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VIDEO GAMES AND VIOLENCE

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This article is dedicated to investigation of violence in video games and its effect on the players' social behavior. For the purpose of research, articles of different authors were reviewed and processed. The need for such method was necessary due to the separation objective scientific research conducted in compliance with the necessary requirements, from articles whose purpose is to obtain a predetermined result because of the interest of the funding or conducting party, and to cover all possible opinions, to consider the arguments of their supporters and make up own opinion. Also some statistic data from worldwide known scientific organizations was handled. Among the objectives of the study, the following can be noted as the main: identifying the most common myths and misconceptions about video games and their impact on players, the reasons for their emergence and maintenance and ways to debunk them; systematization of existing scientific research of recent years and conclusions, to which their authors came. In the course of writing this article and accompanying research, the following conclusions were drawn: cruel video games are really one of the sources of aggression of players, but they do more good than harm, because they make it easier to absorb useful or interesting information, partly combining it with rest.

Key words: video games, on-line games, violence.

In recent years, interest in video games has greatly increased - this wine was the book of Grossman's[6] "Assassination Generation: Video Games, Aggression, and the Psychology of Killing" (2016), which became an absolute best seller. But not everything is so horrible as depicted in this book. His conclusions raise doubts because they are based on questionable statements and contradict empirical data.

The **purpose of the study** is to investigate the impact of cruelty in video games on the social behavior of players.

Among the researchers of this problem, there are such scientists as: Chin-Lung Hsu, Hsi-Peng Lu[7], Christopher J. Ferguson, Cheryl K. Olson, Lawrence A. Kutner, Dorothy E. Warner[4], Tobias Greitemeyer, Dirk O. Mügge[5], Muniba Saleem, Craig A. Anderson, Douglas A. Gentile[10], Jane McGonigal[8], L. Miller[9].

It often seems that the more thoughtfully or seriously someone writes about video games, the less they end up wanting to go on writing about them. This can result not only from the toxic, defensive raging of a substantial part of gaming's fan base but also from a dawning realization that many of the most popular and sophisticated games – perhaps especially those games – remove their players from their humanity in some immeasurable way. In a "good-bye to all that" piece about Grand Theft Auto V published in Grantland in 2013, Tom Bissell confessed that as obsessively as he'd played the game for the past few days, he had, at last, wearied of its "defiantly puerile" mentality. «Maybe the biggest sin of the GTA games," Bissell went on, "is the cheerful, spiteful way they rub our faces in what video games make us willing to do, in what video games are».

According modern investigation: «Books like Dave Grossman's Assassination Generation: «Video Games, Aggression, and the Psychology of Killing" only muddy the water»[9]. The shrieking premise of Assassination Generation is that "the video game industry both gives our children world-class weapons training and psychologically primes

them to murder one another." Other forms of violent media, such as television and movies, get lip service in the book, but games – particularly first-person shooters – receive the lion's share of Grossman's attention, perhaps because they are still fairly alien and upsetting to many parents and therefore a better target for dodgily founded alarmism. According to Grossman, violent video games, when indulged in by kids without the tempering discipline imposed by military and law enforcement hierarchies or athletic programs, are creating «a generation of killers – a generation of homegrown sociopaths»[6].

To support his claims that violent video games cause violent behavior in children, Grossman can muster plenty of research, including a 2015 review study by the American Psychological Association stating that "scientific research has demonstrated an association between violent video game use and both increases in aggressive behavior, aggressive affect, aggressive cognitions and decreases in prosocial behavior, empathy, and moral engagement[1]." What he doesn't mention is the open letter, signed by over 200 academics, criticizing the study's methodology and its conclusions based on "inconsistent or weak evidence." As far as Grossman is concerned, this sort of objection, as well as the many other studies indicating no causal link between violent video games and violent behavior, are merely evidence of how insidiously the game industry has penetrated every corner of academia and the government [6].

