (Adorno, 1991) is not applicable to Play Station players in Addis Ababa. Consumers have creatively added new meanings and contents in consuming popular culture (Fiske, 1989).

Moreover, this study establishes that it is possible to explore how individual differences in the consumption of Play Station games intersect with gender and how these games and gender mutually constitute each other. To examine female children's gaming situation, my efforts were focused on female children, seeking to understand the gaming experience from their perspectives. Based on the female children participants' responses, I have identified two types of participants in my research i.e. gamers and non-gamers. For female gamers, those participants who reported the highest levels of consumption, technology and gender appear to be most highly integrated. These female gamers seemed most likely and willing to exploit gaming technology in order to explore different enactments of a gendered self. By comparison, the non-gamers who participated in the study expressed strong criticisms about game-playing and gaming culture. For these women, games are a waste of time. Their decisions not to play define a self that might be viewed as more traditionally feminine, but which these women insist is interpersonally competent and grounded in the things that matter.

7.3 Scope for Further Research

Technology and media literacy issues in relation to Play Station video games or any kind of video games in children's understanding of computer related concepts are areas for further research. In their description of the informal learning experience about computer related concepts from video game centers the children repeatedly mentioned issues of computer, language and competence in technology related concepts. An investigation in this area will have implications for aspects to be reconsidered and revisited in the globalization of media, which is represented by digital games like the Play Station that brings opportunities to broaden children's outlooks and provide more equal access to "media competency," computer literacy, or ICT skills by informal and non-formal learning processes of children within their "computer gaming' culture, but it also threatens cultural identification and values. These new media were also considered as bad educators, because they "taught" children and young people things like violent behaviors production of local contents for children. This also needs further investigation in Ethiopian context.

One more imperative area of further research is in the aspect of the dispersion of global video games and the inter-textual effects on children in light of the United Nations Convention for the Rights of the Child. The state of Ethiopian children and the media in relation to the provisions of United Nations Convention for the Rights of the Child and other relevant child right issues are yet to be investigated. It is especially important to note how the United Nations Convention for the Rights of the Child demands countries to encourage both international and national media to produce materials for the promotion of the child's "social, spiritual and moral well-being and physical and mental health", and whether this provision is put into effect or not.

Further research can also be done to further probe into how Ethiopian lower-class children negotiate with Play Station video games and its technology by breaking down the seven major thematic issues individually in order to provide a deeper insight into how the children make meaning out of the content and technology of Play Station games in the context of their day-to-day experience.

7.3.1 Personal Remarks

As one of the first researches on video games in Ethiopian academia, I have accentuated the attraction of Ethiopian children to the Play Station game they consume which is an account circle in a multi-vocal, local context in which one of the voices is mine. My understanding of the existence of Play Station games in Ethiopian new media landscape that are aligned to the inter-textual media exposure like (TV and movie) of the Ethiopian children is the major justification for conducting a research on these children. Listening to the voices of these children who were both the gamers and non-gamers was an appealing process. These stories reveal that Play Station gaming experience is helping the children in their self-definition. I hope my study has offered a narrative of how these children have drawn on Play Station games to understand their lived reality and as a response to the conditions of their lives.

The bewildering and ambiguous feelings that I experienced during my endeavor support the genuineness of the power relations that I believe exists and revealed in the form of 'The Digital Divide' a network perceives the phenomenon as the gap between those who can effectively use new information and communication tools, such as the internet, and those who cannot. The digital divide 'runs a jagged course between countries, but also within countries, often coinciding with other 'divides': income, ethnic, age and gender' (Carlsson 2002:8). However, this study might challenge these outlooks of the digital divide partially in this regard ;as the children are exposed to new media technology in the form of console video games which has helped them to have a little bit of computer related knowledge. It is with context that I hope that my research will contribute to understanding Ethiopian perspectives of the role Play Station video games play in the identity formation of children in Addis Ababa. It is my hope that my research efforts will lead to other similar endeavors.

