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Violence Linked to Video Games

Teenagers who are exposed to and engaged in violence in video games can be led to not only short-term but also long-term violence. The more one is exposed to violence, the more one will engage in violence. Because of the changing actions in adolescents, I believe that playing violent video games leads to gun violence, bullying, and physical violence.

The first concern with teens playing violent video games is that playing them causes gun violence. Gun violence may be deadly or non-deadly but is a form of assault with a firearm. Gun violence has been around for a long time, but it occurs more often now than in the past. Most top-selling games, such as Call of Duty Black Ops, Grand Theft Auto, and Fortnite, have incorporated death by guns into their setting. To teens today, video games are considered lame unless the game is rated higher than PG, and many people blame today's gun violence in society on these games. Dr. Patrick Markey, professor in the Department of Psychology at Villanova University, and Dr. Christopher J. Ferguson, professor of psychology at Stetson University, wrote, ". . . it was not until the close of the 1990s after a series of school shootings perpetrated by white suburban kids that 'blame the game' really took off" (102). "Blame the game" is a quote teens and adolescents use to describe their actions caused by video games. When young adults do something immature and deviant, they often blame their action on video games because they might feel better by blaming their actions on a video game. One example of such a deviant action took place in 1999 in Jefferson County, Colorado. The Columbine shooting was one of

the most tragic events in the United States, and it helped shape future school protection laws. With twelve students killed and twenty-two injured, citizens of America began to look at the underlying problems of this massacre. Markey and Ferguson wrote that “As is often the case for high-profile mass shooting events, the Columbine massacre led to hearings before Congress, and . . . these hearings suggested the blame for this horrific act lay with media violence” (104). And Columbine is not the only shooting that is thought to have media violence motives.

The next concern about teens playing violent video games is bullying. Bullying is intentionally hurting someone physically or emotionally. As technology evolves, it gives people the chance to interact with others around the world, and video games are a form of technology that allows a player to do this. When playing on a console, such as PlayStation or Xbox, players can buy a headset that allows them to talk to other players. In an interview I conducted with Brandon Kinder, a video gamer for six years, he stated, “[While playing,] I have heard a lot of vulgar language, such as ‘you suck’ and ‘you need to die.’” Although adolescents may say things in a joking manner, telling other players that they need to die is bullying. Both the victim and the bully can be affected long term by simple words spoken over a microphone in a video game. Robert Fox said, “Students ages 13 to 17 who played more violent games engage in more aggressive behavior. The study also claims violent video games increase aggressive tendencies in the short term and can have long-lasting effects” (9). Students who engage in violent video games hear nasty language and have constant exposure to violence, so these teens may have long-term effects of violent words or actions, also known as bullying.

The last concern about playing violent video games causing violence is physical violence. Physical violence is the intentional use of physical force. As more teens are exposed to violence, it is likely that it will become normal in their actions too. Brandon Kinder said, “Yes, video

games lead to violent acts. I see my friends get so mad when they lose that they take their anger out on others.” As adolescents are becoming more exposed through video games to this vulgar behavior, they will likely become violent in their actions. Morgan Ellithorpe, an assistant professor in the Department of Advertising and Public Relations at Michigan State University, and her colleagues stated, “It is possible that the influence of video game violence could change when moral decisions are brought into context. One way video games change behavior is through changes in players’ self-perceptions” (203). Teens’ sense of morality begins to affect the surrounding they choose to be around. Because some teens choose to be exposed to violent video games, their morals begin to accept violence, which can lead to violent actions.

Exposure to technology can change our actions. Because of the changing actions in adolescents, I believe that playing violent video games leads to gun violence, bullying, and physical violence.

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