Hanging in the Video Arcade

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Abstract

The video arcade is an important site for game studies and game history. So far it has been largely addressed as a site of play. This paper decenters play and the player in the arcade by exploring another subject I call hangers. *It explores the genealogies of player control, engagement and the policing of play practices in the American video arcade in the 1980s. In describing these tensions and tactics, as well as the technical, social, and environmental interventions attempted by arcade operators and guests we arrive at a more nuanced understanding of the arcade as a social space.*

Introduction

In an attempt to recover the conditions of play in the American video arcades of the 1980s, this paper will repopulate the historical arcade with an array of figures who, in addition to the players, made up the US arcade scene of this period. Studying players is important for game studies and game history; however, players were not alone in the arcades. Besides people actively playing games, arcades had workers, attendants, repair people, operators, and owners. Arcades were also full of non-players: ditherers and loiterers, broke kids, little siblings who couldn't really reach controls, parents with folded newspapers chaperoning their kids, friends who tagged along, bullies looking for tokens, and kids making that pocket full of quarters last and last by *not* playing, not right away, not all the time. It is this last group of non-players, whom I term *hangers* that this paper focuses on.

In this paper I will construct an ideal typical category of these overlooked non-players. The term comes with a new name for an old subject. *Hanger* is my attempt to coin a term that can encompass not just a range of social positions and practices but their fluctuating character.[1] In hanger I see hangers-on, and hanging-out, but also lurkers, lingerers, wallflowers, delinquents, and most of all loiterers. Hanging also describes a relation to things that is contingent, dependent but still essentially autonomous. What hangs on something is shaped by it but only temporarily. A drop cloth on a statue takes on something of that work's form but only when it is draped on upon it. Hangers' practices are similarly shaped by the things,

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structures, and systems they hang on.

The hanger can only exist or at least be reconstituted in concert with other figures, most notably the worker and operator on one hand and the active player on the other. This paper will necessarily invoke the worker frequently but only in their interaction with the hanger. Arcade workers and the labor they performed warrant their own study beyond the scope of this paper. Still the worker is crucial to understanding hangers and their practices. Indeed workers to some degree produce the subject of the hanger through their disciplinary and affective labor.

The hanger, like the worker, is defined by what they do. Since what a person does can change from moment to moment (as well as over longer durations) these categories are always unstable. The dichotomy I construct between non-player and player, the hanger-rebel and the active-player, is a caricature, exaggerated to show difference. Any person might at different visits, or moments within a visit to an arcade, move between positions of active play, cruising, looking, watching, talking, and hanging out. Similarly the split between those who work and those who play in these spaces fluctuated over longer periods of time. That is to say, a good arcade worker would likely be an enthusiastic player, just not during their work shift. The adversarial relation sketched here between the hanger and the worker is meant to illuminate not just these different positions but the range of social relations and possibilities for action generated between them.

If we can see the video arcade not as vanished ludic utopia or, as Dmitri Williams has called it, "an open and free space for cultural and social mixing," but as a site of fraught social relations, negotiation, and tension, then we can begin treating it as a historical space (Williams 2), a space that has continued repercussions and implications for our understanding and interpretation of contemporary (and even earlier eras) would-be play spaces. If we imagine the arcade as both foundational to game culture(s) and free or open then we might all too easily assume that the same is true of, for example online role-playing games. Conversely we might assume that some sort of fall from grace has taken place if other play spaces are found wanting in terms of social and cultural mixing. My goal is to expand our notion of who plays to include a wider range of protagonists, including those who won't, don't, or can't play, at least not as we typically define what it means to play. Limiting who counts as participants to those who put coins in the machines and then play the game skillfully leaves out much of the arcade experience from historical analysis. To comprehend the arcade we need to see it as a contested, vibrant space populated not just by players of varying ability, but also by people who watch more than play, and by petty thieves, graffiti artists, loiterers, and employees. It isn't a stretch to imagine that compared to the active, engaged, accomplished players, people who occupy the non-paying positions in this space might generally have less money for games, but more time, and more need for a place to hang out. In keeping these subjects out of arcade histories and imaginaries we become like the arcade operators who decided which bodies had a right to play, loiter, and hang in their spaces.

