
Title	Videogames as moral educators?
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Videogames as moral educators?

**Character & Citizenship Education Conference, Singapore.
8th November 2011**

Associate Professor Angeline Khoo, National Institute of Education

Growing concerns

Percentage of children between the ages of 2 and 5 who use video games has increased by 17 percent since 2009

<http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/video-games-kids-2011-study-246775>

Depression, anxiety and social phobias

Video game "addiction" exists globally and that greater amounts of gaming, lower social competence and greater impulsivity were risk factors for becoming pathological gamers... Depression, anxiety and social phobias are some of the outcomes.

<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2011/01/110119120550.htm>

D. A. Gentile, H. Choo, A. Liau, T. Sim, D. Li, D. Fung, A. Khoo.
Pathological Video Game Use Among Youths: A Two-Year Longitudinal Study. *Pediatrics*, 2011; DOI: [10.1542/peds.2010-1353](https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2010-1353)

Aggression

For men who didn't think about the game, the violent video game players tested no more aggressive than men who had played non-violent games. But the violent video game playing men who thought about the game in the interim were more aggressive than the other groups.

B. J. Bushman, B. Gibson. Violent Video Games Cause an Increase in Aggression Long After the Game Has Been Turned Off. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 2010; DOI: [10.1177/1948550610379506](https://doi.org/10.1177/1948550610379506)

Desensitization to aggression

the brains of violent video game players become less responsive to violence, and this diminished brain response predicts an increase in aggression

University of Missouri-Columbia (2011, May 25). Violent video games reduce brain response to violence and increase aggressive behavior, study suggests. *Science Daily*. Retrieved October 31, 2011, from <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2011/05/110525151059.htm>

Hostility and aggressive intentions

Results of this experimental study showed that those who played the game in the blood-on condition had more physically aggressive intentions, and when players were more involved and immersed in the game, they reported greater hostility and physically aggressive intentions.

Contextual Features of Violent Video Games, Mental Models, and Aggression.
Farrar, K.M. & KrcMar, M, (2006)Journal of Communication; 56(20), pp387-405,

Poor perspective-taking, inability to sympathize

Violent video gaming was negatively related to perspective taking and ability to sympathize. Perspective taking and sympathy were negatively related to perceptions of unjustified violence as acceptable.

The Influences of Video Gaming on US Children's Moral Reasoning About Violence.
Viera, E.T. & Krcmar, M. (2011) Journal of Children and Media, 5(2), pp 113-131

The cognitive benefits of video games

By TIFFANY O'CALLAGHAN Monday, January 4, 2010 | [Add a Comment](#)



Regularly playing video games not only improves your skill at those particular games, but may also improve your reaction time and accuracy on real-life tasks

<http://healthland.time.com/2010/01/04/the-cognitive-benefits-of-video-games/>

**HOW
COMPUTER
GAMES
HELP
CHILDREN
LEARN**



DAVID WILLIAMSON SHAFFER
FOREWORD BY JAMES PAUL GEE

"This book represents the logical next step in a conversation started by James Paul Gee's *What Video Games Have to Teach Us About Learning and Literacy*."
—HENRY JENKINS, MIT

> James Paul Gee

> WHAT VIDEO GAMES
HAVE TO TEACH US
ABOUT LEARNING
AND LITERACY

How Computers and Video Games Are Changing Your Child
For 21st Century Success—and How You Can Help!

“
**Don't Bother
Me Mom—
I'm
Learning!**
”



Marc Prensky

with a foreword and introduction
by James Paul Gee, Ph.D.

Angeline Khoo Matthew J. Hall

**WELCOME
TO OUR
WORLD**

Connecting Parents with Gamers



Calming effect of relaxing videogames

Compared to those who played violent or neutral video games, those who played relaxing video games were less aggressive and more helpful. Playing a relaxing video game put people in a good mood, and those in a good mood were more helpful.

<http://vgresearcher.wordpress.com/2011/07/06/relaxing-videogames-and-prosocial-behaviours-whitaker-bushman-2011/>

Whitaker, J. L., & Bushman, B. J. (2011). "remain calm. be kind." effects of relaxing video games on aggressive and prosocial behavior. *Social Psychological and Personality Science* . [DOI: 10.1177/1948550611409760](https://doi.org/10.1177/1948550611409760)

