

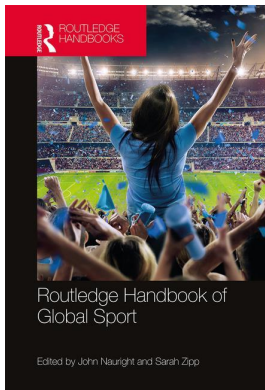
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### E-sports

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## E-sports

*Jacob Hindin, Matthew Hawzen, Hanhan Xue,  
Haozhou Pu and Joshua Newman*

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In recent years, the world has witnessed a phenomenal growth of professional organized video game competitions, known more commonly as ‘e-sports.’<sup>1</sup> The letter ‘e’ in e-sports represents ‘electronic,’ which denotes that e-sports is largely dependent on digital and computer-mediated content; ‘sports’ within such nomenclature refers to the gaming form’s organized, immediate, and competitive features. Hollist describes e-sports simply as: ‘professional video game matches where players compete against other players before an audience’ (Hollist, 2015, p. 825). Taylor (2012) goes further to suggest that e-sports ‘represents the configuration of competitive video gaming as spectatorial and professionalized sport’ (p. 1).

E-sports is not limited to the digital gaming practices of ‘traditional’ sports such as soccer, basketball, or football – even though such simulations of ‘traditional’ sports could also be included as part of e-sports (such as EA Sports’ FIFA and Madden NFL franchises) (Hamari & Sjöblom, 2017). It is also practiced through highly competitive, tournament-style, mass-mediated events that bring together top gamers from around the world to compete in avatar-based fantasy battle games. Hence, we might refer to e-sports as any organized multiplayer video game competition – such as *League of Legends*, *Dota 2* (Defense of the Ancients), and *Starcraft* – where individuals and teams assemble in stadia and arenas to compete in sanctioned, real-time, broadly-streamed, financially-incentivized, and widely-attended tournament events. The domain of e-sports now includes a vast variety of genres including fighting games, first person shooters (FPS), real time strategy (RTS), massively multiplayer online role-playing game (MMORPG), and multiplayer online battle arena games (MOBA). Each e-sports event consists of event organizers, officials, sponsors, broadcast teams, news reporters, and tens of thousands of spectators congregating in professional sports venues – while millions of ‘gamers’ watch live online streams and television broadcasts from other locales around the world.

When defined so broadly, today e-sports is an incredibly popular, deeply professionalized, and highly commercialized feature of the global sport-media landscape (Taylor, 2012, 1–33). By some estimates, global revenues from the e-sports market related to video gaming commerce are expected to reach \$1 billion<sup>2</sup> by 2019 (Riddell, 2016). According to a *Sport Business Journal* report, 205 million people watched or played e-sports games in 2014. In 2015, corporate sponsorship of e-sports was estimated at \$111 million in North America, and the total global prize pool for major e-sports events reached \$165.4 million (Lefton, 2015).

Most recently, e-sports events have drawn considerable interest from traditional sports and media corporations. In January 2016, ESPN launched a vertical site dedicated to covering global e-sports tournaments, events, players, and gaming trends. In late 2015, Turner Broadcasting System (TBS) and IMG partnered to create a 20-event broadcast schedule of *Counter-Strike* e-sports events for the 2016 calendar year. Further, it has been reported that Disney/ESPN is in negotiations with Riot Games to broadcast League of Legends events across ESPN online and television platforms for \$500 million.

Besides media corporations, universities and institutions are also making their incursions into the field of electronic gaming. In the United States, a number of university athletic programs have in the past three years developed university-sponsored competitive video gaming teams. Operating under the same budget as their competitive NCAA football, basketball, and baseball teams, e-sports teams at Robert Morris University, University of California, Irvine, Columbia College, Maryville University, and Southwestern University now compete in online and in-person tournaments around the United States. In Australia, Australian University Games (AUS) – the governing body for intercollegiate sport competitions – sanctioned League of Legends as an ‘official sport’ in May 2016, for which AUS will maintain governance oversight (Walker, 2016).

