Topic Area: Digital World

"To What Extent Do Violent Video Games Affect Individuals And Society?"

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<u>Introduction</u>

This individual report essay is based on the topic "Digital World" and focuses on the research question on "To what extent do violent video games affect individuals and society?".

This topic question and research was inspired by the recent uprise in "AAA" famous video games and how the media is correlating these video games with influencing younger individuals to commit acts of violent crime[1]. It sparked interest in me to use further insight in this essay to analyze this topic.

Hypothesis: Although violent video games may contribute to increased acts of aggression in certain individuals, the true cause of their acts of violence will be more reliant on their innate characteristics and the environment they were raised in. This is because there are several factors[2] that come into play whenever finding the source to such large catastrophes, therefore, the chances of the faults coming onto violent video games alone are highly improbable.

Stakeholders & Perspectives:
Psychological professionals will be taken into consideration for the large portion of this essay due to the sheer credibility they have in their field, hence the information and reports given by said professionals can be used to reinforce or counter my hypothesis. The bias of certain individuals will be taken into account and information will be triangulated to ensure there are agreeing opinions for and against this topic.

Teens and adolescents will be the main view of this essay as the media often entails these individuals responsible for the dreadful acts of violence that the media claim violent video games are responsible for. Their character before and after the video games will be studied to make a valid comparison on whether or not violent video games truly affect their character[3].

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[1] "14 Mass Murders Linked to Violent Video Games — Charisma News." 15 Oct. 2015, https://www.charismanews.com/culture/52651-14-mass-murders-linked-to-violent-video-games. Accessed 10 Feb. 2018.
[2] "APA Review Confirms Link Between Playing Violent Video Games ...." 13 Aug. 2015, http://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/2015/08/violent-video-games.aspx. Accessed 10 Feb. 2018.
[3] "Do Video Games Inspire Violent Behavior? - Scientific American." 1 Jul. 2015, https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/do-video-games-inspire-violent-behavior/. Accessed 10 Feb. 2018.

National Perspective (China)

This section will be discussing the current status of violent video games in China and where the population stands or divides regarding the suitability of these games for the teens and adolescents. It will also discuss the short or long term consequences of violent video games and who could be positively or negatively affected by said consequences.

To accommodate the growing audience[4], there have been several internets and even gaming cafe's to fill the needs of the gaming generation in China.

However, despite the popularity of the game there have been several occasions where China has attempted to ban violent or graphic video games[5] from the population[6] in concern for the mental well-being of the younger generations. This is due to several psychological studies that have been conducted amongst Chinese ethnic individuals to truly understand the cause behind the violent acts of crime as well as the several cases of murder[7][8][9] that occur as a result of losing in a violent video game or meeting unpleasant individuals online. The media has claimed that the graphical video games can result in drugs, murder, and even teen pregnancy[10] due to their powerful influence on the young individuals.

Causes & Consequences: Violent video games contradict with many of the values and beliefs of different cultures and societies within the population[11]. This could have many dire consequences as it may result from disagreements within members of a community or even the same family that would not have occurred if the child did not play video games int he first

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[4] "The phenomenal rise of e-sports in China where gamers outnumber ...." 2 Aug. 2017, http://www.scmp.com/news/china/society/article/2104805/chinas-e-sports-phenomenon-just-imagine-a mericas-entire-capital. Accessed 10 Feb. 2018.

[5] "List of banned video games - Wikipedia." https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_banned_video_games. Accessed 10 Feb. 2018.

[6] "China to ban violent online games - ABC News." http://abcnews.go.com/Technology/story?id=8194306. Accessed 10 Feb. 2018.

[7] "Teenager gets 13 years for 'video game' murder - Telegraph." 4 Sep. 2004, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1470929/Teenager-gets-13-years-for-video-game-murder.html. Accessed 10 Feb. 2018.

[8] "China: Video games cause teen pregnancy, murder - Engadget." 28 Dec. 2009, https://www.engadget.com/2009/12/28/china-video-games-cause-teen-pregnancy-murder/. Accessed 10 Feb. 2018.

[9] "Chinese 16-year-old allegedly murders roommate after losing League ...." 17 May. 2014, https://www.techinasia.com/chinese-16-year-old-allegedly-murders-roommate-after-losing-league-of-l egends-match. Accessed 10 Feb. 2018.

