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2nd Argumentative Essay

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How Video Games Influence My Life

Since April 20, 1999, the media as well as concerned parents have been insisting that violent video games influence children to be violent. On that date, two students, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, went on a rampage at Columbine High School in Jefferson County, Colorado. Fifteen people were killed, including the killers, and twenty-four were injured. Numerous people point to violent video games as a major factor, because these two students created a website about a game they played, Doom. This game was made for the Nintendo 64 and was very controversial because it was one of the most bloody and gruesome games of the time, comparable to Resident Evil. After the massacre the families of the deceased students and faculty of the school made a lawsuit against 25 companies involved in producing Doom. As BBC News online says,

The text of the lawsuit alleges: Absent the combination of extremely violent video games and these boys’ incredibly deep involvement, use of and addiction to these games and the boy’s basic personalities, these murders and this massacre would not have occurred. (“Columbine Families Sue the Computer Game Makers” 2)
There is one major flaw in the reasoning behind this lawsuit and that is when it mentions “and the boys basic personalities.” This implies that the two boys were already self-destructive. I needed to point that out because as I continue writing I shall be emphasizing that it is not solely violent video games that affect children and young adults, but that it is their real life experiences and in a few cases like the Columbine killers, it is their demented view on life.

Parents who have children and are worried about their children’s tendency towards violence should realize that video games have ratings and that it is their job to ensure their child is not influenced by violent material if they are not ready for it. Another important thing to realize is that there are very few instances of shootings like these which occur. When these types of shootings occur, such as the most recent event at Virginia Tech, the media jumps on it like a crazed lunatic. There are millions of children who play violent video games, and out of all these only a miniscule group of children actually go out on a rampage. This should be reason enough to realize that violent games have very little emphasis on encouraging children to be killers. For example, an abusive father is going to have more of an effect on a child than playing a video game where one is able to beat people to death. How often do you hear of children beating up other people to death compared to when you hear a story of an abusive father and then realize that his father abused him as well? In fact, let me point out that violent video games may be an efficient way to relieve stress as well as become more prepared later on in life, so long as that person playing realizes that it is fantasy. The article coming up will give an example of how games can prepare people for real life. An article from the Economist, “Breeding Evil?” points out that games are not solely used for pure entertainment:

So are games good, rather than bad, for people? Good ones probably are. Games are widely used as educational tools, not just for pilots, soldiers and surgeons, but
also in schools and businesses. Every game has its own interface and controls, so that anyone who has learned to play a handful of games can generally figure out how to operate almost any high-tech device. Games require players to construct hypotheses, solve problems, develop strategies, learn the rules of the in-game world through trial and error. Gamers must also be able to juggle several different tasks, evaluate risks and make quick decisions. One game, set in 1930s Europe, requires the player to prevent the outbreak of the Second World War; other games teach everything from algebra to derivatives trading. Playing games is, thus, an ideal form of preparation for the workplace of the 21st century, as some forward-thinking firms are already starting to realize. (9).

This article discusses how games are not just used for pure enjoyment and fun. Although all games incorporate exciting features, in order to be bought by the average gamer, they have to have some type of puzzle to solve which requires more than just clicking a trigger and watching something blow up. While playing games, people have to decide if they want to take the path to the right or the left. What will be the consequences of lying to my employer in the game or on a more extreme note, what will be the penalty of killing a rival drug lord or a random civilian? These kinds of decisions help us balance our life in the real world, although I would like to emphasize that the killing in the game world does not translate directly to the real world except that it helps us weigh the risks of major decisions.

Most of the children who have gone on these sorts of rampages have numerous other psychological problems such as depression, severe anxiety, and tend to be on medication that is supposed to help them with these problems. Yet sometimes these people decide that they are not
going to take their medication which leads to not realizing the difference between reality and fantasy.

Numerous tests have been done on people who play *Massively Multiplayer Online Role Playing Games* (MMORPG). One example is from *CQ Researcher Online*, where Sarah Glazer writes an abstract on whether video games have educational value. In the article she answers the question, “Do video games prepare young people for the future job market?” Sarah Glazer wrote concerning the most successful MMORPG of all time, *World of Warcraft*.

In “Warcraft,” players band together in guilds to share knowledge and manpower in a “quest,” such as slaying monsters. To run a large guild, a master must be able to recruit new members, create apprenticeship programs, orchestrate group strategy and settle disputes. One young engineer at Yahoo used to worry about whether he could do his job. “Now I think of it like a quest,” he said. “By being willing to improvise, I can usually find the people and resources I need to accomplish the task.”

This is a superb example of a game training its player how to be a leader as well as how to be a good follower. A guild master must be able to realize how much he can handle and then delegate power to certain other individuals in the guild who he or she believes has the leadership skills and the commitment to the guild. These people that the guild master promotes as officers usually run certain programs in the guild such as the guild bank, recruitment, raiding times, DKP also known as dragon kill points which are given to people when they raid. These DKP can then be spent on items after killing monsters in the game. The DKP system is very complex; one has to keep record of the members of the guild. In the record are the hours spent raiding, how many
items the person has bid on and if one can go negative DKP that must be kept up with as well. In
*World of Warcraft* even followers are an integral part of the guild. Without good followers a guild would get
absolutely nowhere. As I have found by being in a fraternity, everyone must do his share of work
if the fraternity is to be successful. Glazer suggests that these leadership skills apply to the
workplace as well; the boss can only do so much, but with the help of diligent and responsible
employees, much more can be accomplished with less stress on everyone’s behalf.

