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Gunter Barrie, “Psychological Effects of Video Games.”

The One Million Dollar Question:
The recent release of Grand Theft Auto IV has sparked controversy over the effect of video games on human behavior. Gamers have the option of getting drunk and getting behind the wheel of a car, which has provoked MADD (Mothers Against Drunk Driving) to petition to the ESRB to change GTA IV’s rating to AO (Adult Only) and for Take Two (makers of GTA IV) to withdraw their game from store shelves. So what have been the documented effects of video games on their audience? Do video games prime players to become cold-blooded killers or can they teach players factual information and computer skills? The Holy Grail for psychologists who study video games is to determine exactly what effects video games have on players. Barrie Gunter showcases in his essay the pros and cons of video games and shows subtle insight on his opinion.

The Good:
1. Cathartic method to reduce aggressiveness.
2. Effective medium for physical rehabilitation to the disabled. Examples stem from chemotherapy patients and to patients in physical therapy.
3. Games have been shown to be a medium where adolescents develop social skills. (Arcade Phenomenon).
4. Computer games can teach physical coordination skills, decision making, and multi-tasking skills.
5. Games have been shown to effectively train adolescents to deal with real life situations by creating simulations without a negative consequence. (Dating sims).
6. Effective tool for physical rehabilitation to the disabled. Examples stem from chemotherapy patients and to patients in physical therapy.

The Baaaad:
1. Heightened aggression has been shown in individuals who have played video games.
2. Carpal Tunnel Syndrome, Tendonitis, and other muscle disorders have been reported by gamers.
3. Computer games can have been shown to contribute to social isolation among gamers.
4. Games have the ability to “rot” the brain and lower a person’s intelligence level.
5. Games produce individuals who are socially stunted due to the lack of social interaction with other people.
6. Possible transference of aggression brought on by games to the real world.

The Irony:
1. Points 1-5 of “The Good” and “The Baaaad” contradict each other.

The Conclusion:
The conclusion is that there is no clear answer and there will never really be one. Barrie Gunter believes that the real answer is dependent on the judgment of the developers to be socially responsible for their actions. What is socially responsible is also vague and differs from person to person.
The question I present to the class is if you believe that your interactions with games, especially Final Fantasy VII has taught you anything or made some kind of impact on you outside of the game.