

# The visual feedback from video games media essay



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Video games are electronic games that engage the user through an interactive interface. The interaction involves the use of visual feedback mechanism which is generated on a specially designed video device. Just like any other medium, the use of video games can be used as an effective communication channel. The content of the specific game is however the determinant of the specific ideology that it expresses.

It has been proven through elaborate research that video games have a profound influence in the manner which an individual thinks and behave. Certain experimental and analytical data shows that the playing of video games has a direct influence on one's thoughts. The playing of violent video games has been proven to increase the level of aggressive and hostile thoughts (Anderson, Buckley, & Gentile, 2007;

Anderson, Carnagey, Flanagan, Benjamin, Eubanks & Valentine, 2004). The engagement of a player in games that have positive content has also been proven to elicit positive outcomes. A perfect example is the playing of video games by children which has been proven to help in weight management. In this paper we explicitly investigate whether video games side with certain British political ideologies.

In the recent past, researchers have questioned the validity of passing on political ideologies in videogames. This has always drawn the conclusion that the reputation of the video game industry despite being a disposable form of entertainment which serves a very wide audience does in fact have a degree of political discourse. This notion of political ideologies being encoded in the some games is true but has a degree of flaw.

Thus notion for example overlooks the effort of certain independent game designers and developers. Games such as Super Columbine massacre RPG and Cutthroat Capitalism go to a large extent to dispute the notion of apolitical landscape in the industry of videogames. The level of success in the process of communicating the various political statements which incorporate military, social and economic issues just illustrate the political nature of these videogames. Video games by design and existence are a true example of cultural artifacts which bear a certain degree of political messages. It is a proven fact that even the simplest of the video games despite their low level of mindlessness can never fail to portray the politics of the underlying culture in which they are designed.

The mainstream video which games do seem to lack political ideologies in actual sense have an implicit political undertone. The basic design of these games is not supposed to handle or tackle any form of political issue directly. The design also does not allow for the carrying of political messages covertly. The reality however is that the games do reflect the underlying social values and most of the popular ideologies of the resident culture in which the game was intended to be deployed in. Even in the conservative and economically centered eighties or even the liberal society, politics are in fact intertwined in the very underlying codes of the video games that we do enjoy

### Video Games and the Brain

Researchers have in past conducted experiments to investigate the influence the mechanism and relationship that occurs in the brain when an individual

is playing a computer game. The work of researchers published in Nature (1998) , a British journal indicated that the brain secretes a special hormone called dopamine when one is laying a computer game. Dopamine is a pleasure inducing chemical that is secreted whenever an individual engages his/her mind in the playing f video games. The New brain research that was conducted years back (Bartholow,

Bushman & Sestir, 2006) was the first to show that the playing of violent video games results in bad health of the players. The emphatic responses of the brain to the simulation of certain real-life violence such as shooting with a gun and bombing are also elicited. It was also explained by Walsh (2004, 2006). That the exposure of a teenaged brain to video games results in certain violent long-lasting effects.

A group of British researchers embarked on a research to understand the neurochemical outcomes of playing video games (Koepp et al. 1998). They measured the amount of dopamine hormone which gets released whenever subjects were engaged in playing a video game. The video games were of action genre. The action game involved the maneuvering through a battlefield full of landmines and tanks. Dopamine is a special neurotransmitter that necessitates the modulation of certain information that is passed from one brain area to another. The particular interest in dopamine was because of its role in the control and influence of a wide range of human behavior. Some of the behaviors that it influences are pleasure, learning and even addiction. An example is the fact that in most cases of drug addiction, pleasure is achieved by increasing the level of dopamine in the brain. By

employing a special form of brain imaging technique called (Positron  
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Emission Tomograph) the researchers were in a position to determine the effects of playing a video game on the level of dopamine that is released. The result showed a rapid surge in the amount of dopamine that was released in the brain. The areas that were most noted to have these dopamine surges/release are the areas that are attributed to learning and reward. The injection of amphetamines intravenously gave out comparable results. The observed surge in dopamine and its resulting implications are never well known but is a success in rats. This implies that dopamine may indeed be very crucial in the process of modifying the brain following a certain period of perpetual engagement in training activities. Bao Etal conducted a study using groups of rats. One group of rats was paired with the presentation of a certain tone of about 9-kHz. The observation made was that there was a particular expansion in the brain area that is devoted to the used tone. This was just in the rats that had concurrent of dopamine simulation. (Bao, CHan, and Merzenich, 2001). Their conclusion therefore was that dopamine plays a very integral role in the process of learning. This was what caused the neural realignment in the rats. The conclusion from this experiment is that the large increase in the amount of dopamine that is observed when a person plays a video games has a role that is similar to the one in the rats. The dopamine released leads to a faster rate of learning and pleasure.

