



PETER LANG

'Killer Games' Versus 'We Will Fund Violence'

The Perception of Digital Games and Mass Media
in Germany and Australia

Jens Schroeder

While the assessment of digital games in Germany is framed by a high-culture critique, which regards them as an 'illegitimate' activity, they are enjoyed by a wider demographic as a 'legitimate' pastime in Australia. The book analyses the social history of digital gaming in both countries and relates it to their socio-cultural traditions. Concerning social history, Australia almost depicts an inverse mirror image of Germany. Its foundational dynamics, closely associated with different egalitarianisms, led to a different form of distinction than in Germany – a country whose national self-conception was closely related to groups which perpetuated an idealistic notion of Kultur and later integrated it into a rigid class system. The book not only demonstrates how the discourses on games follow long-established patterns of rejection and approval of mass media but also regard them as an access to the inner workings of both societies. How the games are perceived tells us a lot about German and Australian identity.

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Für meine Eltern

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SECTION 1: Introduction

1.1 “Killer Games” versus “We Will Fund Violence”

In April 2002, in the German town of Erfurt, a 19-year-old expelled student killed sixteen people before committing suicide. This act of violence quickly led to a discussion about the possible reasons for the tragedy. When police investigators found several violent digital games on the perpetrator's PC, one of the chief causes was quickly identified: the gunman supposedly practised for his killing spree with the first person shooter *Counter-Strike*¹. In the following debate the media strongly focused on so-called 'killer games'. Titles such as *Counter-Strike* or *Doom* were regarded as the main triggers of the killings, yet the complex biography of the murderer was not paid attention to. Despite Germany already having one of the world's strictest laws concerning digital game violence, politicians took up the notion of 'killer games' and called for their ban. Such a ban never took place. However, in a fast process, a tightening of the law for the protection of the youth was enacted. This pattern of reaction would repeat itself during later school shootings and become a staple in the coverage of digital games. They became one of the main reasons for violent acts, bad marks and deviant behaviour. They were "the bullseye of morality" (Sicart, 2006: 9).

One could argue that digital games have been the target of mass media criticism for a good part of the last three decades. Accusations of games as training devices for empty-minded serial killers, or the direct blame that they took when the tragic events of Columbine High School unfolded, made them targets of moral panics in other parts of the world. Yet the intensity with which the discourses were led in Germany pointed to issues beyond these concerns. Games allegedly contained 'perverted cruelty', led to isolation, addiction, and escapism; at the same time they were not successfully integrated into institutions of culture and education, making it impossible to successfully control them (Spieler, 2008: 23). It was a trivial medium that was considered as not yet having reached maturity; as such it lacked social legitimacy. People who enjoyed playing games were portrayed as 'freaks' and 'gamblers' – essentially, "urchins" with whom one should not play" (Stock, 2009: 103). They came across as a scene closed to outsiders, complete with their own secret rites (ibid.: 98). Even worse were those 'freaks' who enjoyed the violent "trash" (Zeit quoted by Rittmann, 28.08.2009) of 'killer games', something which basically demarcated a defective personality. This was more than a moral panic perpetuated by those parts of society which lacked the strategies to make sense of a new medium – it was a cultural conflict. This also became apparent in the embedment of discourses on digital games in anti-American and, closely related, anti-capitalist rhetoric.

1 Ironically, *Counter-Strike* was never found on the gunman's computer (Decker, 2005: 60).

Games were looked on as originating from a country of low artistic potential that sacrificed cultural values in the name of profit and manipulated Germany's youth by means of a military-industrial apparatus closely associated with Hollywood.

In Australia, on the other hand, matters were different. When asked if her organisation had a problem with funding violent games as long as they did not step over a certain line, Amelia King of Film Victoria answered: "No, no problem at all. And again: it goes back to working in a completely global market place. If that is what is selling, if that is what it takes to establish our companies and have them self-sufficient and build a franchise then that's the reality of the medium that we're working in. And we need to [let] game development know that we couldn't start to censor and impose cultural values" (Giblin & King. Interview, 2007). This was in a country whose legal framework made it possible for 15-year-olds to play games that in Germany were refused classification on the grounds of their violent content. However, Australians did not seem to be worked up about this fact. As Mark Fludder, senior business adviser for the Queensland Government's Information Industries Bureau, put it: "I think the worst... If you would say to people: 'What's the bad thing about games?', in Australia they're not gonna say that they influence the mind, they get people killing. They're going to say that it stops kids from going outside and playing in the sun" (Fludder. Interview, 2007). These statements were congruent with personal experiences. One could admit his interest in the medium without being immediately confronted with its supposed potential to lead to real world violence. It seemed that games were not regarded as an 'illegitimate' activity but, especially in the case of such easily accessible titles as *Singstar* or *Guitar Hero*, something for everyone to enjoy. This enthusiasm was also reflected by a steady flow of news concerning record breaking sales of games and the consoles to play them on. Even if the medium faced opposition, this mostly came without the cultural baggage that was characteristic for Germany. Something was different in Australia. But what? And – more importantly – why? Why was it that Australia, like Germany a Western democracy, dealt so differently with digital games?

In the following chapters I will introduce the goals and objectives of this dissertation, as well as the methods that inform this work and the overall reflection on the differences between the two countries. The area of research which results from these questions is very broad. A reflection of digital games in the sense of a pure history of the medium is not suited to cover these basic issues. Accordingly, I will not deal with games' isolated history, but will assess them within the context of their social framing. As a result, this dissertation will use a combination of cultural sociology and media history to clarify the reasons for the distinct perception of mass culture (and therefore digital games) in Germany and Australia. The dissertation's approach makes it necessary to position it in the overall field of research; something I attempt in chapter 1.3. This section will conclude with a summary of the sections that follow.

1.2 Objectives and Goals

Even if one superficially assesses the differences in the perception of digital games in Germany and Australia, one will find significant differences. This holds true all the more if one is aware of Germany's history of mass culture. In view of the opposition games in Germany face, Zielinski comments that the "discussion, as we're experiencing it now, has been around in all its subtle differences at least four times in the twentieth century. (...) In the same nuances, in the same facets, with the same arguments" (Zielinski quoted by Stock, 2009: 53). At the same time, it is unlikely that the comparative openness with which Australians met digital games was a spontaneous reaction towards this latest iteration of mass culture, but also followed long established patterns of appreciation of mass art. This perpetuation of reactions alludes to the fact that they relate to reasons deeply rooted in the history of each country and its impact on their respective socio-cultural environments. Essentially, this dissertation has one objective: to explicate the reasons for why digital games are dealt with differently in Germany and Australia and how these differences are accounted for by the countries' histories and identities.

This initial objective has to be detailed in a number of more focused objectives. In order to make meaningful statements about the differences in perceptions of digital games in both countries, the discourses on them must first be analysed. Without an insight into where Germany and Australia diverge, a solid basis for this dissertation would be missing and the research would become meaningless. After these differences have been established, the next step needs to be an analysis of the causes. Therefore we must ask what the socio-cultural and historical forces were which shaped a distinct national conscience and dominant identity constructions during the countries' founding phase to a degree that even today we regard certain expressions and reactions as 'German' or 'Australian' (in one form or the other). In the following, these forces are termed 'foundational dynamics' (also see chapter 1.3). Germany, as a European *Kulturnation*, obviously has a different history and different foundational dynamics from those of Australia, a New-World society built on premises which consciously distanced themselves from their Old World heritage. Processes of nation formation are especially pronounced in settler societies like Australia. In contrast to many European countries with comparatively lengthy histories, dense mythologies and notions of cultural purity, newer nations have to undertake the process of nation formation explicitly, visibly, defensively and are always being caught in the act. It is a rather conscience construction which does not give identities the same appearance of naturalness and authenticity (Turner, 1994: 122-123). These different constructions, the fact that Australia depicted almost an inverse image of Germany in terms of the forces which shaped a large part of the national conscience, could not stay without an impact on the perception of different kinds of aesthetics.