What I am calling for is not that we in game studies become less interested in players and their play, but that we put this play into context. I am aware that this argument may sound illogical or perverse, or even like a betrayal of the central goals of game studies, as it puts non-players and players under the same analytic lens and decenters the study of play away from the most active players, perhaps even away from players in general. By asking what counts as play in specific contexts (historical, spatial, social, and disciplinary) we can appreciate the range of practices, subjectivities, and positions that are engendered and required by such a ludically charged space as video arcade. If we don't interrogate the constructed status of play in our arcade works we run the risk of perpetuating the same discursive constructions produced by the arcade disciplinarians. We might assume that arcades were spaces meant for a narrow range of people, that is players who were skilled (but not *too* skilled), plaint, engaged, and most of all ready to drop quarters at a reliable clip.

Background

This paper is based on a discourse analysis of arcade operator trade journals from the 1980s[2] in the collection of The Strong's International Center for the History of Electronic Games which I accessed while a research fellow at the Strong Museum of Play in Rochester NY in the summer of 2013. I combine this archival work with findings and arguments taken from other arcade studies, in particular those of Carly Kocurek and Raiford Guins, as well as James A Hodges and Derek A. Burrill. Like these authors, I focus exclusively on arcades in the United States. Furthermore I do not address arcades or arcade style play in other contexts or situations, or in eras other than the 1980s.[3]

This paper draws on a range of theoretical and methodological positions from across contemporary game studies. In particular it seeks to take up a question addressed from multiple perspectives by people who have tried to either expand or complicate our understanding of what the subject we call "the player" is doing when he/she plays. While not directly addressing the same issue, a range of authors have described practices that expand or push past "play." These include T. L. Taylor's (2006) work on professional players, Mia Consalvo's (2007) work on cheaters and cheating, Sus Lundgren and Staffan Björk's (2012) description of games as supporting activities such as "pottering" alongside play, and Jesper Juul's (2013) investigation into play and/as failure. More concretely this paper is inspired by James Newman's (2002) "The Myth of the Ergodic Videogame," which offers an important model for decentering the "active" player in his treatment of the onlookers, backseat drivers and co-players who take part in the spaces and practices of play.

When we decenter the player in a ludically charged space like the arcade we must also rethink what objects (in particular, game cabinets) in it could be. In *Game After,* Raiford Guins (2014) describes how different people in the arcade saw that space and the objects in it. He recounts how operators viewed the layout of the units, traffic, atmosphere, the popularity of titles, vandalism, coin theft/break-ins, safety issues, and surveillance. Guins contrasts

operator perspectives on game cabinets and arcades with the perspective of game players who saw the units and space somewhat differently. Player concerns included: the cabinet as a social "destination for would-be players... a hangout, a place to meet up, to play, to be seen, to interact with a new medium and with peers" (Guins, 2014, p. 115). This perspective suggests that the space defined by the game cabinet is only partly based on direct, active use of it as a game. The game unit is central to the arcade as an organizing object for a range of social practices, only some of which are limited to the interactions between players with game narratives, screens, and joysticks. I am not suggesting that these other practices could have happened without the games. The hangers were in the arcade because of the games; but they were there to do something other than *play* them. Analyses of the procedural, cine-matic, narrative, algorithmic, and mechanic aspects of arcade games can do little to help us understand what it was like to hang out in an arcade.

In order to describe and theorize the implications of these hangers and their arcades I look to a telling trade article which lays out the stakes for arcade operators and, in doing so, for subjects like the hanger as well.