### Are e-sports ‘sports’?

Where e-sports sit relative to traditional sports is a matter of definition. Allen Guttman developed a list of distinguishing features for modern sport in *From Ritual to Record* (1978), defined as activities that involve ‘physical, competitive, and organized play in contrast to spontaneous play, non-competitive games and intellectual contests’ (Jonasson & Thiborg, 2010, p. 289). In Guttman’s construct, unorganized, spontaneous play become games when rules and structure are added; some games can then be classified as contests dependent on adding the element of competition, and these contests can be divided into intellectual contests and physical contests, which he calls sports (Jonasson & Thiborg, 2010). E-sports can be seen as fulfilling the requirements of being organized, competitive, and physical. As Witkowski (2012) argues, e-sports differ from intellectual contests in that the kinesthetic ability of the player determines the outcome of the match. Compared to the intellectual contest of chess, where the movement of the piece is unrelated to the player’s actions (e.g. a grandmaster could dictate orders to a stand-in with no difference in performance), the ability of an e-sport competitor to manipulate their avatar, select actions, or aim within a game will directly impact the result (Witkowski, 2012). Jenny, Manning, Keiper, and Olrich (2016), however, draw a distinction between fine motor skills and gross motor skills (moving large parts of the body), arguing that some definitions of sport require gross motor action, a requirement e-sports will not meet unless motion-based video games (those that track gross motor movements) are implemented.

Guttman also argued that modern sports differ from ancient sports in certain aspects, namely a movement towards bureaucratization, rationalization, quantification, record-keeping, secularization, and equality (Jonasson & Thiborg, 2010). E-sports fulfill many of these qualifications, as they have no outward religious aspect (secularization), force players to abide by the same rules (equality), lend themselves more easily to quantification of performance than traditional sports, and have a long history of record-tracking (Jonasson & Thiborg, 2010). However, e-sports lack the overarching bureaucratization of global sports such as football (FIFA) or the Olympics (IOC), instead having several competing organizations competing for supremacy on the nascent international scene (Jonasson & Thiborg, 2010; Jenny et al., 2016). As discussed below, global governance is one of the current challenges facing the emerging e-sport market.

## E-sports and the experience economy

E-sports fans tend to skew younger—roughly 28% may be over 35, although 84% are over 21 (Casselman, 2015). Seo (2013) has argued that e-sports represent a provision of the emerging experience economy driven by younger consumers. The experience economy represents a shift from the service sector to an economic sector where consumers pay to experience memorable events. There are four areas of perceived consumer experience collectively known as the '4Es': educational, escapist, esthetic, and entertainment, which many e-sports events fulfill, such as learning through education experiences or enjoying a performance through an entertainment experience, which may represent a shift towards the desires of younger adults (Seo, 2013).

## The early development of e-sports

E-sports roots lie within the dawn of computerized gaming and the development of competitive game environments. Much of the current competitive videogame market may be traced back to the 1962 debut of *Spacewar*, one of the first multiplayer games distributed among multiple machines (Lowood, 2009). *Spacewar* was developed at MIT to demonstrate the power of a new microcomputer and included two players, each controlling a spaceship and attempting to eliminate the other. The program spread from MIT to other research institutions, adding in unique code at each spot. The game reached its zenith during the 1972 'Spacewar Olympics' at Stanford University (Lowood, 2009). The small competition of approximately two dozen players represented one of the first physical gatherings of competitive gaming and was covered by *Rolling Stone*, primarily for the novelty of the occasion (Lowood, 2009).

By the 1980s the arcade scene in the United States had fully exploded. A series of popular and inventive games such as *Centipede*, *Pac-Man*, and *Galaga* drew many players to the arcades (Borowy & Jin, 2013). Numerous live tournaments were also organized during this time period, primarily sponsored by game companies. The mid-1970s All Japan TV Game Championships in Tokyo were sponsored by Sega (a Japanese multinational video game company), while the 1980 First National *Space Invaders* Competition was sponsored by Atari, manufacturer of the arcade case (Borowy & Jin, 2013). The national *Space Invaders* tournament was the first large-scale videogame competition in the United States, attracting over 10,000 participants from the regional rounds through the final in New York (Borowy & Jin, 2013).