Closely related to the uptake of culture in all its forms is the issue of distinction, the cultural demarcation between social groups: by a conspicuous refusal of other tastes, a class

tries to depict its own lifestyle as something superior. A country like Germany, whose national self-conception was closely related to groups which perpetuated an idealistic notion of *Kultur* and later integrated it into a rigid class system, exhibited a different form of distinction from Australia, which regarded itself as having left behind these pretensions. My ambition is to demonstrate how the different forms of distinction, shaped by different foundational dynamics, asserted themselves in terms of the perception of mass culture to the point where digital games were just the latest medium to be surrounded by long-established patterns of criticism and enthusiasm. To make this point clear it is necessary to give a detailed history of previous introductions of mass culture and with what types of reactions they were met in both Germany and Australia and their modes of distinction. Given this approach, another objective is to demonstrate the possibility of cultural stability during social change – what can a country's methods of dealing with digital games tell us about that country itself?

Therefore, the aims of this dissertation can be summarised by several guiding questions:

- a) What are the different foundational dynamics of both countries and how do they differ?
- b) How do these differences relate to modes of distinction?
- c) How do the different modes of distinction in Germany and Australia relate to the perception of mass culture and therefore digital games?

As mentioned above, this approach includes a broad area of research. Historical media research touches on the interests and motives of the people involved in production and reception and therefore cannot be conducted without taking into account society and culture as a whole. In line with this approach, this work moves within the fields of sociology, media studies, history and marketing. As a result, the writing of this kind of dissertation proves to be difficult as it must draw from several aspects of these disciplines and emphasise them accordingly. The history of different media, contents and mentalities are examples of aspects which have to be taken into account and made part of a comparative method which lets one country learn about itself by looking at another.

1.3 Methods and Precedents

An analysis of the differences of the perception of digital games, the starting point of this dissertation and its basis, cannot rest on anecdotal evidence and the sporadic consideration of news about the medium. Consequently, in order to create a conscience for the differences between Germany and Australia and their wider implications, an analysis of the discourses on digital games since their first impact on each society until the twenty-first century is necessary.

Discourse is a social process of constructing meaning within a mutually understood set of rules. It typically refers to the collective discussion or interplay of meanings and ideas circulating around a particular subject, incorporating these different modes of expression and

instances of communication (O'Shaughnessy & Stadler, 2005: 150). Foucault's theory of discourse is that societies tend to bring together a range of voices, ideas, and beliefs into overall discourses that offer ways of understanding the world. Any society has a number of discourses by which it makes sense of the world and which can be analysed by means of a discourse analysis (ibid.). Foucault (1981) argues that a range of ways of thinking are brought together to make sense of different fields, and that these discourses change over time. For instance, in relation to crime, he explains how medical, legal, religious, and moral discourses define criminality and criminals and suggest ways of dealing with them. These discourses are linked to regulation, surveillance and government of the population; in other words, they are not neutral but are the means of organising and transmitting social power and control (ibid.: 151). Likewise, by examining the discourses employed by leading German and Australian newspapers, it is possible to get a sense of how digital games were perceived since they first entered the mainstream conscience and how they were supposed to be dealt with. This procedure also partly reveals the role national identities play, e.g. by framing digital games with a traditional high culture critique, perpetuating vocabulary that has been employed in earlier discourses or hinting to the national character as somehow protecting from the medium's effects. An analysis of these discourses does not claim to represent that this was exactly what Germans and Australians thought. However, Spigel's claim about television can also be applied to digital games: "While media discourses do not directly reveal how people respond to television, they do reveal an intertextual context – a group of interconnected texts – through which people might have made sense of television and its place in every day life" (Spigel, 1992: 2).

The time frame of the analysis, the late 1970s until the early twenty-first century, is chosen in order to create a conscience for historical continuities and to determine the extent to which the uptake of games throughout the decades followed habitual formulas. This was also one of the reasons why the medium of the newspaper/newsmagazine was chosen; it covered games since arcade cabinets made their presence felt in the late 1970s. Additionally, the analysed publications all enjoy a comparatively high credibility. At the latest after the 1962 'Spiegel Affair', one of the major political scandals in post World War II Germany, the news magazine *Der Spiegel* can rely on a trust on the parts of its readers that has been cultivated over a period of decades (Weischenberg, 1995: 238). It can be regarded as an opinion leader amongst German media. Its influence in the German public is not only due to its high circulation of more than one million copies per weekly issue, but also to the structure of its readership, which on account of its social status has the power to inform public outlooks. This makes the magazine a guide for other lower-circulation publications but also for national newspapers; they often cover 'Spiegel-topics' which were disseminated in advance by news agencies. As a result, the *Spiegel* holds a key position in the German media landscape. It inhibits a leading function in the process of agenda-setting and regulates the flow of information as a gatekeeper by setting priorities in the process of selecting news. Hence, it has a huge in-

fluence on its recipients' perceptions of reality (Schomaker, 2007: 9). Overall, its political orientation can be regarded as liberal, despite the fact that it took a more conservative stance after the death of its founder Rudolf Augstein. It also is characterised by a very critical tenor. As the German writer and poet Hans Magnus Enzensberger once put it: the Spiegel consists of a sceptical omniscience which doubts everything but itself (Glaser, 1997: 262). The second publication to be analysed is Die Zeit, one of Germany's most respected newspapers. Centrist to social-democratic in its political leanings and intellectual in its tone, its high circulation of close to half a million, its 'quality journalism' including in-depth coverage and its appeal to an elite readership also causes it to be perceived as a paper capable of informing public opinion (Solsten, 1999: 398; Avram, 2008: 56). Like the Spiegel, it too is widely read by other journalists, and therefore inhibits an important function in the process of agenda-setting (Avram, 2008: 57). This approach is supplemented by an analysis of German academic literature on digital games in order to both detect if some issues were only confined to the press and to underline the persistence of certain discursive patterns. This analysis mostly covers pedagogic approaches but also works which supply overviews of discourses and attitudes and include information on such matters as the number of 'indexed' games, demographics and legal texts.

The Australian publications to be analysed are the Sydney Morning Herald and The Australian. The Sydney Morning Herald, published by Fairfax Media, one of two big publishing companies dominating the Australian newspaper market, is Australia's oldest continuously published newspaper. It is the 'paper of record'. It is also one of the most respected Australian news publications, and with a circulation of about 249,000 (in 2002), amongst the most read papers in the country (Tiffen, 2006: 108). According to its publisher, the Sydney Morning Herald is the leading New South Wales paper when it comes to reaching influential targets and is the newspaper of choice among high income earners (Adcentre.com.au, 01.11.2009). The Australian is Australia's biggest-selling national newspaper. Owned by News Corporation, the other company dominating the Australian newspaper market, it mainly recruits its readership from the ranks of professionals, managers and white collar workers on account of which it can be regarded as influencing public discourses (Newsspace.com.au, 01.11.2009). Analogous to Germany, this analysis is complemented by an examination of Australian literature on the field. A similar corpus of pedagogic texts as with Germany cannot be identified; however, studies regarding the attitudes of Australians towards digital games complete the picture. Furthermore, several partly structured interviews were conducted with people working in the German and Australian games industry, including developers, lobbyists and government representatives.

