

Nick Ballou

Postdoc 🎮 Media Psychologist 🧠 Behavioral Scientist

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Academic Positions

2023– **Postdoctoral Researcher**

Oxford Internet Institute
University of Oxford

- Group: Digital Wellbeing Lab led by [Professor Andrew Przybylski](#)
- Topic: Video games' effects on mental health, using digital trace data
- Open source and industry-partnered (e.g., Nintendo & Xbox) data collection

Education

2023 **PhD in Intelligent Games & Game Intelligence, *no corrections***

Queen Mary
University of London

- • **Thesis:** The Basic Needs in Games (BANG) Model of Video Games and Mental Health
- 2019 • Supervisors: Dr Laurissa Tokarchuk, Dr David Zendle, and Prof Sebastian Deterding

2018 **MPhil in Applied Linguistics, *with distinction***

University of Cambridge

2016 **BS in Linguistics, *magna cum laude***

Tulane University

Skills

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|---------------------------------|---|
| Statistical Programming | R, Quarto, GL(M)Ms, Monte Carlo simulation, data visualization |
| Behavioural Data Science | Digital trace data, user analytics, predictive modelling, longitudinal data |
| Media effects | Displacement, player experience, self-determination theory, disordered gaming |
| Research Methods | Causal inference, qualitative, quantitative, secondary data use |
| Open Science | Open data/materials/code, preregistration, questionable research practices, open access |

Selected Publications

For a full list, please see [Google Scholar](#). All my articles are available open access by clicking the [OA](#) icons.

Journal Articles

- 2025 **Ballou N**, Hakman T, Vuorre M, Magnusson K & Przybylski AK.
How Do Video Games Affect Mental Health? A Narrative Review of 13 Proposed Mechanisms.
Technology, Mind, and Behavior (in press), [10.31234/osf.io/q2kxg](#).
- 2025 **Ballou N**, Vuorre M, Hakman T & Przybylski AK.
Perceived Value of Video Games, but Not Hours Played, Predicts Mental Well-Being in Casual Adult Nintendo Players.
Royal Society Open Science, [10.1098/rsos.241174](#). [OA](#)
- 2024 **Ballou N**, Denisova A, Ryan R, Rigby CS & Deterding S.
The Basic Needs in Games Scale (BANGS): A New Tool for Investigating Positive and Negative Video Game Experiences.
International Journal of Human-Computer Studies, [10.1016/j.ijhcs.2024.103289](#). [OA](#)
- 2024 **Ballou N**, Sewall CJR, Ratcliffe J, Zendle D, Tokarchuk L & Deterding S.
Registered Report Evidence Suggests No Relationship Between Objectively-Tracked Video Game Playtime and Wellbeing Over 3 Months.
Technology, Mind, and Behavior, [10.1037/tmb0000124](#). [OA](#)
- 2023 **Ballou N**.
A Manifesto for More Productive Psychological Games Research.
Games: Research and Practice, [10.1145/3582929](#). [OA](#)

- 2023 Zendle D, Flick C, Gordon-Petrovskaya E, **Ballou N**, Xiao LY & Drachen A.
No Evidence That Chinese Playtime Mandates Reduced Heavy Gaming in One Segment of the Video Games Industry.
Nature Human Behaviour, [10.1038/s41562-023-01669-8](#).
- 2022 **Ballou N** & Zendle D.
“Clinically Significant Distress” in Internet Gaming Disorder: An Individual Participant Meta-Analysis.
Computers in Human Behavior, [10.1016/j.chb.2021.107140](#).
- 2021 **Ballou N** & Van Rooij AJ.
The Relationship between Mental Well-Being and Dysregulated Gaming: A Specification Curve Analysis of Core and Peripheral Criteria in Five Gaming Disorder Scales.
Royal Society Open Science, [10.1098/rsos.201385](#).
- 2021 Vuorre M, Zendle D, Petrovskaya E, **Ballou N** & Przybylski AK.
A Large-Scale Study of Changes to the Quantity, Quality, and Distribution of Video Game Play during a Global Health Pandemic.
Technology, Mind, and Behavior, [10.1037/tmb0000048](#).

Conference Papers

- 2024 Kao D, **Ballou N**, Gerling K, Breitsohl H & Deterding S.
How Does Juicy Game Feedback Motivate? Testing Curiosity, Competence, and Effectance
CHI '24 Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems, [10.1145/3613904.3642656](#).
- 2023 **Ballou N**, Zendle D, Cutting J & Gordon-Petrovskaya E.
Four Grand Challenges for Video Game Effects Scholars: How Digital Trace Data Can Improve the Way We Study Games
ICA '23: International Communication Association, [10.31234/osf.io/ua6nr](#).
- 2021 **Ballou N**, Warriar VR & Deterding S.
“Are You Open? A Content Analysis of Transparency and Openness Guidelines in HCI Journals”
CHI '21 Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems, [10.1145/3411764.3445584](#).