### The Dominant British political Ideology

The term ideology was first made use of by French philosopher Destutt de Tracy in the nineteenth century. He used it to refer to the ' science of human ideas'. However several definitions have been coined for the word. The term <https://assignbuster.com/the-visual-feedback-from-video-games-media-essay/>

ideology is however used to refer to a certain particular set of ideas and assumptions that are necessary in the shaping of one's understanding of the world. It was however argued by Leys (1983: 14) that ideology refers to ' any set of social ideas that become part of the ' operative assumptions of the general political practice of a certain particular social group. The very nature of an ideology is usually interpreted to be very coherent in that the main ideas within the specific ideology will usually tend to show a high degree of coherent with one another. The main ideologies that dominate the British way of life are conservatism, socialism and liberalism.

## Methodology

### Participants

The participants were gathered from a certain popular social online video gaming platform. To explore the questions as to how often the participants engage themselves in playing video games and How this video games affect politics, the research was undertaken by interviewing six hundred participants of which the majority were male compared to females. There were 65% of males compared to 45% females. The participants were aged between eighteen years and forty years with the mean age being 25year and a standard deviation of 0. 64.

### Procedure

Data collection was done between the months of January and February the year 2010. The affair was random and after informing the officials of the underlying research it was on. The participants were recruited randomly

through random sampling technique which was geared towards a generalized finding that gives a wider scope of views from the respondents, and avoidance of biasness. This was done to eradicate biasness and to get various views from different people who comes from all forms of employment. The main concern of the research was to analyze how people especially teenagers look up for political information online. Secondly there was a concern was how they had persuaded people into voting in elections; thirdly they sort to know how the people had been living informed on politics and other current affairs in the past six months, forth is whether they have stayed committed to their civic participation. And lastly the research sort to see how interested the participants are in political issues around them.

The research engage in analyzing both the activities and interests of the participant from that earlier ages because though teenagers do not always involve themselves in political issues as compared to their adult counterparts, they are at a critical age where experimentation are eminent that can help in the development of new political ideologies that give them certain political identities.

Each person participating filled an anonymous survey questionnaire that was to give details of their attitudes towards videogames, what they know about them, how often they play and lastly, their perception of politics and how video games affects it. The participants were told that video games included any games played on a computer, video arcades, and handheld devices among others. The data collectors were also taught and trained the manner in which the survey was to be conducted. (Walsh, 2000)

The research uses logistic regression and multivariate linear methods in their analysis between the participant's background information variables and their civic quality in playing video games together with the above five concerns of the research on what the participants engage in. The games can then be categorized under various groupings such as those that try to coin the thoughts of participants on moral issues, how they help people learn about problems in the society, how they help in influencing communities decision making procedures, and the nation at large. And lastly some are categorized on how they help in teaching about social issues.

The above statistical methods are used because they assist in controlling factors such as how parents may influence the civic participation of the youths and also how participants' incomes can affect their civil and political participation.

The analysis due to past researches on the topic goes ahead to categorize influencing measures in four different categories that includes; the political characteristics of the games played which talks about how the participants and whether they have any civic experiences that influence political issues or supports them. Another is the social context of the games played which assesses the way the games are played. This could be in solitude or in groups. It also assesses the political behaviors and attitudes, this deal with the magnitude of involvement of the participants to gaming and their political involvement. Also there are demographic variables. They include analysis on age, gender, race and also household incomes. It also analyses the frequency of the games played. Therefore on this research our main concern will be on the variables listed below.

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## Variables

Amount of time spent on video games: the participants were asked how much time they spend playing their favorite video games. This time was categorized into week days and weekends which helped in calculating the amount of time people use in playing the video games weekly.

Video games exposure: the participants were again asked to name at least three of their favorite video games. On each video game named the participants were expected to rate how often they play this game on a seven point Likert scale. Also the participants were asked to rate how the video game related to politics on the same Likert scale. On the scale it is interpreted that 1 represent a no relation to politics while 7 mean a higher relationship to politics. The video game political relation score was calculated.

The participants were also asked to rate their video games relation on a 1 to 10 scale to show how much trends of politics in video games has changed in the past two to three years.

Video game limit: the participants were again asked how often they limit themselves from playing video and the period of time they use in playing the video games.

Underlying video game political inclination: The participants were asked to state the general mood that laying the game elicited as concerns the major British political ideologies.

