



UPPSALA
UNIVERSITET



Looking behind the curtain: Assessing the invisible work of the magic circle

Steven Dashiell, PhD

Department of
Sociology

Game Center



UPPSALA
UNIVERSITET

Gaming and “Immersion”

- Ongoing discussion
- Debates about detail of immersion in games
- Bleed and alibi
- Moving target of definition of immersion
- Magic Circle
 - Original concept interpreted from Huizinga
 - Debates about the power of magic circle
 - Immersion tied into magic circle



UPPSALA
UNIVERSITET



Immersion vs Engagement

- New concept/term – engagement
- Ability to be fully invested in the game, and pull away from concepts out of game
- Distinctions from immersion
- Assumption of an impermeability of the magic circle
- More investiture required, the more important is engagement
- Tabletop role playing games: 4 hours average session



Second Shift

- Developed by sociologist Arlie Hochschild
 - “the unpaid labor performed at home after paid work at a job”
- Far more significant for women or those in feminine roles
- Estimated to be an additional 8 hours per day, or 40+ additional hours per week
- Gender delegated and implicitly enforced (e.g. guilt)
- Often requires management of activities of others (children, significant others)



Research Question & Hypotheses


Research question: What gender differences exist in terms of engagement for tabletop role playing games?

- H1: Men will have a much more defined game space due to fewer second-shift responsibilities and the ability to “break free” from the real world into a game space
- H2: Women will be more likely to cite second shift responsibilities as barriers to their full engagement
- H3: Women are more likely to indicate a barrier to engagement due to an impermeability of the magic circle
- H4: Men are more likely to articulate an enforced distinction between real world and game world concerns.



Method

- Mixed Method survey
 - 55 quantitative questions
 - 7 qualitative questions
- Administered online via Qualtrics
- IRB ethics approval for human research
- Consent provided via online acceptance



AMERICAN UNIVERSITY
WASHINGTON, DC

ASSESSING INVISIBLE WORK AND IMMERSION IN GAMING SPACES

Informed Consent

Approved- American University IRB (IRB # 2123-11)

You are invited to participate in a research study about immersion in tabletop role-playing games, and how outside obligations affect the degree to which one is connected to gaming. By tabletop roleplaying games, we refer to the types of game that involve interactive storytelling such as Dungeons & Dragons.



UPPSALA
UNIVERSITET



Recruitment

- Criteria
 - Over 18
 - Played trpgs in the last 2 years
- Recruited participants via online sites
 - Facebook gaming groups
 - Game listservs
 - Twitter
 - College groups
 - Gender specific gaming groups

GAMERS WANTED



Do you identify as tabletop role playing gamer, who plays games like *Dungeons & Dragons*? And are you at least 18 years old? Have you played in the last two (2) years?

If you answered "yes" to these questions, you are invited to participate in a research study conducted by **American University**!

You will be asked to participate in an online survey discussing engagement in tabletop gaming. Participation is voluntary, and the survey is completely anonymous (absolutely no names or identifying info collected as part of the research). After completion of the survey, you will have the ability to enter a drawing for one of **four \$50 Amazon gift cards**.

For more information, contact Steven Dashiell at dashiell@american.edu or scan the QR code to go directly to the survey.



This study has been approved by the American University IRB (IRB # 2129-11)



UPPSALA
UNIVERSITET



Question topics

- Basic demographics
- Employment information (type, hours, difficulty)
- Home life information (configuration, responsibilities)
- Trpg information (hours played, format, enjoyment)
- Involvement questions
- Responsibility questions
- Qualitative free answer questions



Preliminary Data

- 813 participants
- 20% women
- 14% trans or nonbinary
- 25% queer (homosexual or bisexual)
- 82% white



UPPSALA
UNIVERSITET



What does THIS tell us? – Lessons Learned

- Many gaming sites are still male preserves (Dashiehl 2020)
- Volunteering representatives are demonstrably more likely to be White and male
- Larger queer contingent than initially expected
- Gaming is both micro *and* macro
- Spaces of color, and spaces with women dominant **need to be sought out**
- **Infiltration of gaming culture and gaming tables are not the same**
 - Important distinction in fandom studies
 - How do less visible populations intersect?



Targeted outreach pros and cons

- Is nearly 200 women enough to make empirical assumptions about the second shift?
- Targeted outreach to listservs for women
- Representative vs convenience vs random samples
- But how much is enough?

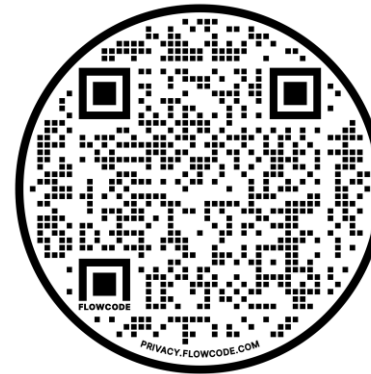


Next Steps

- Closing survey and crunching data (Nov 1 2022)
- Presentations on data at conferences (2023)
- Publishing findings in academic journal (2023)



Steven Dashiell, PhD
Postdoctoral Fellow
American University
Watkins Bldg 113
Department of Sociology & Game
Center
dashiell@american.edu
[@dashiellsteven](https://twitter.com/dashiellsteven) (I am bad at Twitter)



*Scan to go to my
Academia.edu page*



UPPSALA
UNIVERSITET