If one analyses the results of these discourses in both countries, one will find that they both followed certain patterns. Since the early 1980s, digital games in Germany were framed as contributing to real-world violence, isolation and addiction. While these misgivings lessened over the years, they were often issued within the framework of a broader *Kulturkritik* which depicted them as incompatible with basic cultural values. At the same time, this view-

point also accounted for considerations as how to this new medium could be used as a platform for the communication of art and ideas. In this regard, their critique betrayed parallels to previous reactions towards mass culture in Germany. The same holds true for Australia, albeit that here the reactions rather ran along a line of a comparatively broad acceptance. This is not to suggest that concerns over digital games never occurred, similar to Germany, and indeed the rest of the Western world, they were often the target of accusations ranging from leading to delinquency to bringing 'filth' into the country. However, most of these concerns seemed differently motivated. They were not so much concerned about the inherent qualities of the medium itself and did not have the same cultural implications.

Consequently, the question must be what the values, beliefs and feelings were which informed the way the analysed media texts made sense of the world of digital games. Given the prevalence of certain reactions, their rationale was not only informed by the respective historical contexts but, it seemed, also by national idiosyncrasies. If one examines the sociological and historical literature on Germany and Australia, one will quickly find a distinct disparateness. Germany defined itself as a European *Kulturnation*; it was a state in which the bourgeoisie, removed from political activity, sought legitimation in qualities which stood opposed to the superficial values that characterised the ruling noble class. It valued inwardness, depth of feeling and immersion in books, an outlook which was furthered by the fragmentation of the German territory as it offered a form of identity that was not bound to national boundaries. In the course of Germany's history, the establishment of a German state and a failed bourgeois revolution, these once-enlightened values were integrated into a rigid class system and became absolute principles. Australia's history, on the other hand, was shaped by a different outlook. What started as a penal colony would turn into a stable democracy and a young progressive nation where European pretensions were a thing of the past. As a New World society, Australians wanted to distance themselves from England through those characteristics which differed most from the 'motherland' (yet to which they retained a strong connection for decades). This drive took place in a country where nature, climate and the huge distance from the rest of the Western world contributed to different sentiments in terms of how social classes dealt with each other: in people's imaginations – as well as in reality – it was a more egalitarian conduct.

In view of these realities, it becomes apparent that Germany and Australia were shaped by different 'foundational dynamics'. This concept relates to the ways in which cultures develop from their modern origins, to the socio-cultural and historical forces which led a distinct national self-perception and identity construction. It takes into account how these origins, these defining concepts, translate into cultural norms and patterns (e.g. egalitarianism) which even in the present can inform social reality. In this regard, Australia, within the framework of a Western democracy, depicts an inverse image of Germany – even more so than the USA, the New World nation *par excellence*, yet also a country where in the second half of the nine-

teenth century European sensibilities asserted themselves again through a process of monopolisation, legitimisation, and sacralisation of aesthetic forms (Diaz-Bone, 2002: 153ff.). This fact makes Australia an ideal comparison; it is an inverted mirror which helps Germany to recognise itself better and the other way round. We define ourselves by something we are not, this also holds true for national cultures². Different national patterns can only be recognised through those character traits which diverge from the respective norms. They help to sharpen the image this inverted mirror is able to sketch. To paraphrase Ward: if it be conceded that Germans and Australians do differ in certain ways it is clear that we shall never identify these 'typical' or characteristic differences by concentrating our attention on the much more numerous and important traits which people of these nationalities hold in common (Ward, 1966: VII).

These differences in social norms did not stay without an impact on the way culture in its different forms was dealt with. A country with defined itself in terms of high cultural achievements perceived it differently than a nation where people built their national conscience on the notion of egalitarianism and whose harsh physical environment was more likely to counter philosophical deliberations. These facts closely relate to different modes of distinction. As explained above, distinction describes the cultural demarcation between social groups; a conspicuous refusal of tastes lets one class' lifestyle appear as superior to other classes' choices. The concept of distinction is most famously associated with the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. Bourdieu (1984: 492) takes up Elias' notion of the German bourgeoisie, who legitimised and distinguished itself as a group by means of the comprehension of high culture and a refusal of mass art. He develops it further into a political economy of power which shows how consumption and lifestyle patterns mirror patterns of class differentiation, seemingly both drawing from and reinforcing underlying class relations. Given the inspiration of his work by German conditions and sociologists such as Elias, his approach is valuable for identifying the causes for the different perception of mass culture and therefore digital games in Germany and Australia.

Bourdieu puts forward the view that culture is a source of domination. "The arts, science, religion, indeed all symbolic systems (...) not only shape our understanding of reality and form the basis for human communication; they also help establish and maintain social hierarchies. Culture (...) mediates practices by connecting individuals and groups to institutionalised hierarchies. Further, many cultural practices in the advanced societies constitute relatively autonomous arenas of struggle for distinction" (Swartz, 1997: 1). Accordingly, Bourdieu carries out a sociology of symbolic power which addresses the "topic of relations

2 It must be acknowledged that Australian culture means more than just European derived culture: Australian Aborigine culture represents the oldest surviving culture in the world. However, after Australia was colonised, more than 60,000 years of indigenous traditions were marginalised socially and economically.

between culture, social structure, and action" (ibid.: 6). His central concern is the question of how "stratified social systems of hierarchy and domination persist and reproduce without powerful resistance and without the conscious recognition of their members" (ibid.). He seeks to find the answer to this question by exploring how cultural resources, processes and institutions hold individuals and classes in competitive and self-perpetuating hierarchies of domination. Accordingly, he advances the claim that all cultural symbols and practices embody interests and function to enhance social distinction, one of the fundamental dimensions of social life. "The focus of his work, therefore, is on how cultural socialisation places individuals and groups within competitive status hierarchies, how relatively autonomous fields of conflict interlock individuals and groups in struggle over valued resources, how these social struggles are refracted through symbolic classifications, how actors struggle and pursue strategies to achieve their interests within such fields, and how in doing so actors unwittingly reproduce the social stratification order. Culture, then, is not devoid of political content but rather is an expression of it" (ibid.: 6-7).

In his approach to culture, Bourdieu develops a political economy of symbolic power which includes a theory of symbolic interests, a theory of capital, and a theory of symbolic violence and symbolic capital. "His theory of symbolic interests reconceptualises the relations between the symbolic and material aspects of social life by extending the idea of economic interest to the realm of culture. There are symbolic interests just as there are material interests. He conceptualises culture as a form of capital with specific laws of accumulation, exchange and exercise" (ibid.: 8). Moreover, the exercise of power by means of the profits culture guarantees required legitimation, something which he translates into a theory of symbolic forms as resources of symbolic capital which helps to maintain power structures.

His conceptual trademark of extending the concept of economic calculation and capital to all forms of power is complemented by his concept of *habitus*. *Habitus* is called a "structuring structure that itself has been structured, a strategic system of classifications, schemata of perception, dispositions, and scripts – it acts as a reservoir of meanings and recipes for action assigned by, produced by and synchronised with the fields that provided them to habitus in the first place, and which in turn habitus tends to reproduce through its action" (Widick, 2004: 199). *Habitus* connects action to culture, structure and power, it is a "structuring mechanism which operates from within agents (...) the strategy generating principle enabling agents to cope with the unforeseen and ever-changing situations (...) a system of lasting and transposable dispositions which, integrating past experiences, functions at every moment as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations and actions and makes possible the achievement of infinitely diversified tasks" (ibid.). In short, *habitus* is a cultural unconscious that organises perception and thus determines the actions that constitute fields, the structured arenas of cultural and social conflicts.

