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Group #4: Media and Technologies

Influences of violent video games.

Themes: **VIOLENCE**

* Age (children vs. adults) Individual backgrounds
* Gender (male vs. female) Violent behavior vs. aggression

Gabriella: children

Jake: female and male

Jake V: overall violence in society from playing video games

Max: adults

Erin: Female

Introduction:

* Hello we are the Media Technologies group and today we are here to talk to you about the effects of violent video games.
* My name Is Jake and this is… (everyone say there name so they can familiarise voices)
* As a group we came together and decided to inquire, how the popularization of violent video games affects the way our society views and reacts to violence? (research question)
* According to Doctor David Walsh a psychologist that specifies on the impact of media on teens and children found that 90% of teenagers claim their parents never checked the rating before allowing them to play or purchase a game.
* The video game rating system is infact monitored and ran by a government enabled group called the Entertainment Software Rating Board to keep underaged kids and teens from purchasing or playing certain games.
* Just like alcohol or tobacco laws are put into place to keep games deemed unfit for children giving them a “teen” or “mature” rating. Yet with access to different online shopping methods and a lack of parental care these laws are easier to bypass than ever before.
* These games represent a outlet for people of all ages and genders to outlet anger and be exposed to violence in ways they wouldn't have been exposed to before.
* This might not seem very important to you but from our research we have found the violent video games have more affect on people than you would think, not just children.
* Even adults can be more agitated and show signs of aggression as well as display trust issues after playing violent video games.
* By looking at different demographics such as race and gender we will take a closer look at how each group is affected both positively and negatively.

Jake: Gabriella please start us off by telling us how these games affect youth and children.

Youth and children

Thank you Jake.  Now before I get too far in discussing the influences and affects of violent games on youth, I want to note how there is no straightforward answer. The question cannot be simply asking if games do cause children to be more violent, but instead needs to ask what influences video games have in our society today.

* **Why the question of influence?**
* There have been no conclusive studies that neither dispute nor support the claim that video games do have a direct correlation with one’s actions and behaviors.
* There are, however, many researches that have shown how video games do have an impact on the child’s behavior and aggression and the way they view the world.
* Francis Dalisay and the other authors of “ Motivations for game play and the social capital and civic potential of video games” tells how “Psychologists have established motivations as predictors of various types of human behaviors”
* Because of the reward base system in violent video games, it desensitizes players to the negative impacts of violence--in other words, it conditions them to believe that violent actions lead to good things such as power and rapid progress through the game.
* Dalisay and others also explained how the social aspect of video games, and in this case violent video games, acts as a form of motivation to play these games, as it allows players to “meet and form new relationships with other people, and help, chat, work, and collaborate with other players.
* Take Call of Duty for example. It is a first person shooter game that allows you to take on the role where the goal is to shoot the enemy target in order to keep you alive, and earn rewards. Yet when you join teams with a friend on the game, they are able to help you reach those goals and rewards.
* **So in other words, do violent video games let kids think violence is cool and solves problems?**
* Maybe, but again, there are no hardcore facts to support nor dispute this… one thing is for certain, however, the child's background and personal characteristics play a vital role in analyzing the effects of violent video games.
* A study by Christopher J. Ferguson is probably one of the best examples of this because he incorporated multiple variables to show how certain factors might have an impact on the results.
* Some examples how the variables he considered are the group studied in which children aged 10-14 from a small city on the Mexican border, were asked to participate.
* Another variable was having an equal amount of female and male participants, this is due in part because video games is stereotypically a male dominated game.
* The participants also included children with high and low risk of aggression. Previous studies have shown that children with high risk of aggression, depressive tendencies, and antisocial characteristics were more likely to act out in violence and aggression after playing a violent video game.
* Other variables taken into consideration while conducting the research and examining the results, included the reflection of negative life events—such as: Neighborhood problems, negative relations with adults, antisocial personality, family attachment, delinquent peers
* As well as the influence of family environment, family violence, depressive symptoms, serious aggression, and bullying.
* Through analyzing this different variables, it shows that although violent video games may not have a direct influence on the child's behavior, it does have an impact on the way they perceive the world around them.
* **So if there is no hard evidence, why does this matter?**

With the continued advancements of technology and media, it is changing the way we receive and understand the news and what is going on in the world around us. Although it is not proven that video games do or do not lead to more violent behavior, it does show that these violent video games influence the way one understands the world. Many believe that As violent video games become more popular, it encourages gaming companies to create more violent video games. The popularity of video games also has an affect on the way violence is portrayed in media. As Stuart Allan explains in his article “News Culture,” media outlets try to determine what stories to publish, the select stories based on what is controversial, and what would generate the most amount of interest. Because violent video games are so popular, this would encourage media sites to publish more violent news, in hopes of stirring more controversy, and gaining are larger audience interested in the topic. With this acknowledgment of the relationship between violent video games and media, we will be able continue progressing in technology and media, allowing all to become more aware of the world around them, without leading to more violence. Yet in order to do so, we must also look at adults and the impacts violent video games may or may not have on them as well. Max will speak next on the impacts of violent video games in Western societies.

