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Video Games

Video games. When one first mentions video games, the normal stereotype that seems to be conjured is some sort of troglodytic male who is obscenely overweight surviving on monster energy drinks and big macs. This imaginary beast also boasts his sweat ridden shirt of some sort of internet trend that only other kinds of no-life basement dwellers would be able to comprehend, although the chances of them even running into another one publicly are slim to none as the unsociable virgins never leave the light of their computer screens anyway. In addition, the assumption is that when one of these nerds decides to spend their time on video games, they are being totally unproductive and have a high rate or academic failure as well as high drop-out rates. With the new research that is being conducted, it is possible that these new age video game players will be the iconoclasts. It is shown that video games are actually mentally advantageous in a plethora of ways. Researchers who have been studying the validity of this argument thoroughly and have found that the benefits of video games, heavily outweigh the possible negative counterarguments. Through the use of video games, people are able to learn complex theories (theories taught in college history courses for example), conceptual skills, and improve innate abilities like vision, and morality that are unattainable through traditional learning methods.

Video games are very advantageous to the human mind in regards to learning complex theories that are much harder to grasp by just lecture alone. As mentioned earlier, generally have negative contextual views such as people who play them suffer at academics and tend to not be very intelligent. However; according to recent studies, this is definitely not the case. According to a study done at the University of Akron by Professor Martin Wainwright, a history professor a part of their psychological department, has discovered that video games are ultimately one of the greatest tools in order for students to be able to learn complex theories that most undergrad college students normally have a very difficult time grasping. Martin Wainwright says “By requiring students to analyze historical video games in the context of both gaming critique and recent historical scholarship, … enables them to tackle—often enthusiastically—material that is frequently difficult for most students to comprehend in more conventional classroom and seminar settings” (Wainwright 1). This shows that Wainwright’s hypothesis are valuable in the sense that video games are able to translate hard concepts into the brain. As Wainwright teaches a class specifically focused on using video games as the main teaching tool he has already stumbled upon the teaching revelation that is video games. Others may think that video games are fundamentally unable to teach anything to children other than violence or immoral actions. What this argument fails to consider is the fact that these video games are engineered specifically for the sake of learning (Wainwright 5). As most parents are only familiar with shooting games teaching violence, they fail to see the potential in another effective, and easy to learn and use method.

Video games also harness the ability to better our mind’s conceptual skills in unknowing and even enjoyable ways. Researcher Christopher Ferguson, is a researcher at Texas A&M University who is a part of the behavioral sciences department, has done a study researching the effects of video games and their effects on visuospatial. After months of researching Ferguson finally concluded that “violent video game exposure is associated with increased visuospatial cognition” (Ferguson 6). This research shows yet another example of the teaching capabilities of video games, in this case, even games in the violent genre being of educational value. This shows that every kid and even teenager that has been “wasting” their time playing violent video games, they are building conceptual skills that may be helpful in the future. It may seem that if the subjects are playing a violent game, they must be inheriting some kind of negative violent behavior from it. While this position is popular, Ferguson in his study tested his subjects for any potential violent backlash the game may have had on the subject and concluded that “results of the current meta-analysis did not support a relationship between violent video game exposure and aggressive behavior” (Ferguson 6).

Continuing on the topic of conceptual skills, Researcher Jon-Chao Hong who is a professor at National Taiwan Normal University, and is also a part of their college of Technology has discovered groundbreaking evidence regarding kids with ages ranging from four to six benefiting from the teaching capabilities of video games. After creating an EVIG (Embodied interactive video game) that is made specifically for teaching children, Hong decided to test its effectiveness on the elementary students. Through many testing sessions Hong had discovered that “kindergarten children were able to develop their emotional intelligence as they took part in these learning activities. They learned to communicate, share, take turns, control their own possessiveness by obeying the rules, respond appropriately to peers, and control their impulsive emotions as they became involved in playing games” (Hong 10). This quote shows the educational potential video games have even on elementary school children. Video games even have the power to bring out the learning in the emotional spectrum of a child’s conceptual skill set. It would be easy for one to believe that a child would already have that ability of emotions that could be taught in a traditional face-to-face manner, however; a traditional method has not been produced to mimic the abilities that the EVIG has had on the children.

Video games also have a unique ability to be able to effortlessly better a person’s innate abilities like vision. A TED talks, featuring the renowned researcher Daphne Bavelier, part of the Entertainment Software and Cognitive Neurotherapeutics Society, has done a profusion of research about the topic of video games either being detrimental, or beneficial to the mental health of society, has found that action video games actually lead to better eyesight, attention span, and differentiating faint details like being able to see a car better in thick fog. The research consisted of test subjects taking a spatial pretest and then play video games for 10 hours within a span of two weeks and take the test again. Bavelier’s research concluded that “they actually performed better and the results are there five months after having done the training” (Bavelier 15:35-16:00). The important part of that conclusion is the fact that after the span of five months the results had been the same or even improved. This is important as we know that the effects of video games last quite a long time and actually have a positive effect, so we know that the learning isn’t something that we do and will eventually be forgotten and not worth the time trying to improve. It might seem as if it’s just a biological/natural advantage for some people to be better at these skills than other, but the point is that even if the people who have a knack for discerning color differences and being able to read fine print play video games, they will get even better at reading and discerning and people who are not as good can have a way to catch up.

In some studies, it is revealed that playing video games may actually be used as an educational tool in sharpening the skilled hands of surgeons. Dr. Rosser, a general surgeon specializing in minimally invasive (laparoscopic) procedures has been a recognized national and international leader in minimally invasive surgery for over 20 years. After doing his research on 33 surgeons “Doctors who'd once played for more than three hours a week did the lap-skills course in an average of 64 minutes with 197 errors; doctors who'd never played took 87

minutes and made 314 errors” (Rosser 5). This is another prime example that shows the effectiveness of video games’ teachings. With the simple act of playing video games, Surgeons are able to decrease the amount of errors by a huge margin that not only subsequently benefit the surgeons, but the patients as well. Although it may be easy to speculate that the reason that the margin is so drastically different is due to the age and experience distribution. Although it may not be the most accurate, Rosser actually accounted for the percent error of age and experience to try and get the most legitimate answers as possible.

The curve for learning in video games does not stop there, as video games are even able to teach people scruples, which people used to think did the exact opposite. Jane Mcgonigal, a professor of video game studies at UC Berkeley and Director of Game Research & Development at Institute for the Future, has done a plethora of research on the topic. Jane Mcgonigal states that in the game world we are “motivated to do something that matters, inspired to collaborate, and cooperate… and in game world we become the best versions of ourselves. The most likely to help in a moments notice, the most likely to stick with a problem, as long as it takes. To get up after failure and try again” (Mcgonigal 3:42-3:59). Mcgonigal strongly enforces this in her video as this advance in moral thinking can lead to greater altruistic things being produced in the future. If people, children/teens/adults are able to learn these scruples and take it out of the gaming world into the real world, then these altruistic things that could only happen in video games may be possible in real life in the future. It is easy to imagine how silly playing video games for the betterment of the future sounds, however; if it is true that people are able to gain so much valuable lessons from video games, and even the possibility of having that cumulative knowledge come together for the greater good, isn’t it worth a shot?

Conclusively, video games are able to make complex ideas/theories easier for students to grasp, conceptual skills, improve on innate abilities and even appropriate moral judgment. For a while the normal stereotype has been created to hector gamers; however these new scientific findings and their influences on the possible positive sides heavily outweigh all possible negative sides. This may subqsequently have gamers looked at in a new light once the ideas and accomplishments video games have on people will be more widely noticed and influential.

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