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Appendices

Appendix I a

Supporting Letter to Public Libraries, NGOs and Government Offices

To: _____

Addis Ababa

Endalkachew H/Michael Chala is a fourth batch student of the Faculty of Journalism and Communication, Addis Ababa University. As part of the requirements of his successful completion of the program, he is involved in conducting a research with a theme of Video Games and Children in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

As the resources in your institution, particularly those of library and documentation will be of great assistance to the successful development of the thesis, the Faculty of Journalism and Communication kindly requests your cooperation for the specified student.

Regards,

Appendix I b

Supporting Letter to Selected Schools

To: _____
Addis Ababa

Endalkachew H/Michael Chala is a fourth batch student of the Faculty of Journalism and Communication, Addis Ababa University. As part of the requirements of his successful completion of the program, he is involved in conducting a research with a theme of Video Games and Children in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

As the profile of the targets of his study fit to the children learning in your institution, we ask for your kind assistance to let him conduct interviews with the selected number of students which he is going to specify.

The Faculty of Journalism and Communication would like to thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Regards,

Regards,

THEMATIC QUESTIONS

Digital video games and children's involvement

1. How do the children narrate the story of the play station video games they play?
2. Which aspects of the video game make the children's emotions intense and keep them coming back to video game?
3. What role does the background story of different types of video games play for children?
4. What kind of characters in video games do the children associate with success?
5. What kind of perspectives do the children prefer playing in play station video games?
6. Do the video games provide any way out from their lived reality (perhaps as a means of being big and strong, potent, commanding, etc)?

Cultural Convergence and Glocalization

1. How do the children compare their lived reality to that of the digital games they play? Are there times that they wished to be like the characters they play in game?
2. Is there anything that the youth particularly like about playing play station video games? Does it have anything to do with their lived reality?
3. Why do the children prefer to create their own jargons and game rules for the characters in the games
4. To what culture or tradition do the children associate digital game playing?
5. Is there anything that the youth dislike about Play station games?

Digital Culture and Ethiopian Identity

1. Has the playing of digital games the way the children see their lived reality and culture in any way?
2. Are there any aspects of the digital games /characters they attempt to imitate?
3. Is there any aspect that the children used as a point of reference to challenge traditional views and conservatism?

Gender and technology fusion /Integration of digital gaming

1. Why the female children do are not allowed to come to the game centers?
2. Which digital games do the children like most and why?
3. Do the games the children favor got anything to do with their gender?
4. Do the digital games influence male gamers' self identity or self -image or perception of male and women in general?
5. How can male's gamers gaming perception be understood from the perspectives of power dynamics of technology of the gendered self?

Digital game play and Gambling

1. Do the children give a special attention to violence? Why?
2. From where do the youth get the money for playing the video games?
3. Does gambling help children to improve their performance in gaming?

Video game play and other formats of media

1. Do the children follow other formats of media (films, soccer broadcasts, and other)?
2. What is the relation ship between films, soccer broadcasts, and other and digital games in the life's of the youth?

Appendix III

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR INDIVIDUAL IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

1. Can you please kindly tell me your name, how old you are, and which grade you are in?
2. Do you remember when you have started playing digital video games?
3. What do you know about Play Station video games?
4. In what way do you get the information about the video games you have played so far (TV commercials, Televised satellite broadcasts, friends)?
5. Which video games have you liked most? Why?
6. Think of the any video games you like most. Which aspects of the game do you like and remember most? Why?
7. Do you like playing digital games? Why?
8. What is (are) your favorite video games?
9. What aspects of your favorite games do you like?
10. Do you play the games alone, together with your friends, siblings or any other people?
11. How do you compare video games with films and other formats of media?
12. Do you always understand the language in the digital games you play? If not, how do you solve the problem?
13. How did you learn to play with the joystick?
14. Who starts /open the digital game for you?
15. Do you have the opportunity to watch children films or soccer broadcasts that are related with digital game that you have played?
16. What do you like more films or the digital games?
17. How do you relate the game you play in the digital games to your own lived reality? Is it similar or different?
18. What do you think of digital game playing?
19. After playing the video games films, what do you think of the culture you live in (with friends, family, school, etc.)?

20. Is there anything you would like to tell me about the digital games you have played so far that we have not discussed so far