GDC
How to Talk about Games, Today
Moral Panic and Misunderstanding
Lindsay Grace
Knight Chair, University of Miami
GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE
MARCH 18–22, 2019 | #GDC19

salon NEWS & POLITICS

What's leisure and what's game addiction in the 21st century?

Are these people suffering from a disorder — or just having fun?

32

LINDSAY GRACE

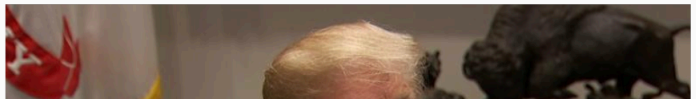
JULY 1, 2018 5:30PM (UTC)

CNN Opinion » Political Op-Eds | Social Commentary | Live TV | U.S. Edition +

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

By Lindsay Grace

Updated 7:09 PM ET, Fri March 9, 2018

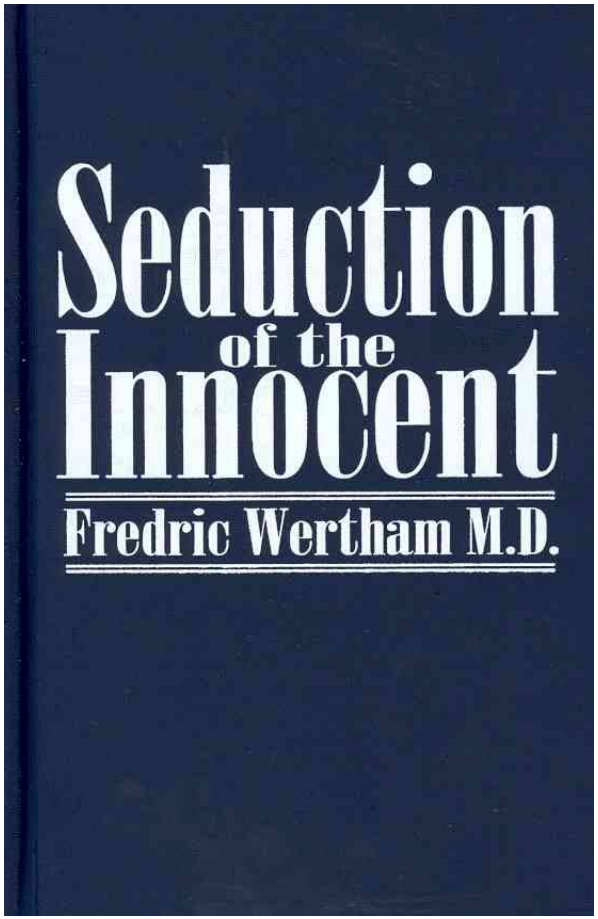


More from CNN

Woman jailed for 11 years for

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

SNOW

Comic books were dangerous

300
PREPARE FOR GLORY!
JUDGMENT IS COMING
DREDD 3D
GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY
SPIDER-MAN
SPIDER-MAN 2
SIN CITY
THEY LIVE
PERSEPOLIS
THE FILM IRAN DIDN'T WANT THE WORLD TO SEE
DICK TRACY
MICHAEL KEATON
DANNY DeVITO
MICHELLE PFEIFFER
BATMAN RETURNS
HELLBOY
HERE TO PROTECT
FROM THE VISIONARY DIRECTOR OF "300"
WATCHMEN
03.06.09

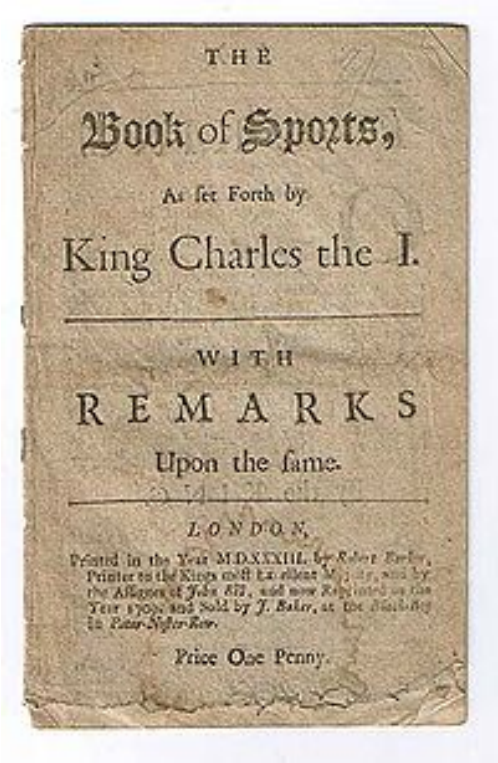
At some point,

all leisure **seems** subject to **moral panic**

Sport

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

Sports illustrated, 1962


THE

Book of Sports,

As ſet Forth by

King Charles the I.

