

Free essay on video game violence

[Entertainment](#), [Video Games](#)



The video gaming experience has long been marred by controversy and debate as research and current events show that video games have the capacity to induce behaviors that are violent in nature. Opinions regarding this matter are divided as some groups argue that not video game titles in the market are violent and explicit in nature, they are even beneficial in terms of educational and cognitive development. Research had also proven this benefit in video gaming, however, other groups had argued that this benefit is often not seen since only a few gamers prefer these educational titles and most, if not all, would favor titles that their friends would play as well. Some groups even argue that most of these video games tend to cause gamers to lose track of reality, thereby influencing their behavior all together. With video games becoming more advanced and realistic to emphasize gore and violence, gamers become easily detached from reality to fantasy which then disables them from controlling their violent tendencies and commit atrocities to make their games a reality.

According to Signorielli (2005) for the past couple of decades, video games have slowly gained a huge following and adapted several new styles, stories and genres to accommodate all types of gamers after the success of PAC-MAN and Super Mario. However, concerns had also been prominent as early as the 1970s as some children learn how to play video games as early as three years old. Parents became weary as to the possible side-effect early gaming would entail, as well as to the video game titles available for their children to peruse. Questions like “ Would they act aggressively due to these games?” or “ would they learn something with these games?” were mostly asked by concerned parents, educators and lawmakers. The sentiment

continued to increase as Nintendo and Sony, two of the world's current video gaming giants who began in the 1990s, introduced new types of games that allows players to see the game world through their own characters. Almost immediately, these new game types became popular with the gaming population, especially those from the younger generation. While there are people who were concerned with the negative impact of these 'real-life' games like violence and aggression, there were groups that showed that not all video games may lead to such drastic changes.

In one study done in 2001, a meta-analysis showed that in comparison with television violence and video game violence, television violence triggers a person's aggression more than video gaming violence. The reason for this, according to the study, is due to the fact that video games are mostly played by children and they are directly involved in the action of the game. Joseph Dominick, in 1984, noted in his study that video gaming also prevents the onset of aggression and violence because of the higher requirement of concentration and attention needed from players, enabling them to discern details in violent video games and see how credible they are in real life.

Scenarios in violent video games are also impossible to replicate given the storyline these games utilize, even if they are based in real-life scenarios. In television, viewers tend to take everything by face value as scenes portrayed in shows are done in real life scenarios. There is also the fact that mass media adds to the illusion or desensitization viewers get and how they interpret what they see in television. Additional studies, like the study of Greg Costikyan, a known video game designer in the US, in 2003, stated that video game violence and the sentiments are unfounded because video

games, including the violent ones, involve puzzle solving and concept introduction to its gamers, improving the gamers' health and their cognitive development. Games are also created to enable social interaction with other gamers, including violent video games. Players are placed into scenarios to test their logic, analysis and even teamwork which would allow them to pass in the next level. The Australian television series " Beyond Online Limited", which discussed technological and scientific breakthroughs around the globe, supported Costikyan's analysis as they showed examples on how gamers were aided by video gaming in processing information, improving awareness and analysis .

While these groups have valid points in terms of the capacity of video games to incite learning, development and camaraderie with their peers; majority of literature, as well as visible examples, points otherwise that majority of video games nowadays have a capacity to incite violence and aggression in gamers, especially the younger generation. In the analysis done by Gentile et al. (2004), video games nowadays show at least 89% of violent content and almost half of the game titles available today are violent in content, especially directed to other players. The statistics itself is alarming because young gamers often purchase the highly violent and aggressive games due to the fact their peers also play it. There is also the lack of interest in educational and developmental games, which further fuels gamers to closely lean towards the popular games available in the market. However, the effect of video game violence in gamers, especially to the younger generation, varies given the video gaming genres available that has violence and aggression in its content.

