**Controversies, controversieS, **

In the video game industry, as well as the video game community, there are many controversies involved within as with other communities and industries. These controversies are caused by issues people have with these communities or issues caused by individuals within said community. This essay will be about the controversies around violence in video games and its correlation to real world violence.

The topic of violence in video games is very well known both within the video gaming community as well as outside the community with news coverage of the topic and other media highlights talking about whether or not it is a major contributor to violent acts in the world.

Since this debate has been active since the creation of the arcade game Death Race in 1976, where the game depicts the player killing humanoid figures. [1] The humanoid figures depicted were said to be “gremlins”, however many people think these “gremlins” look very similar to humans. [2] The concerns about video games being violent spread because of this game, and parents were concerned that their children would become violent due to this. Other games appeared in the arcade, such as Cop ‘n’ Robbers, Tank 8 and Jet Fighter, that had similar levels of violence depicted as Death Race in them but they received very little complaints. [3]

In 1992, the release of the video game Mortal Kombat to many consoles, which sparked more controversy and issues about violence in video games. The game featured massive amounts of blood and gore, especially during special moves called Fatalities. Numerous arcade games that contained a high amount of violent content followed in Mortal Kombat’s wake. Though these games were originally exclusive to arcade machines, so it was possible for the games to be segregated from games aimed for younger audiences. In home console releases of the game, it became more accessible for younger players. However, these versions had the excessive gore hidden away. Some versions, namely Sega’s licensed version of the game has it locked behind a cheat code that anyone could use and younger players would be able to witness the extreme violence. [4]

Due to the influence of video game violence, a horrible massacre in America occurred on the 20th of April 1999, in Columbine High School, in Columbine, Colorado. This massacre reignited this fierce debate revolving around this topic as the shooters, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, were avid players of the violent video games like Doom. This led to Bill Clinton, the US president at the time, to order an investigation to find the correlation between video games being sold to child and school shootings throughout the nation.

At the start of the 21st Century, in 2001, the video game developer studio, Rockstar Games, released the game Grand Theft Auto 3, on the PlayStation 2. This game was one of the first ever open world games and it allowed the player nearly free control to complete missions in any means they desire, which included the gun use, melee combat and reckless driving. In the story of the game, the player plays as an unnamed character who explores a contemporary urban setting, taking on various missions within the city’s criminal underworld. This game was very successful, selling over 2 million copies within 6 months. [5] The game’s extreme popularity led to multiple groups to raise their concerns and criticisms towards the violence found within the game, among many factors. [6] The following games Rockstar would release, Grand Theft Auto: Vice City in 2002 and Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas in 2004, would spark up more controversies within video game culture. These controversies cause the US government decided to act and in 2005, California banned the sale of violent video games to minors. [7]

One game from the first-person shooter series of games, Call of Duty, the game Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2 released in 2009, included a very controversial mission in the game’s story mode named “No Russian”. In the mission, the player takes on the role of a CIA agent who has embedded himself within a Russian ultranationalist terrorist organisation, the leader of this group the group to speak “no Russian” to not give away their origins. This mission allows the player to participate in a terrorist attack in a Moscow airport, which involves the player to have the choice of firing indiscriminately at civilians and security alike. The player’s participation in this mission is not mandatory, with the game displaying a disclaimer before the mission, warning the player about the violent content found within and gives the player the option to skip the mission, with no penalties for this choice. If the player chooses to play this mission, they are not required to participate with any shooting in order to complete this level. The mission ends with the leader killing the player in order to frame the US for the attack that leads to the start of a world war. Many had issue with this mission for its depiction of violence and terrorism with some saying that video games had yet to mature. This mission is considered a turning point for the video game industry, in how certain depictions of violence can be seen as acceptable while others are considered unacceptable. [8]

From the 2010s and 2020s, there have been many incidents that have highlighted people’s concerns with the depictions of violence within video games such as legal issues caused by video game, making the US government introduce new laws to control distribution of violent video games to minors, and violent video games becoming the main blame for many over the world for shootings that have occurred within schools and other public places. [9] [10]

In conclusion, there are many people who believe that violent video games cause people to commit atrocious violent acts and other who don’t believe this. The NRA or the National Rifle Association and the US government are notable advocates against video games, though the American Psychological Association urge the US government to avoid correlation between video games and violent crimes. [11]

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