



University of  
New Haven

University of New Haven

Digital Commons @ New Haven

---

Honors Theses

Student Works

---

4-15-2021

## When Attraction Becomes Addiction: A Study in Video Games

Camille Garden  
*University of New Haven*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.newhaven.edu/honorstheses>



Part of the [Experimental Analysis of Behavior Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Garden, Camille, "When Attraction Becomes Addiction: A Study in Video Games" (2021). *Honors Theses*.  
12.

<https://digitalcommons.newhaven.edu/honorstheses/12>

UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAVEN  
HONORS PROGRAM

**2020-2021 Honors Thesis**

When Attraction Becomes Addiction: A Study in Video Games

Cam Garden

A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Undergraduate Honors Program at the University of New Haven.

Student:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature)

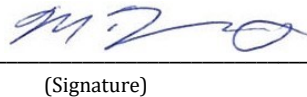
Thesis Advisor:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature)

Department Chair:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature)

Honors Program Director:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
April 15, 2021

Date

Contents

Abstract	3
Introduction	4
The Psychological Impacts of Addiction	10
History of Media Criticisms	15
The Rise of The Video Game Industry	22
Criticisms of The Video Game Industry	30
What Happens Next? / Conclusion	38
Works Cited	42

**ABSTRACT**

Since their inception, video games have been accused of everything from encouraging violence to ruining the mental health of children, adolescents, and adults alike. The adverse effects of video games have been studied scientifically to prove their negative qualities. Yet, this criticism is not new or unique to video games. With the birth of every new media format, including but not limited to novels, magazines, and movies, there is some level of controversy surrounding the validity and inherent goodness of the given format. Video games are not the exception to this rule. This research questions the validity and truth behind the arguments claiming the negative effects of video games.

## INTRODUCTION

Our ever-evolving society revolves around our ability to receive, interpret, and criticize information. This practice has been repeated in every area of our social interactions including politics, interpersonal relationships, and most dominantly, the media. Most recently, the video game industry has been at the head of controversy. Critics have considered video games to be violent, addictive, and generally harmful to youth and adolescents. Without proper consideration, psychologists have quickly related an interest or attraction to video games and more broadly, the internet, to addiction. Ranging from large media outlets such as USA Today, NBC, ABC, and CNN to medical associations such as the AAP and the APA, harsh claims have consistently been made about the relationship between violent video games and increasingly violent people.

In an article titled “Are You Addicted to Your Phone” by Julie Scharper, testimonials of adolescents and their technological habits were used as case studies on the negative effects of internet usage with little to no scholarly proof. One child’s experience in particular notes

“He had stopped playing sports, his grades slipped, and he struggled with anger issues. At Paradigm [a residential treatment program in Malibu, California], where devices aren’t allowed, he realized how much he’d been missing. He got into surfing and tennis and applied for a job. Most importantly, he remembered how to connect with friends face-to-face. For Caleb, breaking his video game addiction was, well, a game changer...” (Scharper 15)

This description of Caleb’s “addiction” fails to properly evaluate the reality of Caleb’s technology usage. In fact, it never mentions to the reader how much Caleb was playing

video games to qualify it as an addiction. The only statistic provided in the article is that boys on average spend 56 minutes a day playing video games while girls spend 7 minutes a day playing video games (Scharper 14). Neither of these statistics are as appalling as Scharper would make it seem, nor do they take into account the reality of the digital age. Ultimately, the data provided does not paint an accurate enough picture to substantiate the sociological implications it wishes to make. Richard T. A. Wood, in arguing against the criticism of video games, poses the question: “What then are the consequences of excessive video game playing? The primary consequence is time loss...” (171). He then goes on to argue “Those who liked losing track of time reported that they found it a relaxing experience and a sign that the game was engaging...So does spending a lot of time doing something define an activity as addictive or problematic?” (171). Inherently, no. The act alone of doing something for an extended period of time does not in and of itself constitute an addiction. Often, those who are subject to the criticism of being video game addicts are really just enjoying video games. Though justification is not required the enjoyment of most activities, video games often provide players with both psychological and physiological benefits. Wood adds that “Watching television, reading, playing a musical instrument, [and] training for a marathon are a few of the more socially acceptable examples” in regard to activities that take up long periods of time (171). All of which leads to the question, why is there so much negative criticism focused on the addictive and otherwise negative traits and stigma surrounding video games and video game players?