Strong Hand, Iron Will

In the June 1983 issue of the arcade trade journal *Play Meter,* arcade owner Gerald Walford published an article titled "Strong Hand, Iron Will" in which he outlines strategies for the successful running of a video arcade. The article constructs a discursive model of the arcade that is far from a lost arcadia or ludic utopia, but rather a contested site of labor, control, resistance, and delinquency. Walford provides an important professional perspective, that of an arcade operator. The other articles from *Play Meter* and *RePlay Magazine* I draw on were all useful[4] but what makes "Strong Hand, Iron Will" special is that is written not by a correspondent for the trade journal but in a first-person voice of an arcade operator. Walford shows us that the work of running an arcade was primarily one of human resource manage-ment, both of employees and visitors. "Strong Hand, Iron Will" is not just an anecdote of a solitary operator, it is a professional missive meant to instruct an industry on how to manage and run workers, players, and arcades. In addition Walford is particularly clear, even cynical about what the arcade is. "Iron Will" is not an article about what games to stock, or how to fix them; rather it is a how-to guide for the disciplining of workers and, through them, the possibility of the disciplining of patrons and visitors. Much of the primary material I draw on comes directly out of "Strong Hand, Iron Will" and it is key to this paper for several reasons. We begin to see in this article that people did not necessarily come to the arcade to play, and that getting people to play and keeping them playing were the responsibility not only of auteur programmers and genius designers but of attendants, repair people, and operators.

The-all-you-can-play arcade: "Suspension of Disciplinary Norms"

Keeping people playing usually, but not always, meant keeping people pumping quarters or tokens into the arcade cabinets. In my effort to reconstitute forgotten bodies and practices of the arcades we will now look at an alternative arcade model. This will also help us to better understand what was at stake in the kind of disciplinary practices outlined in "Strong Hand, Iron Will" and the arcade in general.

While most arcades operated on a coin for play model, many experimented with a flat fee, "all you can play" approach. Flat fee arcades or, more often, flat fee nights or interludes at coin operated arcades, operated by a different calculus for both owners and players. Rather than attempting to stretch out a few dollars over a few hours, players would need to reverse their play and consumptive modes and play more games, more often. The matter of skill, a crucial one in Kocurek's excellent subsection on expert players, largely disappears during flat fee play, as there is no longer an economic incentive to keeping a single game going as long as possible (Kocurek, 2015, p. 203). As Bill Kurtz's (1982) *Play Meter* article "All You Can Play" describes Cleveland's Wonderland Arcade's special flat fee nights: the arcade was filled to capacity. We can infer that what a player would need to be good at to play would shift from being good at playing a given game (and thus playing for longer per quarter) to finding an open or available one. Here we must be careful to note how what constitutes play and player practices shift when we read them against different arcade disciplinary and economic arcade models.

In this model, the labor for the operator, as Kurtz explains, was the time it took to convert the units from coin play to free play modes, during which play would have to temporarily stop. We can wonder how attendants handled shifting players from one mode of play and consumption to its reverse. Flat fee play was not just a matter of changing how much one charges, like a happy hour at a bar or an early bird time in a restaurant, but instead more like converting a restaurant from *à la carte* to all-you-can-eat. This is just the comparison George Rogers (1989), the owner of St. Petersburg Beach Amusement Center, makes in "Thumbnail Sketch" (p. 132). As anyone who has been to an all-you-can-eat restaurant can recall, the model of consumption, but also of enjoyment, is peculiar. Selecting is replaced by sampling, as dishes which one might otherwise agonize over ordering and then lingering over are tried, and then perhaps thrown away unfinished. So, too, in an "all you can play" arcade. With this model we must assume also comes a reversal of staff attitude toward less than active players. Under these conditions there are no hangers, no freeloading onlookers, because everyone has already paid to be there. The appeal of "a great time at bargain prices" would then necessarily lock out exactly the hanger and affiliated characters so central to this paper, or at least the practices that constitute them. Kurtz and Rogers show us how this in turn changes the nature of the labor workers would need to engage in. Under this alternative economy of arcade play, the duties of attendants shifted from monitoring levels of play to repairing cabinets and maintaining a clean, family-friendly environment, which is what people purchased when paying a middle-class entry fee.

While it was the exception rather than the rule, I focus on the all-you-can-play model as a counterpoint that helps us appreciate the importance of the "coin-drop economy" model, which as Kocurek argues, had a specific attentional and disciplinary economy. The agonistic relationship between arcade attendants and hangers during the normal rules of pay-to-play was temporarily disrupted during periods of flat-fee play, where there were no non-players, dawdlers, or hangers to monitor. Under the conditions of flat fee play there wasn't a place for the casual player or the drop-in-on-the-way-home player; in short, for the contingent player who was so critical to the pay-to-play space. Arcade owners did not mind losing loiterers, gadflies, and kids with no money during flat fee play periods, but they also lost a class of customers: those who were not sure about how long they might play, or exactly how many quarters they could afford to part with. "All-you-can-play" therefore also meant "not all of you can play," especially not those with less money, or less control over how long they might be able or allowed to play.