WITH

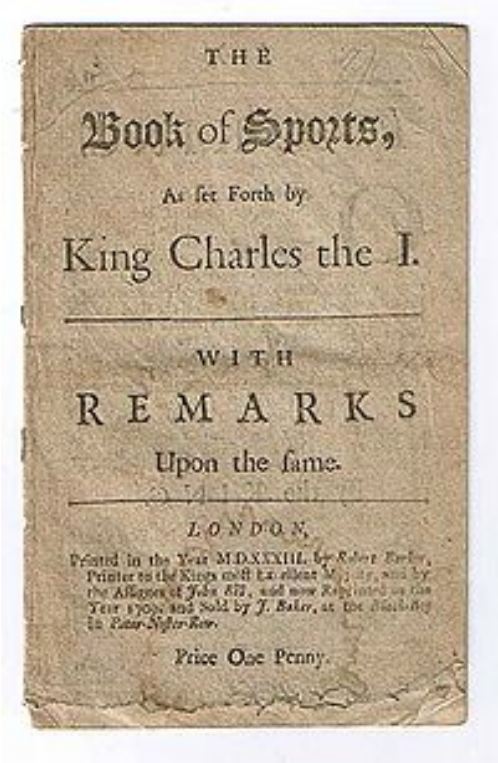
REMARKS

Upon the ſame.

LONDON,

Price One Penny.

A guide to Sunday
sports and recreations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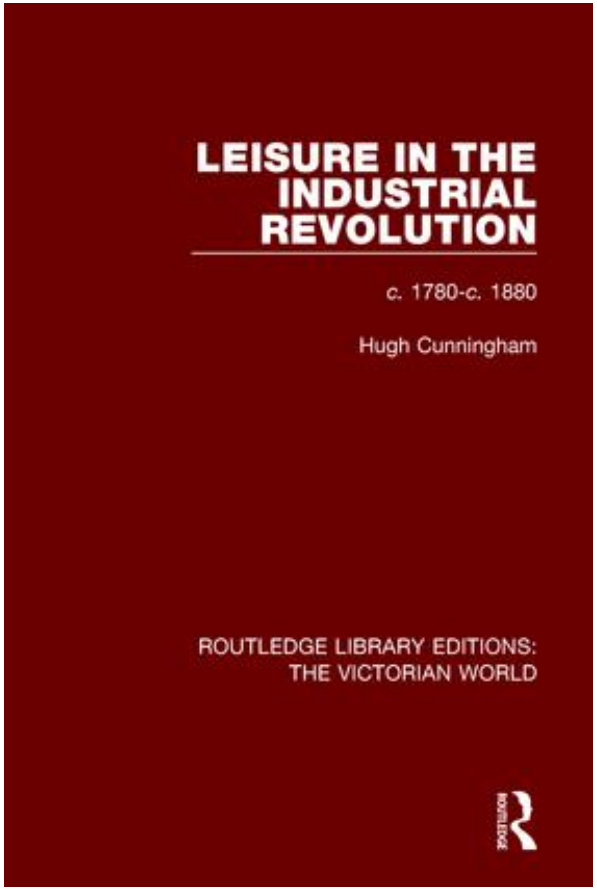
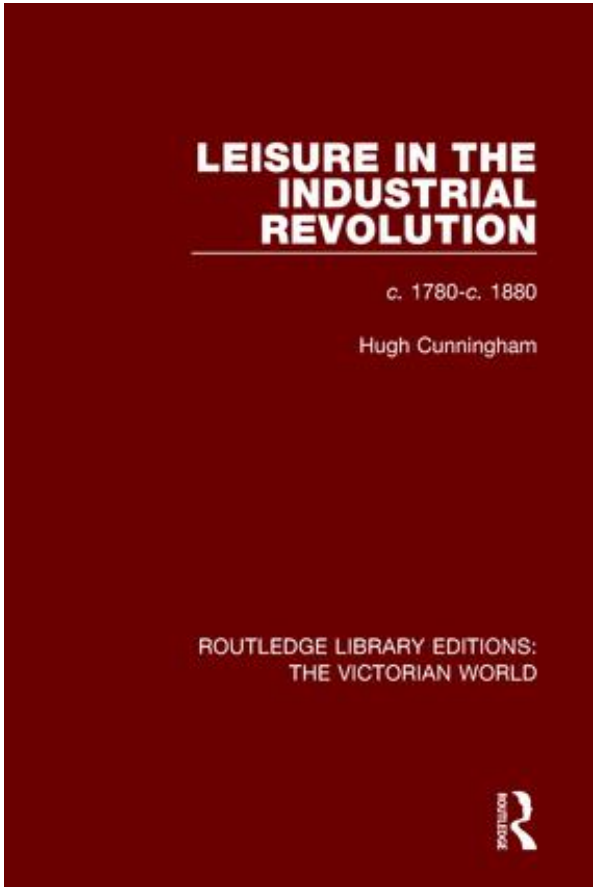
Publicly burned in England, 1643

