

# —POINT OF VIEW—

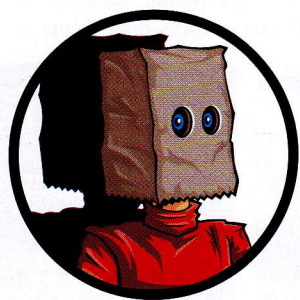


Do you have a comment you would like to make about this or another education issue? Maybe you have a suggestion for a topic you would like to read about.

Let us know your thoughts.

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## What's in a Game?

'Get outside and play! And don't come back inside until I call you.' Remember those words from your childhood, communicated in a manner of cloaked love by a mother who knew that getting you out of the house was good for you (and her!)?

I tried exactly the same thing the other day with my two darlings. Well, what a response! It was as if I had two heads and had actually asked each of them to go to the woodpile and use the sharpened axe to remove a limb. So, what had I done wrong? Why did my mother get away with all that peace and quiet in the house during the day? Why did I get very good at building cubby houses, playing imaginary games and talking myself into the neighbour's house for free food and drink? What has changed? Let's take a look at what's different and how our society has changed the environment children grow up in. (OK, so there's a few generalisations and some non-PC, 1960s comments, but the premise is valid!)

	1960(ish)	2000
<b>Games</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Played with your friends in the street.</li> <li>● Revolved around sport.</li> <li>● Were determined by your sex. Boys played with boys and girls played with girls. But if it was the difference between play and no play then the gender barrier vanished.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Playing in the street with your friends is not an option due to 'stranger danger' and the volume of traffic.</li> <li>● Games are played, and sport is watched, sitting in a chair, facing the screen of a television or computer; they are physically and often mentally passive.</li> <li>● You can play with the opposite sex if none of your peers is looking – computer games are asexual!</li> </ul>
<b>Sport</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Was played formally at school by everyone.</li> <li>● Was played informally (but more intensely) in the street or the local park.</li> <li>● There was no sport on the weekend until you became a 'big kid' (14).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Is not played at school – it's too competitive!</li> <li>● Is not played in the street or park (see above) unless you are with a known, trusted adult.</li> <li>● All formal sport is played on the weekend (all weekend!).</li> </ul>
<b>Friends</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● You had your 'best' friends but anyone in the neighborhood became a friend if you needed someone to make a team or a group.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● You don't spend a lot of time in the local environment so your circle of friends is generally smaller.</li> </ul>
<b>Neighborhood</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Was as safe as a bank. (I think that's safe! It was then anyway!)</li> <li>● Had a park or area where all the neighbourhood kids would gather.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Most parents worry if their child has to walk alone in the local environment.</li> <li>● Still have the park, but it is now a meeting place for drug dealers, users and possibly even paedophiles.</li> </ul>
<b>Parents</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● One parent was home during the day.</li> <li>● Children spent their first four years in the home environment.</li> <li>● Both parents were home on the weekend.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Number of parents home varies from 0-2.</li> <li>● Many children attend child care from an early age.</li> <li>● The family doesn't spend much time at home together on the weekend.</li> </ul>
<b>Technology</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Black and white television swept the world (but you weren't allowed to watch it until it got dark).</li> <li>● You always had lots of homework so there wasn't time to watch television anyway and you had to be in bed by 8.00 o'clock.</li> <li>● The movie theatre was a once a term visit if you were lucky!</li> <li>● An indoor game was played with a board and dice.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Colour television with a huge screen is as essential as the water supply.</li> <li>● Homework is seen as placing too much stress on a child and the family harmony – and it's the teacher's job to teach anyway!</li> <li>● A movie a month is not uncommon – a video a week or more often is the norm!</li> <li>● A computer, complete with interactive violent games, is the focal point of the juvenile household.</li> </ul>

So, change is good we are told. And we wouldn't be without most of the things we now take for granted. But what has happened to the way a child grows up? It has changed significantly in fewer than 50 years. Is the change for the good? You make up your own mind. Is 'playing a game' still playing a game? And does it bring the same benefits to a child's growth and development?