Vision and Control

In this section I trace how hanger and worker attention functioned. In doing so I show how the efforts of worker and operator manage and produce the active player and deviant hanger. Before the player can be controlled it is the attendants of the arcade who need to be disciplined. As Walford (1983) writes: "Our attendants are not allowed to read, watch television, or play games while on duty. Full attention must be given to controlling the environment" (p. 61). This was more like a cop's beat than a stationary panopticon; the attendants had to be "on" and mobile. They "patrolled the arcade" in order to make change, but also to control guest behavior. Walford anticipated Giuliani-era broken-window theory of policing: "Our attendant is on top of the action. An attendant who sits too much gradually loses control of the environment through minor problems leading into major problems" (p. 61). Walford acknowledges that in some arcades workers are allowed at times to sit, as long as they were positioned so that they could both see and be seen (that is surveilled while surveilling). "Visibility" Michel Foucault (1977) tells us, "is a trap" (p. 200). This trap ensnares both worker and guest. Vision and lines of sight, in combination with walking the beat, are crucial to Walford's guide to arcade control. Attendants must show that they are focusing their attention on guests in order to signal to the guest that their attention in turn needs to be of the correct disposition, namely focused into the space of the game.

Arcade attendants brought their attention to bear not only on guests' (hangers and would-be players alike) movements, but also on their affect. Attendants had to learn to distinguish between loiterers with no intent to play from players taking a rest between games. That is to spot the difference between a hanger hanging and a player en route to play. As Walford (1983) writes in his guide for arcade workers: "Be careful because sometimes a customer may be resting between games or waiting for a game" (p. 61). And guests had to learn to appear to be resting between games rather than loitering or up to no good. J. C. Herz (1997) describes surveillance by managers as a monitoring of a correct disposition and level of

activity: "Anyone obviously not Having Fun is suspect" (p. 57). Reciprocally, workers in some arcades were expected to not only be on patrol, but to do so with an attitude suggesting they were having fun. This may have been more often the case in family entertainment centers and arcade/restaurants, such as Chuck E. Cheese's, than in dedicated gaming arcades and combination pool halls. These arcade bodies watching and being seen to be watching other bodies, what Hodges (2014) calls the arcade's "semiotic circuit" of surveillance anticipate current networked modes of observation and performance. The arcade attendants watched out for who was using these arcade games in the right manner, with the right kind of attention and disposition. These attendants attended to pose, posture, and corporal attitude more than what might be gleaned from scores or in-game progress: Action for them too was outside the game. At the same time people in the arcade knew they were being attended to and this meant that another kind of play was also going on, one which demanded stealth, patience, and pretense.[5]

Invisible subjects

The work of hangers is often rendered invisible. I infer from Walford as well as my personal experience and other's anecdotes that arcade guests would often try to look like they weren't loitering and/or actively try to avoid being noticed by the staff. But this desired invisibility should not erase the hanger's presence in the histories and analyses of arcades, which should attend to all who populated arcades including those who did not play. As Guins (2004) suggests in his discussion of the need to pay attention to "visible evidence of who plays" (VEWP), this is a political as well as methodological issue (p. 202). Furthermore in reifying the active paying player of the arcade, we reinforce the tendency in game studies to look to the idealized, "real" or "hardcore" gamer, and to deny significance and agency to casual gamers, onlookers, loiterers, and most workers apart from the designer/auteurs.[6] When we do this we don't just make a range of arcade subjects invisible, we also ossify complex arcade objects, in particular the game cabinet.

For the hanger with no other place to go and attendants for whom the arcade is a job, the cabinets have a life, a significance, a function even when their screens are not being looked at, and even when they are turned off. Recall the arcade after (or before) hours, and the practices that go on to keep it humming and ready for the players to come. When it is open, the arcade cabinets become islands in a sea with favored navigation routes, eddies, and harbors. Crowds form around the new cabinets with their exciting games, and there are dead zones around cabinets that feature games that are also-rans, past their primes, or barely working. This spatial layout is read and reworked by the hangers, the would-be players stretching the minutes of active play one can purchase with a dollar over hours, like afternoon drinkers at a bar, the petty extortionists on the lookout for marks to "ask" for "extra" quarters, and parents and partners wondering how much longer they have to wait until they can leave.

