

In violence we forget who we are.

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“Bang bang, shot dead, everybody’s gone mad”, these words taken from Michael Jackson’s song “They Don’t Care About Us” are one of the many phrases that children often hear when playing their video games. With the ever increasing violence in video games one wonders how they affect the young minds that play them. Many make the argument that video games can be used as a great educational tool in class and at home. But educational games are not what most kids are playing, they are playing games that are violent, use vulgar language, and some even contain sexual gestures. Many parents who buy these games for their kids do not even realize the violence that they are bringing into their own homes. This is why parents need to provide guidance and restriction on the purchase and use of video games; because violent video games have been shown to make children act out more violently. The time spent playing video games can lead to mental and physical health problems, and parents need to become more knowledgeable about the games that their children play.

Many heinous crimes and shootings have been linked to the violence in video games. In a recent Norway mass shooting the shooter testified in court that “he played video games as a way to train for a shooting spree that killed 77 people last summer.” He also stated that he played World of Warcraft for over 16 hours a day. (Sutter) This was an astonishing testimony that opened up a new debate to determine if violent video games are bad for our children. This

started a rush of new and some old studies to resurface showing whether the aggression levels in children had a direct cause with the violent games that they play.

A video game that always comes up in these studies is Grand Theft Auto, which is a mature level game where you play a gangster who kills pedestrians to steal their cars. Grand Theft Auto has an 18+ rating but has also been found in the hands of children as young as four and five. Alison Sherratt who works at St Mary's primary in Riddlesden commented after watching her four and five year old children "out on the playground throwing themselves out of the window of the play car in slow motion and acting out blood spurting from their bodies".

(Children acting out violence)

There has been a wide array of discussion and studies on the effect of video game violence on children. In 2000 at a Congressional Public Health Summit the impact of entertainment violence on children was very thoroughly discussed. It was concluded that "entertainment violence can lead to increases in aggressive attitude, values, and behavior, particularly in children." (Anderson et al. 82)

It has also been shown that violence in video games does not only affect children but adults too. In a study conducted in 2005 researchers had twenty nine year old men and women play three different types of games; one where killing is rewarded, one where killing is punished and one where there was no violence. The conclusion was that the participants who played the violent games especially the games where killing was rewarded showed a significant increase in blood pressure and aggression. (Carnagey et al. 886). This clearly shows that violence affects anyone and the violence in these video games affects our minds and bodies.

It's no hidden fact that children will spend many hours in front of a television screen playing their favorite game, but at what cost. We all know of the high rates of childhood and adolescent obesity, and there have been many studies conducted that show that long hours playing games can lead to obesity in later years. Kelly Murumets commented "Our kids today, little ones under the age of four, need to move more, they need to sit less and they need to get off of screens" and that 73 to 84 percent of their waking hours is spent being sedentary.

(McGinn)

Obesity is not the only consequences that can result from children spending too much time playing games, it can also lead to "negative outcomes such as social isolation, insomnia, depression, anxiety, obesity and it also affects mental health of an individual, a recent survey warns." (Technology stealing kids' sleep) This recent study surveyed children between the ages of 10 and 18. The results are astounding. It states that most children spend an average of six to seven hours a day on some kind of electronic device.

Most children would rather play their game than sleep; which is causing a wide outbreak of sleep deprivation among teens. Sleep deprivation is leading to many daytime problems for teenagers, including headaches, impaired concentration, weakened immune systems, crankiness, and an increased use of nicotine or caffeine and hyperactive behavior often misconstrued as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). (Technology stealing kids' sleep)

When children play games for as many hours as they want it becomes an addiction. Children begin to lose track of time the more hours they play. "That sensation of losing track of

time will be familiar to most gamers.” (No Killer App) Soon gaming will be the only thing that children will want to do.

Many countries like China and South Korea are attempting to limit the number of hours that youngster can play on games. (No Killer App) The responsibility for limiting the hours that their children play on video games falls on the parents. When children are gaming, productivity and learning go down. When parents start to regulate how many hours their kids play they will avoid many health and mental problems later on.

With all the available information on how video games affect children it’s no question why many parents have an eagle eye on their kids when playing. But many parents do not. After questioning many parents what games their children played many answered that they have no idea. This is not as surprising as you would think, most parents do not even regulate the games that they let their kids buy, let alone know the rating of them. Even though there are many regulations already set in place for video game purchase, for example prohibiting the purchase of mature rated games for children under the age of 18, the regulation should not end at the store.

When parents restrict their children from seeing an R-Rated movie, or a television program because of its graphic nature why is it that they stop there. Video games should be evaluated on the same bases as movies and television shows or even more regulated because they actively engage the child into its world. It is recommended that if parents are “unsure whether any game is suitable for their child, they could rent the title first and then watch them play.” (Miller II)

It's not that difficult for parents to regulate their children, it can both be fun and educational for both child and parent if you get your child to teach you about the game. "Kids love to teach their parents something, and games are a great opportunity to do that." (Miller II) There should never be an excuse for a parent not to regulate their child's gaming because it can be rewarding now and rewarding for the future.

Even though many parents are in the dark about the games their kids play many do know and regulate what comes into their homes. In a news article written by Nancy Churnin, she tells how many parents face a tough choice on buying M-Rated games for their children. In her interviews many parents, one of whom commented "I don't think it's a positive influence" referencing the release of Halo 2. She urges parents to research the games their children play and ask themselves to evaluate how their child will react to violence and other aspects of games. (Churnin)

In conclusion video games can be an educational tool in many homes and classrooms, but these types of games do not attract the interest of children like more popular and wider known games that contain violence. When parents step-up and start learning what games their kids play, how these types of games will affect their kids and regulate how many hours their kids play video games it can help decrease problems later in their child's life.

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