

The Circumstances Surrounding *Battle Royale* and

Later Impact on Society

Katrina M. Valaike

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Dr. Jason McKahan

Shepherd University

Abstract

There are several direct contributions that have lead up to the creation of the film *Battle Royale*, primarily bases on economic and social reasoning. Japan currently suffers from a low birth rate which is affecting industries across the board which has convinced lawmakers to create programs associated with promoting the growth of families. This can be seen in *Battle Royale* through how the previous generations, before the BR Act was put into place, there were dozens of children in the class while there is now only one child in the class which illustrates how numbers are currently declining in Japanese classrooms. After the release of the film, *Battle Royale* has come to impact society on a monumental level. This can be seen in how aspects of the film are able to be seen in the current culture, ranging from other films to videogame releases.

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Direct Contributions to Making *Battle Royale*

The direct contributions leading up to *Battle Royale* is based on a series of economic and social reasons. Economically, Japan suffers from a low birth rate which affects all industries within the country as there are not enough potential workers to fill the positions that are being vacated due to retirement. And socially speaking, the low birth rates have convinced lawmakers to create programs associated with promoting the growth of families. Although unwanted pregnancies have been affecting the parental figures into not wanting to keep the child due to overwhelmingly negative emotions toward the child.

Economic Contributions

With higher education reform having been demanded the thirty years leading up to the release of the movie, propositions would finally be implemented in the 1990s after the discourse within the twenty years prior. This is primarily due to the population of 18-year-olds having been decreased by half a million over ten years during the 1990s and leading up to the turn of the century. With the decrease in upcoming university-level students, this has urged for reforms to be put in place due to troubles that universities have had in recruiting new students.

There was also an issue with how the education system was teaching the upcoming employees since what the industry and job market needed was a huge difference in what they were being taught at the university level. And with the upcoming Japanese generation is reaching adulthood, they have displayed a different system of values than the previous generation due to having been raised on “consumerism, and material abundance” (Doyon, 2001). Despite this, the

national economy and productivity of Japan is still growing steadily based on what education is still being provided at the time. With mandatory education ending after junior high school, roughly 95% of Japanese adolescents finish high school with 38% being chosen to enroll at the university-level (Ozawa, 1991).

A current social issue that is currently affecting the job market as well include new mothers who are going onto family leave, if it is being provided to them at all. Women will go back to the employer after having a child due to the length of time that has been given for family leave. And due to having a young child, this has negatively implications since with fewer mothers are being employed with the less amount of education that she has (Waldfoegel, Higuch, & Abe, 1999).

Social Contributions

With the increase in unintended pregnancies, there is a monumental decrease in the attachment and feelings that the mother has towards the child and a decrease in the participation from the father. This is an issue when negative feelings towards unintended pregnancies intersect a low national birth rate that needs to be increased dramatically in order to deal with the aging population (Goto, Yasumura, Yabe, & Reich, 2006).

There are patterns that have developed from low birth rate countries such as Spain, Greece, and Italy that can coincide with trends that is being seen in Japan. Trends in such countries include low birth rates when out-of-wedlock, marriage being delayed until later in life, adult children not moving out of the family home until they are well into their twenties or even thirties, and a difficult job market for those who are leaving university. There have been many attempts to enact family-friendly policies which include three-five year plans, dubbed the “Angel Plan(s),” that have been implemented from 1995 through 2009. This also includes two laws, “Plus One” (2002) and “Next

Generation” (2003), and several changes and developments towards the Child Care and Family Care Leave Act (Boling, 2008).

Inspirations in Other Media

Kill Bill: Volumes 1 and 2

Themes relating to *Battle Royale* are able to be seen in how both films are able to relate to the passion for murder, spiritual transformation and redemption. Released in 2003, *Kill Bill* is a martial arts film about a woman after revenge concerning a team of assassins and their leader who had attempted to take her life. In the attempt to track down the assassins, she is lead to Japan where the first target she has acquired is leader of the crime syndicate that is based in Tokyo.

Lust for murder is seen as a necessity in both films, in which the scenario is either to kill or be killed. There is no negating that this is a requirement set forth by the BR Act in *Battle Royale*, considering that if multiple people are still left standing by the end of the three-day time limit the lives of the remaining participants are taken. And with *Kill Bill*, it is fair to say that if the Bride was not willing to take the lives of those who plan on killing her then it would be her life that would be taken.