[10] "China Blames Online Games for Drugs, Murder, Teen Pregnancy ...." 24 Dec. 2009, https://www.pcworld.com/article/185490/article.html. Accessed 10 Feb. 2018.

[11] "China Censors Block Hunger Games-Style PUBG Video Game ...." http://www.newsweek.com/game-over-pubg-china-censors-block-hunger-games-style-video-game-so cialist-697176. Accessed 10 Feb. 2018.

place. The divide in opinion may have small or dire consequences depending on how many members are involved and how strongly they are pro/against violent video games[12].

Furthermore, some video games imported from America or western side of the globe such as "CSGO" or "PUBG" may have direct conflicting interests with traditional Chinese virtues or core socialist values. These complaints amongst the community result in the ban of specific video games in China[13][14]. Whilst these bans may temporarily relieve the issue of the cause and therefore close the gap of disagreement between individuals, it, in fact, may simultaneously encourage illegal behavior as there have been cases[15][16] in which individuals have illegally pirated video games from illegal sources thereby breaking the law in China.

However, there have been several good events that benefitted certain individuals and the community as a whole. For example, there are several individuals[17] who have made a job and a living off of recreational gaming and streaming. Furthermore, the popular "Esports" has actually benefited the economy of China and[18][19] it has been noted that more individuals are participating into the fray.

Hence, violent video games may create a divide amongst the more traditional communities in China which have strict beliefs and rules, resulting in a cultural divide amongst the society having results such as video game banning. However, communities which have accepted video games as a rising power and influence have been able to benefit by using such

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[12] "Battlegrounds: China could ban video game over blood ... - CNN Money." 30 Oct. 2017, http://money.cnn.com/2017/10/30/technology/playerunknown-battlegrounds-banned-china/index.html. Accessed 10 Feb. 2018.

[13] "CHINA may ban PUBG b/c violence and graphics - Steam Community." 30 Oct. 2017, https://steamcommunity.com/app/578080/discussions/1/1480982338961838840/. Accessed 10 Feb. 2018.

[14] "The end of Chinese PUBG cheaters ? - Gameplay Discussion ...." 30 Oct. 2017, https://forums.playbattlegrounds.com/topic/92643-the-end-of-chinese-pubg-cheaters/. Accessed 10 Feb. 2018.

[15] "China's complicated history with video games: when a ban isn't really ...." 30 Jan. 2013, https://www.engadget.com/2013/01/30/china-console-ban/. Accessed 10 Feb. 2018.

[16] "Pirates steal video game riches in China - CNBC.com." 9 Jan. 2014, https://www.cnbc.com/2014/01/09/pirates-steal-video-game-riches-in-china.html. Accessed 10 Feb. 2018.

[17] "Professional video gaming reaches big time in China- Nikkei Asian ...." 12 Nov. 2017, https://asia.nikkei.com/Business/Trends/Professional-video-gaming-reaches-big-time-in-China. Accessed 10 Feb. 2018.

[18] "Esports: Is the gaming business ready to come of age? - Financial Times." 5 Nov. 2017, https://www.ft.com/content/ef8539b6-be2a-11e7-9836-b25f8adaa111. Accessed 10 Feb. 2018.

[19] "BBC - Future - The Chinese female gamers putting male players in the ...." 11 Sep. 2017, http://www.bbc.com/future/story/20170911-the-pro-gaming-glass-ceiling-in-china. Accessed 10 Feb. 2018.

applications to make a living through entertaining others, also by benefitting the economy of China since China is also known to have an Esports Community[20].

Global Perspective

Globally, research has been done by professionals that found evidence going against my thesis statement that video games cause violence[21] and have also found contradictory evidence that supports the thesis statement[22] of this essay, claiming that video games cannot be the sole underlying factor.

Universally, the ones that are most affected by the violent video games are often the people who play said games (such as teenagers), their parents, the producers of such video games e.g. "**Insomniac Games", "Activision", "Bungie", "Valve"**, as well as the minor community that is under influence of the media and have risen to join the debate.

The juvenile population are often the target audience for game developers and are also often guilty of the ones who commit acts of violence and crime. The male population is specifically targeted[23] as it is found that men tend to prefer action/graphic video games more than their female counterparts. Adding on to that, since the majority of the gaming population is under the age of 17 it is likely that they have not developed a full persona and sense of morality to determine whether or not actions are right or wrong, further increasing the chances of committing crime due to causes such as desensitization to real-life violence[24] and increased long-term aggressive behaviour.