Adults:

Mass shootings have plagued America in the past decade. You most likely have heard these headlines in the news: The Sandy Hook Massacre, Aurora Theater Shooting, the Tucson Shooting and The Norway Massacre. All these men are responsible for mass murders and one thing they all had in common was playing violent video games extensively and frequently. According to Stuart Hall, Representation is the production of meaning through language. To put it in layman's terms, to provide a portrayal that depicts that situation or object (Hall). So Representation plays a large part in all video games because it engages the viewer and depicts the virtual reality the gamer is in by using familiar literacy. Anders Behring Breivik killed 77 people in Norway in 2011 and he “testified that he prepared for the assault by playing the first-person shooter video game Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2” (Journalist Resource). Coincidence or not, A recent study from Ohio State found that “people who have a steady diet of playing these violent games may come to see the world as a hostile and violent place”(Bushman).

So many young adults are regularly playing violent video games including myself and my colleagues with me today. In my personal experience, I find myself being irritated and frustrated when my friend knockouts me out in the new UFC video game. If you’re a fan of Meek Mill and Rick Ross’ music, you might have heard about Lil Snupe, an upcoming artist from their label, who was shot and killed over a game of NBA 2k15. Us being consumers we passively engage in these activities without realizing what this exposure does. From Brad Bushman’s study, “Playing video games could be compared to smoking cigarettes. A single cigarette won’t cause lung cancer, but smoking over weeks or months or years greatly increases the risk. In the same way, repeated exposure to violent video games may have a cumulative effect on aggression.” In another study by Craig Anderson, they found that “Across the 33 independent tests of the relation between video-game violence and aggression, involving 3,033 participant, High video-game violence was definitely associated with heightened aggression” (Anderson).

In my research I found numerous studies that suggested violent video games increase aggression in young adults and children but I also found several studies that found no effect from exposure to violent games. One thing that should be noted is that in each study that examined violent games their approach had a different framework of research and it could have skewed their results. As David Guantlett puts it, the media effects approach “comes at the problem backwards, by starting with the media and then trying to lasso connections from there, on to social beings, rather than the other way around” (Gauntlett).

Jake: Erin I would like to know more about how violent video games affect females can you enlighten me on the subject.

Females

I would now like to focus on how sexualized women characters in violent video games play an even larger role in affecting the minds of males.

* I first want to point out a very important and insightful documentary called, *Miss Representation*, written and directed by Jennifer Siebel Newson, in which she portrays how the media perpetuates this concept that the woman is nothing but a sexualized object.
* That being said, just as misrepresenting women in the media is an issue, so is showing men as superior and dominate. Which, in today’s society is ultimately what is shown not only in video games but also through all media outlets.
* In relation to Gabriella’s discussion on youth, Newson also argues that a child’s development is extremely important and if they see early on in TV shows and movies that men are dominant to women then that’s how they will grow up to think.
* Her film explicitly shows that corporations are comprised mainly of patriarchal males who decide what content is produced and who produces it aids in perpetuating this notion of misrepresentation. How can women be truthfully represented when men run the entertainment world?
* Digging deeper into this topic of video games, in Alessandro Gabbiadini article, *Acting like a Tough Guy* he discusses numerous concepts that could potentially cause violent actions or discrimination towards the female population. I’m going to touch on a few of his main points so that we can get a better understanding of how sexualized video games have become.
* Gabbiadini mainly argues how the, “exposure to sexist video games can decrease empathy for female violence victims.”(1)
* Empathy is a major issue surrounding violent video games because empathy is how we relate to one another’s pain.
* He states that, “numerous studies have shown that playing violent video games reduces feelings of empathy and makes people numb to the pain and suffering of others” (1)
* Along with that, he brings up this interesting concept surrounding objects vs. people – where for example in video games victims are looked upon as objects not as real people. **Gabriella, do you think this concept affects young minds?**
	+ *I absolutely do Erin! In Stuart Hall’s first chapter of Representation, he examins in depth the role representation has to play on our understanding of the world around us, which I think fits perfectly into Gabbiadini’s concept of object versus people. In many violent video games, women and other minor characters are seen as objects, instead of actual people. Relating this back to my segment in the influences on children, I feel that plays a major part in how a child would be more inclinded to act violently. If a game represents women or another group as nothing more than an object, the child will reflect this representation in the way they treat them in the real world.*
* Going further with this concept, females are looked upon as not just objects but sex objects. Not worthy enough to be respected as a normal object/character
* so my question for the listeners is, what does this mean for females in the real world? What kind of image does this inflict on real life women?
* As were thinking about those questions, Gimbadini demonstrates a great example of this gender exploitation in the  highly sexualized game known as Grand Theft Auto.
* His MAIN ARGUMENT surrounding this game are the masculine norms that are strongly reinforced in GTA
* He proposes that “GTA gameplay will increase masculine beliefs. Masculine beliefs, in turn, are expected to be negatively related to empathy for female violence victims.”
* Gimbadini also points out that “players’ implicit self-perceptions” which is to say that players pick avatars that represent them or who they want to be
* In a nutshell his argument here is that: if you pick an avatar you connect with then you will be more likely to want to do the same things the avatar does in the game. For example, if the avatar participates in prostitution then in a sense you are agreeing with it and therefore you would most likely want that to happen to in your own life.
* My final thoughts and questions that I have for you listeners are, is it too far to say that violent video games lead to pornographic addictions and then participation in prostitution? Do we see a direct correlation between sexualized games and the ever increasing exploitation of women in society or is that just a coincidence?