The video game industry has spent every moment since its popularization battling criticisms and stigmas. However, this is not the first industry to receive this kind of

negative attention. During the early stages of every popular media format, there have been some level of criticism regarding their negative impact on society. In the 1940s, women were "... considered to be in danger of not being able to differentiate between fiction and life...split between romantic imagination and a kind of realism" (qtd. in North) due to the romantic story lines in novels. A 1949 New York Times article stated "...[Television] can keep a child occupied if an adult wants relief from youthful energy, but it can also keep the child occupied too much for his own good... [it] often seems destined to entertain the child into a state of mental paralysis". He even went so far to say, "Critics of television... have not hesitated to predict that it will be "the death of culture" (Gould).

As it stands, video game criticism is not entirely rooted in society's desire for a more evolved social system. Rather, we as a society have fallen into a violently toxic cycle of criticizing the unknown. When it comes to evaluating the validity of video game criticism, it is important to first denote the distinction between attraction and addiction. The act of attracting players to games has been studied and comes down to the key elements of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) in which players are evaluated on their willingness to play video games based on its perceived usefulness and ease of use (Lee and Tsai). The initial attraction and return to a certain game lie in the players' ability to find usefulness and enjoyment in playing. These feelings of enjoyment have been linked to both interface and social interaction (Lee and Tsai). The overall desire to play games and continue playing games is founded in enjoyment of playing the game. Attraction has many different attributes as exhibited by the rapid growth of the video game industry. There is a massive market for

video games in multiple different formats, and the user base continues to grow year by year.

Currently, The COVID-19 pandemic has reconfigured the social standards around playing video games. With people mass quarantined inside of their homes, video games became the principal form of both activity and social interaction. In order "...to escape the stress of quarantine and COVID-19, 63% of those surveyed are playing more immersive role-playing video games than ever before," many of which cited that playing video games provided a new level of comfort and social interaction that was otherwise lacking in quarantine (People). As the pandemic continues, the full effects of it on video games' social acceptance cannot be fully comprehended. The global shift in all social normality could have lasting effects on the video game industry, who is playing, and how much they're playing. However, it is impossible to truly project what the full outcome of this interruption is. As the world has come to a halt, video games have also served as convenient and effective escapism to those with access to them. In a world where people are all trapped at home, the desire to escape became overwhelming. Escapism is effectively provided through most media formats, but video games excel in that they also provide a very unique and specific agency in their play. This makes playing video games an easy and apt way for hundreds of thousands of people to find the relief many people searched for during the early months of quarantine

The issue and basis of addiction lies in "...failures of the decision-making system due to identifiable vulnerabilities" (Redish 114). Where attraction serves as a source of enjoyment for a particular event or activity, addiction is the inability to properly evaluate the balance of consequences and their prospective actions. As of 2010, the Diagnostic



and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition Text Revision (DSM-IV-TR) had categorized addiction-based activity such as “pathological gambling as an Impulse Control Disorder Not Elsewhere Classified (ICD)...”; It conjunctively categorized ICD with disorders such as “...kleptomania, pyromania, intermittent explosive disorder, and trichotillomania” (Bellegarde and Potenza 28). The DSM-V, the current and 5<sup>th</sup> edition of the “Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders”, has categorized and defined “internet gaming disorder” (IGD). The caveat to its categorization is its distinction

...from an intense but ultimately benign or even healthy interest and prioritization of gaming, sometimes referred to as ‘engagement’ (Charlton and Danforth 2007). One key feature that should denote addiction is negative consequences. Where video game addiction would be expected to be associated with a range of negative consequences including mental, physical and social decline, high levels of engagement would not (qtd. in Loton et al. 566)

Ultimately, addiction is not a subset of attraction, but rather a disease or a mental disorder. It stems directly from an individual’s inability to create the proper mental path of response to a certain stimulus. This is exhibited in alcoholism, drug addiction, and other ICDs. Thus, the criticism of video games being addictive and video game addicts being lazy must be evaluated through a clinical lens. The term addiction as it relates to video games is often thrown around incorrectly and fails to take into account the loss of agency that comes with all addictions. Video game addiction is socially viewed as an excess of playing games that is inherently negative. It fails to recognize any potential positive benefits that come from playing video games. Alternatively, it lessens the impact

of the real definition for addiction that requires medical and, or psychological intervention.