In addition to being played, game cabinets are looked at, leaned on, their foot plates kicked,

their coin return slots optimistically jiggled, their joysticks used as coat hangers. Indeed these were clear violations of one of Walford's (1983) rules for arcade operators: "Keep the machines clear of the coats and packages. The Joysticks are not coat hangers" (p. 61).[7] From moment to moment these cabinet-objects changed their function. The cocktail cabinet (a sit down cabinet where the screen faced upwards under a glass table top) could be used to play a game of *Joust* one minute, and then in the next become a bench, a coffee table, or a desk as arcade visitors, workers, hangers, and players shifted places, positions, and dispositions.[8]

Hanging Out

Hanging out–killing time in public, alone or together–was a source of pleasure and concern for the guests and owners of the arcade, and also for public moralizers and politicians. In this section I suggest that hanging out, the defining practice of the hanger, was one of the central activities of the arcade, one that was policed, demonized, and attacked from within and without.

Hanging out had a bad reputation long before the days of *Ikari Warriors* (SNK, 1986). David Nasaw (1999) shows how hanging out was a feature of older (penny) arcades and an issue that concerned owners of earlier iterations of the arcade (p. 156). J. C. Herz (1997) sees the heyday of the arcade (in her estimation the late 70's early 80's) as a loose affair, where management generally had a hands-off approach to loitering and passing time: "People assembled and spoke to each other, but it was the same kind of glancing interactions that take place in train stations and airports, where everyone is en route" (p. 58). In many communities a moral panic over loitering and "hanging around" was connected to the video arcade, as can be seen, for example, in this quote from *RePlay* Magazine (1987): "Selectman James Hannon stated, 'You're going to get people hanging around using the game. We've tried to discourage them (video games), quite frankly.' Loitering is the reason given for the refusal." Statements like these were used to justify denying licenses to arcades, something Kocurek (2015) devotes attention to in her *Coin-Operated Americans* where she shows how anxieties about youth intersected with the video games entre to mainstream US culture.[9]

RePlay describes the selectman's statement as a "prejudice" against arcades. However we should also read it as an acknowledgment that hanging out activities are *essential* to the arcade. In fact, arcades are not only sites of play and players but are always sites of loitering and hangers. In the above article, *RePlay*, as a trade journal, tries to uncouple loitering from play, paralleling the daily struggle of arcade operators to have more guests putting quarters in the machines and fewer hanging out. One strategy operators employed was to make their arcades less attractive to exactly the kind of teen subjects Selectman Hannon was worried about. Herz (1997) notes that some arcade owners tried to change their "teenage hangouts" into family friendly centers (p. 49). I would emphasize that the core anxiety here is less about teenagers than hanging out in general. Both arcade operators and government officials attempted to control the hanger's body, either by disciplining it towards active play or shut-

ting down sites of hanging out.

Walking and cruising the arcade

Hangers did more than just hang around, they also moved through arcade spaces. All but the most dedicated and skilled players spent as much or more time walking as they did anything else in the arcade. Would-be players, as well as those with no intention to play, would walk around in the arcade, past rows of cabinets, on their way to another location in the room, or to the bathroom, the snack machine, or the doorway (Apperley, 2010, p. 40; Guins, 2004, p. 60). They cruise looking for games to play, games to watch, and sites of action. I use the loaded term "cruise" here to borrow from a cultural practice and critical lexicon of parallax uses of space, looking, desire, and locomotion. Queer theorist Mark W. Turner's (2003) view of the city as "always liable to be contested and appropriated; … passing moments on the street imply many ways of moving and seeing" can be applied as well to the arcade, a city in microcosm (p. 46). The cruising of the arcade is diminished, not just by the lack of sexuality (although arcades were sometimes sites of flirtation and more, to be sure), but also by, at least for the non-player, the lack of a spark of recognition between people. Unlike what we might call the about-to player looking for a short waiting line in front of a cabinet or a likely partner/opponent for a game of *Mortal Kombat* (Midway Games, 1992), the hanger looked for absences and cruised for cover. What the hanger looked for was gaps, not partners. The pleasures of that cruising were various and complex. Even a familiar arcade needed to be checked out each time one entered. Any new cabinets? Who's here? What is the lay of the land? Some players might make a beeline for a certain cabinet, but more likely the space warranted not only initial circumnavigation, but repeated navigation. We see potentially problematic player (and hanger) movement again and again in Walford's (1983) "Iron Fist" but also articles like Kurtz's (1982) already mentioned "All You Can Play," Jon Eisen's (1982) *Play Meter* piece "Insurance: What Do You Mean It's Not Covered," and Claire Blackman's (1983) profile of Good Time's Vice President (VP) Gary Hubbard. Based on theses texts and in my own experiences as a hanger more often than player in this same era I have to argue strongly against Burrill's (2008) contention that: "One does not 'hang out' in between machines, there is nothing to do in 'nowhere'" (p. 62). There is plenty to do in the liminal spaces of the hanger's arcade. One might even play, moving from loitering and skulking to active play and those out of this position, at least temporarily.

