

Stronger Foundations for Critical Games: Contrasting Flanagan's Critical Play with Freirean Pedagogical Principles

In an era marked by growing anti-democratic propaganda, the need for civic education becomes imperative. In particular, critical citizenship education, developed by Paulo Freire, can provide citizens with the necessary critical tools. I contend that, to counter the anti-democratic threat, there must be investment in effective tools for critical citizenship education.

Games have been found to constitute a suitable methodology for the teaching of civic competencies and development of interest in civic topics. But while there is a growing number of civic games, those integrating critical theory remain scarce. Flanagan's research on critical play is a notable contribution. However, upon comparing Flanagan's intended social impact of critical play to the framework that the author proposes for the analysis and design of critical play, a certain misalignment between the two could be said to emerge. I contend that this gap could be filled by an integration of critical citizenship pedagogy.

The present study aims to bridge critical play and critical citizenship education, by identifying gaps between the characteristics of existing critical games and the pedagogical strategies prescribed by Paulo Freire. Based on this analysis, I propose a framework for the design of Freirean critical play.

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