What exactly do critics mean when they casually refer to video game addiction? In order to answer this question, two other questions must be taken into account. First, is video game addiction in its current social connotation indicative of a larger societal problem? If so, why is it addressed as a player issue rather than an epidemic. If not, will the overhyped criticism of video games fade when a new mass media format arises? The answers to both rely on an understanding how addiction works, how and why the video game industry is growing, and why the implication of the word addiction has an impact on the social reception of “video game addiction”.

## THE PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACTS OF ADDICTION

Despite having a clinical definition and connotation, addiction as its used in modern society carries an increasingly negative stereotype. Clinically, people who suffer from any form of addiction suffer from a neurological disorder rather than an active choice to make socially unacceptable or inept decisions. The word addiction has historically been misused both out of ignorance and maliciousness. Depending on the agenda, addiction can be unintentionally colloquialized or it can be weaponized to villainize a group of people. Specifically, as it relates to video game addiction, there is a history of both being true. When discussing addictions and just in using the term, it is important to understand both the historical context of the word as well as its clinical definition and qualifications.

Though it is still being researched, addiction is currently believed to be rooted in a faulty decision-making system in the human brain. In general,

...a decision must balance expected reward, expected costs, and the risk of each” however, “...one cannot know the future, and therefore one cannot know the actual probability of a receiving a reward of the actual cost that will be paid; thus, one cannot know the actual value of a decision (Redish 101).

As such, with time and age, an individual gradually acquires the experience and knowledge to make better evaluated decisions. The decision-making system becomes a pattern based in situational awareness and habit; people make decisions based on what they know. Addiction is any unintentional interruption of a person’s decision-making pattern. Within the decision-making system are a number of vulnerabilities that leave room for addiction to disrupt the process. The current identifiable vulnerabilities are the

change of needs, the mimicking of euphoric reward signals, overvaluation of expectancies, incorrect separation of situations, lack of recognition of changing situations, overfast discounting processes, change in learning rates, and an unbalanced planning/habit system (Redish 105). These processes and faults were studied specifically as they relate to gambling and substance addictions. The introduction of addictive substances, or behavior in the instance of gambling, can create a new neurological pathway that diverts the original healthy decision-making process into one of addiction. The DSM has consistently drawn a distinct line between addiction and ICDs. Other than gambling, addictive adjacent behaviors have been categorized exclusively as ICDs rather than as actual addictions. Gambling was only changed from an ICD to an addiction with the release of the DSM-5.

The DSM-5 specifically lists nine types of substance addictions within this category (alcohol; caffeine; cannabis; hallucinogens; inhalants; opioids; sedatives, hypnotics, and anxiolytics; stimulants; and tobacco). These disorders are presented in separate sections, but they are not fully distinct because all drugs taken in excess activate the brain's reward circuitry, and their co-occurrence is common (Grant, Chamberlain).

Addiction occurs when a person can no longer properly evaluate the reality of a situation.

Modern society has adapted the word to go beyond the scope of its definition. People often use addiction when referring to smart phones, the internet, foods, and obviously video games. How we use words, especially this one, is important in a modern context as well as for the social standards society is held to. Until recently, society has failed to use "person-first" language when describing conditions and addictions that

affect a wide diaspora of people. With time, language evolves, and words carry different social connotations based on historical context. For instance, the word gay was once defined as happy or carefree and then eventually migrated to be synonymous with homosexuality. In a similar manner, words have often been weaponized against a group of people before they are able to be adjusted and reclaimed to have a more humanitarian approach. As it relates to addiction, people-first language insists a restructuring of sentences to make descriptive language adjectives rather than nouns. For instance, instead of referring to someone as an addict, a crackhead, a drunk, or a junkie, it is more appropriate to state that they are a person with or struggling with a substance use disorder (Words Matter). The manner in which words are used have both a psychological and sociological effect on people. On the one hand, words can often degrade or cut people down. Language can be weaponized to be incredibly demoralizing. At the same time, it creates and fosters a culture of stigma surrounding serious medical conditions like addiction.

