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Violent video games and their effects on youths

Researchers and critics have always had unease and disagreements about violent video games and the effects they have on youths. There are arguments that support video game use and debate that it does not have a negative effect on children. However there are those who object and claim that violent video games do have a bad effect on children. ISU Psychologists Publish Three New Studies on Violent Video Game Effects on Youths written by Craig Anderson et al. claims that violent video games increase aggressive behavior in children. “According to these researchers, there was visibly more hostility and attitudes towards violence in the children examined. On the other hand, Henry Jenkins debated that violent video games seem to do more good than harm in his televised essay, Reality Bytes: Eight myths about Video Games Debunked . He feels that video games are undermined and demoralized by narrow researches. Jenkins claims that video games enhance learning, build friendships and offer an environment in which children can release stress.

Even though Jenkins and Anderson agree that violent video games can be harmful to children who are under-aged, they disagree that such video games later on cause aggressive behavior and hostility. Jenkins implied that violent video games may make a child more aggressive because he claimed that it builds their self confidence in facing daily challenges. Violence is sometimes interpreted as strength. Anderson and Gentile also agreed that children that play some of these video games stronger mentally because the games allow them to gain control and power over the characters. As a result of this, some may begin to show power over their friends or enemies. However, Jenkins claimed that researchers who do narrow investigations do not have a strong claim that video games do more harm than good. He explains that games help to build self-confidence and motivation. The characters in the video may represent the persons playing the game, and they may see themselves as a super women or supermen. They may gain a level respect for themselves by imitating these characters; imitating their heroes would possibly lessen insecurity and cause the players to walk with dignity to know they have achieved something. Furthermore, Jenkins enlightens us that these same video games that have been demoralized enhance learning. He explained the scenario where it is used in combat training for soldiers. He also adds that children are more controlled because they get to take their anger out in the cyber world rather than real life. They use these games as a stress fighter where they just express themselves and as a result see what the result would be in the real world if they did act it out. It is believed that playing video games helps children refrain from acting violently in the real world.

In contrast, Anderson’s newspaper article explains that children do not have resistance to the effects of violent video games. The study shows the short-term effects that violence has on children. Even the violent cartoon video games resulted in aggressive behavior.

Jenkins mentions that video games are a meaningful form of expression. In the cyber world kids are able to hurt things and not pay the consequences for it. In the real world, they would not be prepared to face the consequences if they kill someone or hurt them. This is because they get away with what they choose to do with their characters in games and are able to inflict pain and not be punished. As a consequence, children may grow to think that it is okay to hurt others in the real world without being punished.

Jenkins has a point when he says that video games are a meaningful form of expression but what about his views that talks about how the violent video games are used to train soldiers versus how it affects children? How is it different from the intense training soldiers have to go through? Is it that we are preparing them to go out into the world to be armed and dangerous or do we just want them to be prepared physically and mentally for the real world? These are questions that are debatable because everyone has their own perception of games and their effects. It is somewhat agreeable that playing violent games “enhance learning”, but one needs to stop and wonder if it alters brain functioning. Facts prove research done have shown that a person’s brain development can be altered by playing violent video games. The frontal part of the brain associated with concentrating, inhibiting and self-control is used when playing a non-violent video game. In reverse, those who played the brutal video games showed a lot of activity in the “reptilian” side of the brain, which is called the amygdala. This is associated with instincts such as reproduction, feeding and survival. It is associated with the emotional arousal, particularly anger. This part of the brain has no capability to logical reasonable or objective decision making. In addition, it does not express tolerance, consideration or affection. Should there not be a concern if teenagers are over-stimulating this section of the brain for so many hours daily? To make matter worse, when actions and thoughts are repeated, the brain is “hardwired” to accept them and reinforces what is practiced, whether by thinking or acting. This makes it more likely to repeat these actions in the future. In the brain there are networks of cells called dendrites. When activities are repeated the dendrites are stimulated and neural pathways are created between different sides of the brain. The neural path becomes stronger when an action is practiced over and over again. These essential changes are the physical devices of learning.

If research shows that video games harm our children then why do we still deny the facts? It is important to consider what is right apart from what we think is right. Is it right to judge based on our assumptions or do we need to consider facts which make it more logical and reasonable? Jenkins proved a good point when he said that playing the games builds relationships and enhances learning, but what else happens? And which is more important for the children, the concern for their wellbeing or their self-interests?