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

Magazine

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"

Life Sentence Given In 'Dungeons & Dragons' Killing Case

May 31, 1985

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Archive

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 **A**bout **D**ungeons and **D**ragons (1983)

The founding of BADD: **Pat Pulling**

Bothered **A**bout **D**ungeons and **D**ragons (1983)

The founding of BADD: Pat Pulling
Bothered **A**bout **D**ungeons and **D**ragons (1983)

Director:
National Coalition on TV Violence

The founding of BADD: Pat Pulling
Bothered **A**bout **D**ungeons and **D**ragons (1983)

Director:
National Coalition on TV Violence

Earned support of US Surgeon General

Television

40+ years

TV and aggression research

Eron, L. D., Huesmann, L. R., Lefkowitz, M. M., & Walder, L. O. (1972). Does television violence cause aggression? *American Psychologist, 27*(4), 253-263.

"**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**. "

PAIK, H., & COMSTOCK, G. (1994). The Effects of Television Violence on Antisocial Behavior: A Meta-Analysis1. *Communication Research*, *21*(4), 516–546.

"We find a positive and significant correlation between television violence and aggressive behavior"

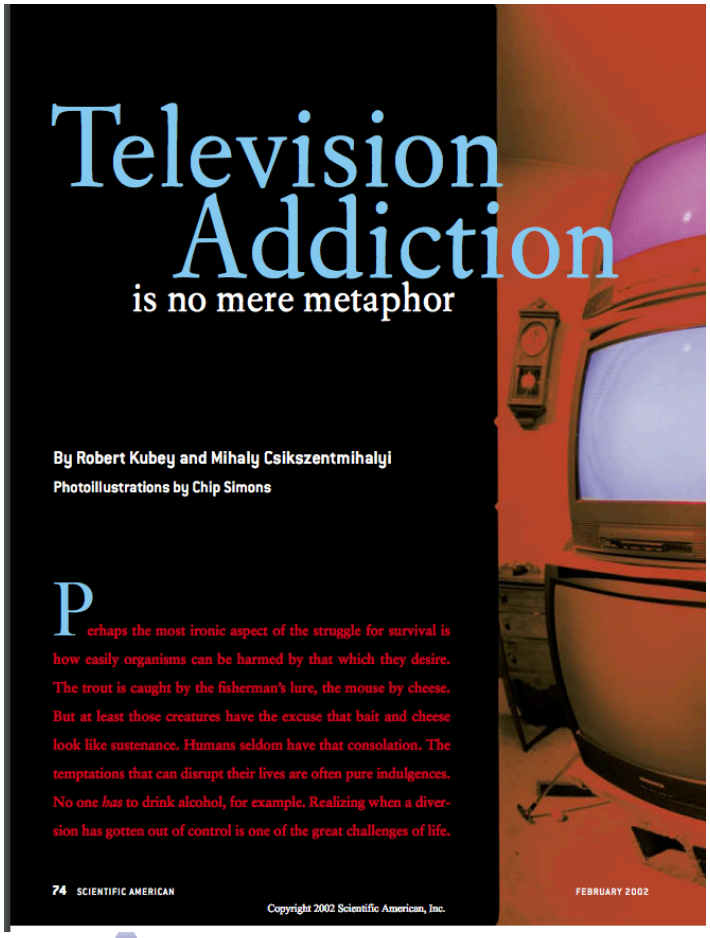
Science proves television fosters aggression?