With the guidelines provided by the DSM-5, there is technically no such thing as a video game addiction. The closest qualifying condition is IGD, which is "...a condition warranting more clinical research and experience before it might be considered for inclusion in the main book as a formal disorder" (APA, 2013). Clinically, no one can truly be addicted to video games, yet there are still a number of resources available to those who believe they are addicted to video gaming. According to the American Addiction Centers website, people who suffer from poor performances at work and school, neglect of hobbies or friendships, a decline in personal hygiene and grooming, inability to set time restraints on gaming, increased irritability or anxiety while away

from gaming, increased time gaming, symptoms of withdrawal, or using games as an escape could all be signs of a video game addiction (“Video Game Addiction Symptoms and Treatment”). These symptoms “[appear] to be similar to other forms of addiction, as pathological gambling and substance-related disorders, in terms of characteristics, consequences, and neurophysiological correlates” (Milani et al. 889). The concept of video game addiction has only been studied in direct relation to other forms of addiction rather than as an individual and unique disorder. Regardless, the use of the word addiction when describing video games is incorrect. The term ‘video game addict’ to describe someone who plays an arguably unhealthy amount of video games is a misnomer used to incite fear in society.

The most accurate description for the socially understood definition of addiction is an inclination. There is always a possibility that someone could suffer from IGD, but even then, the research on symptoms and treatment is yet to be fully realized. Either way, the issue of video game in reality is entirely different than its social portrayal. In society, “video game addicts” are seen as lazy with no potential to provide anything meaningful to society at large. Realistically, addiction in all forms is a disease. Addiction rewires the neurological pathways that allow people to appropriately weigh the pros and cons of a situation. When these pathways get crossed, there is a lapse in judgement that leads to a false equivalency between the projected reward of a negatively impactful activity such as substance abuse or excessive gaming. On a larger scale, society has struggled to fully realize the impacts of addiction based on a number of different factors. Most notably, drug addictions have been criminalized when the majority of the affected demographic was black. Yet, when the majority of people diagnosed with substance abuse disorders

shifts to the White demographic, addiction is treated as a clinical issue rather than a criminal act (Orgera, Tolbert). For example, the opioid epidemic was not declared until 2017 despite recognition beginning during the Nixon Administration, hence the “War on Drugs”. When the word addiction is used in a casual and factually incorrect manner, it undermines and disrespects the historical importance of the word. It also detracts from the severity of the word, causing people to not fully understand the impacts of addiction. Addiction is a disease and needs to be treated as such, across demographics and proclivities. Society’s informal adoption of the term has done harm to the overall image of the video game industry and has undermined the efforts to help rehabilitate those who suffer from addictions in any form.

Though it is not technically an addiction, the inclination to play video games excessively has become an issue for individuals. Those who struggle with control either have a general impulse control disorder or internet gaming disorder. There are multiple resources to help deal with the interference on daily life such as the American Addiction Centers, the Partnership to End Addiction, and the Addiction Center. Society is beginning to enter a dangerous territory. As long as playing video games are stigmatized and criminalized at their current rate, video games will fall out of the standard nature of early media criticism. The language used to discuss and describe video games is imperative both for how society deals with players as well as how society will be able to look back on the reactions to video games. Video games are not addictive and based on the stipulations for addiction, they can never truly be addictive. While video games are actively fighting both for reputation and against stigmatizing addiction, they are not the first media format to endure this type of skewed stereotyping.

## THE HISTORY OF MEDIA CRITICISMS

Every new and emerging media format has faced scrutiny for its unknown consequences on society. The novel was once considered harmful to the women of society because it allowed them to imagine things outside of their realities. Critics feared that televisions in the home would disrupt the nuclear family structure. Society has continued to become more progressive, understanding, and accepting of the different individuals involved in our society. As a subset of this, our society has increasingly become more tolerant and accommodating of individual preferences, interests, and even vices. As we've progressed through new technologies and time, our media has mirrored the inclusivity expressed through society. Certain styles and actions that would have been considered obscene or scandalous in the 1800s are now considered modest by modern standards. Even the term criticism as it relates to media changes as the medium grows older. Beginning with a definition of condemnation or disapproval, criticism eventually moves to an academically and artistically based analysis. Criticism is based in a fear of the unknown and as such, it dissipates with time and understanding. However, the determining factor for when criticism changes from condemnation to appreciation is how quickly society moves something from the general perception of taboo into a social or cultural norm.