Team Science and Consortia

- 2022 Parsons S, Azevedo F, Elsherif MM & **110 others including Ballou N**.
A Community-Sourced Glossary of Open Scholarship Terms.
Nature Human Behaviour, [10.1038/s41562-021-01269-4](#).
- 2022 Stewart S, Pennington CR & **8 other UKRN leads including Ballou N**.
Reforms to Improve Reproducibility and Quality Must Be Coordinated across the Research Ecosystem: The View from the UKRN Local Network Leads.
BMC Research Notes, [10.1186/s13104-022-05949-w](#).

Grants

Principal Investigator

- | | | | |
|------|-------------|--|--------------------------|
| 2024 | £25k | Effects of gaming reduction using actigraphy <i>Status: Ongoing</i> | Huo Family Foundation |
| 2023 | £10k | Media use and mental health in identity construction <i>Status: Ongoing</i> | Uni of Oxford |
| 2023 | £1k | For hosting the QMUL festival of open research in AI <i>Status: Hosted 5 speakers with 30 attendees</i> | QMUL |
| 2022 | £3k | For research on data donation and loot boxes <i>Status: Pokemon Go data donation platform created; manuscript in prep</i> | AFSG |
| 2022 | £4k | For research on logging Xbox play <i>Status: Published in Technology, Mind & Behavior</i> | IGGI CDT |
| 2021 | £2k | For research on logging Xbox play <i>Status: Published in Technology, Mind & Behavior</i> | Centre for Future Health |

Co-Investigator

2023 **£366k** Capturing the Digital Footprints of Video Game Play [ES/Y010736/1]
Status: Ongoing, platform available at <https://gameplay.science/>

[ESRC](#)

Teaching and Advocacy

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| 2025 | Master's Supervisor | Oxford Internet Institute/QMUL |
| – | • De facto primary supervisor for 4 MSc students (Social Data Science/Game AI) | |
| 2022 | • Scaffolded successful transitions into academic and industry roles | |
| 2024 | Research Methods and Metascience Instructor | QMUL Researcher Development |
| – | • Proposed, designed, and led workshops on research methods and practice | |
| 2021 | • Developed open research skills with PhD students and postdocs across disciplines | |
| 2024 | Local Network Lead | UK Reproducibility Network |
| – | • Responsible for coordinating grassroots open science activities at QMUL | |
| 2021 | • Coordinated survey on awareness and use of open sciences practices | |
| | • Sat on academic misconduct committee | |
| 2024 | Local Organiser/Founder | ReproducibiliTea QMUL Chapter |
| – | • Established local chapter of ReproducibiliTea journal club for science reform | |
| 2020 | • Grew to attendance of 15+ across disciplines and career stages | |
| | • Initiated collaborations with faculty, librarians, external speakers, and other institutions | |
| Now | Reviewer | Various Journals |
| – | • 50+ reviewed articles since 2020 | |
| 2020 | • Consistent "net positive" reviewer - I commit to reviewing 3x my reviewed first-author submissions | |

Media Features

My proudest media appearance is a [BBC Ideas](#) short video about my work and gaming history.

Work I've led or contributed to has been featured in written outlets such as [The Guardian](#), [The South China Morning Post](#) [1, 2], [New Scientist](#) [1], [Toronto Star](#), [The Independent](#), [London Standard](#), [Irish Examiner](#), [Perspective Media](#), [2], [GameStar](#), [CS4FN](#), [BGR](#), [Inside Hook](#), [PC Gamer](#), [PC Games Insider](#), [Science X](#), and [PsyPost](#) [1, 2].

I've been interviewed for live news, video, and audio outlets including [Children and Screens](#), [Pixel Parenting](#) [1, 2], [TRT World](#), the [Vol Breakfast Show](#), and [Play Aid](#).

I've been quoted or asked to comment for outlets such as [Business Insider](#).

Invited Talks

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|------|---|---|
| 2025 | 5 Fun Facts From the New Generation of Games and Mental Health Research | GDC - Game Developer's Conference |
| 2024 | Causal Theory Meets Digital Trace Data | University of Southern California |
| 2024 | Science Speakeasy: Mindgames | Newcastle Life Science Centre |
| 2024 | Scientific Misconduct on Steroids: Generative AI and Academic Fraud | QMUL Festival of Open Science in AI |
| 2024 | 10 Ways Media Use Can Affect Mental Health, through a Causal Lens | Barts and the London Psychiatry Society |
| 2024 | Mechanisms of Gaming and Child Mental Health | University of Hamamatsu |
| 2023 | Three Paths Forward for Games and Mental Health Research | University of York |
| 2023 | Six Methods Reforms for the Social Sciences | KU Leuven |
| 2023 | The Basic Needs in Games Model: Untangling the Effects of Games with Open Science | University of York |