How to Talk about Games, Today
Moral Panic and Misunderstanding

Lindsay Grace
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What’s leisure and what’s game addiction in the 21st century?
Are these people suffering from a disorder — or just having fun?

Video games do not teach people to become shooters in real life

By Lindsay Grace

Updated 7:09 PM ET, Fri March 9, 2018
We’ve been here in the past
Comic Books
“I think Hitler was a beginner compared to the comic-book industry,”
- psychiatrist Frederic Wertham
Widely debated-

**Comic books** as the source of

**Juvenile Delinquency**
Comic books were dangerous
At some point, all leisure seems subject to moral panic
The Puritans “accepted the King James Bible, but they had the common hangman **burn the Book of Sports**, in which James I commended the games to be played after Sunday service.
A guide to Sunday sports and recreations
A guide to Sunday sports and recreations

Publicly burned in England, 1643
Sport was evil and dangerous
Class, religious, and ideological tensions of leisure from 1780-1880
Travel, Music, Racing:
Linked to anti-social behavior
Dungeons and Dragons
The great 1980s Dungeons & Dragons panic
Dungeons and Dragons

“a fantasy role-playing game which uses demonology, witchcraft, voodoo, murder, rape, blasphemy, suicide, assassination, insanity, sex perversion, homosexuality, prostitution, satanic type rituals, gambling, barbarism, cannibalism, sadism, desecration, demon summoning, necromantics, divination and other teachings”
CLAYTON, Mo. (AP) — A man who said the fantasy game "Dungeons and Dragons" played a role in the killing of a college student has been sentenced to life in prison.

Darren Lee Molitor, 19, of St. Louis, was sentenced Thursday for the strangulation death of Mary C. Towey, 18, in April 1984. He had been convicted earlier of first-degree murder.

Another man, Ronald G. Adcox, is awaiting trial on a capital murder charge.

Molitor told St. Louis County Circuit Judge Alphonso H. Voorhees before he was sentenced that his trial was not fair because he was not permitted to present expert witnesses to give evidence about the role-playing fantasy game "Dungeons and Dragons."
“It is a way of letting tension and anxieties loose .. But subjecting the mind to the **amounts of violence involved** isn't. It is far more bad than it is good. Especially to a young mind. And an 18 or 20 year old still has a young mind. Its effects are both mental and physical. It is in comparison to drugs, alcohol or tobacco. **It is very possessive, addictive and evil.** Evil may sound wrong or peculiar to explain a game, but there is no other way to describe it. It is a device of Satan to lure us away from God. It is an occult.”

- The “Darren Molitor” letter, 1985
D & D was addictive and inspired violence
The founding of BADD: Pat Pulling
Bothered About Dungeons and Dragons (1983)
The founding of BADD: **Pat Pulling**

**Bothered About Dungeons and Dragons** (1983)
The founding of BADD: Pat Pulling

Bothered About Dungeons and Dragons (1983)

Director:
National Coalition on TV Violence
The founding of BADD: Pat Pulling
Bothered About Dungeons and Dragons (1983)

Director:
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Earned support of US Surgeon General
Television
40+ years
TV and aggression research
“3rd graders who preferred violent TV programs were rated more aggressive in school by peers. In a 10-year follow-up . . . [it] was even more strongly related to aggression 10 years later.”

“We find a positive and significant correlation between television violence and aggressive behavior”
Science proves television fosters aggression?
“Mean effect sizes from aggregate and experimental studies do not suggest that media violence and criminal aggression are positively associated, but findings from prospective longitudinal studies are more ambiguous.”

No link between Violence and TV

February 2002
“Most of the criteria of substance dependence can apply to people who watch a lot of TV.”

- Robert Kubey & Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi
**TV is the Dominant Leisure Time Activity**

39% of leisure time in 19 countries

Table 2.4. Watching television is the preferred leisure activity across all surveyed OECD countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>TV or radio at home</th>
<th>Other leisure activities</th>
<th>Visiting or entertaining friends</th>
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OECD18 | 36 | 40 | 11 | 6 | 7 |

Source: Secretariat estimates based on national and multinational time-use surveys (2006 where available). It is important to point out that conclusions derived from these figures should be tentative: national time-use surveys’ methodologies differ in the way they choose to include or exclude the measure of secondary activities.

Meta-analysis “results suggest there is a smaller effect of violent video games on aggression than has been found with television violence on aggression. “

Games
One way to talk:

Remind people of our worldwide political past with leisure
The dangerous game of pitting leisure against morality
Leisure is political
Leisure is political

Attacking Leisure is an opportunity to chip at culture
Attacking Leisure is an opportunity to chip at culture and enforce your own culture
“psychiatrists, politicians, and editorial writers feared the most extreme comic books – filled with crooks, monsters, and voluptuous women – would drive innocent children into the clutches of juvenile delinquency.”
"Comic books . . . attracted a high quotient of creative people who thought of more established modes of publishing as foreclosed to them"

David Hajdu
Attacking games mirrors past attacks on leisure
In an era of declining leisure
Workism Is Making Americans Miserable

For the college-educated elite, work has morphed into a religious identity—promising transcendence and community, but failing to deliver.

FEB 24, 2019

Derek Thompson
Staff writer at The Atlantic

Report finds work has become the new religion
Millennials Are Literally Dying From Overwork

By Benjamin Cosman | Dec. 18, 2013

The news: Yet another millennial has died after working insanely long and strenuous hours. Mita Dhiran, a copywriter at Young & Rubicam.
Maybe, we **should not attack leisure**
We should **ask about the root** of our **discord**
Like TV, it’s going to take a long time to determine Aggression, Addiction link
Games don’t need to be burned, to be erased.
Erasing our cultural contribution is often much easier
On games, censorship and bans

Discomfort Design: Critical Reflection through Uncomfortable Play

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Abstract
Consider that uncomfortable moment in life when people discover a playful experience ceases to be worth playing. Just as an arm is broken on the playground, or a relationship can no longer be mended, there are explicit moments when art transgresses some unforeseen territory leaving us with fear of its potential. This paper explores the potential of taboo game design.

Introduction
Taboo is a construct that defines borders. It tells us where we can and cannot go. The social more is as much a looking glass to reflect on our values as it is a place to test our mettle. This paper seeks to explore how games offer unique critical experience through socially prohibited play. It simply seeks to discuss how play through taboo gameplay exposes that which we may not want to discuss. Taboo game experiences are more than just uncomfortable situations, they are opportunities in rhetoric. They punctuate an experience and offer opportunities for thoughtful reflection on social values.
Thanks for listening!
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