Though now a revered form of academia, the rise and popularization of the novel in the late 1800s and early 1900s garnered mostly negative criticisms. An 1887 *Saturday Review* article regarded that novels were "...certainly not for the serious minded", a sentiment that has since changed (Oliphant et al. 18). Novels were seen as the lowest form of art and literature below poetry, music, and visual arts. The issue with novels lied



in their reverence for fiction and the mystical. Critics found that “Three issues were of particular importance...its status; the relationship between fiction and mortality; and the relationship between fiction and reality” (Munday 205). Skeptics were all too concerned with the effect that reading novels and fiction would have on people’s ability to discern fiction from reality; a criticism that has made a resurgence with arguments against video games. To date, the criticism of media formats always goes through a transitional phase from taboo into acceptability. For the novel, the social standard that changed was the discussion of the human condition. Although it is not unique to the novel, the discussion of the human condition is central to the novel’s ability to migrate from negatively connotated criticism into critical acclaim. By the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, “...some who were positive about the nature of the novel thought that it could even take the place of religion in teaching men and women about life” (Oliphant et al. 19). Using fiction, novels were able to create fictitious scenarios that deep dove into the questions often answered by religion. “Fiction at its best was a discourse of general humanity and acted like a religion in instructing readers about their proper development, making them aware of the condition of humanity at large” (Oliphant et al. 19). This creates the heavy implication that fiction could become more influential than religion itself.

Religion is a complex issue in and of itself, however it is a well understood fact that religion in any capacity operates under a rigid moral code and structure. In a world unfamiliar with novels and fiction, the moral code established by religion was regarded as an absolute truth. Coupled with a lack of access to literature and the means to read it, religion served as a sole proprietor of truth and knowledge before the popularization of the novel. Breaking from the binary of believing in religion or believing in nothing,

novels provided a new option and that was to believe in mortality of humanity. Moving from an issue of fiction and loss of contact with reality, critics "...condemned novels that offended against conventional standards of sexual and social morality..." further solidifying the implication of novels being an alternative to religion (Munday 211). This implication completely changes how the modern novel and all subsequent media is viewed. The novel became a controversial style of art and literature that could both replace and directly oppose religion. Today, the novel is studied as a standalone medium with its own merits and values. This transition from novels being for the absent minded, to a direct departure from religion, and then finally into the hallmark of academia is heavily reliant on the fact that the standards of what is acceptable have shifted. In the era of religion pre-dating novels, stories that are so clearly about mortal sins would have been entirely inappropriate. Now, novels such as *The Scarlet Letter* (lust), *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (sloth), *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (pride), *A Clockwork Orange* (wrath), *Madame Bovary* (envy), *The Great Gatsby* (gluttony), and *A Christmas Carol* (greed) that directly tackle the human condition as they relate to the "7 deadly sins" are all considered classics by modern standards. Novel criticism has entirely shifted to the evaluation and analysis of the academic merits of a work.

Television and film have faced criticism in a similar format to the novel. Where the novel was criticized for its stance on the human condition and life, film was seen as an abomination to the sanctity of human life. In an essay by O. Winter on the cinematograph, he notes that "We may look upon life moving without purpose, without beauty, with no better impulse than a foolish curiosity; and though the spectacle frightens rather than attracts, we owe it a debt of gratitude, because it proves the complete despair

of modern realism” (McKernan). While the film medium faced some criticisms, it was mostly overshadowed by the novelty of its new technology. The concept of film and moving pictures were met with praise for ingenuity and creativity. The film was at its core a spectacle. As film became more popular and included sound and color rather than just black and white images, the transition from negative criticism to analytical criticism happened rapidly. By the time film critics really emerged, the media format was already wildly popular in society and progressing technologically. Movies have now become “...a subtle and complex social instrument so vast in range and powerful in effect that it has become one of the most influential agencies of modern times” and continues to grow in complexity and reverence (Doyle). By 1939, “...the American movie [had] come up from a minor nickel novelty to one of the foremost industries of the world...” (Doyle). Just like novel criticism, modern film criticism has primarily focused on the stories being told as the format continues to grow. The film industry has gone from an abomination of life to telling stories, again, about the human condition. The human condition as a focal point moved film from an abstract and unnecessary art form into one of importance in our society. Through this medium, society has again pushed past what was once considered socially acceptable to create space for a new medium.