Several variables had been indicated that influences gamers in reacting strongly to violent video games. The first variable entails trait hostility or anger, which may double the impact of the violent video games to children. Children showcased in the analysis that they are more vulnerable in reacting violently and aggressively after playing violent video games, especially if they have a history of aggressiveness. In adolescent gamers, they show higher trait hostility that influences their arterial pressure, epinephrine and nor-epinephrine levels or their fight-or-flight tendencies. In a 2000 study by Anderson and Dill, they cited that players who are already aggressive and violent in nature, would become more hostile once they interact with violent video games and become more harmful to the people around them. The second variable pertains to monitoring and limiting. With parents nowadays too busy to watch over their children's playing habits and video game preferences, they are unable to limit their children's playing time and discuss the violent nature of their video game. Without parental monitoring and limiting, young players can easily sneak past their parents and purchase games in the guise that they are for their age group. The immediate impact of the lack of monitoring and limiting, violent video games easily goes unnoticed by parents and they would be unable to stop their children from developing violent tendencies through these games easily.

Considering the variables that determines the intensity of video game violence to gamers both young and old, experts show that video game violence affects gamers' attitudes and changes them to become aggressive and violent in several different means. First and foremost, video game violence causes gamers to become aggressive as these games would incite

high aggressive cognitions and emotions. With the high physiological arousal, aggressive tendencies and emotions attached to these games playing, gamers become oblivious to reality which causes them to react aggressively if provoked or disturbed by others. Dang, Lee and Nguyen (2007) added that a study from the Indiana University School of Medicine had showed that brainwave patterns are stimulated by violent videogames, which causes them to have decreased control over their impulses and their attention. Since gamers tend to focus more closely at these games, the reduced attention span they have over their surroundings would cause them to react, if provoked, as if they were in the reacting to the game without clearly thinking who they are attacking. There are also cases wherein the violent video game players tend to lean towards delinquent behavior and do illicit activities like drugs, unprotected sex, and crimes which increases their aggressiveness towards society.

Carnagey, Anderson and Bushman (2006) added that violent video games causes desensitization, thereby influencing how the gamer sees the world around them. Young gamers, due to desensitization would become numb with the violence they see both online and offline. The study even indicated that for players who have already been desensitized by violent video games, they would most likely have no remorse for violence victims and would often support violence. It is also noted that desensitized gamers would also show a changed perspective over issues like crime, punishment and interpretation. Some would develop sentiments that violent offenders of justice should not be given a harsh punishment for their crimes and would not see easily the guilt of these offenders. They, the gamers, themselves would not easily see

the implications of their actions as they become more stimulated to be resistant to guilt with their actions. Others even develop an attitude of pure ignorance if there is violence happening around them. In one instance in 1964 in the murder of Kitty Genovese in New York, desensitized people tend to show that witnesses had less sympathy to help, which is why it is crucial to understand the signs in people. Although desensitization can be used as a therapeutic means to reduce trauma and phobias, gamers, especially children, exhibit high aggression and numbness to crucial issues due to desensitization and it would be difficult to treat. In the study done to support this impact of violent video games, participants who played violent video games for 20 minutes already showcased desensitization to real violence. Once the mind is now desensitized due to violent video games and their emotions aroused by the violence they witness, the next effects to their behavior is reflected. The player's attitudes become more withdrawn and unstable as they become oblivious to who is family and who are friends. These affected gamers would see their family and friends as rivals and would react negatively if they lose in one of their games, often getting into schoolyard fights and arguments. With the interactive feature of most games, not only do they become oblivious to the world around them, but they slowly incorporate to their lifestyles the identity of their video game counterparts. Since most games these 'virtual identities' came from very aggressive and violent games, it would often result to the gamer mimicking the aggressive and violent stance of these characters. The lack of self-control these players would also foster frustration once they cannot move to another level in the game or in any other activity they enter into offline,