The new media attention birthed the first wave of e-sports (proto) celebrities and professionals. These included Ben Gold, a contestant on the reality game show *That's Incredible*, whom Walter Day considered the first video game champion; Leo Daniels, who earned five national records and used his celebrity to attract business to the arcade he managed; and Roy Schildt, whose expertise at *Missile Command* among others, earned him sponsorships from Taco Bell and Nike (Borowy & Jin, 2013). Similar to golf, contestants played against 'the course' and then compared performances. This, however, quickly changed with the widespread emergence of home consoles and the advent of the Internet age.

The widespread adoption of home video game consoles from the mid-1980s to 1990s brought gaming to living rooms across the world. Unlike personal computer gaming, consoles are stand-alone devices that are usually connected to televisions and played with specifically designed game controllers as opposed to mice and keyboards. Including consoles such as the Nintendo Entertainment System, Sega Genesis, Sony PlayStation, and Microsoft Xbox, the consoles of the late 20th century eased access to competitive gaming. Gaming magazines such as *Nintendo Power* and *Sega Visions* kept and published records to encourage competitions (Taylor, 2012, 6), and in 1990 Nintendo held the Nintendo World Championships, a touring

competition within the United States. Consoles allowed multiple players to directly compete against each other without purchasing multiple play chances such as in an arcade, allowing for longer game sessions. By projecting the display of the game on televisions rather than personal monitors, consoles also acted as a catalyst for passive consumption of games by other members of the family or friends of players, prefiguring the rise of e-sport spectatorship (Taylor, 2012, 184).

The development of e-sports has also come about in conjunction with the digital interconnectivities brought about by the launching of the worldwide web in 1989. From the early 1990s onward, advances in software and hardware (network) technologies allowed video game players to connect in real-time multiplayer gaming scenarios. In the early days, competitions were carried out over the Internet or through Local Area Networks (LAN), where both smaller and larger numbers of computers were linked together in one network. The most popular genres within multiplayer online gaming environs were FPS, RTS, and sports games (see Jonasson & Thiborg, 2010). In FPS games, the player controls an avatar, the virtual representation of a human or creature in the game. The only thing visible of the avatars on the screen are the hands and the weapons they handle, with the goal being to 'shoot' enemy players, akin to an immersive, complex shooting gallery. FPS games may be structured for individual battles (such as in the *Doom* or *Quake* series) or as team-based matches with objectives such as in the *Team Fortress* series or *Counter-Strike* (a series which has sold more than 10 million copies since 2000). *Counter-Strike* in particular has remained popular, especially in Europe; the game pits teams of five against each other, one attempting to plant a bomb and the other attempting to stop it (Witkowski, 2012).

### Emerging e-sports leagues

The late 1990s to early 2000s saw the development of the first organized e-sport leagues with regular scheduling and structured seasons. Over time the number of different games in which organized, prize-based competitions are held has increased. E-sports organizations defunct and ongoing such as the World Cyber Games (WCG), Electronic Sports World Cup (ESWC), Major League Gaming (MLG), Professional Gamers League (PGL), Championship Gaming Series (CGS), and Cyberathlete Professional League (CPL) – in cooperation with corporations within the computer game industry – arranged LAN competitions at both national and international levels. The earliest leagues consisted of both the PGL – an ephemeral production founded in 1997 that included competitions in *Quake* and *Starcraft* with Nolan Bushnell as its first commissioner – and the CPL that was founded by Angel Munoz in the same year (Taylor, 2012, 1–34).

The CPL attracted media attention (such as MTV specials) and offered an example for other leagues to follow (Kane, 2008, 117). However, after years of declining events, the league was sold in 2008, reorganized to host several events in China, and eventually stopped production. CPL management was later accused of shady business dealings, deception, and issues with delayed or never-paid prize money from tournaments, clouding its final years (Taylor, 2012, 9). The fickle nature of emerging markets meant that many of the first e-sports leagues were short lived, including the WCG.