Given the nature of habitus and the fact that society by and large 'misrecognises' how cultural resources, processes and institutions lock groups into reproducing patterns of domination, Bourdieu thinks of the practice of sociology as 'socioanalysis' where the sociologist is to the social unconscious of society as the psychoanalyst is to the patient's unconscious (Swartz, 1997: 10). It is the misrecognition of those embedded interests that is the necessary condition for the exercise of power, accordingly their exposure will weaken their legitimacy and open up the possibility for the creation of a more egalitarian order. By exposing those underlying interests that bind groups into unequal power relations, sociology becomes an instrument of struggle capable of offering a measure of freedom (*ibid.*).

However, there are aspects of Bourdieu's approach that have drawn criticism. His practice of sociology shares a weakness with psychoanalysis. It includes an authoritarian defence mechanism: the stronger one rejects the diagnosis of psychoanalytic analyses, the stronger the repression is said to be, whereas in the case of Bourdieu's 'socioanalysis' the stronger one defends the legitimacy of certain aesthetics the more misrecognised their relation to power becomes. However, in both cases the validity of the actual diagnosis does not undergo scrutiny.

Additionally, his application of the language of economic interest and strategy to all areas of cultural and social life has been attacked on the grounds that it reduces to a form of economic determinism since his theory is orientated by a single unitary argument in which "the ensemble of social practice reduce to a more or less mediated and more or less hidden game of material interests" (Caillé quoted by Swartz, 1997: 68). This criticism also centres on the fact that Bourdieu "makes no attempt to delineate what part of social actions can be explained by conscious calculation and what part cannot. All action for Bourdieu reduces to underlying interest, whether conscious or unconscious" (*ibid.*). Accordingly the question should be asked whether different kinds of conduct vary in their degree of interestedness: are some forms of behaviour more interested than others; "that is, might some forms of behaviour respond more directly to survival needs than others?" (*ibid.*: 69). As pointed out, interest-orientated action is regarded as not assuming conscious, rational calculation. In his work, though, Bourdieu makes no consistent distinction between conscious and unconscious forms of interest calculation, but rather claims that "interested action gains in legitimation and efficacy the less visible its interested dimension is to actors" (*ibid.*: 70) which in turn suggests that he "is willing to recognise degrees of awareness of the interested character of some form of action; moreover, these presumably have some bearing on the success or failure of those pursuits" (*ibid.*). In addition, Bourdieu does not take into account forms of behaviour that possibly go against the objective interest of actors (*ibid.*: 71)

It should furthermore be noted that the concept of habitus has been charged with allegations of structural determinism. Critics claim that "in the last analysis, habitus is unable to account for innovation and change, for it reduces action to the interests of the types of capital it internalises in dispositions and generates only practices corresponding to those interests"

(ibid.: 211). Bourdieu rejects this criticism by pointing out that it merely amounts to a superficial reading of his work that does not take the 'inventive' side of habitus into account, but some of his formulations lend credence to critics' concerns. Also, while "habitus calls attention to the dynamics of self-selection in competitive social processes, the internalisation of objective chances into expectations and the adaptation of aspirations to actual opportunities are often more complex and contradictory than the process suggests" (ibid.: 291).

Another issue is that Bourdieu treats the dominated classes "as homogenous in their habitus, driven by material necessity, lacking in cultural capital, and hence dominated by dominant culture" (ibid.: 170). Due to them not being able to use culture as a source of profit to advance in society, on account of them having to first of all ensure their physical survival, the 'lower orders' are not capable of participating in the struggle for distinction which raises the question as to whether there can be a genuine form of working-class culture outside of the purview of the dominant class culture respectively if there are sources of differentiation in consciousness and practices that the working class habitus does not reveal. It is this lack of differentiation that hints to another weakness of Bourdieu's theory, namely that, despite the sophistication of his work, he implicitly assumes the structure of taste to be one-dimensional (Schulze, 1992: 132). Despite him describing tastes which result in higher profits ('legitimate' culture) and those which do not contribute to social advancement ('illegitimate' culture), what he actually means are separations of a single dimension. This excludes the possibility of a combination of 'legitimate' and popular tastes in the same class. Lastly, a point of criticism includes that Bourdieu's concept of capital lacks an analytical grip on the specificity of capitalist societies and important variations among them, as, for example, the rate of interconvertibility might be lower in market societies with a strong welfare state (Swartz, 1997: 81).

Despite these limitations, Bourdieu's work is still immensely useful for analysing German society. Germany was the birthplace of a delimiting, exclusionary notion of *Kultur*. Not only was it an instrument for the self-reproduction and self-legitimation of dominant social classes but also for the nation. The German bourgeoisie's secularised belief in the importance of an aesthetic education of mankind led to an embourgeoisment of the arts in the nineteenth century in the course of which, in consequence of hollowed out enlightenment ideas, music, painting, theatre and literature started to function as standards of ethical orientation and definite means of power. This reached a point where *Kultur* was transposed onto the national level and became a distinguishing mark of German identity: when Germans expressed pride in their achievements, they spoke not of their civilisation but of their *Kultur*. A neo-Kantian orthodoxy conceptualised *Bildung* (education, cultivation) as a personal progression towards spiritual perfection and a sign of moral and social superiority. A social psychoanalysis which conceptualises culture as capital and regards it as embodying interests offers the appropriate tools for an analysis of these conditions.

However, its diagnoses must be different if applied to Australia, a country which consciously rejected European conditions. In this young nation, patterns of domination were not regarded as 'natural', and the basis of its distinct national outlook was shaped by anything but high culture. What if the egalitarian order Bourdieu aims to create is already achieved – not only in people's imagination but also in the way different classes deal with each other? His approach is still applicable but, given its roots in European traditions, results in a contrasting outcome: it is a different patient on Bourdieu's couch, his actions and patterns of social norms tell a different story. In fact, he sneers at that German who just walked out the door because he reminds him of his English cousin whose snobbery and pretentious manners he never liked (yet with whom he could not live without). Somehow they are all related to the extended family of Western democracies, but these new young members are different. Naturally, they also have a different outlook on mass culture and therefore digital games.

In order to demonstrate how the differences in the perception of games are related to the countries' different socio-cultural histories and their impact on different modes of distinction, this is followed by a history of the introduction of previous forms of mass art. This analysis of the mass media film, radio and television will reveal how the uptake and production of mass culture followed established patterns. Testifying to the persistence of certain social norms, the discourses on digital games are just the latest iteration of these reactions. This history is described in the vein of Bourdieu's 'socioanalysis', i.e. it will mainly focus on how mass culture became part of different power relations. It accounts for the aspect of perception as well as production, as both of these fields offer valuable insights into how parallels in discourses in each country reassert themselves. Not only did the uptake of mass culture follow certain idiosyncratic notions but also its production was shaped by forces based in different outlooks. In accordance with this thesis' focus on the *characteristic*, this part will mostly centre on the historical parallels in each country's media history in order to better point out the differences between the two nations³.

Bourdieu's approach is supplemented by the consideration of historical contexts, as these played an important role in directing and informing opinions on aesthetics. Wars, mass migration, new patterns of consumption, a realignment of international relations, novel intellectual currents and social movements: all these developments did not stay without impact on mass culture's function in society, and they amplified both concerns and enthusiasm. The importance of having to consider the respective historical and cultural framing of mass culture becomes apparent in the case of Hitler's rule over Germany. The National Socialists' reign of terror can be regarded as a cultural revolution which suspended all of Germany's traditional socio-cultural influences (respectively led to their consistent last perversion), one of the re-

3 Variations are accounted for, e.g. due to differences in the quality of the medium itself, the way film was taken up did not foreshadow every aspect of later discourses on games respectively did not completely contrast Australian notions.

sults being a new relationship between classes and a decidedly different mode of dealing with mass culture.

