

Games have been around for centuries and have been constantly evolving during time. They are used as tools to capture aspects of culture and educate future generations, a form of entertainment, a way to sharpen mental skills, etc. Games also publicize gender roles and inequalities. At the 2016 GDC, Julia Keren-Detar, Game Designer at Untame, speaks about the evidence of gender roles in games throughout history. She observes that the relevance of gender in games became pronounced from the late 1980s onwards owing to various factors including, but not limited to, the social aspects at that time. The behavioral fact that further reinforces this is that some game structures are preferred by one gender over the other. She goes on to explain the impact of socioeconomic factors on games through the example of chess. If one studies the evolution of chess, it becomes evident how the original pieces were replaced by those that made more sense to the society at that time. An attempt at gender equality is seen when the Queen replaced the General on the board. At that time, however, the Queen was the weakest piece on the board. The Queen went on to become the most vital piece on the board when some of the powerful Queens started ruling parts of Europe.

According to Julia, the bifurcation of gender in games in the late 80s can be seen as a resultant of a marketing strategy at that time. The toy-making companies, especially, started targeting certain toys to a certain gender. Television shows targeted to half the gender were created to aid this. Thus we can see how games played a role in assigning roles to gender in society.

However, gender roles are not the only aspect of games that have changed over time. Frans Mayra, in Chapter 3 of his book *“An Introduction To Game Studies”*, details the various factors that have led to the change in the design of games. He states that the fundamental character of games can be studied through the tools for analysis and design of games: *rules, play, and culture*. Every aspect of games is influenced by the environment surrounding it. Even something solemn like religion has influenced games. An example of this is dice, which is thought to have been used for divination. We also see how games have been turned to rituals in some parts of the world as well. Our attention is also called upon the diversity of play: play as fate, power, identity, frivolity, progress, imaginary, and self. Every aspect of human nature can be put into each category of play.

Throughout the chapter, Frans illustrates how it is not just one factor but various aspects around it that affect games. The advancement of art, technology, society, mentality, etc., has led to changes in games. If we look back in time, we can see that the early digital games were created to test the capabilities of the technologies and push its limits. This was later commercialized and given to the masses as a form of entertainment.

Both Julia and Frans clearly emphasize the transformation that games have undergone over time, and not always has these transformations been advancements or for good. It is not only changing but has also influenced various aspects of life. Games can also affect society as a whole. This is seen through the ban on certain games in places. A recent example of this is the ban on GTA 3 in Australia. The effect on society can also be traced back to the Roman empire, where cards and dice were banned due to gambling. Just as current situations in the world influence games, linking games to existing socioeconomics help the larger masses connect with it. For example, the game on coronavirus has been popularly downloaded since the people can relate to the game. The versatility of games also allows it to serve as a medium to educate the masses if used well or can be used to push specific agendas. Thus, it is a collective of factors that have transformed games to the way it is today and will transform it in the future.

Apart from gender roles in games, what is another example of regression?

Can't play as frivolity be extended into play as self as one is engaging in a relaxing activity?