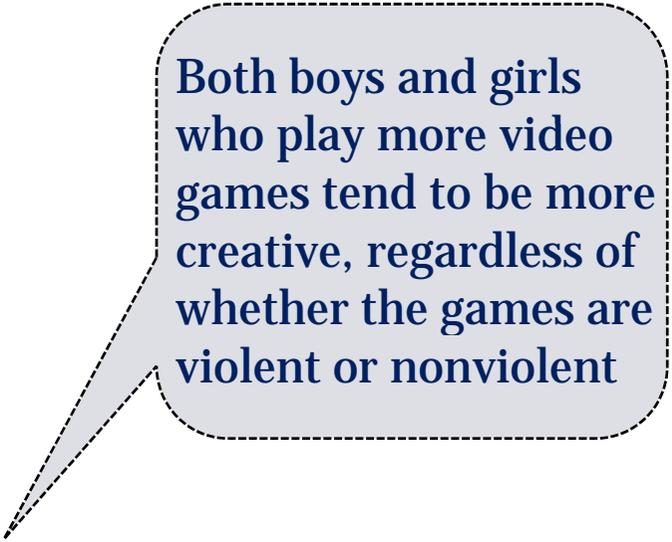
Prosocial behaviours

Players of
“prosocial”
games got into
fewer fights in
school and were
more helpful to
other students.

http://medgadget.com/2008/08/studies_show_benefits_of_video_game_playing.html

Gentile, D. A., Anderson, C. A., Yukawa, N., Saleem, M., Lim, K. M., Shibuya, A., Liau, A. K., Khoo, A., Bushman, B. J., Huesmann, L. R., & Sakamoto, A. (2009). The effects of prosocial video games on prosocial behaviors: International evidence from correlational, longitudinal, and experimental studies. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 35, 752-763.

Creativity



Both boys and girls who play more video games tend to be more creative, regardless of whether the games are violent or nonviolent

<http://news.msu.edu/story/9971>

Jackson , L.A., Witt,E.A.. Games,A.I., Fitzgerald,H.E. ,von Eye, A., Zhao, Y. (2011) Information technology use and creativity: Findings from the Children and Technology Project. *Computers in Human Behaviors*
<http://news.msu.edu/media/documents/2011/11/33ba0f16-a2e9-4d36-b063-2f540f115970.pdf>



Games are a waste of time



Games make you addicted



Gamers have no 'life'



Games are dangerous!



Gamers lose sense of reality

I have lots of friends in games

Games help me relax

Games make me think

Games can teach me about lots of things!

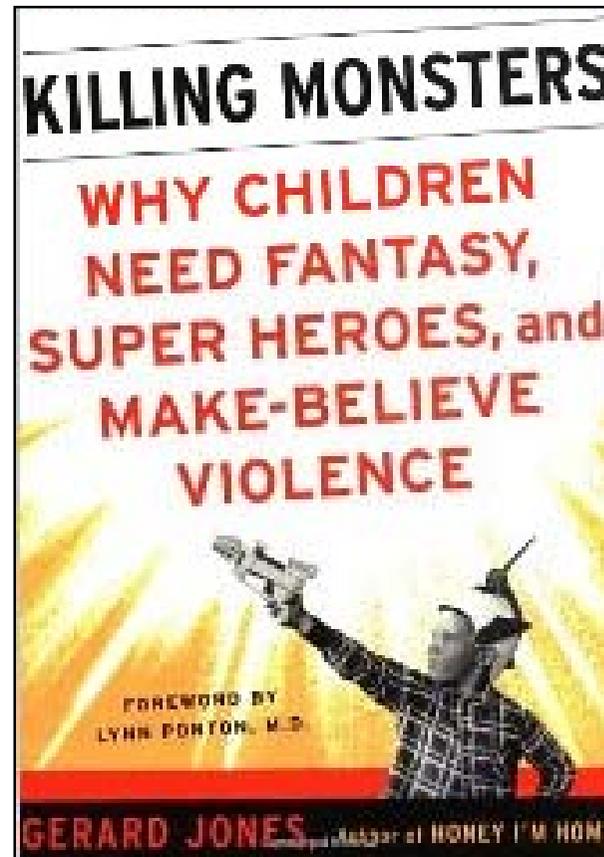
Games are a lot of fun!



Views on what's "Virtual" and what's "Real"

Killing is not real:

Gerard Jones:
Fantasy violence help children
to cope with their feelings of
anger and powerlessness.
They teach children to trust
their emotions



Jones, G. (2002) Killing monsters: Why children need fantasy, super heroes and make-believe violence. Basic Books, N.Y.

Views on what's "Virtual" and what's "Real"

Killing is real:

Hartman and Vorderer:

Evidence of anthropomorphism: gamers perceiving non-human artificial objects as if they are humans and social beings

Gamers of violent games need to manage their moral concerns through moral disengagement.

Hartman, T. & Vorderer, P. (2009) It's OK to shoot a character: Moral disengagement in violent video games. *Journal of Communication* 59, pp 865-890

So, is there a boundary between the virtual and the real?

If the virtual world is not real, how can aggressive or prosocial acts in the virtual world have any effects in the real world?

Game Transfer Phenomenon

Prof Mark Griffith:

“People may have a nano-second or half-a-second when they think it's almost like they're in a game, but it's almost like a conditioned response and people know, very, very quickly, that they are in the real world. And a lot of the time people are just amused by it. It's not something that's in any way causing problems.”

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-2039841/How-video-games-blur-real-life-boundaries-prompt-thoughts-violent-solutions-players-problems.html?ito=feeds-newsxml>

What is a virtual world?