Video game developers will ignore such claims and create studies to support their claim, this is done to allow their business to continue prospering and selling merchandise. Most companies are largely unaffected as most media sources claim the fault to be on the individual committing the crime rather than the company that produced the game.

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[20] "The phenomenal rise of e-sports in China where gamers outnumber ...." 2 Aug. 2017, http://www.scmp.com/news/china/society/article/2104805/chinas-e-sports-phenomenon-just-imagine-americas-entire-capital. Accessed 11 Feb. 2018.

[21] "Yes, Violent Video Games Do Cause Aggression | Psychology Today." 21 Dec. 2012, https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/our-changing-culture/201212/yes-violent-video-games-do-cause-aggression. Accessed 11 Feb. 2018.

[22] "Violent video games DO NOT cause antisocial or aggressive ...." https://www.mirror.co.uk/tech/violent-video-games-not-cause-9995091. Accessed 11 Feb. 2018.

[23] "Video Games: Males Prefer Violence while Females Prefer Social ...." 23 Aug. 2012, http://usabilitynews.org/video-games-males-prefer-violence-while-females-prefer-social/. Accessed 11 Feb. 2018.

[24] "Do Violent Video Games Contribute to Murder? | Psychology Today." 18 Aug. 2015, https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/slightly-blighty/201508/do-violent-video-games-contribute-murder. Accessed 11 Feb. 2018.

Causes & Consequences:

First and foremost, there is research stating that playing violent video games from a young age increases acts of aggression, bullying, and fighting and should remain a significant public health issue and safety concern[25]. Hence, there is a broad consensus among medical associations, parents, researchers, and pediatricians that all agree that violent video games increase aggressive behavior[26].

Moreover, studies have shown that there is **"compelling evidence that the use of realistic controllers can have a significant effect on the level of cognitive aggression."[27]** which signifies that simulating violence such as shooting guns and hand-to-hand combat in video games can cause real-life violent behaviour.

The consequences of this are that many of those who play video games have an increased likelihood of committing acts of crime. This statement is also supported since studies have shown that many perpetrators of mass shootings have too played violent video games, evidence of this is present during the Columbine High School shooting that occurred in 1999, [28] as it was found that the murderers of 13 students were teenagers who played violent video games. Additionally, Many mass shootings have been carried out by avid video game players: James Holmes in the Aurora, Gabby Giffords and killed six others (2011); and Anders Breivik, who killed 77 people in Norway (2011) and admitted to using the game Modern Warfare 2 for training.[29]

Nevertheless, despite the overwhelming evidence that violent video games may be behind the increased acts of aggression in young individuals, there is also compelling evidence[30] that suggests video games cannot be the only cause and such studies that claim this are flawed[31] . This is because they fail to take into consideration a wide variety of external factors that could play a much more commanding role such as family history and mental health, adding

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[25] "Do Video Games Influence Violent Behavior? - Michigan Youth ...." 24 Aug. 2011, http://yvpc.sph.umich.edu/video-games-influence-violent-behavior/. Accessed 11 Feb. 2018.
[26] "'Broad Consensus' that Violent Media Increase Child Aggression ...." 6 Oct. 2014, https://news.osu.edu/news/2014/10/06/broad-consensus-that-violent-media-increase-child-aggression/. Accessed 11 Feb. 2018.
[27] "Realistic Gun Controllers in Video Games Foster Aggressive Thoughts ...." 16 Mar. 2015, https://today.uconn.edu/2015/03/realistic-gun-controllers-in-video-games-foster-aggressive-thoughts/. Accessed 11 Feb. 2018.
[28] "Columbine High School shootings - Facts & Summary - HISTORY.com." http://www.history.com/topics/columbine-high-school-shootings. Accessed 11 Feb. 2018.
[29] "'Training simulation:' Mass killers often share obsession ... - Fox News." 12 Sep. 2013, http://www.foxnews.com/tech/2013/09/12/training-simulation-mass-killers-often-share-obsession-with-violent-video-games.html. Accessed 11 Feb. 2018.
[30] "No evidence to support link between violent video ... - ScienceDaily." 16 Jan. 2018, https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2018/01/180116131317.htm. Accessed 5 Mar. 2018.
[31] "Here's what we know about the links between video games and violence." 2 Mar. 2018, https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/here-s-what-we-know-about-links-between-video-games-n852776. Accessed 12 Mar. 2018.

on to that many of the studies are not long-term[32]. Further evidence supports this because, despite the violent juvenile crime rate significantly decreasing in the past decades, sales of violent video games have continued to increase at a significant rate.[33]

There's even been evidence suggesting that violent video games are beneficial to youth and are one of the main reason that juvenile crime rates have decreased. This is because said games allow the players to release stress and anger[34] and distinguish between virtual violence in the context of a game and appropriate behavior in the real world[35]. Besides, studies have shown that violent games can have a positive effect on kindness, civic engagement, and "prosocial" behaviors[36].