Also to be accounted for is the fact that with changing social realities, Bourdieu's sociology runs the risk of losing currency. With the exemption of the break under the Nazis, Germany's 'classic' Bourdieu phase lasted until the mid-twentieth century (which likewise depicts the end of Bourdieu's main period of research); beyond this point an application following established interpretations proves difficult. This, however, does not mean that this approach is obsolete; rather, it just needs to be adapted to these new realities. Accordingly, authors are consulted who develop his concept further and make it the basis of their research on contemporary societies. For Germany, Bourdieu's work is extended by Gerhard Schulze's (1992) vigorous socio-cultural analysis of German post-war society with its description of several everyday aesthetics and how they help to inform the distinction of several milieus. In Australia, Bennett, Emmison and Frow (1999) analyse the tastes and cultural preferences of late-twentieth century Australian society and put them in relation to the exercise of power. Both of these texts offer valuable insight into how far the application of Bourdieu is still appropriate in the late twentieth/early twenty-first century and explicate the basis on which a New World patient can expect a different 'socioanalytic' diagnosis. In order to demonstrate how different histories lead to different distinctions and how these still assert themselves in contemporary German and Australian society, this analysis is completed by a description of contemporary marketing groups and their cultural preferences. Given the differences in social norms in both countries, it can be expected that these are reflected in consumer segments' tastes.

No research is totally original; naturally, also this dissertation is part of a tradition. Its comparative approach which analyses the foundational dynamics of two Western countries with diverging histories and relates them to the uptake of mass culture and digital games by means of a 'socioanalysis' does not have many precedents. However, there are works which possess an affinity to this thesis' approach and inform important parts of it. The following aims to present parts of the tradition this research belongs to.

Before positioning this research in the overall picture of the field, it needs to be pointed out that its starting point, the history of the uptake of digital games in Germany and Australia, is largely unexplored. For both countries there exists no historical analysis which covers the perception of the medium since its introduction. Of course there are sources which trace its history, such as Kent's standard work *The Ultimate History of Video Games* (2001) or Demaria's and Wilson's detailed account *HIGH SCORE: The Illustrated History of Electronic Games* (2004). However, these histories mainly focus on the United States and Japan (and to a smaller degree on the UK) and mainly list names, dates and companies without relating them to a larger social context. Accordingly, this dissertation mainly relies on a discourse analysis of print media.

On the other hand, there are texts which work as a useful amendment or present an overview of parts of the field. Herzberg (1987) for example offers a critical summary of the German academic literature on digital games and summarises its results. Moreover, she supplies details on gamers' demographics and sales figures of games and consoles. An annotated bibliography reveals the prevalence of certain patterns of interpretation which are congruent with the sentiments encountered in the analysed print media. A discourse analysis of how several German newspapers cover digital games is carried out by Stock (2009). He points out the missing research on the issue and attempts to answer how games were reported on by looking into such issues as the description of violent titles and gamers in general. However, while Stock's work offers useful insights, there are limitations. On the one hand, the time frame of his analysis is limited to one year (mid-2004 until mid-2005), which makes it impossible to identify long-established patterns of reactions. On the other hand, despite him covering the history of digital games, their public perception and reasons for their rejection, these parts of his analysis are rather brief and do not explore the issues in depth; in addition, he does not address how the uptake of games owes to Germany's cultural environment.

The situation is similar for Australia. A systematic analysis of the uptake of digital games since their introduction does not exist. However, there are works which offer hints. Van Moorst (1981a-c) looks into discourses on the environment in which arcade games were played and, to a lesser degree, into the games themselves. He identifies the public reactions to this new form of entertainment and relates them to the concept of moral panic, the feeling expressed in a population on an issue which appears to threaten social order. A similar approach is taken by Larme (2000) and his thesis on censorship and game controversies. In addition to an analysis of controversies around fantasy role-playing titles in the 1980s, he examines the opposition faced digital games faced in the early 1990s. Titles such as *Night Trap* caused the first real instance of public resistance against the medium, something Larme likewise attributes to the mechanisms of a moral panic. However, neither he nor Van Moorst explore how these responses were shaped by Australian conditions. Durkin and Aisbett (1999) offer an overview of Australians' attitude towards digital games at the end of the twentieth century. Their qualitative study of players' perceptions and experiences looks into such issues as which types of games are played, feelings associated with game play and concerns about violence. In addition, it includes a literature review of pre-1995 research. In a similar fashion, the *Interactive Australia* report (Brand et al., 2008) provides data on the demographics of gamers, what their gameplay behaviours are, the importance of games in the family experience, and how gamers compare with non-gamers on attitudes toward games. Again, both these accounts do not offer any insight into how these attitudes were influenced by social contexts, but instead describe the facts during a certain point in time.

It should also be noted that the internet offers a good source of information on these matters. In Germany, Heise.de provides a summary of discourses on violent games and public reactions to them by collecting news, surveys and background information on the issue. This

information reaches back to events in the late 1990s but mainly focuses on incidents which took place after the 2002 Erfurt tragedy. A similar function is fulfilled by Stigma-Videospiele.de which likewise gathers news items regarding the rejection of digital games and statements of prolific game critics. The site offers detailed insights into 'characteristic' German reactions; however, it has only been online since late 2007. In Australia, the blog of game journalist Jason Hill and the Australian version of Gawker blog *Kotaku*, *Kotaku.com.au*, prove to be valuable resources in this regard.

In terms of precedent texts which describe the respective histories and foundational dynamics of Germany and Australia, the state of research is more complete. For the description of a distinct German outlook I rely on Norbert Elias' seminal *The Civilising Process* (2000). In it, he describes the genesis of the distinction between *Kultur* and *Zivilisation* by exploring the relationship between the German notion of culture and the French idea of civilisation. While 'civilisation' sums up everything which has made Western society of the last two or three centuries believe itself superior to earlier societies, the Germans conceived of civilisation as something external and utilitarian, and in many ways alien to their national values. "Civilisation moves forward over time and transcends national boundaries, in contrast to *Kultur*, which is bounded in time and space and is coterminous with a national identity" (Kuper, 2000: 30). Due to the influence of this distinction on German history its explanation and its cause form the basis for further research. "German history, to be sure, does not consist of a single, linear tradition of anti-Enlightenment and anti-Western impulses. But to entirely disregard this ongoing tendency may produce a certain historical colourblindness. Whatever its merits as an objective tool of historical analysis, many Germans repeatedly asserted a species of the *Sonderweg* thesis to describe – and celebrate – their own condition. In that sense the *Sonderweg* must at least be considered as a primary datum of German subjective historical consciousness from the eighteenth century forward" (Aschheim, 2001: 118).

This dissertation's application of Elia's notion builds on Glaser (2005), who explains how *Kultur* over the course of Germany's history was emptied of its ideals and, as a semi-religious absolute, contributed to impenetrable power structures which inevitably led to the Third Reich. While his text suffers from an 'retroactive' approach which reads history backwards and forces it to follow its own footsteps, his account of how German culture rid itself of its Enlightenment origins and how the *Kulturnation* became closely associated with an authoritarian *Staatsnation* in which subjectivity and irrationalism became overpowering, forms an important basis for describing differences to Australia. Similarly, Herf (1984) describes the peculiarities of German history and the country's socio-cultural norms and relates them to the uptake of technology. According to Herf, antimodernist, romantic, and irrationalist ideas present in German nationalism tried to convert it from a component of alien, Western *Zivilisation* into an organic part of German *Kultur*. Given that every mass cultural break was closely associated with advances in technology, this is a crucial aspect to consider.