So Jake can you please enlighten us on how this affects both males and females?

Females and Males in General - Gender

J – Going further with video game effects on gender, more specifically gender and violence in video games, it’s important to note that results from studies over the years testing to see if video games cultivate violence and aggression are mixed results. Part of that challenge is because the genres in video games are too broad and this include games’ realism that many games largely depend on in terms of interactivity with the game world and characters.

J – On that note, we can continue on with a study from the [Brenick, Henning, Killen, O’Connor, and Collins (2007)], authors of Social Evaluations of Stereotypic Images in Video Games. Their study notes that males and females who viewed violent images of males’ aggressive behavior and sexually exploitative images of females’ attire and poses as wrong because of the negative influences that images can have on players’ attitudes and behavior (p.411). The findings confirmed our general expectations that males and females evaluate stereotypic images in video games using different forms of reasoning.

J - Participants stated that video game playing has little effect on players’ attitudes because players don’t usually copy or imitate the behavior observed stating, “playing is okay because it’s not like he’s going to go out and shoot someone tomorrow” (p.411-412).

J – But this presents an interesting contradiction to participants’ notions that males were less likely than females to view the violent game as negative or as having a negative consequence on players’ behavior and attitudes. Given other findings by Anderson and Bushman (2001) and Carnagey and Anderson (2004) males think playing video games is a personal choice, and that it has little to no effect on their social outlooks or behavior. Yet, empirical research has shown that there are, in fact, many negative consequences of playing games with negative content and images. The importance of study showed that the difference between a player who played more video games, particularly males, and a player who did not, were that players who played more were likely to condone negative stereotypic images and to be less critical of those negative images. These findings indicate that male and players who play video games frequently may be more accepting of such increases in aggression and not just aggressive outcomes from playing violent games. This also contributes to an understanding of how youths perceive their experiences of playing video games and the content of such video games, as well as to an understanding of the effects of videogame play on stereotype evaluation and the contingent societal effects. These findings will also inform the manner in which parents educate their children and adolescents about the effects of playing video games and the manner in which parents, the government and the video game industry regulate age-appropriate game usage.

ADD QUESTION: To wrap up our segment, I wanted to add onto Erin’s segment on gender roles. Using Hall’s concept of representation and semiotics, our examination took a closer look at how gender was exchanged or signified as a sign and/or signifier within the world of gaming. If Hall was here right now, what would he say? Maybe he would add that gamers must negotiate a new sense of representation each time they ‘game’ because of gender-specific storylines or character models. Maybe this semiotic approach to examine gender stereotyping would prohibit the influence or encouragement of games that would be shaped to engender a male response and to incite a desire of aggression towards the opposite sex.

Jake do you have any comments to conclude our segment for today?

Conclusion: As our time comes to a close we now understand that Videogames have an effect on both males and females of all ages. This varies depending on the game and the duration/ frequency that the game is played.According to page 313 of How Violent Video Games Communicate Violence. The “Studies suggest that violent video games tend to justify real world violence using four reasons. First, they communicate that violence serves a higher good. Second, the enemy is often introduced as a perpetrator of heinous acts, which allows users to engage in advantageous comparisons. Third, victims usually consist of groups that are commonly perceived as less worthy of protection, such as men or male soldiers, but rarely ever of civilians, women, or children. And fourth, violent video games reward rather than sanction violence.   From this study we can now see the connection between violent video games and aggression shown towards other people.” (Hartmann 313).  By knowing this we can approach this issue in a sensitive way to make a difference and change people's mindset about video games. Further research and studies will help us pinpoint what factors need to change to decrease violence and aggression. With this understanding, we will be able to change the culture around video games and violence.

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