Future Perspectives & Solutions

Should the mass shooting and juvenile crime rates increase then this implies that there is evidence against the hypothesis of this essay. Solutions for this would be for parents of violent game players to educate themselves on game ratings e.g. M Rated, 15+ etc. in order to be aware of what they are letting their child into. Watching for cues and doing their research about the video game beforehand will allow the parents to make the best choice in the interest of their child's mental well-being and safety.[37]

Another possible outcome is if accumulated negative effects of playing violent video games will increase aggressive behaviors and hostile expectations[38] for those who play them consecutively over a period of time. It is best recommended that individuals should avoid playing any video games for too long of a period of time. However, research has suggested that the more violent games you play, the more aggressive you become.[39] Hence it is recommended that gamers should avoid playing too long on consecutive days to allow the release of tension and negatively accumulated effects that could possibly occur during the time period.

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[32] "Christopher Ferguson: Video Games Don't Make Kids Violent | TIME.com."
http://ideas.time.com/2011/12/07/video-games-dont-make-kids-violent/. Accessed 11 Feb. 2018.
[33] "Video Game Violence | SiOWfa15: Science in Our World: Certainty ...." 23 Oct. 2015,
https://sites.psu.edu/siowfa15/2015/10/23/video-game-violence/. Accessed 11 Feb. 2018.
[34] "Violent Video Games Help Relieve Stress, Depression, Says TAMIU ...." 17 Jun. 2010,
http://www.tamiu.edu/newsinfo/7-08-10/article5.shtml. Accessed 11 Feb. 2018.
[35] "Virtual violence - American Psychological Association."
http://www.apa.org/monitor/2010/12/virtual-violence.aspx. Accessed 11 Feb. 2018.
[36] "Prosocial Video Game Effects – Media Psychology Review."
http://mprcenter.org/review/narvaez-prosocial-video-game/. Accessed 11 Feb. 2018.
[37] "How To Handle Violence In Video Games - Care.com Community."
https://www.care.com/c/stories/3416/how-to-handle-violence-in-video-games/. Accessed 11 Feb. 2018.
[38] "Violent video games and aggression: A cumulative effect? - CNET." 10 Dec. 2012,
https://www.cnet.com/news/violent-video-games-and-aggression-a-cumulative-effect/. Accessed 11 Feb. 2018.
[39] "The more you play, the more aggressive you become: A long-term ...."
https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0022103112002259. Accessed 11 Feb. 2018.

Last but not least, violent games may be used as therapy and can be educational to individuals as it encourages empathetic behavior that allows gamers to develop a higher emotional quotient that may be beneficial to them in real life in the future.**"Through immersion in imaginary combat and identification with a violent protagonist, children engage the <u>rage</u> they've stifled . . . and become more capable of utilizing it against life's challenges."[40]**

<u>The Verdict (Personal Perspective)</u>

As with many other issues in life, video games can be good and beneficial, if played in moderation and controlled. By achieving equilibrium with game time and social life it is possible to avoid the negative effects of video games whilst simultaneously reaping the rewards of gaming such as tension and stress relief.

Having a conscious, and aware mindset of what game you are buying and playing is much more important than the act of playing the game itself, this is because if one is aware of the game they are playing they will likely be aware of the possible acts of gore and violence that it may present and be shielded from its negative effects due to their raised awareness.

In conclusion, Violent video games are advantageous and profitable to the community and individuals as well since they may be used as a remedy for empathic behaviour, this means that game developers can continue to prosper as their sales go up due to civilians buying their products either for leisure, recreational gaming, professional gaming or even possibly psychological treatment.

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[40] "Violent Video Games Are Good for You | Psychology Today." 17 Nov. 2010, https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/geek-pride/201011/violent-video-games-are-good-you. Accessed 11 Feb. 2018.