

Since the year 2000, there have been 284 school shootings in America. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_school_shootings_in_the_United_States) Just in the last five years there were already 132 school shootings. In the wake of these tragedies, the investigators and our society have looked to find somewhere to point the blame. Some scientists think of gun laws while investigating this major issue, others blame the school system, but almost all of them conclude at least some blame on video games. If the last conclusion is completely true, there is clearly an issue since 90% of the teenagers that play video games own games which are 90% likely to include mature levels of violence. However, scientists mistakenly simplify the issue down to the equation that violence in games equals violence in real life, mistakenly because correlation does not prove causation. Today, I want to talk about why video games do not cause violence, but they can actually be a healthy way to release aggression.

Unfortunately, research on video games, aggressiveness and violence is a long way from being finished. It is always inconclusive and does not ever come to a consensus. For every study that you can find that proves video games cause violence, you can find an equal amount of studies that prove that video games have no correlation to real-life violence. Communication scientists, pediatricians, and media psychologists all disagree greatly among themselves. They just can't find "THE" answer as to whether there is a causal relationship between gaming and violence. A news post from TheGuardian told us that about 20% have a varied / different opinion over whether gaming produces real-life violence or not. That variation does not sound convincing to us, normal human beings, who like to pretend as if we are 100% certain about everything, but you have to realize the following: A scientific conclusion can only be considered valid if the results differ a maximum of 2% in the results.

Since we can't rely just on research to tell us whether there is a relation between violence and video gaming, we must find a different approach as to whether video games cause violence or not. The only thing all the researchers tend to agree on is that video gaming increases aggression. However, this is not because of the content. You could compare it with the following situation. Just imagine that you're out in a forest. The plant, flowers and trees themselves don't inherently make you frustrated or angry. Now imagine that you are trying to climb that beautiful tree all decorated with flowers and nice colors. You are trying to climb the tree, but you are struggling to find good footholds, strong branches and some good grip. You might get frustrated by this, because you can't reach the top. This is basically the same with gaming. The game is not what creates aggression; often, it's the mechanics or failure that increases frustration which might lead to aggression. To quote Dr. Przybylski, a scientist who studied the concept that the mechanics or the failure could cause aggression, "Players of games without any violent content were still feeling pretty aggressive if they hadn't been able to master the controls or progress through the levels at the end of [a] session."

Another example, take for instance the Japanese culture. The Japanese are emotionally repressive. This means that they don't share their negative emotions because their societal focus is on group harmony.

(It is astonishing that if you read their literature, watch their television, play their games, you'd think they were all psychotic./ this sentence sounds weird to me but im not sure) But that is just exactly what I'm trying to tell you. They are using their social media and televisions as an outlet for their emotions which they can't (show/repress) for the rest of the day. Manga, a Japanese comic series, could be seen as graphic and outspoken but in theory it isn't nor are the Japanese. In fact, it's actually completely the opposite: the Japanese are highly contextual and soft-spoken. The Japanese media is just an outlet for their emotions and it's not (an instigator / a cause) of emotions. To sum this part up, video games in our culture could be compared to manga and the Media in the Japanese culture: an outlet, not an instigator.

Does aggression lead to violence? It surely can, but only if the individual hasn't been learned how to deal with aggression in a way that is non-violent. A question you could ask, do video games teach how to handle aggression? Most games really do not, but they can, because they are a form of handling aggression in a healthy, non-violent way. In fact, this is also what a lot of studies show. They point to the idea that teenagers who have a high-risk for violence are less aggressive after they play videogames like Manhunt 2 (Most aggressive game as of now based on the graphics of the game), COD and Mortal Kombat. Just by concluding that violence is caused by video games is ignoring the true issue at hand. This issue isn't the video games itself but the handling of the aggression, or as complex as being self-confident and knowing your identity

So, the next time you are sitting in front of your TV and you're feeling the urge of throwing your controller at the TV, you can just remind your teachers and caretakers that you're not being violent, you're just trying to manage the fact that you're can't adapt as well as you'd want to with the video game. Thank you for your attention.