

## CONCLUSION

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When we began this project, we wanted to challenge the lack of nuance in both academic and media discussions around forms of deviance and video games. The book's opening chapters sought to explain, at times quite bluntly, the inadequacies of traditional sociological theory that has usually been used to investigate the subject area. The chapters proceeding this then aimed to put forth arguments, from various academics of differing theoretical positionality, on the realities of deviancy in video games, hopefully raising questions which will stimulate further discussion upon the subject. As detailed within the opening, the editors aimed, at least for their sections, to draw upon the emerging deviant leisure perspective



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to situate their discussions within wider criminological issues. Within this, therefore, the concluding chapter aims to consolidate the various discussions and situate each subject matter within the deviant leisure perspective more directly.

## SITUATING THE DISCUSSION

In the seminal paper, [Smith \(2016\)](#) outlines a four-point typology in which the various harms of the deviant leisure perspective are identified, enabling us to situate the proposed forms of deviancy within this collection to be placed. The four categories are subjective harms, environmental harms, socially corrosive harms and embedded harms.

Within the remit of the notions proposed here, it is mainly the subjective, socially corrosive and embedded harms which are exhibited. Environmental harms are perhaps identifiable within the industry, the primary example being prevalent folk law that the developers of the E.T. game ([Atari, 1982](#)) based upon the Steven Spielberg biopic. Due to the immense criticism of the game upon its release at Christmas of 1982, the developers reportedly took six semiarticulated trucks full of copies of the game and dumped them in a landfill in El Paso Texas. Such actions were, at the time, disputed by the developers. However, excavation of the site has since uncovered various copies of the game, one of which is now on display in the Smithsonian ([Robarge, 2014](#)).

The subjective harms are much more observable and prevalent throughout the contribution to the book. Within this discussion of the actuality of violence facilitated by and emerging from the gaming as a leisure form is the phenomenon of swatting proposed by Lamb. Within the chapter, Lamb details how such actions are implicating upon policing within the United States, highlighting the possibility and, perhaps, eventually a necessity

of policy being influenced due to the deviancy increasingly prevalent within some gaming subcultures. The chapter poses difficult questions, highlighting how leisure activities could be reorientating state violence as a tool for individuals to exercise their special liberty (Hall, 2012, 2015) to deadly means within areas of commodified leisure. Within this notion, the chapter offers swatting as possibly being typified within the remit of a socially corrosive harm. The sovereignty affords to the perpetrators and acted upon in purely self-prioritising actions over relatively minor sums of money, impacts much further than the intended victim. Within the terrestrial world, armed police forcibly entering the home reverberates around the wider community and familial home of the individual. This is before we even consider those whom engage in observing such acts as they are live-streamed or thereafter.

Most prominent throughout the contributions within the book though is the prevalence harms we would typify as embedded. Within the work of Smith (2016) and covered extensively by Raymen (2016) is gambling. This is utilised by Smith (2016) as the primary example of those harms which are successfully embedded within legitimate consumer culture and legitimised to a degree they are rarely perceived as a deviant act. Brown and Osman summarise the way in which gambling within the ludodrome is increasingly normalised. Most worryingly is the 'surprise mechanics' of the video game developers which are advertently targeted to a demographic that, in any other form, would be illegal. This chapter raises serious questions, which in the time of this book being collated have thankfully begun to gain traction, but as of the time of writing are yet to be taken seriously within society. We propose that within the consumer society that perpetually targets children from the outset (Hall, Winlow, & Ancrum, 2008, p. 95), such disavow of the widespread normalisation of gambling in the various forms

we can identify on gaming platforms will exacerbate the already widespread and damaging effects of the gambling industry highlighted by [Raymen \(2016\)](#) in the future. The normalisation of such nihilistic approaches to the pursuit of money and perceived status within the ludodromes also leads to what Kelly and Lynes propose as the democratisation of white-collar criminality.

