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Do Video Games Have a Positive or Negative Effect on People?

There has long been a debate as to whether or not video games are good or bad for the people who play them. In recent years, a variety of studies have begun to be conducted, in an attempt to discover the truth behind all the accusations. Do you think that video games truly have the ability to turn someone violent? That Grand Theft Auto has the ability to make someone go on a crime spree? Do you ever wonder if somehow our video games could actually help the world around us? We all know many people who play video games, or play them ourselves such as violent action games or the simple puzzle games; most of which are even particularly popular on today's phones. So what is truly happening in the minds of those who find themselves so enthralled by these games? The results may surprise many people because games are being proven to have anything but a negative effect.


Video games have been around for decades now. The debates that question their effects on us have been around for just about as long. Do these games stimulate aggression in us? Or do they help us release our stress and let us relax? Do they cause our children to become bullies? Or do they keep them from lashing out at the world around them? Should parents be monitoring what their children play more closely? Or are we trying too hard to censor the next generation? In the last couple of decades in particular, there has been a lot of research done to try and define



the effects of gaming on the human mind. This research has shown results that were surprisingly, for some people, positive.

Have you ever played a puzzle game on your phone, or on the computer? I know most people have. Whether they play on their lunch hour, or while waiting in the doctors' office while killing time, most folks have a favorite puzzle game they turn to. In today's world, there are currently a number of puzzle games that have been designed by scientists, which are helping advance scientific research. As a result, there have already been amazing advancements made by players of these very games. In 2011, gamers solved a problem researchers had been steadily working on for 13 years, in three weeks alone. The enzyme structure they helped solve was for an Aids-like disease in monkeys. The following year, in a different game, gamers began discovering planets that astronomers had missed. As of January 25, 2014, they had discovered 40 planets that could sustain life (Mohammadi). These games are designed for the average person, with no experience necessary in the particular field they are helping. To the gamer it is just a puzzle to be solved. Without even realizing it, gamers are well on their way to changing the future of science as we know it.


One of the biggest debates people argue about is whether or not the action game genre has a positive or negative impact on gamers. Now there is evidence that supports that action games can actually stimulate learning for players. Daphne Bavelier, a research professor in brain and cognitive sciences at the University of Rochester, has explained that our minds constantly form templates to help us learn and predict what will come next in all aspects of our life, from conversations to driving, and certainly in learning new things. She and her team recently did a study on a group that was tested before and after playing action games; "Being a better learner



means developing the right templates faster and thus better performance. And playing action video games, the research team found boosts that process.” (Patenaude). The study subjects were again tested months to a year later, and once again the action players did better than their counterparts, showing that the positive effects of playing video games are not just a temporary thing.

Violent games in particular, have often taken the brunt of accusations for their supposed negative effect on the minds of the people who play them. The idea that violent games and violent actions are linked is nothing more than an illusory correlation, where people focus on the cases that back up their view and ignore all others. In particular, cases of shootings done by young males are brought up consistently. People ignore the fact that most young males play violent video games when using that as part of an accusation towards a young male shooter. Thereby making it the basis for why the young male shot other people; ignoring the fact that there are many other young males who play those exact same games and never harm another person. (Peckham).


Christopher Ferguson, a researcher from Stetson University, did a study recently on children with pre-existing mental health conditions, such as depression or attention deficit disorder. He concluded there was no negative effect from the exposure to violent video games, therefore giving no basis to believe the myth we hear so much about these days. This is “particularly important because I doubt many critics of violent video games believe they can just turn people randomly into psychotic killers with no grasp of reality” (Shackford). To take it even further, Ferguson told Stetson University Today, “In my recent research we found that for some teens with a pre-existing mental health issue, playing violent video games seemed to be



associated with less bullying” (Peckham). These studies display that not only do violent games not have a negative effect, but they may even be helping to create a positive effect.

Despite the results of these kinds of studies, there are still those who would insist on accusing games as to correlating too closely with real world outbursts of violence. The research of Patrick Markey, an associate professor of psychology at Villanova, has actually shown a trend of quite the opposite. “Monthly sales of video games were related to concurrent decreases in aggravated assaults and were unrelated to homicides. Searches for violent video game walkthroughs and guides were also related to decreases in aggravated assaults and homicides two months later” (Makuch). Markey stated following his research that “I think the biggest 'take home' of this study is that violent video games were not related to increases in violent crime--not even a little” (Makuch). I truly believe the biggest issue with violent games is when children are exposed to them at a grossly inappropriate age. The games come with a rating, just like movies and shows, parental monitoring is a bigger issue then the true impact of these games on society as a whole. There are enough people playing video games that the fact a violent act is committed by a player becomes entirely irrelevant. "Finding that a young man who committed a violent crime also played a popular video game, such as Call of Duty, Halo, or Grand Theft Auto, is as pointless as pointing out that the criminal also wore socks" (Makuch).

While study of the effects of video games is still in its infancy, there are too many signs of positive effects to keep blaming games for the problems of the world. The fact that games have been connected to amazing scientific advancements, improved learning, and even correlations in a decrease in violence seems to me too much to be ignored. Every person is different and how they look at the world is affected by that. Video games do not make people



who they are. They can, however, be used to help society and improve the pace at which people learn. Is that really so wrong?



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