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# Violent Video Games do not CAUSE VIOLENCE

# Introduction

1. Correlation does not prove Causation.

Since 1992, there have been 387 school shootings in America. In the wake of these tragedies, the investigators and our society have looked to find somewhere to point the blame. Some blame gun laws, some blame our school system, but almost all conclusions place at least some blame on video games. When 90% of today's teenagers video games are 90% likely to include mature levels of violence, there's clearly an issue. However, the issue is mistakenly simplified down to the equation that violence in games = violence in real life, mistakenly because correlation does not prove causation. Today, I want to talk about why video games do not cause violence, and can even be a healthy way to release aggression.

# body

1. Research is inconclusive.

Unfortunately, research on video games and violence is inconclusive and does not ever come to a consensus. For every study that you find that proves video games cause violence, you have a study that proves that video games have no correlation to real-life violence. Media psychologists, communication scientists, and pediatricians disagree greatly among themselves as to whether or not there is a causal relationship between gaming and violence. There is more than a 20% variation in opinion over whether or not gaming produces real-life violence. That variation does not sound convincing to us, who like to pretend we are 100% certain about things, but you have to realize that for a scientific hypothesis to be considered valid, it can only vary about 2% in its results.

1. Alternative logic to research.

Since we cannot truly trust research to tell us whether violence and video gaming is causal, we have to take a different approach to understand why video games do not cause violence. The only thing that research tends to agree on is that video gaming increases aggression. However, this is not because of the content. When you're out in a forest, the trees themselves don't inherently make you frustrated or angry. But if you try to climb a tree and struggle to find good footholds, strong branches etc., you might get frustrated, because you can't get to the top. So it is with gaming. The game is not what creates aggression; often times, it's the mechanics that increases frustration. To quote Dr. Przybylski, a scientist who studied this concept thoroughly, "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."

1. Japanese Analogy.

Let's take another example. The Japanese culture is emotionally repressive. They do not show negative emotions because their societal focus is on group harmony. Yet if you read their literature, watch their television, play their games, you'd think they were all psychotic. That's just the thing -- they use their media as an outlet for the emotions they repress every day. Manga isn't graphic and outspoken because the Japanese are graphic and outspoken, it's just the opposite: the Japanese are highly contextual and soft-spoken. Japanese media is an outlet for emotions, not an instigator of emotions. Video games for our culture is like manga and media for the Japanese culture: an outlet, not an instigator.

1. Video games do not cause violence, they cause aggression.

Does aggression lead to violence? It can, if the person hasn't learned how to handle aggression in a non-violent way. Do video games teach how to handle aggression well? They can, because they are a *form of handling aggression in a healthy, non-violent way*. In fact, many studies point to the idea that teens who have a high-risk for violence are actually *less* aggressive and violent after they play games like *Halo*, *GTA*, and *Mortal Kombat*. Saying that video games cause violence is ignoring the true issue at hand, which can be as simple as handling aggression, or as complex as being self-confident and knowing your identity

# CONCLUSION

So next time you want to throw your controller at the TV, you can remind your parents and teachers that you're not being violent -- you're just trying to cope with the fact that you're not as adept as you'd like to be with the game. Thank you for your attention.

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