

Connecting the Dots between Games and Addiction

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ABSTRACT

That computer games are addictive and socially isolating were taken as a given more than thirty years ago, when one of the world's most (in)famous psychologists, Phillip Zimbardo, declared that: “[t]he video games that are proving so addictive to young people may not only be socially isolating but may actually encourage violence between people” (Zimbardo 1982, p. 59 in Loftus and Loftus 1983).

Three decades later we are still debating what game addiction is and if it even exists. In this time span, however, many different branches of research have provided alternative perspectives on the subject. Though game addiction remains the most widely used term variants such as *excessive-*, *obsessive-*, *compulsive-*, *problematic-*, *dependent-*, and *pathological gaming* has emerged. Aside from the psychological perspective, however, a host of other perspectives have emerged. In this sense 'game addiction' has grown into an umbrella-term, which covers a wide array of different meanings.

Proceedings of DiGRA 2014: <Verb that ends in 'ing'> the <noun> of Game <plural noun>.

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Perspectives from discourse analysis (Cover 2006), Goffmanian symbolic interaction (Brus 2013), sociology (Johnson 2012), studies of moral panics (Golub & Lingley, 2008), virtual ethnography (Karlsen 2013), neuroscience (e.g. Yuan et al. 2011, Kühn et al. 2011), psychological prevalence studies (e.g., Lemmens 2009, Mentzoni et al. 2011), studies of economics and serialization (Goggin 2008), addictive design (Dow-Schull 2005) and game studies (Flaaten et al. 2010).

There is little interaction among researchers in the abovementioned domain. Hence, research into the subject is heavily compartmentalized. Should we try to connect these dots or should researchers agree to disagree? The speakers on this panel will address this question along with a number of other issues related to their current work. The panel will consist of:

Dr. Joyce Goggin, whose current research focuses on literature, film, painting and digital media, which she approaches from an economic point of view. Topics of her research include addiction, material culture, finance, gambling, money, play and serialization.

Dr. Espen Aarseth whose current research revolves around such themes as the ontological understanding of games (what are they, what are they made of, and how they are different from each other), games and narrative, the relation between games and geographical space and games and addiction

Dr. Faltin Karlsen whose research focuses on media users, computer games and game culture. In relation to which he recently published a book about excessive playing in online games, called 'A World of Excesses: Online Games and Excessive Playing'.

Rune K. L. Nielsen, who is currently writing a PhD thesis about computer games and addiction, focusing on game addiction scales and their validity, but his research interests also span ethnographic descriptions of the digital leisure activities of at-risk youths in juvenile detention facilities and psychological assessment of such youths.

Keywords

Gambling, addiction, excessive play, youth, modernity, seriality,

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