## The model

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There exists broad based and multidisciplinary body of research work that deal with the effects of video games on various social phenomena, some borrow their relevance applications, game theory. DeGroot (1974) came up with a perfect self updating model , whereby persons adjust their personal belief regarding a certain event (also called the state of the world) by way of observing all persons with whom they have a common social tie and in effect taking an average of their friends' averages. Political ideologies and beliefs do necessarily involve a certain level of personal stubbornness but is not explicitly explored by the model, however the

DeGroot updating model is still relevant towards the process of forming a political ideology, especially when the aspect of social video gaming which is so connected and impressionable is concerned. In this research however, we do a slight modification of the DeGroot's model in order to include an element of political judgment as well as a decreasing level of an individual's sensitivity to other's views in a bid to capture the overall maturation state and solidification of the various political views and ideologies. For this purpose we begin by employing DeGroot model which has a simple stochastic configuration having the following parameters.

The model is employed in gauging a person's view regarding the elements of British political ideologies that they derive or perceive to be entailed in the video games. The model is as follows.

.....(1)

Where  $n$  is denotes the number of direct links that an individual  $i$  has with certain other people  $j$  in the online gaming network. I reconfigured the model <https://assignbuster.com/the-visual-feedback-from-video-games-media-essay/>

to incorporate some of the most observed realities of British political ideology acquisition.

In the model we assume that a person maintains an autoregressive component in his or her ideology. The model then becomes as follows.

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.....(2)

Allowing the general political ideology to start out at time 1 as  $i b_{\sim} + e$ , in which  $\hat{\mu}_i$  is a random error term which is drawn

from  $N(0, s^2)$ . The expectation of  $\hat{\mu}_i$ , and  $2$  is  $b_{\sim}$  is arrived at by inspection, as the expectation

$( ) i E b_{\sim} + e$  is  $b_{\sim}$ ,

Which leads us back to equation (2). Variance of  $\hat{\mu}_i$ ,  $2$  is evaluated the equation

is clearly decreasing. Therefore, one can boldly infer that more connections of  $n$  can lead to corresponding  $\hat{\mu}_i$ 's which quickly converges to the equilibrium of  $mb_{\sim}$  and to each other.  $2$

This model however comes with a certain number of assumptions, some of which are more concrete than others. The initial assumption is that it does not take into account the weightings or a measure of the strength of the various different ties.

Conclusion

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Video games have been proven to have profound effects on the player's thoughts. Certain ideologies can also be passed or rather contained in the video games. The exact nature of the ideology that a particular game may pass varies significantly with the nature of the game. Certain games have specific political ideologies that dominate their main theme. The study reveals that a great degree of political ideology is encapsulated in the British games. The designers of various games are at times motivated by certain political ambitions in the process of designing the games. The main political ideology that is eminent in most games is conservatism and it is mainly expressed in terms of strategy of the games. Most British gamers enjoy playing games that replicate the old battlefields campaigns.

### Literature Review

Many theorists have come up with similar and different arguments concerning the relations of video games, politics and culture of different regions of the earth.

When participating in these social practices, players of the game have the opportunity to involve themselves in new identities. For example, while playing the game " Sims Online" a presidential political contest of Alphaville erupted between, Baynes who is 21 years old, and Laura who is a 14 year old girl. Political jockeying and voter fraud accusations emerged just like it would in a real political activity. These occurrences created learning opportunities to Laura and Baynes about the realities of real politics and what they entail. This very election attracted national attention as pundits engaged in debates on the significance of games where players could not only run political

systems in their virtual lives, but could also engage in political debates and arguments. Laura's political campaign, platform and alliances were substantial enough to initiate a stronger police force and run an overhaul of the system of judiciary. This creates an understanding of how deep it can be to gain experience in online virtual worlds. These games contain very rich contexts for learning since players are able to have new and powerful identities and actually experiment on them. ( Shaffer 2004)

According to Terry Flew (2005) digital games are on the increase in society, a thing which has created social isolation especially teenage boys, who hide in bedrooms; thus fail to actively engage in the society. David Marshal (2002) agrees with Flew though he is against the effects of the out come of his research He found out that games are dynamically social and extensive social conversations emerge from online gaming in huge multi-player formats. For example, the " Sims Online" has created entire social and political structures in some communities that have adopted a social gaming prospect in their daily lives. These online gamers actively participate in various forms of communication which includes one-on-one correspondence. These kinds of games are massive, social and intimate.