Spiritual transformation and redemption is seen at the end of both films for the main characters. Shuya and Noriko are able to survive after leaving the tournament where the government declares them as being murderous fugitives who are then on the run from authorities. Their spiritual transformation, after having seen the horrendous acts within tournament, forces both to redeem themselves after the atrocities that have been committed during *Battle Royale*. The Bride sees a similar spiritual transformation and redemption arc when she finally confronts Bill, who she was able to make peace with before his death. This starts into motion the new life that she would have with her new identity and now four-year-old daughter.

Hunger Games

There are several themes going between *Battle Royale* and the series of *Hunger Games* films. The main brush strokes see the use of political power and child competitions to the death in order to set an example to the rest of society to prevent future rebellions as major similarities between both franchises. Briefly going over the plot for *The Hunger Games* franchise, the series is set in a dystopian universe of Panem, loosely based on North and South America, which is separated into the twelve districts plus the Capitol. Each year, one boy and one girl ranged twelve to eighteen are chosen from each of the twelve districts to participate in the Hunger Games which sees all twenty-four participants enter an arena where only one is allowed to leave and the entirety of the Hunger Games is broadcasted across the country.

The sense of political power displayed by both movies is by far the biggest similarity between both franchises. During the early parts of *Battle Royale*, it becomes clear that the Battle Royale (BR) Act was created as a means of controlling the population after a massive economic recession that was set in motion due to a massive rebellion of students refusing to go to school. Forcing junior high school students to take the lives of their fellow classmates is the result of the BR Act and is primarily enforced to scare the entire population into behaving or else their class would be chosen next to participate in the next annual Battle Royale. Early in the first *Hunger Games* movie, it is clear that the Panem government has absolute power of the citizens living there with repercussions towards any sort of rebellion. This is what sets up the first annual Hunger Games which would be televised by the capital to the rest of the country in the manner of: this is what happens when this society rebels, children will kill each other until one is left standing.

DayZ

It can be claimed that *DayZ* is a loose videogame adaptation of *Battle Royale*, as both have the same general concepts with the videogame going in a different direction with the narrative. Currently in development by Bohemia Interactive, *DayZ* is an open world survival game that was released on Steam's early access page in late-2013 where the player has to inhabit a zombie-infested wasteland scavenging for supplies to prolong the life of the character. There are additional items that can be obtained outside of the standard food, water, and medicine such as clothing, which would be able to provide additional storage space for supplies and potential stat bonuses, and a variety of weapons to protect the player against zombies or other players. Interacting with other players is another integral part of the game, considering that it is allowed by the game's programming to kill other players it is a useful being able to avoid other players if one so chooses.

This has major similarities what strategies would be implemented in *Battle Royale*. Considering that each of the participants needs to decide on how they will approach everyone else in either choosing to kill, avoid, or cooperate the other participants. There would also be the need to find food and water to survive the tournament as it would be possible to last the entire three-day time limit. At the start of the tournament, each participant is able to collect a duffel bag with standard-issue items such a map of the island that the tournament is taking place on, a compass, and an item that may or may not be useful as a weapon (these range from firearms to binoculars). Befriending other participants is a choice that is possible to make in the tournament but is a risky choice to make considering that only one is allowed to walk off of the island and multiple people who are left at the end of the three-day time limit will all die.

PlayerUnknown's Battlegrounds

An instant hit with gamers while still in Steam's early access list, *PlayerUnknown's Battlegrounds (PUBG)* is an online multiplayer game that has a lot of inspiration taken from *Battle Royale*. Starting on an airplane that has a fixed trajectory going over an island, one hundred players have to parachute onto the island while avoiding the other players who have jumped off at the same time by scavenging for weapons and equipment to kill others before getting killed themselves. If the player is able to make it out of the initial landing and survive the others who had landed in the same area, taking roughly five minutes, then there comes the interesting part of the gameplay. Over time the "safe zone" on the map starts to shrink and the player will start taking damage the longer they are outside of that zone. This causes the remaining player base being forced to congregate into one area and start taking each other out until someone sees the "Winner Winner Chicken Dinner!" screen telling them that they ranked number one out of a hundred.

Describing the gameplay of *PUBG*, it immediately becomes apparent how similar it is to *Battle Royale*. There are changes between both although these changes are minor such as the player base being scaled up from forty-two to one hundred and there being a safe zone in *PUBG* while sectors are used to temporarily get players to move in *Battle Royale*. Death counts are regularly broadcast in both; it is in real time with *PUBG* but every three hours for *Battle Royale*.

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