The WCG began in 2000 as a product of the South Korean competitive e-sports scene, and was created by a collaboration of the South Korean government and private investors (Hutchins, 2008). The games patterned themselves after the Olympic Games, complete with medal count, opening and closing ceremonies, and nationalized competitors (Hutchins, 2008). Entrants would go through numerous rounds of regional qualifying before the winners were invited to the annual grand finals, held in South Korea for the first four years before being rotated among the US, Europe, and Asia. Total prize money for the competition rose from an initial \$200,000 to approximately \$500,000 at its peak, with over 70 nations and 700 competitors represented at

the 2007 finals. The WCG claimed that approximately one million players globally entered the events, when all of the numerous national preliminary rounds were included (Hutchins, 2008). The 2009 finals in Chengdu, China attracted over 82,000 live spectators, while the 2010 finals in Los Angeles attracted over 32,000 (Taylor, 2012, 206). The WCG also exhibited the push towards rationalization and bureaucratization that may increasingly be seen as e-sports undergoing 'sportification' (Jonasson & Thiborg, 2010, p. 292). As with many of the nascent e-sports organizations, the WCG did not prove to be as stable as some of the more well-established e-sports leagues – the competition was shut down in 2014.

That the WCG originated in South Korea is no surprise. Since the 1990s South Korea has taken a leading place in global e-sports structuring, acting not only as '...what a professional scene that has entered the cultural mainstream can actually look like, but for the imaginative (even mythical) power it holds for those trying to foster pro gaming in North America and Europe' (Taylor, 2012, p. 18). The emergence of e-sports in South Korea may be traced back to the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis. Following the crisis, the South Korean government decided to invest in information technology as a developmental goal. Between 1998 and 2002 \$11 billion was invested into the country's Internet network (Li, 2016, 35). This investment has led to South Korean consumers having access to very fast Internet connections, with over 95% of the population having access to broadband Internet (Jin, 2010, 20). Access fees are also cheap – monthly fees for Internet usage fell from roughly \$40 in 1999 to under \$20 by 2006, at which time US consumers still spent on average more than \$50 per month (Li, 2016, 35). PC bangs (24/7 Internet cafes that provide relatively cheap hourly access to gaming computers) became popular after the financial crisis as laid off workers searched for something to do. The PC Bangs then acted as primary setting for the development of competitive gaming (Jin, 2010, 22–25). As of 2012 the South Korean gaming economy surpassed \$5 billion with over 50% of the population playing online games (Taylor, 2012, 17).

This level of activity has led to government involvement in the South Korean e-sports scene. In 2004 its Game Industry Promotion 5-Year Plan was instituted to foster online gaming and e-sports – included in the plan was support for e-sports festivals, academic research and game development (Jin, 2010, 67). The largest step South Korea has taken is the formation of the Korean e-Sports Association (KeSPA) in 2000, a nongovernmental body that was nonetheless created with the approval of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism (Taylor, 2012, 25). KeSPA catalyzed the bureaucratization of e-Sports within South Korea. KeSPA has managed numerous tournaments, overseen construction of dedicated e-sports stadiums, aided in securing sponsorships, handled broadcast rights, and registered and tracked professional gamers in South Korea as well as structuring their path to professionalization (Taylor, 2012, 161–162).

## The rise of major e-sports events

While various e-sports leagues and organizations have experienced both pronounced successes and failures, game publishers and developers, such as Blizzard, Valve Corporation, and Riot Games, have become robust players in steering new development of e-sports. In particular, those game developers have specifically designed and modified games to attract more participants and spectators of different age and gender groups, leading up to the rise of large-scale professionalized e-sports events.

The most popular genre became known as multiplayer online battle arenas (MOBAs), which generally consist of two teams of five players and each player attempts to destroy their opponents' base. Each team consists of five 'heroes' who must strategically navigate pathways to their opponents' base that is occupied by enemy minions and powerful defensive turrets, while defending

their own. The most popular MOBA titles include Riot Game's *League of Legends* (LoL) and the Valve Corporation's *Dota 2*. Both games operate on a free-to-play basis, with charges for extras such as unlocking additional characters. The low initial expense for participants has led up to massive player activity in both games – as of 2013 *Dota 2* had four million unique players each month, while LoL averaged 32 million per month (Funk, 2013).

