

Qi mu

Sociology, Violence



Qi Mu English 112 Oct 23, 2012 Violent Video Games Increase Aggression

Since the advent of Violent Video Games (VVGs), they have become more and more popular. Now, VVGs enjoy unprecedented popularity. According to a 2008 Pew Research Center report, 95% of children play video games, and among them, more than half play VVGs (Violent Video Games) ("Violent Video Games and Young People"). A question may be raised: Does VVGs harm people? Many say they don't. Perhaps they didn't know many researches show the opposite. VVGs are harmful to both adults and kids because VVGs increase their aggression. Opponents argue that there are no substantial connections between VVGs and aggression. For example, In 2007, Ferguson, an associate professor of psychology at Texas A&M International University and the author of *Suicide Kings*, after doing a meta-analysis study which contain all the articles concerning violent video games and aggression behavior from 1995 to 2007, denies that there is a link between VVGs and violent behavior (Ferguson "The Good, the Bad ..."). For another example, the U. S. Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals declares "The state has not produced substantial evidence that ... violent video games cause psychological or neurological harm to minors" (qtd. in Gallagher). In short, many people do not think VVGs cause harm to minds. These declarations, however, are not valid. First, although Ferguson found that VVGs do not cause aggression behavior in his 2007 study, he only used resources that concerning the connection between VVGs and behavior (Ferguson "The Good, the Bad ..." 311-12). Thus, it is not comprehensive enough. Besides, Anderson, an Iowa State University psychology professor and chairperson of the Department of Science and Technology of the

university, refutes that if people examine many researches and find out what is the most common feature of all those studies, they would know the truth. That is “ exposure to violent video games increase subsequent aggression”. It becomes even more obvious when people look at those high quality study results (Anderson “ Violent Video Games and Other Media Violence (Part I)” 30). Thus, by reviewing all the studies regarding this topic, people would find there is a connection between VVGs and violence. What is more, a new study shows the opposite too. Marko et al, an assistant professor at Nanyang Technological University of Singapore, finds similar results. They did a longitudinal study which published in 2011 and was three weeks long. This study is newer than Furguson’s one. In the study, they used 135 participates, and assigned them to two groups; one group played a VVG called Grand Theft Auto, and the researchers prohibited participates in the other group playing any video games (Marko et al.) The result reveals “ playing violent video games leads to an increase in aggressive attitudes” (Marko et al. 597). This study shows that VVGs harm the mind. Further, Anderson et al. have done a study in Japan and U. S, which consists of 1231 children in Japan. They published this study in 2008. They measured those kids’ aggression at the beginning of the study, and then they measured the aggression level after about half a year. In this study, Anderson et al. suggests “ violent video games are a significant risk factor for later physically aggressive behavior” (Anderson et al). So, VVG do increase violent behavior. Then, Anderson, Gentile and Buckley have done a study with 161 kids and 354 adults. , They published it before 2007. They divided participates to two groups. One group played non-violent video games and the other played violent video games.

Immediately after participants' playing, they measured participants' aggression by a test. The test was also a video game, and it was a competitive one which the winners would punish the loser with a noise. The winner set the noise level. The result tells researchers that " participants who played the violent video games punished their opponents with significantly more high-noise blasts than those who played the nonviolent video games" (Anderson, Gentile and Buckley 66). Thus, VVGs make people less nice towards others. Also, Anderson, Gentile and Buckley have done a similar research study. They published this study before 2007, too. For 189 children in high school, researchers inquired their habits about how often they played violent video games and how they felt about violent video games. The result shows that those children played more VVG " hold more pro-violent attitudes, have more hostile personalities, are less forgiving, believe violence to be more typical, and behave more aggressively in their everyday lives" (Anderson, Gentile and Buckley 83). In other words, VVGs do make children nastier. Additionally, Anderson, Gentile and Buckley did another research study before 2007 of 430 elementary school kids. To measure kids' aggression, they surveyed kids themselves, teachers and classmates. Researchers asked kids' how often they played VVGs and what were their attitudes towards violence; to teachers, they asked teachers to give them the children's information about those children's compassion towards others; and to classmates, researchers asked what kids they thought exhibited good moral character. They asked them twice in a year's time. The result shows that "" children who played more violent video games early in the school year changed to see the world in a more aggressive way and also changed to