Other areas the book has explored show areas of convergence between the typologies. As Hoffin and Lee Treweek observe, sexual and gendered violence is routinely commodified to varying degrees, normalising such socially corrosive behaviour within the ludodromes, and effect that could arguably resound much further into the social fabric of the demographics it targets. So too, the discussion of attitudes of LGBTQ communities by Colliver highlights the ability for prosocial ([Atkinson McKenzie, & Winlow, 2017](#); [Denham & Spokes, 2019](#)) ludodromes to achieve success within the market. Unfortunately, the most profitable gaming franchise in history uses the platform of consolidate and commodify harmful attitudes on a multitude of levels. Treadwell takes a vastly different approach to the majority of the contributions within this collection, highlighting the potentially prosocial and rehabilitative potential of engagement within the ludodrome within the UK prison population. Within this discussion, he raises important questions of the way in which video games are underutilised within the social sciences as a form of media that has equal potential to inform theoretical understandings of our lived reality within contemporary society.

#### WHY DOES IT MATTER?

In an age where the social world has been increasingly derogated ([Winlow & Hall, 2013](#)) and leisure activities leave

individuals more concerned with their representation of wealth through conspicuous consumption (Veblen, 1965), we increasingly exist within a state of perpetual anxiety with an increasing lack of ontological security (Giddens, 1991). Within this, the individual's self-designated necessity to exercise their deepest desires is a key driving force of social interaction, which permeates across all aspects of their life course in what Hall conceptualises as exercising their special liberty (Hall, 2012). Within the ludodromes (Atkinson & Rodgers, 2016), we observe a space in which consumer capitalism enables and promotes such behaviour in perhaps the most stark demonstration. It offers the individual the opportunity to exercise control over their existence, through the avatar, and resituate their perception of self in what appears to be a self-contained environment. However, this disconnection is fundamentally flawed. It is intrinsically tied to consumer capitalism, with the newest game or console being needed to be able to participate within the ludodromes. Extra financial investment is increasingly needed to fully participate within the games, with the latest 'skin' or shiny sword increasingly important for the individual to participate within the burgeoning economy of the virtual world which conspicuous consumption has now pervaded. For some individuals, the pursuit of success within the ludodrome has resulted in the actuality of violence; participation in real-world and virtual black-market's, criminal transgression in the form of white collar criminality, along with underage and problematic gambling. Meanwhile, the embedded harms from the terrestrial world impinge upon the pursuit of leisure time, with sexual violence and hateful content targeting marginalised communities commodified and profited from. Aside from all this, in addition to a driving force underpinning much of the content discussed within the book is the competitive culture of consumer capitalism which has suffused the leisure activity

with E-sports tournaments offering players the chance to win multi-million dollar prizes and E-sports degrees now offered by high educational institutes.

As the opening of this book demonstrated, the myopic discussion of video games being a causation of increasingly recurrent atrocities such as school shootings and other mass killings is highly problematic. Most importantly, such discussions stymie the public and policymakers from actively addressing the real underlying motivations of such actions. Such simplistic vitriol seeks to disavow the realities of such grave and catastrophic instances.

‘Running amok’ as a phrase can be traced back to Malaysian and Indonesian dialects. The phrase denotes an episode of sudden mass assault against people or objects, usually by a single individual, following a period of brooding that has traditionally been regarded as occurring especially in Malay culture. A description of such instances can be traced back to Captain James Cook, who encountered an incident during his voyages (Dames, 2010). The colonial explorer popularised the phrase, describing the incident as the ‘indiscriminate killing and maiming villagers and animals in a frenzied attack’. From this, it is evident that actions such as the mass shootings we witness on an all-too-regular basis within modern western culture as perhaps being more deeply embedded within the human psyche and various cultures worldwide. Obviously, within the sixteen century such actions would be perpetrated using knives and other such weaponry rather than the automatic rifles we observe in today’s context; thus, the ability for the perpetrator to damage a comparative number of victims was stifled. Nonetheless, it highlights the redundancy of the discussion of ‘video games cause violence’, aside from all the methodological and theoretical flaws detailed within the opening of this collection.

In closing, this book aimed to stimulate an intellectual exploration of the harms video games enable, cause and proliferate as a form of deviant leisure. At times it has stepped outside of the immediate theoretical approach to respond to such a call, something the editors welcome and are thankful for. By approaching the discussion of video games and the forms of deviancy associated with an inquisitive and enthusiastic manner, it is hoped this body of work will demonstrate that despite the media (and on occasion scholarly) approach of a black and white/good vs. bad debate, this book has hopefully demonstrated the actuality is shades of grey. Nuance can be ascertained within the discussion of video games and harm, and hopefully this book serves as a reference point to further such discussion.

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