LoL was launched by the Riot Games in 2009 and has been at the forefront of the e-sports revolution. In elite competition, LoL teams – similar to traditional sports teams – feature athletes, coaches, analysts, sponsors, fans, as well as media contracts and merchandise. To date, the game has been featured in more than 1,260 tournaments and over 2,700 professional players around the world (Aaron, 2015). In organizing their events, Riot Games has collectively offered over \$19 million in prize pools, and viewership has skyrocketed as well. For comparison, in 2014, more than 27 million viewers watched the LoL World Championship and the average viewership number of the NFL was 17.6 million (Aaron, 2015). The 2014 competition as a whole saw 288 million cumulative daily unique impressions, according to the organizer Riot Games.

As large-scale international events, the production of major e-sports tournaments might be considered what Roche (2000) describes as mega-events. In 2015, for instance, several e-sports events – produced in joint effort by multinational corporations and governing bodies – substantially grew the e-sports market by facilitating competition and captivating audiences. In January 2015, the *Dota 2* Asia Championships in Shanghai, China, featured 20 teams made up of five players competing for a share of the \$3 million prize pool. Later in August of that year, Valve sold out the KeyArena in Seattle, Washington for The International 2015, which featured 16 teams from around the world competing for a share of the \$18.4 million prize pool.<sup>3</sup>

This trend has further expanded to another game genre: sports video games. Sports games have become increasingly popular. In sports games, game players control digital representations of popular athletes from traditional (or modern) sports in a simulated game, match, season, or race. Popular titles in this genre are the FIFA football series (nearly \$10 billion in total sales) and the Madden NFL game (which has totaled more than \$4 billion in sales in the US alone). Borrowing from the FPS and RTS platforms, the major sports game manufacturers EA Sports has in recent years enacted a number of initiatives to grow their live event market. 'It is evident to us that this represents a large and important growth opportunity for the company,' noted Peter Moore, chief operating officer at Electronic Arts, 'This has the feeling of a great startup, but a startup within a \$4.5 billion company with three decades of experience in gaming' (quoted in Fisher & Thomas, 2016, 1).

Apart from MOBA, RTS, FPS, and sports genres, fighting games, as practiced by the fighting game community (FGC), have emerged as a major part of the e-sports biome. Most fighting games consist of two players controlling characters in a two-dimensional plane attempting to defeat the opposing player. Mimicking boxing or traditional combat sports, each player has commands that correspond to punches, kicks, throws, and special moves. Fast-paced execution and timing is paramount to victory. Popular titles within the FGC include the *Street Fighter* series, the *Mortal Kombat* series, and the *Super Smash Bros.* series. Fighting game competitions often revolve around locally organized match nights at arcades or gaming halls which function as both social occasions and opportunities for high-level competition and local bragging rights. Major e-sports events on fighting games are either organized wherein the players qualify through smaller regional events or are invited directly, or as 'open' competitions, where every player who attends is afforded a spot in the bracket. The most notable fighting tournament is the Evolution Championship Series, or simply Evo. Evo started as Battle by the Bay in 1996 within the San Francisco area, and was rebranded as Evolution in 2002, with the championship eventually moving to Las Vegas (Cravens, 2014, 18). The tournament now bills itself as the world's largest

fighting game event, and has gotten significant number of spectators. The final of Evo 2016's *Street Fighter V* segment was broadcast live on ESPN2.

## Media consumption of e-sports

While television coverage of e-sports, such as the EVO2016 final, is becoming more common, the primary ways for media consumption of e-sports continues to be online or in-person. Streaming sites, such as Twitch.tv, broadcast matches as well as provide a chatting service for viewers to communicate with each other in real-time. Streaming sites also provide a platform for individual professionals to host their own stream, broadcasting their recreational play or practice, allowing them to talk to fans directly (by reading the chat that accompanies their stream), as well as earning income from advertisers or sponsors. Online platforms may also host video on demand (VOD) or replays of concluded matches, mimicking a trend in traditional sports where VODs and replays are recycled and consumed at the viewer's leisure time (Taylor, 2012, 199–200). Games have also been adapted to make it easier to spectate. Popular titles such as *Starcraft* and *Counter-Strike* now have built-in functions to record and review matches (Taylor, 2012, 199). Originally, commentators would have to bundle audio with zip-files after the match or clumsily join as a neutral third-party and hide in order to observe the match from a non-playing computer. Developers eventually installed modes specifically for observation where commentators could view and move around a map naturally within the game (Li, 2016, 49).