When it comes to descriptions of Australian identity and its formation, one of the most important texts is Ward's *The Australian Legend* (1958). Ward describes how the traits of a distinct national character were informed by the pastoral workers of the Australian bush, resulting in an egalitarian, sceptical and anti-authoritarian outlook – values which directly opposed Australia's British heritage and strongly influenced the young nation's self-conception. These character traits were strongly perpetuated by subsequent literature on national identity which translated the legend into contemporary society. A better part of these texts was written in the 1960s, a point where Australia's homogenous identity slowly began to crack. Examples include *Lucky Country* (1966), Horne's influential comment on Australian postwar society, Pringle's *Australian Accent* (1965) or McGregor's *Profile of Australia* (1965). All these works contributed to the longevity of a populist nationalism at whose core stood the 'bushman' and his ascribed qualities. As such, they unquestionably influenced the country's self-perception, its social norms and realities.

However, at the same time, Ward's description also concealed aspects of Australian history and identity whose consideration is crucial in understanding the uptake and rejection of mass culture. In order to detect these, White's notion of the constructedness of national identities is employed. White (1981) explains that when we look at ideas about national identity we need to ask what their function is, whose creation they are, and whose interests they serve. By asking these questions, the image of the Australian Legend can be partly corrected and reveal neglected realities such as the continuing close relationship to England, Australia's strong protectionist stand and the exclusion of marginalised social groups from the country's egalitarian sentiment. By means of White's approach it becomes apparent that in terms of social structure Australia was never as egalitarian or radical as it thought itself to be; a fact which Thompson (1994 a-b) underlines with her history of the country's levelling traditions and common misconceptions surrounding them. On the other hand, it also helps to approach Australia's egalitarian sentiment from an angle which does not perpetuate overworked clichés. While it was never as distinct or inclusive as Australia's populist nationalism would suggest, it was more than just an empty gesture. In this regard, I rely on Hirst's (2002) notion of an 'egalitarianism of manners', one of the most important clues when looking into concepts of Australian identity. This was a 'huge change of rules' compared to European outlooks. Moreover, this sentiment was not only influenced by Australia's cultural traditions but also its distance from the Western world, a factor which Blainey (1968) in *A Tyranny of Distance* accounts for. Finally, White's method is useful for explaining how the specificities of Australia's identity construction contributed to a resistance towards mass which followed a different logic from that of Germany by reducing debates about fundamental cultural values into national conflicts.

As explained above, the different modes of distinction which result from these histories and their impact on socio-cultural traditions are described through Bourdieu's cultural sociology and its extension by Gerhard Schulze who adapts his approach to late 1980s Ger-

many. His historically conscious study explains the changes society underwent since the 1960s and how this affected aesthetic preferences which he regards as increasingly constituting large social groups. He describes these milieus, their origins, tastes and modes of distinction and how they relate to the perception of different forms of mass culture. By making taste one of the principal points of his research he supplies this dissertation with a crucial basis. Schulze also translates the milieus he outlines into established marketing segments, a step which I will replicate with modern segments in order to see if his findings still apply and to allow for a better comparison to Australia. To a certain degree Bennett's, Emmison's and Frow's *Accounting for Tastes. Australian Everyday Cultures* (1999) can be regarded as the counterpart to Schulze. They, too, analyse aesthetic preferences of contemporary Australian society and explain how they relate to the constitution of class. As can be expected, putting Australia on the couch of Bourdieu's 'socioanalysis' finds a different kind of dominant distinction prevailing in the antipodes. However, while this is a crucial conclusion which helps to illustrate the differences between Germany and Australia, it needs to be pointed out that their research lacks the historical awareness of Schulze's work. Schulze offers a historical trajectory for the milieus he describes, *Accounting for Tastes* 'just' offers a (crucial) snapshot. It is not so much an extension and adaption of Bourdieu's approach to contemporary Australian society; instead his old couch is still the main site of confessions. In this regard Australia lacks a study as extensive as Schulze's. As a result, some statements regarding the perception of digital games in Australia are more tentative than in Germany.

In terms of texts which describe the history and rise of mass culture in Germany under a socio-cultural perspective, Maase sets an insightful precedent with *Grenzenloses Vergnügen* (1997). He explains how mass art became a defining moment of modern societies and analyses the function it fulfilled. His period of investigation reaches from 1850 to 1970 and therefore covers a large part of the era explored in this dissertation. Maase mainly focuses on the historical contexts which framed mass culture's uptake and gave it momentum, and he relies on Bourdieu's writings to explain the opposition it encountered. He also accounts for changes and continuities under the Nazi regime and compares Germany's development with other European countries in order to determine the extent to which it followed international trends or national idiosyncrasies. For Australia, I partly draw on Goodall (1995), who investigates the contextual questions that encircle the spheres of high and mass culture. He relates these debates to back to the history of Australia which "has struggled with questions of its identity, but which has interpreted them to a peculiar extent in terms of a conflict between elitist and populist definitions of its culture" (Goodall, 1995: 79). Goodall links cultural analysis to the construction of Australian nationalism, examines how elitism and populism feed into identity politics, and explicates how the mutual exclusivity of Australianness and high culture is inscribed on the body of the bushman. However, while he acknowledges Bourdieu's work, there

is a reluctance to apply him to Australian conditions and look into how aesthetics became part of power relations and crucial in constructing social classes.

This reluctance continues in other works I draw on to illustrate Australia's media history. The notion that aesthetics are part of a political economy of power and utilised to highlight and stabilise social demarcations is rarely examined. This raises the question what contributed to this blind spot. Is the hesitation to investigate these issues a result of Australia's egalitarian self-conception or did class relations really play a lesser role in the perception and rejection of mass culture? Given Australia's cultural traditions, the latter is probable. However, this notion needs to be elaborated from different texts as it is mostly implied but hardly fully explored. Bertrand's *Cinema in Australia. A Documentary History* (1989) is useful in this regard as it not only offers commentary but also a collection of contemporary texts dealing with early Australian cinema, ranging from newspaper articles and reviews to interviews with people involved in the trade. Shirley and Adams (1983) provide an authoritative and accessible history of Australian cinema which to some extent hints at the role the relation between class and culture played by pointing out the low cultural status film inhabited during the pioneer years. They do not, however, explore this issue in depth. They do mention an 'egalitarian market' and the enormous success the cinema enjoyed in Australia but do not link it to notions of Australian identity and their impact on distinction. Collin's text in *A Century of Australian Film* (1995) supplies a hint in this respect by talking about the heterogeneous composition of early Australian audiences and how exhibitors preferred publicity which stressed the egalitarian appeal of movie venues. Other precedents include *Australian Cinema* (1994), a reliable reference work which provides a general introduction to the field, *Historical Dictionary of Australian and New Zealand Cinema* (2005) and *The Cinema of Australia and New Zealand* (2007). These sources do not only present an overview of film's perception in Australia but also of its production which in terms of demonstrating 'characteristic' patterns is just as significant as the uptake of the medium.

