ENG 111

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

There has long been a debate as to whether 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? The results may surprise many people. We all know that there are many people who play video games, whether they are violent action games or the simple puzzle games, most of which are particularly popular on today's phones. What is truly going on in the minds of those who find these games to be so enthralling?

Video gaming has been around for many years. Throughout that time it has been a constant debate whether gaming has an effect on the people playing, and if so, if the effects are positive or negative

Video games have been around for decades now. The debates that question their effects on us have been around for just as long. Do these games stimulate aggression in us? Or do they help us release our stress and let us relax? In the last couple of decades in particular, there have been a lot of research done to try and define the effects of gaming on the mind. This research has shown results that were surprisingly, for some people, positive. Have you ever played a puzzle game on your phone, or the computers? I know most people have. There are currently a number of puzzle games that have been designed by scientists

that are helping advance scientific research. There have already been amazing advancements made by players of these games. In 2011, gamers solved a problem researchers had been working on for 13 years in three weeks. 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 already changing the future of science.

One of the biggest debates people argue about is whether or not the action game genre has a positive or negative impact on gamers. There is now 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 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 the game play are not just a temporary thing.

Violent games 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. 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. He concluded there was no negative effect from the exposure to violent video games. 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).

Despite the results of these kinds of studies there are still those who are 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?