Match commentators, often called 'shoutcasters' or simply 'casters,' have become an essential part of the e-sports consumption experience, and are often drawn from pools of ex- or current players (Taylor, 2012, 224–228). These announcers are used for all game types, although their roles may differ for certain genres that are difficult to understand by novices (fighting games, for instance, may be more 'viewer-friendly' than MOBAs that have complex tactical action across the broadcast). Matches may be wildly different in length (an RTS battle can be over in 10 minutes or an hour) and this uncertainty makes showing individual games difficult to fit with traditional advertisers (Taylor, 2012, 211–212). These difficulties present problems for television broadcasting for many games. However, successful television ventures have been undertaken, especially in South Korea, which has multiple channels devoted specifically to e-sports competition. For example, OGN (originally ongamenet), a South Korean e-sports-dedicated cable channel, was one of the first and has been in operation since 1999 (Jin, 2010, 68).

## Emerging international e-sports governing bodies

The administration, governance, and management of various e-sports games/franchises has progressively been bureaucratized, taking a similar path to international sports such as football/soccer, volleyball, basketball, and athletics. Increasingly, governmental or pseudo-governmental institutions have been formed to administer e-sports. For instance, in early 2016 the Electronic Sports League – the world's largest competitive video gaming organization – announced the formation of the World eSports Association (WESA). The formation of the WESA represents the most significant effort (to date) to create an international governing body for competitive gaming. This international governing body will provide oversight of tournament scheduling and player contract mediation, look to curb the growing trend of match fixing, and seek to develop a comprehensive set of policies and procedures for dealing with the growing problem of doping in e-sports (see Waldron, 2016). WESA will also be responsible for promoting electronic gaming and tournament marketing in established and emerging markets across the global North.



## Contemporary issues in e-sports

### *Violence in e-sports*

One concern with the rise of E-Sports is the effect of violent games on behavior; many e-sports titles include actions that represent player avatars doing violence to other players (shooting, punching killing, etc. ...) and psychology researchers have warned that watching or playing violent media may make it more likely that individuals perform real-world violence (Anderson & Bushman, 2001). The results of studies have been mixed and the effect of violent media is an area of active research. Anderson and Bushman's (2001) meta-analysis found links between violent video games and aggressive behavior, cognition and affect. Anderson et al. (2008) found correlations between habitual violent video game play and later aggression within a longitudinal study of US and Japanese youth. Saleem, Anderson, and Gentile (2012) found that violent video games increased states of hostility, aggression, and mean feelings compared to neutral or 'prosocial games.'

However, the field is still unsettled on whether consuming violent video games leads to violence. Ferguson (2018) notes that 'false positive' results for studies linking violence to violent game consumption are prevalent and may be the result of publication biases favoring studies that show significant relationships. An open letter to the APA signed by over 200 scholars criticized making conclusions that violent games caused violence behavior as many studies in the field suffered from methodological issues and the meta-analyses of these papers may be flawed (Consortium of Scholars, 2013). The ultimate links between violence and gameplay remain at this time an open question.

### *Gender in e-sports*

E-sports is played and watched primarily by men; there are no women players among the top 100 pro earners, and market research indicates 85% of the audience is male (Featherstone, 2017). Currently, most women's' teams and tournaments exist segregated from men's' tournaments in the fashion of traditional sports. Contemporary debate focuses on whether professional women competitors should participate within or parallel to existing tournaments. Arguments for separate women's teams note that women face institutional barriers to entry, including an 'initiation' culture that can be acutely sexist and the reticence of male organizers to include and 'skill-up' burgeoning female players in the same way they would male players. Separately organized and supported women's' teams allow for female gamers to benefit from networking opportunities as well as exposure. Conversely, arguments against separating women and men focus on how there may be no biological reason they cannot compete at the same level at e-sports and that separating players and tournaments reinforces divisions that may be more difficult to break down in the future (Taylor, 2012, 125–128).