Deciding to play was about timing as much as space or the appeal of any given game. Keeping an eye out for an opening of a game required not just positioning but also timing, as Thomas Apperley (2010) argues in *Gaming Rhythms: Play and Counterplay from the Situated to the Global.* Apperley looks at the gaming café alongside the related but distinct space of the Internet cafe. Invoking Henri Lefebvre's (2002) concept and method of rhythm analysis, Apperley finds his gamer subjects adjusting, meeting, and countering the temporal demands and rhythms of their bodies and urban settings in order to play in different ways. We see this also in the practice of cruising and walking the arcade. What is and was at stake is a syncing

of rhythms, of the right cabinet being open at the right time. Hodges (2014) who points out that this time was often out of rhythm with the temporal, cultural and consumer contexts that arcades and their players occupied.

The question of timing, killing time, and play is prefigured in an earlier arcade, the shopping arcades of 19ᵗʰ-century Paris, whose transient figures were documented in Walter Benjamin's (1999) *Arcades Project*. Benjamin's figure of the gambler, whose play practice is deeply connected to timing, and having a "correct physical predisposition," anticipates the centrality in the video arcade of practices of getting ready to play (p. 299). As Benjamin writes:

> Rather than pass time, one must invite it in. To pass time (to kill time, expel it): the gambler. Time spills from his every pore. – To store time as a battery stores energy: the flaneur. Finally, the thirsty type: he who waits. He takes in the time and renders it up in altered form – that of expectation. (p. 107)

The same logic applies to the arcade hanger, who watches and cruises, searching for the right time and space to play his/her game. This cruising of the arcade is prefigured by another Benjamin figure, the *flaneur*. However, the would-be or ersatz player is far from the strolling man about town we see in *The Arcades Project* and much closer to Benjamin's "he-who-waits." Both walked those earlier Parisian arcades, but "he-who-waits" walked until he found a place to lean, to rest, to avoid being made to move on. So, too, walks the hanger in the video arcade.

This arcade hanger combines all three types but is closest to the final figure, "he-who-waits." In a 'quick sketch' from this same convolute (folio) of *The Arcades Project*, Benjamin calls this "thirsty" type "synthetic" in that he changes time into energy (p. 864). The video arcade hanger similarly transforms time into potential energy that can't be captured by the arcade operator. Like the gambler, she kills time by changing it and that requires more than mere passivity, it requires tactics.

Tactics

The arcade space is semi-public (which is to say neither quite public nor private), and one that mixes commercial and ludic practices. As such, it requires the deployment of a range of tactics. As Michel de Certeau (2002) writes:

> A tactic is a calculated action determined by the absence of a proper locus. No delimitation of an exteriority, then, provides it with the condition necessary for autonomy. The space of a tactic is the space of the other. Thus it must play on and with a terrain imposed on it and organized by the law of a foreign power. (p. 36–37)