Indeed, becoming a guild master “amounts to a total-immersion course in
leadership,” argue John Seely Brown, former director of Xerox's Palo Alto
Research Center, and Douglas Thomas, an associate professor of communication
at the University of Southern California's Annenberg School for Communications.

Business experts Beck and Wade came to similar conclusions after surveying
2,100 young professionals, mainly in business. In their book *Got Game*, they
claim those with extensive gaming experience were better team members, put a
high value on competence and had more potential to be superior executives.
Perhaps most important, they argue, gamers understand that repeated failure is the
road to success. They found that 81 percent of those under age 34 had been
frequent or moderate gamers.

I myself have a few years of experience at playing this game. I bought the game the second week
after it had been released in 2004 and played the game all the way up until my freshman year in
college. I know for a fact that this game made me more confident in myself and my leadership
abilities. As Glazer mentioned earlier, people who play *World of Warcraft* (*WoW*) have the
option of joining a guild. Every guild has a certain group of players, usually all have the same
time constraints on how much they can play and how much energy they are willing to put into
teamwork and leadership. There are guilds with people who do not play very much, and there are
moderate guilds as well as elite guilds. I was a member of a moderate guild and then joined an
elite one. Moderate guilds were usually a group of people who would attempt raids but were not
very successful due to the fact that they were not as organized nor had the leadership it takes to
lead a successful raid such as the elite guilds have. In this game a guild could go on a raid,
which is a 40-man endeavor or quest where you have to work as a team. In order to do this, one
would need to be at least level 58-60, 60 being the highest level at the time. It usually required
12-19 days of playing the game before one reached level 60. Before I quit playing, I had logged
over 100 days of actual game play over a period of around a year and a half. I admit this is
excessive, yet for all the hours some people would say I wasted, they helped me accomplish
much. Before I say what playing this game did for me, let me first say some things that this game
did to my detriment.

Raid
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usually took up to three to four hours which would start at seven or eight o’clock at
night and could continue after the required time if the raid group agreed to it; again this is forty
people working together and talking. Raids were usually done Monday-Friday and doing this
every day or even every other day was quite a strain on my grades, yet I still maintained my
schoolwork and valued my relationships with my friends above games, although I did slip at
times. I recall turning down a movie with my friends so that I might have a chance at winning an
item off of a monster in the game. Sometimes I would even lie to my friends; I would say my
parents would not let me go because I was embarrassed to tell them I had made a commitment to
my guild to help with a major raid. In the long run, though, this helped me, because my senior
year in high school I was captain of my soccer team, one of the first major leadership positions
that I had ever held. By playing WoW I was taught how to formulate new tactics, which helped me in real life by looking at past mistakes and taking advantage of them. I knew that failure will always occur at some point in life, but from these mistakes one has to look at what it was that caused that failure and to be sure to implement a plan which will not allow failure to occur for the same reason.

One final thing I must mention that this game helped me do was to get out of my safe zone in college. Before I started playing this game, I would have never believed that I would be doing all the things I am doing as a freshman in college. With balancing my time between classes, VP of my pledge class, SGA, and being a member of the Service and Social Council, I can safely say that WoW had a major role in giving me the confidence I needed to realize that I had the qualities of a leader.

In the same article as before mentioned, Sara Glazer gives a chart which shows the top selling games for 2005.
Although the top 10 computer games are mostly rated T, the top 10 games for all the gaming systems are mostly rated E. This is yet another example that people are getting overworked about a few cases of shootings, not to mention that the games that most people attack are those which are rated M for mature audiences. As you can see, games rated M are not even on the chart of top games.

At one time, some people used to believe that fantasy books were not good for young people because they were not real. As an article from the *Economist* states,

They poison the mind and corrupt the morals of the young, who waste their time sitting on sofas immersed in dangerous fantasy worlds. That, at least, was the charge leveled against novels during the 18th century by critics worried about the impact of a new medium on young people. Today the idea that novels can harm people sounds daft. And that is surely how history will judge modern criticism of video games, which are accused of turning young people into violent criminals. (“Don’t Shoot the Messenger” 18).

Many people believed that fantasy books would corrupt young people’s minds, yet look at what fantasy has given us, J.R.R Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings* trilogy and C.S. Lewis’s *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. What many people used to believe would corrupt the young has in fact brought new ideas and innovations to the world such as computers, robotics, and some modern day medicine which at the time were all considered part of a fantasy world. Perhaps this is the same case for video games; maybe they will somehow inspire a new idea for the future which will become the ethical issue of the day.
No matter what happens, though, there will always be debates over certain things which affect our youth. Although some may seem impractical it is vital that we continue to question how we raise our young because one day they will be in our leaders and hopefully make the right choices in raising their children.

- Mentions that the way the video game industry is looked at currently was the way some books were viewed in the 18th century. Says that when the generation of gamers becomes the older generation, focus on video games as a moral issue will shift to something new.


- The source talked about the Columbine shooting and a lawsuit that was going to be made against 25 companies. The companies were the creators of *Doom* for the Nintendo 64 console.


- Talked in great detail about how many games require leadership skills such as online games. Showed the chart for top 10 games for 2005. Gave examples of working men who owned businesses and said that some games were good tools for advancement in a career.

• States that games also help with military training, educational purposes, and hand eye coordination in some instances.