These debates rest within a broader debate within gaming about traditional views of femininity and masculinity. Gaming, as a tech-heavy leisure pursuit, has often been associated with 'geek' culture, which provides opportunities for men to perform alternative masculinities or translate mainstream hegemonic masculinities. As a (once) marginalized subculture, this may display as either an embrace of alternative lifestyles or repudiation of traditional athletic norms, or as a reproduction and reclamation of masculine norms through the display of technological mastery as well as misogynistic behavior towards unproven female gamers. Many women choose to either hide their gender online, or to adopt hyper-masculinized or hyper-feminized identities within casual competitive play, a phenomenon reinforced by sponsors looking for particular

identity displays for all-women teams. The complicated relationship between masculine and feminine performances are exacerbated as 'geek' culture and e-sports become increasingly mainstream, and the level of subculture differentiation dissolves. (Taylor, 2012, 110–125).

### **Disability e-sports**

E-sports present uncertain opportunities for disabled gamers to compete. The nature of electronic interaction allows many gamers with impaired gross motor abilities chances to find workarounds, such as Mike 'Brolylegs' Begum, a fighting game competitor born with arthrogryposis and scoliosis who plays using his tongue for fine dexterity on a controller stick. Rumblevests have also been developed to assist hard of hearing or deaf gamers, while other competitions may alter their monitor/input setups to accommodate wheelchairs or other assist devices. However, there are currently no accessibility standards for tournaments and acceptance of certain modifications or adaptations will depend on the tournament organizer. Travelling to tournaments may impose financial costs on some competitors with disabilities, and whether modified controllers are allowed or other accommodations are made may depend on ad hoc decisions of tournament legality (Giampapa, 2016; Winkie, 2017).

### **Conclusion**

While nascent compared to other sporting pursuits, the sustained growth of e-sports suggests that the activity will continue to play an important role within the sports ecosphere. The stakeholders and structure of the e-sports industry are still in flux. The connections between the tournament organizers, game developers, professional teams, sponsors, media organizations, and fans will continue to evolve to uncertain ends. Jonasson and Thiborg (2010) offer three scenarios: that e-sports develops into an alternative counterculture to mainstream hegemonic sports, that e-sports becomes accepted as part of mainstream hegemonic sports, or that e-sports itself becomes the new hegemonic sports, acting in concert within changing social conditions and the increasing importance of networked technologies. However e-sports ultimately ends up, its exploration of sporting spheres, both new and old, will continue to warrant further attention.

### **Notes**

- 1 Existing literature on e-sports has primarily focused on e-sports consumption, marketing, and experience economy (e.g. Borowy & Jin, 2013; Kirschner, 2015; Seo, 2013, 2016; Seo & Jung, 2014), legal aspects, ethical and moral issues, and regulation in e-sports industry (e.g. Blackburn, Kourtellis, Skvoretz, Ripeanu, & Iamnitchi, 2013; Comerford, 2012; Golub & Lingley, 2007; Hollist, 2015), e-sports and cultural life, social relations, and politics (e.g. Dyer-Witheyford & de Peuter, 2009; Fisher & Jenson, 2016; Grimes & Feenberg, 2009; Hutchins, 2008; Millington, 2014; Simon, 2007), and the relationship between e-sports and the development of other industries and fields in particular sports and media (e.g. Burroughs & Rama, 2015; Crawford & Gosling, 2009; Jonasson & Thiborg, 2010; Rai & Yan, 2009).
- 2 Driven by the growth in e-sports market, the global digital gaming sales hit \$61 billion in 2015 (DiChristopher, 2016).
- 3 Valve generates its record-size prize pools through crowdfunding and compendium sales—in game purchases that participants can make (during non-tournament play) (Tassi, 2015).

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