Chin-Lung Hsu, Hsi-Peng Lu tell why do people particularly play video games: "On-line game is an entertainment technology, different from a problem-solving technology. While using entertainment technology, people usually want to "kill time".[7]

However, social norms have a direct impact on the adoption of on-line games. Users may feel obligated to participate because they want to belong to a community.[...] Flow experience may play an important role. Users intend to play entertainment technology continuously where they are completely and totally immersed."[7]

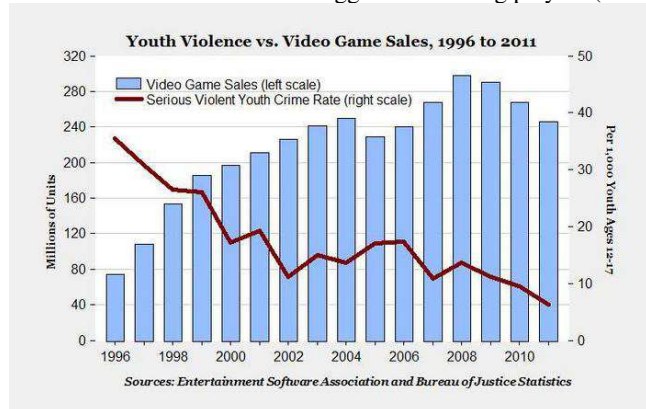
The influence of the video games: Christopher J. Ferguson, Cheryl K. Olson, Lawrence A. Kutner, Dorothy E. Warner "Results of the present study do not support the common social belief that violent video game exposure constitutes a significant public health risk for the general population of minors. These analyses found little evidence for the assertion that playing violent video games is a useful predictor of youth delinquency or bullying behaviors"[4], Tobias Greitemeyer и Dirk O. Mügge "Many are concerned about possible harmful effects of violent video game play. As the present meta-analysis suggests, violent video game play does affect the player's social behavior. On one hand, aggressive behavior is multidetermined, with violent video game exposure being one source among many others (and some of them having a stronger influence than do violent video games). On the other hand, even small effects (and the effect of violent video games is small to medium in its effect size) can have a negative impact on societal level when many people are exposed to it (which certainly applies to violent video games). Thus, in our view, violent video game play should be regarded as a risk factor for aggressive behavior." [5]

But that's not so obvious: "Given that playing violent video games negatively affects the player's social behavior, the question arises as to how one can potentially counteract these effects. It is noteworthy that many violent video games involve some prosocial parts in addition to their violent content (e.g., killing enemies to save the world).

As our meta-analysis has documented positive effects of prosocial video game play, a combination of violence and helping in a game may be less harmful than a violent game without any prosocial content. In a similar vein, violent video games are often played cooperatively in a team. In those video games, the players assist each other in harming other game characters. Recent findings suggest that cooperatively playing a violent video game in a team (relative to playing the same video game alone) counteracts the negative effects of violent video game play on cooperative behavior (Greitemeyer, Traut-Mattausch, & Osswald, 2012) and empathy (Greitemeyer, 2013)[5]. Because cooperative behavior and empathy are antagonists of aggressive responses, the effects of violent video game play on aggression might be attenuated by playing the game cooperatively in a team.

Playing video games is often vilified. We would like to stress that in terms of the player's social behavior not all video games have negative effects (Bavelier & Davidson, 2013; Greitemeyer, 2011). In fact, depending on the content, video game play may also benefit social behavior, cognitive development, or health (cf. Strasburger, Wilson, & Jordan, 2013). The present meta-analysis provides clear evidence that prosocial video game exposure increases helping and decreases aggression. Moreover, the effects of playing prosocial video games are not less pronounced than the effects of playing violent video games (if anything, they are stronger). Thus, in terms of the player's social behavior it is not only a question of how much is played (the amount of game play), but also a question of what is played (the content of game play). It is our hope that this meta-analysis contributes to a more nuanced view of the effects of playing video games, in that not only potential risks of violent video game play but also opportunities of prosocial video game play are discussed" [3], Muniba Saleem, Craig A. Anderson, Douglas A. Gentile "prosocial content in video games decreases total state hostility, aggravated, and mean feelings, and increases positive feelings relative to both violent and neutral games"[10].

A comparison of video game sales and youth violence can be proof that violence in video games is not the main source of increased aggression among players (Pic. 1).