channeling their characters without realizing it. Essentially, their frustration and annoyance for not being able to move on and level up would be rechanneled to their family or friends in the most violent of means. However, the most dangerous impact of violent video games for any player is the fact that with their minds no longer responsive to reality and in 'game' mode, they slowly become attuned to killing or defeating their opponents that it would slowly incorporate itself to their minds in real-life situations. The idea itself is fueled by the fact that video games nowadays act as a simulation game like RPG games or first player shooter games. The interactive nature of video games - may they be violent or not- enables the player to enter the game personally and adds to the realistic value of these games. Since gamers become desensitized by the video games and now falls under the illusion of being in the game, they mostly see the possibilities of reenacting their games in reality. Hardcore gamers who have succumbed to these games easily become delusional that they can reenact these games easily, showcasing signs of interest in procuring weaponry and identifying scenarios that could substitute for the scenes they wish to remake. Gamers who have already entered the state of full desensitization and illusion that they are in a game even offline, they utilize video games to sustain their skills, mostly acting as a simulator to provide them with concepts and solutions to make it a reality. Games with protagonists killing another character to pass in the next level of the game often entices players to enter such aggressive nature. As the player continues to reach a higher level, they develop aggressive techniques and apply them in real-life situations. While these techniques may vary in effect given the player's age,

power and gender; reports showcase that there is a high increase on cases wherein the gamers commit crimes to reenact their favorite games . The development of aggressive and violent techniques through violent video games is supported by an interview to Lieutenant Colonel David Grossman in 1999. In his assessment, Grossman believed that violent games, especially the first person-shooter types, can be both an excellent simulator for the police force and an effective teacher for antisocial behavior in gamers. Grossman mostly attributes violent video games responsible for the development of antisocial and violent tendencies to the perpetrator of the Heath High School Kentucky killing in December 1, 1997. The young suspect killed three students in the process and according to the authorities, the suspect practiced his marksmanship skills through video games, including his stances and techniques. Another example to this capacity of violent video games in inciting violence and aggression from its gamers is the 1999 Columbine High School tragedy with the two suspects killing twelve students and one teacher, hurting an additional twenty-three students in the process. According to Jerald Block (2007), authorities discovered that both players had been hardcore players of Doom and Duke Nukem, two of the most popular and extremely violent first person shooter games in the period. Erik Harris was a known developer of specialized Doom levels for gamers, while Dylan Klebold also played Doom and Wolfenstein 3D. It is said that Harris and Klebold had utilized a mockup map of Columbine in one of their customized levels, which enabled them to practice their attack. Both had already been taken into custody in 1998 for theft and with their computer privileges blocked, their anger which was mostly directed on video games

were now turned to the real world. The gratification for their reenactment of their favorite games, for them, would give them the thrill and emotion the games give them (Signorielli 37-38).

As video gaming continues to develop itself to incorporate new strategies, technologies and stories to make their gamers feel more in tune with their characters; there is a necessity to draw the lines on how people should be guided with the possible side effects these games may bring to gamers. On the one hand, video gaming has promise in improving how players perceive things like logic and analysis, and improve their health and development. However, the capacity of video games to incite violence and aggression, especially video games with violent and aggressive content is alarming. Since video games nowadays incorporate real-life scenarios and the interactivity to enable players to get on to these games intimately, the development of aggression and violence is highly possible as players become attuned with their game self and become more violent. Unless there is a change in players' game preferences and monitoring of available games in the market, there is a high possibility that more gamers would be drawn into committing violent and aggressive actions to others that may become dangerous to society.

Works Cited

Block, Jerald. " Lessons from Columbine: Virtual and Real Rage." American Journal of Forensic Psychiatry 28 (2007): 5-33. Print.

Carnagey, Nicholas, Craig Anderson and Brad Bushman. " The effect of video game violence on physiological desensitization to real-life violence." Journal of Experimental Social Psychology (2006): 1-8. Print.

Dang, Jimmy, Jin Lee and Chau Nguyen. " Playing with Ethics: Video Game Controversy." Hovorka, Dirk. The Ethical Imperative in the Context of Evolving Technologies. Boulder: Ethica Publishing, 2007. 137-148. Print.

Gentile, Douglas, et al. " The effects of violent video game habits on adolescent hostility, aggressive behaviors, and school performance." Journal of Adolescence 27 (2004): 5-22. Print.

Signorielli, Nancy. Violence in the Media: A Reference Handbook. Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2005. Print.