" 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"**

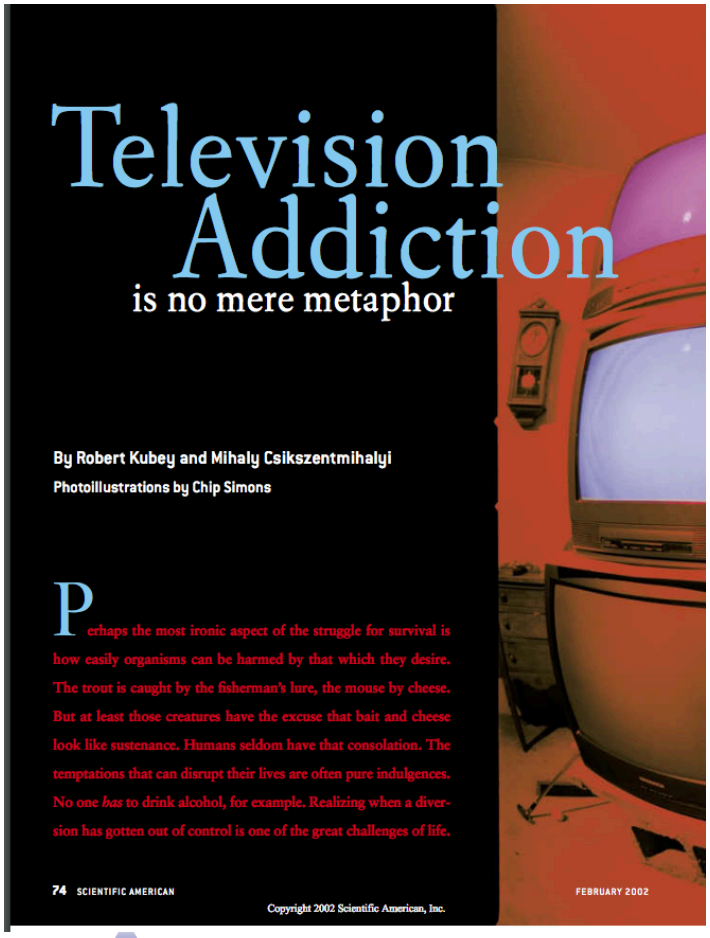
Savage, J., & Yancey, C. (2008). The effects of media violence exposure on criminal aggression: A meta-analysis. *Criminal Justice and Behavior, 35*(6), 772-791.

No link between Violence and TV

- Kaplan, R. M., & Singer, R. D. (1976). Television violence and viewer aggression: A reexamination of the evidence. *Journal of Social Issues*, *32*(4), 35-70.
- Freedman, J. L. (1984). Effect of television violence on aggressiveness. *Psychological bulletin*, *96*(2), 227.
- Savage, J., & Yancey, C. (2008). The effects of media violence exposure on criminal aggression: A meta-analysis. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, *35*(6), 772-791.



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

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

Prevalence of different types of leisure activities percentage shares of total leisure time

	TV or radio at home	Other leisure activities	Visiting or entertaining friends	Participating / attending events	Sports
Australia	41	47	3	2	6
Belgium	36	42	8	8	5
Canada	34	34	21	2	8
Finland	37	40	7	8	8
France	34	45	6	7	8
Germany	28	46	4	15	7
Italy	28	48	6	10	8
Japan	47	42	4	0	6
Korea	35	41	16	1	7
Mexico	48	33	10	4	5
New Zealand	25	45	24	2	5
Norway	31	33	14	15	8
Poland	41	38	6	8	6
Spain	31	41	4	12	12
Sweden	31	42	7	11	8
Turkey	40	25	34	0	2
United Kingdom	41	39	7	10	4
United States	44	32	16	2	5
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.