The tactic "must play on and with a terrain imposed on it." The hanger, therefore, is a kind of player after all, a player not of games, but of the rules, terrain, and rhythms of the arcade. Cabinets and a host of other arcade objects (vending machines, pool tables, cocktail units etc.) laid out in their careful rows and clusters to invite the circulation of players also provided a miniature urban landscape to play with and in. To evade surveillance, the spendthrift hangers needed to locate themselves in the attendants' blind spots, using the materials of the arcade to hide not their play (as is often the case with students and workers using their mobile games devices at school or at work) but their non-play. Not all arcades were equally fertile ground for such tactics, and some may not have required it much at all, particularly those more casually run establishments. The tactics of the hangers never reworked the arcades permanently; tactics never do. Rather they create pathways and moments of alterity. Play, for many theorists, is composed of moments set apart, or in de Certeau's term, *poached* from the terrain of the everyday. We find this sense of play in recent studies of video gaming by Apperley and Lorke (2014), and in my own study of Nintendo DS usage (2013). But in the video arcade, a space designed for play, the powerless, the other who must use tactics to evade control, is not the player but instead the one who does not play.

The arcade is designed and designated explicitly as a space for play. And play, at least for classic theorists Johan Huizinga (1950, p. 7, 28) and Roger Caillois (1959, p. 9-10), is defined as a voluntary activity. For all but the employees, the arcade was a place that we chose, rather than being compelled to go to. In the urban and suburban milieu of the teenagers of the 1980s, the arcade, like the mall, was a place where young people could interact and live outside of the differently controlled territories of the home, the school, and the workplace. This was possibly the arcade's greatest value. The importance of places to go and hang out would likely have only increased after 1986, when most states raised the drinking age to 21, effectively closing off the bar as a social locus for older teens. With this in mind we can see how even a relatively free and open space, even one explicitly meant to be a site of play, was ripe for the kind of tactics de Certeau ascribed to controlled spaces. Perversely these tactics, rather than inserting play into spaces of work, would, in the arcade, amount to a refusal to play as expected or required by the arcade control apparatus (attendants, coin-operated game play, even individual game mechanics).

This critical perspective which decenters the figure of the player in favor of an expanded scope which includes a more complex set of practices and artifacts and figures can help us better understand the tensions around use and misuse of the arcade space we see in news reports of the time. Local communities attempted to ban arcades because they viewed them from the outside as wild and dangerous (Huhtamo, 2005; Nasaw, 1999; Kocurek, 2012, 2015). The view from inside the arcade, from the skybox, bullpen, or back office, is the same image reversed. The arcade for operators was a place not of excess and disinhibition, but of manicured, harmonized play. Arcade operator discipline guides like Walford's (1983) "Iron Will" offer tips on how to manage arcade employees, and served the interests not only of the arcade, but also of many (but not all) of the clientele. It is well and good to pine for outlaw

spaces, but the reality of such spaces is that they are not equally open to everyone (see Cunningham, 1994; Sefton-Green, 1998). The order that Walford's rules were intended to enforce created safe and welcoming spaces, at least for those with quarters.

The video arcade was a space designed for profitable play, and owners, managers, and operators sought to create an environment that encouraged videogame play and discouraged non-play related activities. Though the arcade was for owners and operators a site of business, their practices dovetailed with the active players' goals—to have fun playing the latest and best videogames. However, hangers, did not participate in this ordered play, and resisted in minor and major ways this regime of play-based activities.

Flashback

It's an afternoon in 1991 and I, a high school sophomore, walk into Kaimuki Cue, my dimly lit local arcade in Honolulu, Hawai'i. In the center of the large room, I spot two former classmates whom I haven't seen in years, since we were in the 6th grade, sitting on a *Joust* cocktail cabinet. Paul is leaning against Emily, who is braiding Paul's rat-tail, no small task with a cigarette stuck behind his ear. We have a quick, tense, stilted exchange before I head off to play a game. Perhaps it was *Forgotten Worlds*. It was a relief to be playing, but the pleasure I found in the game was reduced by the gnawing sense that I was missing out on something, and that the real action was happening on top of that *Joust* cabinet and not on my game screen.