On the other hand, McArthur (2008) argues that the amount of time young people play, or the frequency of the plays are significantly related to most outcomes of both civic and political occurrences in pour daily lives. McArthur continues to emphasize that the gaming influence to games has increasingly persuaded others on the voting process, charity contribution, volunteer work, and also in growing interest as far as political views and events are concerned. MacArthur finds very little evidence supporting the aspect of <https://assignbuster.com/the-visual-feedback-from-video-games-media-essay/>

videogames in the promotion of attitudes and behavior that undermine behavior as well as civic commitments. On the same note, there is also little evidence supporting an association of video game playing and that of a vibrant civic and political life. McArthur concluded that the frequency of playing games was associated with only two political and civics outcomes i. e. an increase in political interest and protesting with variations that only emerge according to the level of frequency a gamer has to play.

Henry Jenkins, a prominent scholar in digital media highlighted potential participation of cultures that come up as a result of engagement with the digital media. Such participatory cultures are in support of communities that share the same interest and involve themselves in sharing and creating what they create with others. Those with experience join in to mentor those who are coming up. With the kind of report put forth by Jenkins, the newly created participatory culture presents more opportunities for gamers to, participate in community life as opposed to isolation, engage in civic debates, or to be leaders in politics. Extensive opportunities through participation may gradually change self perception and encourage social ties with other inhabitants. In order to be empowered, one is supposed to make meaningful decisions within a civic point of view. For example, citizenship skills are learnt through engaging into political acting in order to understand choices to be made in political terms; all these require steps from watching political news and acting politically. This is more like having interest in politics acting in a game world and then acting politically in the real world.

Henry Jenkins (2007)

Developmental Psychologists concerned with adolescent behavior have suggested that nurturing is very important during the early years in life i. e. child and teenage years. This is the time that teenagers try to anticipate the lives of adulthood and work hard to understand who they are, who they want to be and how they relate to the society. Gibson (2003) notes that the development of sociopolitical orientations is very critical; therefore assessment of the importance to which young members of the society experiment with civic and political activities available to them is crucial in development of future participation.

Brown and Thomas in their arguments in “ virtual worlds” write that players learn to create new innovations within networked environments that are well suited to social interactions, problem solving and effective communication. For example, in world of warcraft, players generally come together to form guilds in which they associate together and coordinate in how to attack and destroy the enemy as well as plan to raid the enemy. When new members are recruited, they undergo training as well as ways of resolving conflict among the guild members. This calls for the establishment of an implicit or explicit code of conduct. This kind of interaction and social influence prepares young people on the future stance of their lives. Douglas Thomas (2008)

Sasha Barab and Kurt Squire have qualitatively studied the content of the game Civilization IV. This is a game where players begin to join a group settlers living in an underdeveloped land. After joining the piece of land, they try to think deeply on how they will develop the land to the standards of a big city; they therefore send a number of scouts to go and explore the <https://assignbuster.com/the-visual-feedback-from-video-games-media-essay/>

territories that surround them. In order to do this, they are expected to set up a group of warriors who are supposed to fight and protect their city. These players start their ways from the Stone Age period and keep moving until the modern twenty first century. This is a process where they have to develop ideas and make wise decision on how to introduce religion, reading e. t. c at the same time; trade negotiations take place as well as talks on governing their territories especially financially and politically. This kind of simulation enables players to have opportunities of learning about the dynamics of political, economical, as well as the legal system that are stipulated in a real government. This simulation also provides opportunity for players to acknowledge their civic identities due to their experience as civic leaders in the virtual world. Such cognitions and attitude coincide with the players' behavior, thus help them develop and practice civic skills. With this study, Squire and Borab concluded that young people gain both civic and political knowledge through playing commercial video games such as Civilization IV. Borab and Squire (2004).

There also have been games purely designed to be used within a basic education context. Games such as Quest Atlantis include a narration based on a storyline of young male and female protagonists. This is meant to initiate a proper understanding in pupils about the purpose of some of the activities they carry out in their daily prospects. This game has also helped students perform better in their studies, especially in subjects like, language arts, social studies and science. For example, in social studies; students have developed and appreciated history and its relationship to their present lives and the adoption of various perspectives of making decisions. As far as



gaming in an educational setting is concerned, studies show that players under the guidance and intervention of adults yield more productivity and worthiness as opposed to the players under the reflection of peer groups. Other arguments though state that games with more distinct design features can facilitate greater civic learning conditions without the intervention of an adult. Borab and Squire (2004).