By the 1950s, television had taken its place in the homes of most Americans. Unlike film, television did not have the luxury of being novel. As such, the criticisms of television as a medium and as it appeared in the average family home faced harsh criticism comparable to that of novels and eventually video games. Where novel and film criticism more closely focused on the human condition, television criticism is historically rooted in the internal and external effects it has on the family unit structure. With

televisions becoming commonplace in homes, the family structure was being challenged by the stories told on the screen and by the external effect television viewing had on the family dynamic. There was a fear that families would "...sit in abject silence hour after hour...[with] less social interrelationship than before television..." departing from the original assumption that "...the television-stimulated assembly in the living room would restore the home to a position of popularity which it had not known since the advent of the Model T" (Gould). Not only were families watching television without interaction, but the different members of the family unit were all watching their own programs, further dividing them.

The internal effects on family units were perpetrated by the popularization of the sitcom. A hallmark of modern television, sitcoms have done exactly what novels and films have done in observing the human condition. However, sitcoms did this in a way that "mirrored America's changing societal landscape and our expectations of ourselves and others" (PBS, "Pioneers of Sitcoms"). Television serves as the perfect example for Oscar Wilde's assertion that "life imitates art" ("The Decay of Life"). Portrayals of family units on television mirror the modern family while simultaneously creating a standard of family living to be imitated. In modern media, television shows have moved away from the traditional nuclear family structure. Many different stories explore single family homes, LGBT families, found family structures, and more diverse casts. This style of television is indicative of societal change all while pushing the standards of what constitutes a family unit. Modern television criticism praises the diversity and inclusion shown on television even outside of the familial structure narrative. Just as novels and

film did, television challenged, subverted, and pushed the standards of social acceptance in society to accommodate its medium.

The way we view media is entirely reliant on the social norms of the time and how the emergence of new media pushes that standard forward. The criticisms that novels, films, and television faced ended up being the very things that pushed their mediums into popularity. These same criticisms that were brought up against these now popular and revered media formats are not only challenged but surpassed by video games. Where novels were berated for their praise of fantastical stories and commentary on the human condition, video games allow an exploration on the human condition with the added bonus of agency. Video games allow players to experience firsthand the qualms of humanity while still learning the consequences of actions. Additionally, the criticism against television of families losing social interactivity is directly opposed by the system of online gaming. While families and individuals are playing games and staring at a screen for hours, they are also provided the option to play and interact together or even interact internationally. Lastly, the issue of media corrupting the average citizen has been proven wrong with the rise and popularization of every medium. As time progresses, so does the general level of acceptance and tolerance in society.

The social norms established in early novels of women being subservient to men and needed to remain modest have since shifted into an ideal of female liberation. Modern society calls for a destruction of the patriarchy and reestablishment of gender roles. The film industry that was once controlled by the now abandoned Hays code now includes categorization for films that include explicit sex scenes. Similarly, with television, the FCC's guidelines on what and when "indecent" content could be

broadcasted on television have changed since its implementation in 1927 (Levi). What society deems acceptable and allows as consumable media is constantly changing in time with the progress and further exploration the human condition. Thus, it follows that video games as the most recent media format will follow this same trend. To date, video games have been broadly described as agents of violence that are corrupting the minds of the youth. In a similar manner to the aforementioned media types, the fear of the new and unknown have pushed video games into a negative light. Eventually, the criticism video games face now will soon be considered tame in comparison to either society, a new literature format, or the games themselves. As the format continues to grow, video games are going to be revered as an art format in the same regard. There is still a way to go before video games reach widespread social acceptance, however they are beginning to pop up in academic and popular culture. The rise of gaming and eSports has even prompted universities across the country to offer degrees in the study of eSports management (G. Anderson). As video games emerge further as mainstream media, they will become increasingly present in academic settings. The only questions that remain are: Will there come a time when society can no longer progress in tolerance? And if so, will that come before or after the negative criticisms of the video game medium subside? The best way to evaluate these questions is by first evaluating how the video games have grown over time to become the multi-billion-dollar industry it is today.

