This thesis analyzes co-located gaming practices. Computer games are often played online, without co-players being physically present. In internet cafés, however, young, mostly male, game players gather in order to play multiplayer games together. These are settings within which players can talk to one another and observe each others’ actions directly, something that creates unique circumstances for game playing. The aim of this thesis is to analyze how this sort of co-located interaction structures gaming activities. Four empirical studies detail a range of situated gaming practices, exploring interactional aspects of embodiment, vision, categorization and blame from ethnomethodological and conversation analytical perspectives.

Demonstrating proficiency in gaming is found to be an ongoing concern for the players, and internet cafés are shown to be rich settings for both the display and the contestation of gaming competence and expertise. This is accomplished not only by acting skillfully in the games, but also through other means, such as instructing novice players, engaging in self-praise or blaming teammates. Even though many games require fine-tuned cooperation between players, disputes and conflicts are also core components of gaming interaction. Engagement in identity work and the establishment of local hierarchies of gaming competence is shown to be an important and enjoyable aspect of gaming culture, but also one that both conditions and limits participation in gaming activities.
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