StatLink http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/551081652177

39%

of leisure time
in 19 countries

https://www.oecd.org/berlin/42675407.pdf

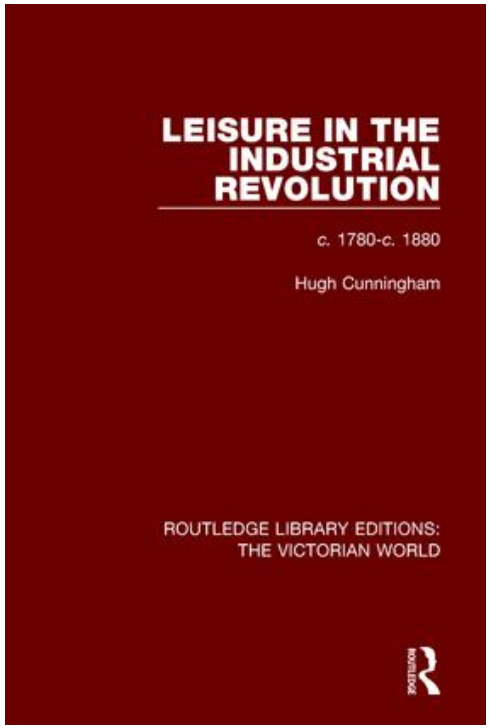
Meta-analysis “results suggest **there is a smaller effect of violent video games on aggression than has been found with television violence on aggression**. ”

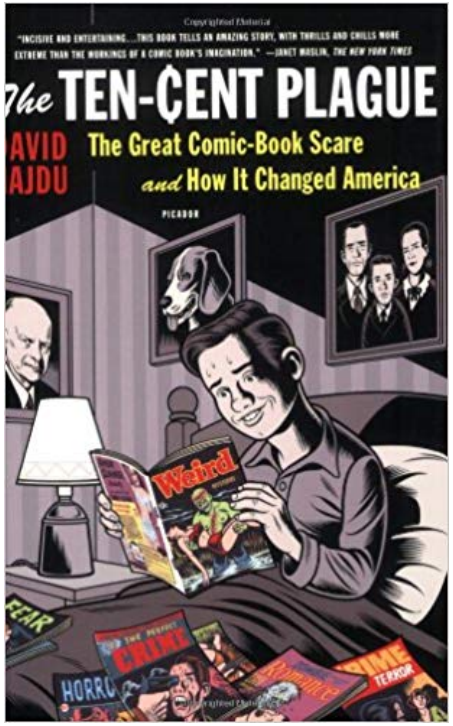
Sherry, J. L. (2001). The effects of violent video games on aggression: A meta-analysis. *Human communication research*, *27*(3), 409-431.

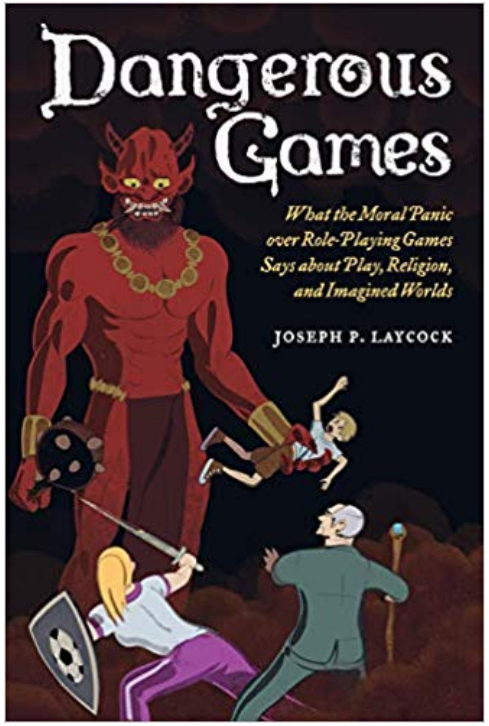
Games

One way to talk:

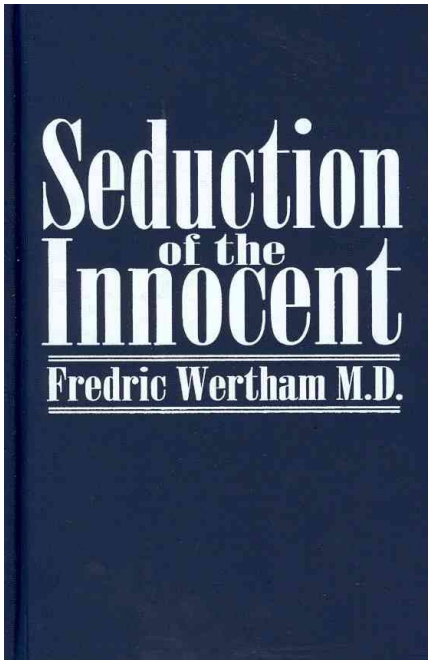
Remind people of our
worldwide **political past** with **leisure**