become more verbally and physically aggressive later in the school year" (Anderson, Gentile and Buckley 102). Thus, VVGs make many adolescents perceive the world in a more negative way. Ferguson is partially correct that many experiments regarding VVGs are too short, and the results that show VVGs cause aggression and violence are not valid because that the players didn't have the time learn enough skills to play the game well, thus subsequently feel frustrated. Nevertheless, longitudinal studies show the opposite. Anderson asserts that from the results of many longitudinal studies (studies that need a longer period of time to do - perhaps months or years) that done in Asia or America or Europe, the outcome was consistent; those participates, who were kids, all became aggressive at the end of the study (Anderson " Violent Video Games And Other Media Violence, Part II" 21-22). As these larger scale studies show the same thing — VVGs spur aggression — the results are valid. Ferguson in his article " Video Games Don't Make Kids Violent" claims that many researches concerning VVG are not valid because what researchers of those studies measure has nothing to do with real life situation. However, Anderson, Gentile and Buckley et al. disputes those experiments are valid because people would respond the same way both in the experiments and real life. They argue that the authenticity of those researches as " The validity of laboratory research paradigms in psychology has passed so many logical and empirical tests that they can be generally accepted as having both high internal and external validity" (Anderson, Gentile and Buckley 23). That is to say, what happens in the lab will predict what happens outside the lab. Some people believe that there is a theory of " venting", which means that as aggression accumulates in the

body, VVGs can help relieve some of those pressures. However, The 14th Dalai Lama, a renowned teacher of Tibetan Buddhism and Nobel Peace Prize winner of 1989, suggests the venting of anger as “ if you ... just keep expressing them, this usually results in their growth, not their reduction” (Bstan-É½dzin-rgya-mtsho). Likewise, Anderson suggests the contrary happens too. Researches from the past 30 years show that exposure to violence only makes those people involved more aggressive (Anderson “ The Impact of Interactive Violence on Children”). In essence, “ venting” will not decrease aggression, but do the opposite. Proponents claim that only some kids who have problems with their minds such as tend to be angry are prone to the negative effects of VVGs, the Harvard Mental Health Letter article “ Violent Video Games and Young People” mentions. Yet, Anderson responds that “ Scientists have not been able to find any group of people who consistently appear immune to the negative effects of ... video game violent” (Anderson “ Violent Video Games and Other Media Violence (Part I)” 29). In other words, not one can escape the negative influence of VVGs. It would seem that VVGs only affect kids. Still, as Anderson, Gentile and Kather observe that it is not true. From the previous example which 161 kids and 354 adults participated, they find that VVGs not only affect kids, but those games also affect adults, who are in the universities (Anderson, Gentile and Buckley 67). Hence, VVGs affect nearly everyone. Granted, there are many other factors contributing to violence, just like not only smoking contribute to lung cancer, but there are many other factors. But Anderson contends that in today’s society “ media violence” such as violent video games is the most prevalent factor that lead to violence (Anderson “ Violent Video Games and

Other Media Violence (Part I)" 29). That is to say, although VVGs are not the only cause of violence, it is the main cause. To be sure, the crime rate has declined steadily while more and more are buying more and more VVGs, Gerdes, the author of *Guns and Crime*, suggests (Gerdes). Nevertheless, the VVGs exert subtle negative influence on game players that may only become obvious after some time. Anderson explains why violent video games can do this to children: children who spend long hours playing violent video games would expect the real world resembling a game because they immerse themselves in the game. In the game, many people tend to kill the player; so kids who play those games would subconsciously expect the same in the real world because of the "learning process". What is more, they see the world differently; if something is not going well, they would think people are against him. This gradual process of harming slowly changes children's personality (Anderson "Impact of Media..."). That is to say, while statistic shows the situation is getting better, VVGs are harming people in an esoteric way. As it were, VVGs is not as adorable as many think, those games slowly some individuals' mentality. Playing violent video games increase many people's proclivities to aggression. To some people, those games increase their aggressive behavior; to some other people, those games increase the tendency of aggression in their mind; and to some people, those games change how they view the world. Works Cited Anderson, Craig A. "Impact of Media Violence on Kids." Congressional Testimony. 21 Mar. 2000. eLibrary. N. p., n. d. Web. 24 Sept. 2012. Anderson, Craig A. "Violent Video Games and Other Media Violence (Part I)." *Pediatrics For Parents* 27. 1/2 (2011): 28-30. Health Source - Consumer Edition. Web. 14 Oct. 2012. Anderson, Craig

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