For Germany, Heller's (1985) account of the literary intelligentsia's reaction to early cinema provides a vital basis for the examination of how the perception of mass culture followed a specifically 'German' model. He explains why the guardians of Germany's socio-cultural conventions and their dominant mode of distinction so vehemently opposed the medium and relates this response to writers' perceived social function and the notion of emptied enlightenment ideals as a means for self-reproduction. By choosing this approach he demonstrates how class and *Kultur* were intrinsically tied to each other. Kaes' collection of statements concerning the cinema entitled *Kino-Debatte: Texte zum Verhältnis von Literatur und Film* (1978) depicts a meaningful amendment to Heller's assertions as it presents some of the texts he investigates in full length. Reflecting the opinions of writers and other interests involved in the literary trade, it is not only useful for stressing Heller's arguments but also to establish parallels to later discourses in Germany and highlight differences from Australia. Widdig (2001) in turn explains how the intelligentsia's fears intensified when post-World War

I inflation, with its dynamics of massification, devaluation, and the rapid circulation of money, condensed the experience of modernity in a traumatic way. In addition, I rely on texts included in *The German Cinema Book* (2002), a comprehensive collection which reevaluates traditional areas of interest in German cinema and complements this with a look at hitherto neglected aspects. Kessler's and Warth's contribution about early cinema and its audiences supply especially valuable insights into class-related dynamics and touch upon core aspects of this dissertation. Another introduction to the field of German cinema providing a meaningful framework is Hake's *German National Cinema* (2002), the first comprehensive account in English of German cinema from its origins to the present. Hake traces the development of German cinema in relation to political and social change and outlines the artistic under- and counter-currents, technological innovations, and social transformations that defined each era of German film. Moreover, national cinemas are always relational; they only recognise themselves in other cinemas, which is why Hake's description of German film's relationship with other national cinemas and cultural practices leads to a deeper understanding of the *Kulturnation's* uniqueness. In order to grasp this uniqueness in terms of production, Elsaesser's and Scheunemann's chapters in *Expressionist Film: New Perspectives* (2003) are employed. They provide discerning perspectives on important film styles and genres that emerged in films by the eminent directors of the early Weimar era and strive for a picture of its cinema that in thematic as well as stylistic terms reflects the multifaceted cultural and political developments of the period as well as national traditions.

In both Germany and Australia, radio is probably the most neglected medium in the academic literature on media and communications. Dussel's verdict – that the history of its organisation is well documented whereas the history of its programmes and reception is only partially explored – holds true for both countries. His *Deutsche Rundfunkgeschichte* (2004) gives a comprehensive overview of broadcast in Germany and attempts to cover some of the mentioned shortcomings. A similar function is fulfilled by Glaser's and Koch's *Ganz Ohr: Eine Kulturgeschichte des Radios in Deutschland* (2005). Similar to Dussel's text, it deals with 80 years of German broadcasting history in compressed form. By providing the reader with a broad view that does not lose itself in a plurality of methods and themes, both of these books offer a good basis for the delineation of differences to Australia. Other items which depict a meaningful amendment in this regard are the texts of Perkons (2005), Kleinichen (2005) and Lenk (1999). By looking into how literature was conveyed to the listeners, Perkons describes how the 'taste elite' of the literary intelligentsia recognised itself in another mass medium and used it for its purposes. Kleinichen offers an account of how broadcast's audience was made up during the Weimar republic while Lenk analyses the medium's integration into patterns of consumption.

One of the seminal books on Australian radio history is Inglis' *This is the ABC* (1983). Inglis covers the first fifty years of Australia's public broadcaster and explains its agenda and

impact on the country's public life. Given that German radio basically started as a state broadcast, a direct comparison of the two systems and their mode of operation proves to be very illuminating in terms of a different handling of mass media. On the other hand, Inglis hardly talks about the general perception of the medium; he does mention that major parts of the audience regarded the ABC as 'stern' and 'stuffy' but does not relate these judgements to notions of Australian identity or class. Moreover, while he gives a detailed account of the Commission's programmes, he barely devotes any attention to their allocated time slots. The importance of these should not be underestimated as they reflect the priorities assigned to different contents, one example being the banning of 'light' entertainment into the late evening hours. Due to Inglis' focus on the ABC, the private sector does not receive much attention. Generally, this facet of Australian radio history is a neglected field, yet there are some texts which provide some insight into its history and help to contrast it to that of Germany. Walker's *The Magic Spark* (1973) serves as a useful basic introduction which primarily covers organisational aspects. Similar to Dussel, Potts' *Radio in Australia* (1989) examines several decades of Australian radio history in rather compressed form; it mainly focuses on the medium's early years and commercial radio's 'golden period'. The contributions to *Stay Tuned: An Australian Broadcast Reader* (1992) likewise depict a useful basis for an analysis of aspects not covered by Inglis. Not only do they deal with the important relationship between commercial stations and advertisers but also reproduce texts of contemporary witnesses. However, as pointed out above, hardly any of these texts offer a comprehensive history of programmes; while an overall impression of the kind of content aired by private stations is created, no information is given in regard to its time slots or intended audiences. Moreover, a thorough examination of the relationship between radio and notions of national identity and class does not take place. Similar to the film part, this leads to a greater reliance on numbers and statistics to bring my point across.

Given the period's decisive and final break with any enlightenment ideals, the way mass media were dealt with during the Nazi regime fundamentally differed from any previous patterns. One of the notions I built on in this matter is Herf's 'reactionary modernism'. The term describes the desire to rid technology of its 'civilised' Western roots and let it become a part of a *völkisch* vision of modernity. As seen, Herf employs the notion of a distinction between *Zivilisation* and *Kultur* and a resulting *Sonderweg* which facilitates the application of his approach. Furthermore, his description of Hitler as a cultural revolutionary is closely related to a new definition of what constituted status and class, and therefore distinction, in the Third Reich. Egalitarianism functioned along racial lines and under the sign of a dictatorship; it nevertheless had an enormous appeal for ordinary Germans. This is a phenomenon explored by Schoenbaum (1966) who describes how Hitler envisioned a strategy that offered something to everyone – above all, the mirage of a classless society. Aly (2003) takes up this outlook and further sharpens Schoenbaum's argument. In order to further describe the cultural and political climate of this period, I draw on Koonz' *The Nazi Conscience* (2003). Koonz

locates the source of Hitler's power not in his summons to hate, but in his appeal to the collective virtue of his people, the *Volk*. She explores the ruling ethnic fundamentalism and details how the Nazis developed a 'secular ethos' that conferred privilege upon the Aryan people and excluded outsiders from protection.

Dussel's as well as Glaser's and Koch's texts adequately provide commentary on the development of broadcasting under National Socialism and explicate its unique characteristics, such as the push for a 'people's receiver' (*Volksempfänger*). They also stress the degree to which it predominately followed international developments. Zimmermann's *Medien im Nationalsozialismus* (2007) uses a comparative approach to achieve the same objective. Not only does he analyse Germany but also the fascist regimes of Spain and Italy and the way they deployed mass media. Once more, this demonstrates the influence of divergent social norms, even when the resulting differences could only assert themselves within the limited frame of dictatorial practices. In regard to film, it needs to be pointed out that Nazi cinema was not a 'Teutonic horror show', but a comparatively modern culture industry attuned to audiences' sensibilities. It was a media culture which demonstrated how destructive the power of fantasy could be, especially when informed by a 'pathological' form of modernity. These issues are explored by Petley (2002) and the contributions to the volume *Mediale Mobilmachung I: Das Dritte Reich und der Film* (2004). They deal not only with movies' themes, their mass appeal and their embedment into propaganda strategies, but also with how closely German movie-making of the period resembled contemporaneous Hollywood.

The cultural climate prevailing in German postwar society can be described with the help of Glaser's *Deutsche Kultur: Ein historischer Überblick von 1945 bis zur Gegenwart* (1997). By showing how attitudes toward art and culture quickly went back to 'normal' after the break under the Nazis, Glaser clarifies how the period's social context informed an uptake of mass art which resembled prewar positions. *Kultur* served as a demonstrative counterpoint to the barbarous past and vouched for a 'different' Germany. Consequently, radio took on the role it already held during the Weimar republic and became an important playground for the cultural intelligentsia. As could be expected, this was an outlook which also influenced the establishment of Germany's television service. Hickethier's *Geschichte des deutschen Fernsehens* (1998) is an important foundation for the description of its history; not only does it cover organisational aspects but also provides for how Germany's social norms influenced programmes and the uptake of the medium. Likewise, Baier (2007) and his description of how television contributed to a democratisation of German society under chancellor Adenauer accounts for the medium's relationship to postwar realities. In addition, the contributions to the volume *Mediengeschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (1999) offer concise explanations of several aspects of the course the medium took. They include an examination of contents, the relationship between German public broadcasting and advertising, the effect new social movements had on mass media and the establishment – and rejection – of privately owned TV

stations. Seeßlen's biographical account *Macht Fernsehen Dumm?* (1999) gives an insight into 'characteristic' German reactions towards television by describing the viewing habits of a middle-class family and the peculiar relationship it had to a medium which denounced all kinds of bourgeois sentiments.