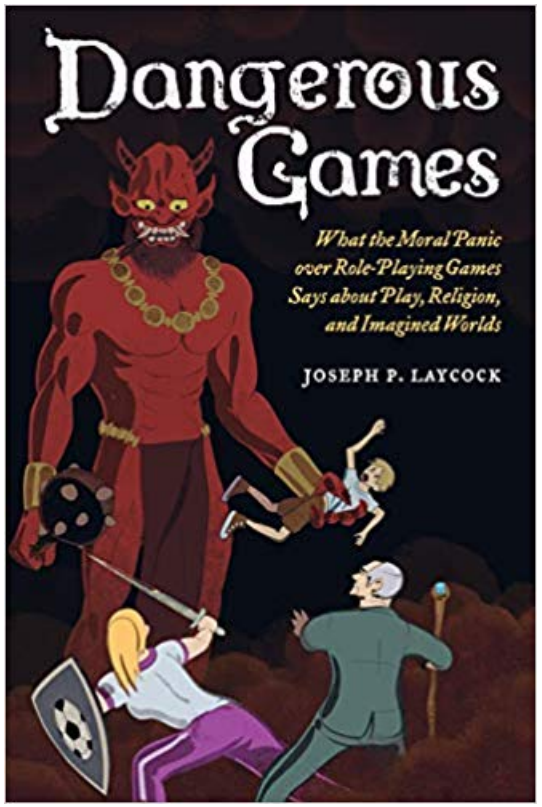

LEISURE IN THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION
c. 1780-c. 1880
Hugh Cunningham
ROUTLEDGE LIBRARY EDITIONS: THE VICTORIAN WORLD
ROUTLEDGE


The TEN-CENT PLAGUE
The Great Comic-Book Scare and How It Changed America
AVID AJDU
PICADOR
Weird
CRIME
TERROR
FEAR


Dangerous Games
What the Moral Panic over Role-Playing Games Says about Play, Religion, and Imagined Worlds
JOSEPH P. LAYCOCK

Introduction by Maury Terry
THE
DEVIL'S WEB
Who Is Stalking Your Children For Satan?
Pat Pulling
with Kathy Cawthon


Seduction of the Innocent
Fredric Wertham M.D.



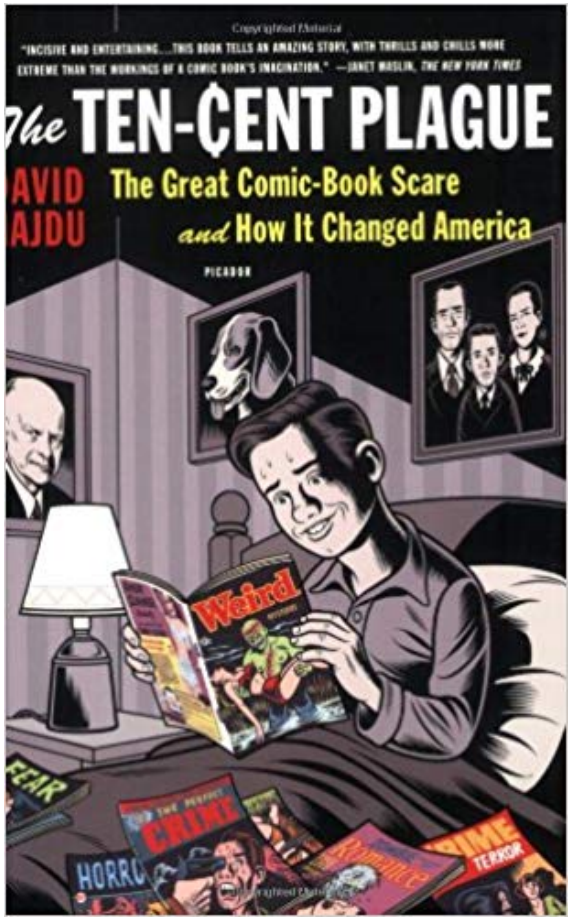
The dangerous game of pitting leisure against **morality**