More literacy scholars have introduced the new versus the old literacy in this new technology era of global understanding. Meyer and rose (1999) interprets the old literacy concept based on the assumption that the basic carrier of information in our culture is the print and the most important knowledge is the ability of students to express and understand themselves through text. Right now technology is catching up, thus the new definition of literacy has changed to mean the ability of a student tot be able to express self through digital technology which is rapidly becoming the sole carrier of information. This is critical in today's education context. This education context requires the knowledge of print literacy; this call for both the old (print) and this new (digital) concept to enhance more skilled literacy. It simply shows that there is a perverse challenge of literacy in both the digital and the non-digital innovations of our daily lives. (Meyer & Rose, 1999)

Electronic games have actually been used in the classroom by teachers to associate the traditional ways of teaching. Young people have always been inspired by some character in the games. This invokes some sense of attention and concentration which are part of the teacher's goals in the teaching process. After the digital game use, pupils begin to reveal some real enthusiasm for writing diaries, text, coloring and making drawings; this <https://assignbuster.com/the-visual-feedback-from-video-games-media-essay/>

also motivate them to keep proper records for what they have learned and drafted in the classroom. They also go on to discuss their projects in broader perspectives, thanks to the games their teachers introduce to them in classroom. The game world in schools is particularly stronger in the United Kingdom for the sole contribution of contributing and advancing personal skills in innovation and creativity. These games develop intellectual and social skills that includes self confidence, ability to explore and cooperate, enterprise and initiative, responsibility, independence e. t. c. (Meyer & Rose, 1999)

According to Zimmerman and Salen, games are forms of organized play with a set of rules and guide to players. If a game is well designed with a meaningful purpose, then the game will definitely yield positive results “ meaningful play” which is a very good learning condition. This definition of meaningful play simply means the results of the relationship between the outcome and the action in a game which are integrated and discernable into the wider view of the game. When the real design focuses on meaningful learning results, then it is able to preserve playfulness which is deserved by children and at the same time serious learning. Games really motivate players to concentrate on mastering their tasks according to how the game is supposed to be played. The innovation of very distinct elements of game design such as rewards, goals, rules, multisensory cues, interactivity, and narrative context, have proven necessary to kindle the expected outcomes of learning. For example, EVE Online is an online game that one has to subscribe to in order to play. Its nature as a casual game doesn't in any way undermine the gain of knowledge while playing it. EVE Online is all about

dominating a market by setting up a number of corporations. This game has attracted so many prominent personnel including, MBA's, city traders, economists, chief executives e. t. c. to gain knowledge of complex financial lessons that they can practice in the real world. One of the gamers was interviewed and explained that once one has managed to conquer a virtual corporation spanning the universe, you can then easily be able to manage a real corporation spanning the earth. (Zimmerman and Salen 2004)

Games are interactive mediums with to fully understand becomes a core challenge. Within game worlds, players have the agency. These games are therefore inhabited by the gamers, within the theories of digital games, a reliable game should be able to constrain players through the narratives and the rules that they are bound to. It is also important that the players be given the actual control for entering the virtual world. Kreimeier, 2000 continues to explain that the game developer's desire is always be able to design games that enable the players to fully engage themselves in the game world. In this way, games are constructions by both the players as well as the authors. For example, the Grand Theft is a game representing the inner L. A in a way that leads players to understand some of the limited choices urban youth have, this game also has a way of inviting them to try the personae of the black man in the inner city; and the experience the sensations of the urban culture and the life of an urban gang member. The Grand Theft game allows gamers to inhabit this for a particular view point and also help in the development of the identities within them. (Squire, 2004).

Deux Ex is a very popular game design as a science fiction game. It contains characters of duplicitous leaders of the government, very powerful corporations and also full of terrorists who are sponsored by the government. Warren Spector who designed the game offers moral choices to the gamers on whether to trust organizations or to trust individual people. In a world where no moral decision is right, the player is left to rethink of who he wants to join the competing organizations such, as family royalties, government or corporations. This kind of game helps us know the most important things and choices to make; as well as what to ignore when making very important decisions. All these game are differently understood and interpreted by different player.(Black 2004)

According to Tom Malone (1981), there is an intrinsic motivation of games to players through challenge, control, fantasy, curiosity and opportunities for competition, collaborative play and social interaction. He goes on arguing that games have a way of creating presence, or emotional immediacy which is one of their most appealing features; the core to this is that we are entering the world to this and not merely manipulating the screen pixels.

Clinton (2004) says on the other hand that immersion is fundamentally built through the game world interaction. These verbs given to players- jumping, punching, running, diving and kicking through and over enemies and few other obstacles are the building blocks through which gamers become war lords, action heroes, or civilization leaders. Clinton maintains that the digital world's cognition is mediated thoroughly by player's action capacity. Thus the player's actions become the player's interface with the world. Clinton's observations go on proving that the first thing a player does before playing a

particular game is to familiarize him with the game controls. This action gives him total control of the characters body and what he can do in the virtual world. In the real world this helps a player to conform and find out his abilities that he can use to venture through his day-to-day