Doug Thomas and John Seely Brown:

“Virtual worlds are persistent, avatar-based social spaces that provide players or participants with the ability to engage in long-term, joint coordinated action. In these spaces, cultures and meanings emerge from a complex set of interactions among the participants, rather than as part of a predefined story or narrative arc. At least in part, the players are the ones who shape and to a large extent create the world they inhabit.”

Nick Yee describes the virtual environment of the game world as

“places where alternative identities are conceived and explored. They are **parallel worlds** where cultures, economies and societies are being created. They are environments where the relationships that form and the derived experiences can rival those of the physical world. They are new platforms for social science research. They are places where people fall in love, get married, elect governors, attend poetry readings, start a pharmaceutical business, and even commit genocide. Whatever MMORPGs are, or will become, one thing is clear. **They are not just games.**”

Doug Thomas and John Seely Brown:

Virtual worlds provide the opportunity for participants to be *both/and*: both inside and outside, both player and avatar, both character and person.

We need to look at virtual worlds as space that embody both the physical and virtual simultaneously, as spaces which allow for, and even demand, an *imaginative bridge* between the two

Conceptual blending defines the spaces as both virtual and physical simultaneously. There is no transfer to speak of, because the player is neither situated in only the game or only the world, she co-exists in both.

The relationships among the players outside the game is transformed by the events that take place in the game.

Virtual worlds constitute an entirely new learning environment...instead of “learning about”, participants in virtual worlds engage with the world by learning to be.

Kohlberg and Moral development

Character education through reflection and learning, moral dilemmas as educational tools

Pre-conventional: Moral values in terms of personal needs

Conventional: Moral values in meeting others' expectations and social obligations

Post-conventional: Moral values determined through reasoning based on universal principles, based on deeper understanding of human rights

Pre-conventional: Gamers play to advance own goals. good and bad, right and wrong seen in terms of winning and losing

Conventional: Gamers in clans /guilds play to advance goals of the group. Selfish play is frowned upon. Learning to put interests of the guild above self

Post-conventional Gamers learn to mediate conflicts that arise among guild members, to clarify guild rules and redefine them when necessary

Ryan and Lickona's Character education

Character education through

Moral knowing

- learning moral content: those values which constitute the moral heritage passed on from one generation to the next. This includes moral reasoning and cognitive strategies for making decisions

Affect

- the emotional side of morality and part of our identity, how deeply we feel about our values

ActiOn

- will to weigh choices and take action, competence to listen, communicate and take the appropriate action, and habit that develops into character

Gamers' interaction with guild members:

Gamers learn what to do and not to do while playing with others. Gamers have strong commitment to their guilds and uphold values of the guild

There are discussions and debates on action of team members.

Ryan and Lickona (2008):

“Character develops in and through human community. We grow through membership. Roles to play, perspectives to consider, conflicts to resolve, commitments to fulfill, relationships to care about, responsibilities to juggle – these are the social matrix in which we live and have our moral being...

-- the guild as online community

Care Ethics

- Modeling

“We do not merely tell them to care and give them texts to read on the subject, we demonstrate our caring in our relations with them” (Noddings, 1998)

- Dialogue

Importance of talking to explore and evaluate our caring

- Practice

Importance of immersing ourselves in the practice of caring and reflection of caring so as to produce a “mentality”

- Confirmation

Helping someone towards his or her better self, and that person says: “Here is someone who sees something better in me.”

Guild members act as role models, help one another achieve their goals, establish a culture of caring through constant pattern of play and also in chats and discussions on theguild forums (e.g. to boost morale and demonstrate concerns for member undergoing chemotherapy)

Learning in raids – some examples:

- **managing frustrations** (e.g. in raid “wipes”)
- **tolerance, being patient** with poor players, accepting another’s point of view in raid postmortems
- **perspective taking** – understanding other team members
- **assertiveness** and **being tactful** in communicating with others
- **responsibility** -- preparation for raids - getting geared up, repairs, getting potions etc, being punctual
- **trust** – trusting everyone to do their part, e.g trusting the healer to heal while “tanking”
- **self-sacrifice** – putting guild members’ needs before self
- **humility** – not boasting about how much you have contributed (how high your “dps” is)

All I need to know about life I learned from videogames...

1. Set goals and work towards the quests.
2. Reputation matters.
3. The hardest tasks aren't meant to be done alone.
4. Even if you fail, getting experience points is still very important.
5. Know why you fail, and learn from mistakes
6. Don't boast – there are always others better than you.
7. Don't behave aggressively – others will respond to you in the same way
8. Be patient with those who are weak, remember you were once there
9. Work together as a team– it's more efficient and it's more fun
10. It's important to have fun but not at the expense of others.....



Self-awareness

Generosity

Perseverance

Empathy

Responsibility

Delayed gratification

Self-control

Patience

Tolerance

Teamwork

Trust

Perspective-taking

Self-sacrifice

Humility