Picture 1 – Youth Violence vs. Video Game Sales [3]

Myths about video games are pretty spread in the society. From everywhere is heard that video games corrupt children, inculcate love to violence, deprive communication and so on. They can often hear such phrases as “Back in my time children

used to play outside, unlike present days!” or “All you do is playing games. You might become completely stupid soon!” That is quite possible that some part of myths about video games is bounded with attitude to the Internet in general. Myths are quite similar. Statements like “New mass media, first of all – computer, the Internet, take all the youth's leisure time. Because of that children don't read at all. Because of the Internet children don't communicate with each other. Children are enlightened about sex through the computer. Children become violent because of the Internet” are circulating in the public consciousness. If they change word “the Internet” to “video games”, they will get existing myths about them. That's an interesting resemblance.

Many people know and understand nothing about technologies that have already became habitual for the young generation. And the obscurity is scaring. Scare causes discomfort. Therefore they need to change something to make the annoying factor disappear. The “easiest” way is to declare obscure as evil and convince other same people of this. If they consider any resources but scientific, they will probably find much information about why video games are the terrible scourge of society. There is given many doubtful proofs, but people believe in that. Often such sources turn out to be magazines that are dedicated to parents of school and pre-school aged children. Trust in such kind of publications among certain population layers is quite high. People think that employees of magazines like that are conscientious journalists that want to share correct and verified information. Unfortunately, that happens rather seldom.

Despite of anybody in our time can enter the Internet and read scientific studies on the subject of their interest, almost nobody does that. That happens partly because of conviction that the Internet is evil and partly because of mistrust to scientists. There are very common assertion in the CIS countries that USA and Europe desire to annihilate [country name], sponsor and publish only those studies that are needed for Greater Target achievement (i.e. to “corrupt” children and so on). Even the phrase “British scientists has discovered that...” has already become a meme, what also affects the trust to other scientists and their studies and scientific publications. Religions, particularly Orthodoxy, contribute to this as well. In their mind, almost everything is designed by Devil to seduce people with various technologies and entice them (people) into the hell. So they need to avoid everything written by “sorcerer-scientists” and happiness will find them.

For some reason many people forget about the fact that there is a lot of educational video games. Not only children, but adults as well play to learn something or remember interesting and useful information in a game form. That way is quite effective. Human completes a task and their brain tells them that they are well done. That is far more interesting than just reading a regular text. Game can perform some visualized information, what is also useful for educational process. Even a regular video game, the main purpose of which is entertainment, benefits. As it has been already mentioned, benefit of video games is more than harm. Games meet the human's needs of information (education, puzzle solving, communication with other entities, heroic impersonation, travels through space and time), control (care for other entities, creating of the surrounding world objects, coherent actions with other entities (tactic), all the following actions planning (logic)) and/or action (material goods collection, danger avoidance, destruction, competition with other entities, driving). Depending on the genre they improve spatial thinking, communication skills, advance action planning, responsibility and so on. Among

the negative influence willing to “save”, eternal thrill search, wish to recreate dangerous game episode in life and so on are worth noting.

Jane McGonigal said at TED Talk, that video games have many positive aspects such as better collaboration and better communication with people, better stress resistance and better cultural education (Pic. 2).



Picture 2 – The benefits of video games[8]

Thrively's study shows that video games can cause both positive and negative effects. On the one hand, players spend less time reading and doing homework, a majority of 4th to 8th grade children prefer violent games. On the other hand, players have higher performance in perceptual and cognitive ability and they make decisions faster without sacrificing accuracy (Pic. 3).



Picture 3 – Video games can be positive [2]

Conclusion

According to the studies, violent video game influence is one of the sources of aggressive behavior among other ones (and some of them have stringer influence then violent video games). But there are more benefits in video games. Only scientific studies must be read and let be read by other people and myth-buster lectures must be given to decrease the myths popularity. Time, correct information and proper argumentation (without logical and actual mistakes) will help to reach understanding those people who

want that.

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Софія Прокофєва

ІГРИ ТА ЖОРСТОКІСТЬ

Анотація: розглянуто проблему жорстокості у відеоіграх та її вплив на соціальну поведінку гравців. Для дослідження було проаналізовано багато статей різних авторів, статистики від всесвітньо відомих наукових організацій. У ході дослідження було виявлено, що жорстокість у відеоіграх є лише однією з причин збільшення агресії, користь значно перевищує негативний вплив.

Ключові слова: комп'ютерні ігри. Відео ігри, жорстокість, агресія.

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