

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: Prof Sebastian Deterding, Dr Laurissa Tokarchuk, and Dr David Zendle

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

University of Cambridge

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

Tulane University

Skills





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

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](#), [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

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