Leisure is political

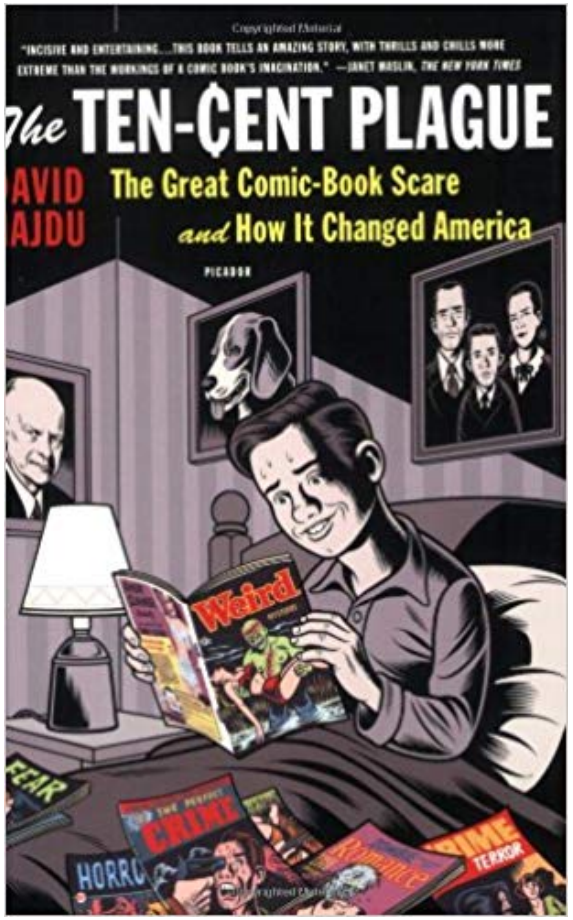
Leisure is political

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."

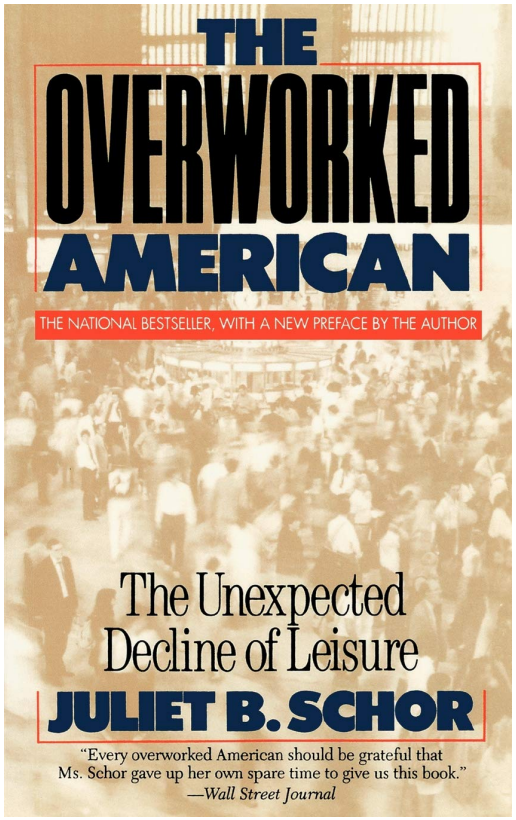


"Comic books . . . attracted a **high quotient of creative people** who thought of more established modes of publishing as foreclosed to them"

David Hajdu

Attacking games mirrors past

attacks on leisure



In an era of declining leisure

IDEAS

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

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BuzzFeed News How Millennials Became The Burnout Generation

Maybe, we should not attack leisure

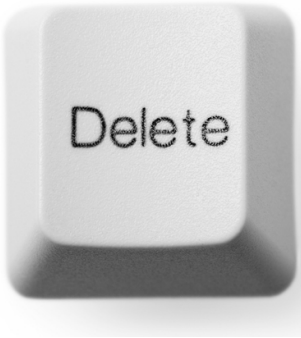
We should **ask about the root** of our **discord**

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

Lindsay Grace
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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.

Grace, L. 2011. **Discomfort Design: Critical Reflection through Uncomfortable Play**, 17th International Symposium on Electronic Art (ISEA), Istanbul, Turkey

Thanks for listening!

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ProfessorGrace.com