

## Stuck on Screens: Patterns of Computer and Gaming Station Use in Youth Seen in a Psychiatric Clinic

This thought provoking paper by Baer et al. demonstrates to us that we need to start to get a much better understanding of the impact of digital technology in the lives of children and youth – both those who live with a mental disorder and those who do not. There are so many as yet unanswered questions, though there does not seem to be any lack of firmly held opinions about this and related topics. And, as in any new field of study and as with any new technology with substantive social impact, it often seems that strength of opinion is inversely co-related to the data that supports it. We need much more good research on this subject.

One issue that I would like to raise is that of content. Digital media has the capacity to bring to a huge audience, much different content. In digital parlance, “content is king” and I think that “what” is being done may just be as or more important than “how” it is being done. Two cases, in point. Brenda Laurel created the innovative but now ill-fated Purple Moon digital interactions, designed to meet social development needs of young

girls. Her “Starfire Soccer Challenge” is an outstanding example of digital technology supporting positive emotional development (and I understand that its emotional navigation interface may now be being used in the treatment of autism). Many of us are familiar with the work of Jane McGonigal and the Institute for the Future. Digital games such as Superstruct and World without Oil may have substantial positive social, civic and economic outcomes!

We are a long way from understanding this new technology. Remember what people were saying when the telephone was invented?

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