This scene captures something of the tension of the arcade as contested space. My cooler-than-me former elementary school classmates might not have been enjoying themselves more than I was as an active videogame player; they might not have been engaged in flow and transported by their activity in the arcade, but they were up to *something*. This *something* is related to the concerns of the politicians who tried to close video game arcades, or to at least ban teenagers from the premises. I suggest that the core concern of these politicians was not the violent content of the games, or the fact that young people were wasting time and money. Rather the real source of anxiety was the unknowable potential of what coalesced and simmered around the games. The concern centered less on game players, like me, than on hangers, like Emily and Paul. The good gamer is a docile figure; the hanger is less so. The game players seemed to be there for the right reasons; the hangers for no good reason. And yet, I suggest that the hangers were just as important to the functioning of the 1980s arcade as the active players. Their difficult-to-define sociality was, to paraphrase Erving Goffman (1969), "where the action was," and therefore part of the allure of the arcade for all who went there.

The conventional story is that the arcades were done in by the superiority of the PC and home console game platforms introduced in the late 90s. I suggest that what killed the arcade was not only the rise of online gaming but also the rise of online socializing. The

hanging out that was demonized by anti-arcade crusaders and arcade owners may have been a critical ingredient in the arcades vitality.

Tristan Donovan's (2010) *Replay* (no relation to the magazine), a popular history of video games, examines the demise of the arcade in the context of the rise of music games (p. 283). In the chapter "Beatmania," Donovan, drawing on quotes from then Sega VP Howell Ivy, explicitly connects the wane of the arcade to the rise of online socialization, but not in the form of online play, but rather in the form of social media. Online games can provide co-play and competition via networked play, but not the same sense of hanging out or anything like the capacity for loitering, at least not at first glance.

Indeed if we look to the thriving spaces of the contemporary bar-arcade, we quickly see how relatively unimportant active game play is to the experience. This has implications for those seeking to design new experiences which reference the arcade as much as game historians and critics. People did things other than play games (alone and together) in the arcade. These other social practices characteristic of the 1980s arcade have not, at least so far, been successfully transported into networked game play.

Is it possible to be a hanger in virtual play space? If so how would it differ from the hanger of the video arcade? The Nintendo 3DS's Street Pass and the Xbox One and PS4's party and chat features allow for a kind of hanging out in a virtual space, but this is a sociality that so far lacks the frisson of the arcade. In emerging forms such as *freemium* based games, games with real money markets (see Roque, 2005; Prax 2013), and game-casts, Let's Plays and Twitch.tv (Taylor, 2014) we may find free-riders, non-players, delinquents and perhaps even hangers, just as there are already people hard at work keeping these new play spaces just that–places meant for the right kind of play and players. We must not have the scope of the study of these future developments, nor past contexts, foreshortened by the logics of the systems that produces and polices them. I hope I have shown that one way to expand our scope is to look at the spaces commonly assumed to be *meant* for play and then to ask what else do people do in these spaces and how and why have those people and those practices been made to not count.

Endnotes

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2. In this paper the most important issues were published in 1982 and 1983 as well as from later in that decade, 1986 and 1989. My research is also informed by issues of *RePlay Mag-*

azine and *Play Meter* from the late 1970's into the early 1990's all of which was accessed at The Strong's International Center for the History of Electronic Games.

3. Apart from an anecdote from 1991.

4. See Kurtz (1982), Blackman (1983), Eisen (1982), and RePlay Staff (1987, 1989).

5. There is something almost quaint in this age of the NSA, cookies, keystroke tracking, and displays that monitor our flickering gaze about this kind of old fashioned, incarnate mode of attention and surveillance.

6. I am not the first to try to address this. In *A Casual Revolution: Reinventing Videogames and Their Players*, Jesper Juul (2009) discusses what kinds of subjects count as (real) players. Jason Begy and Mia Consalvo (2010) analyze how the category of "hardcore gamer" functions for gamers, journalists and designers. Both works show how the player is traditionally read as male, adolescent, or a young adult, skilled, and passionate about game playing, contributing to what Nick Dyer-Witheford and Greig de Peuter (2009) call a "bad-boy arcade ambience" (p. 20).

7. This is also partly where I got the idea for the name "hanger".

8. For an expanded take on the implications of rethinking what an arcade cabinet can be see my (2015) "Cocktail Cabinets: A Critique of Digital and Ludic Essentialism" in *Analog Games Studies.*

9. In particular see Chapter Four, "Anarchy in the Arcade: regulating coin-op video games."

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