Naturally, the changed realities after World War II also affected Australian society. One of the most important changes in terms of conditions framing the uptake of television was Australia's intensified relationship with the United States. The Americans increasingly took over Britain's role as a protective power and main trading partner and in doing so exercised an increasing influence on Australia's imagination by means of their brand of consumerism and mass culture (currents which were already noticeable before the war). Texts I rely on this regard are Altman's *51st State?* (2006), White's *The Australian Experience of Americanisation* (1983), Waterhouse's (1998) description of how these changes asserted themselves in regard to popular culture and Serle's (1967) and Boyd's (1960) notion of 'Austerica'.

Arrow's (2009) concise analysis in how far the introduction of television depicted a turning point for Australian history provides valuable leads concerning the medium's uptake. It finds a useful amendment in Walter's texts (1994, 1998) which detail the different interest groups that fought over the way television was to be employed and in how far this was informed by notions of culture and nationality. Naturally, Inglis' account of the ABC's first 50 years also includes the broadcaster's involvement with television and can help to discern its different mode of operation compared to its German counterparts. However, once more hardly any of the texts relate television's uptake and rejection to notions of Australian democracy and class. One of the few exceptions is Bye's (2001) description of how the construction of a distinct Australian identity led to warnings from other parts of the world about television's supposedly negative impacts losing their immediacy (Bye, 2001: 380). Likewise, White's (1980) explanation of the role Australia's nationalism played in reducing cultural conflicts to national ones can also be applied to television. Furthermore, in order to amplify these factors, I draw on contemporary *Sydney Morning Herald* articles which can help to highlight 'characteristic' Australian reactions. Regarding the specificities of Australian-produced TV content and its integration into an international anglophone mediasphere, O'Regan's *Australian Television Culture* (1993) as well as Cunningham's and Jacka's *Australian Television in World Markets* (1996) paint a picture opposed to that of Germany. Given the differences in history, language and outlook, Australian programmes represent a contrasting television culture which also expresses itself in its relation to world markets.

As mentioned, there is no Australian counterpart to Schulze's historically conscious analysis of postwar society. However, one important aspect of recent Australian history is well covered, namely migration. The important question to ask in this regard is in how far certain social norms which informed modes of distinction and therefore the perception of mass culture were able to survive in the face of the highest rate of incoming migration in the OECD. The flow of migrants meant that future notions of an Australian 'national character' had to be

plural and could not be regarded as fixed or 'pure', something White (1981) accounts for by hinting at the traditional constructedness of Australia's populist nationalism. Instead, as O'Regan (1993) points out, now several identity projects exist next to each other and lead to the production of a perpetual identity crisis. On the other hand, it must be remembered that the bushman myth is still a defining power in discursive productions of identity and was flexible enough to adapt to changed social realities. In this I follow Dennoo, Mein-Smith and Wyndham (2000) and their description of how the myth moved from bush to beach, as well as King's and Rose's (1990) item about 'humanity ads' which demonstrate how populism works in a multicultural era. Other precedents which deal with issues of Australian identity in a multicultural society are Turner (1994) who focuses on its construction by means of popular culture; Nicoll (2001) and her survey of the twentieth century cultural production that illuminates different iconic images through which national identity is frequently narrated; and Terri's (2000) interpretation of the Australian people and their increasingly opaque nationalism which now offers varying points of entry for different people. Finally, MacKay (1993) partly touches on subjects explored by Schulze by explaining how the social movements of the 1960s gave way to a generation primarily concerned with self-actualisation; however, he does not approach this phenomenon from a cultural-sociological perspective which would have facilitated a comparison to Germany.

1.4 Structure

This dissertation consists of five sections, which are, in turn, divided into chapters. Each section focuses on different topics and therefore may be of interest for a variety of readers.

The first section is the Introduction. A general overview of the goals, objectives, methods and theoretical affiliations of this dissertation can be found here.

The second section, composed of Chapters 2 and 3, offers a discourse analysis of the coverage of digital games in Germany and Australia by means of investigating leading national print media. The period of investigation starts in the late 1970s, a point in time when digital games started to make their presence felt, and continues into the early 2000s. This will allow for discernment of certain longstanding patterns of perception. For each country the period of investigation is broken down into different intervals to make this overview more accessible. While parallels between the countries are accounted for, this section mainly focuses on 'characteristic' reactions, i.e. those which diverge from the respective norms of the other nation. Given the lack of research in this area, this section will be relevant to anyone with an interest in the history of digital games in both countries.

Once these differences in the appreciation of digital games are established they are traced back to the socio-cultural history of Germany and Australia. The third section, composed of Chapters 4 to 10, constitutes the German part of this exercise. Chapter 4 aims to describe Germany's foundational dynamics by means of Elias' distinction between *Kultur* and

Zivilisation. It will explain how the concept became an empty shell which lost its connections to its enlightenment origins and became part of a thoroughly feudalist society. In order to explain its relation to structures of power and how it became a means to uphold class demarcations and legitimise social order by employing a certain form of elitist distinction, Bourdieu's socioanalysis is employed and described in detail as it forms the basis for further reflections.

In order to demonstrate how this mode of distinction influenced the perception of mass culture to a point where digital games were its latest iteration to be embedded into long established patterns of criticism, this is followed by a detailed history of previous introductions of mass media under the aspect of power relations. Chapter 5 describes the reactions film was met with and how these were informed by Germany's past and the resulting dominant modes of distinction. In order to reveal statements which can help to stake out a 'quintessential' German outline, it mainly focuses on the cultural intelligentsia, the bearers and guardians of a distinct national consciousness. Germany's national conscience was not only reflected by film's uptake but also by its production. It likewise revealed certain 'characteristic' mentalities which revolved around notions of cultural worthiness and foreshadowed later discourses. Chapter 6 attempts to do the same with radio, a medium in which Germany's cultural traditions did not so much assert themselves in regard to the resistance it encountered but rather in terms of its political economy and the production of its programmes.

In Chapter 7, I analyse the decisive break in the handling of mass media under the National Socialists. This chapter demonstrates the importance of Germany's foundational dynamics for the uptake of mass art through the developments their absence caused. Once they were gone, so were traditional forms of criticism. Hitler's social vision did not leave much room for exclusive ideas of distinction (as long as one was part of the *Volk*), the result being a push for a (pathological) mass-media modernity.

Chapter 8 will describe the uptake of television. Before an examination of its perception takes place, the social and cultural context of its introduction is explored. After World War II, Germany's concept of *Kultur* regained its strength surprisingly quickly. It was an alibi, a demonstrative dissociation from the recent past. Accordingly, in many respects the discourses surrounding the launch of television exhibited parallels to previous (prewar) discussions.

Chapter 9 will account for the social changes which Germany went through from the 1960s to the present and how these affected modes of distinction. It is based on Schulze's application of Bourdieu to late twentieth century German society which describes how the constitution of different milieus revolves around contrasting everyday aesthetics and the according distinctions. This chapter also includes an analysis of one of the most important influences on the perception of commercialised mass culture in postwar Germany: the Frankfurt School, and specifically the work of Theodor Adorno. The main points of Adorno's interpretation of mass culture's function will be explained and examined. It will be demonstrated that his augmentation of Germany's cultural conventions with left-wing criticism did not radically differ