## **THE RISE OF THE VIDEO GAME INDUSTRY**

Despite facing decades of negative criticism, lawsuits, clinical trials, and multiple news headlines for its “inherently violent” nature, the video game industry has quickly become one of the largest media industries in present day society. As of 2017, “The video game industry is one of the fastest growing industries...at least one person in more than 60% of US American households plays video games on a regular basis, doing so for at least 3 hours per week, and 65% of US American households own at least one device which is capable of playing video games” (Roettl and Terlutter 1). An updated infographic from the Entertainment Software Association in 2020 has these numbers up to 75% of households playing video games on a daily basis and 10.9 hours per week (ESA 4, 6). The production market alone for video games is incredibly expansive. Games require computer software engineers, artists, writers, graphic designers, musicians, marketing teams, and more. All of which provides an intricate experience for game players to find themselves attracted to. In some respects, the sheer level of complexity and interaction provided by most modern video games would be enough to warrant societal concern. Video games in the 21<sup>st</sup> century include a lot of roleplaying and first-person games that graphically simulate violent, sexual, and otherwise immoral acts. While these attributes attract players, they also raise questions about the psychological and moral impact on the target audience that has historically been minors and adolescents. The industry has been and will continue to grow at an expedited as technology and marketability advance. What pushes video games beyond other media formats, however, is its high market concentration, accessibility, and the player interaction experience.

One of the hallmarks of the video game industry and its ability to grow is solely in its high concentration of the market. Every media format has a type of genre categorization system. With books, film, and television, this genre system is based in narrative structure and emotional reaction within certain conventions. These conventions allow readers or viewers to infer the pacing, mood, and possibly the ending of a story before they begin. For example, romantic comedies center around a couple facing odds to be together whereas an action movie shows a hero's journey against high stakes. Video game genres on the other hand categorized by gameplay and the type of interaction they provide a player. In his article regarding the genre classifications of video games, Thomas Apperley argued "...that the nonrepresentational, specifically interactive, characteristics of video games should be deployed by game scholars to create a more nuanced, meaningful, and critical vocabulary for discussing video games..." (Apperley 7). Classification of video games create niche communities and interests that more specifically draw in players. All romantic comedies are not made equally, but "A shooter [game] is a shooter [game], whether it's set in the Old West or on Mars or anyplace else. A player who enjoys shooters will probably enjoy one no matter where it's set, if it's well made" (Adams). This, in turn, creates a more heavily saturated market by providing a surplus of games to people who prefer one genre to another. While other media genres focus on formulaic storytelling to retrofit their respective genres, video game genres' basis in gameplay allows for a multitude of plots in a game genre and more diversity in game play. Thus, players who are partial to any specific genre or genres are more likely to explore a wider variety and setting of games. Given that, video game producers are able to mass produce more games in the same genre with less fear of breaking genre



conventions and subsequently, less risk in losing customers. In fact, it follows that video game companies can oversaturate a market with niche games within a genre to satisfy a larger demographic within reasonable game building time constraints. Where the novel, film, and tv industry have to focus on quality of work and target audience, video games have the flexibility of mass producing in a single genre and attracting more players.

The other contributing factor in market concentration for the video game industry is the emergence into the digital age. As of 2021, 97% of Americans own a cellphone, 85% of which own a smartphone (“Demographics of Mobile Device Ownership”). Smartphones all come predownloaded with an app store; the Apple app store specifically has a “Top Games This Week” category on the home page and a page entirely for game apps. This page includes game recommendations, rating lists, and a list with 200 free games for download. Where video games used to be confined to cartridges, discs, and consoles, they are now nothing more than a tap or a click away. With that accessibility comes the innate human urge to classify different types and groups of video game fans. There is a certain stigma that comes with playing games, specifically those that involve fantasy elements because the enjoyment of fantasy or science fiction narratives have often been equated with being uncool. This is also in part because of the media and even medical outcry against video games. The video game community is statistically a majority of Americans, but the connotation that comes along with it pushes players into a silent majority. Though people are still playing video games, games that are accessible in app format on a cellphone instantly makes people feel safe in their self-proclaimed separation from traditional gamers. However, video games are video games regardless of the format, just as gamers are gamers regardless of the format. I’ve made jokes about my

roommate playing Fortnite since she doesn't fit in the stereotypical Fortnite demographic, but I'm currently on level 1631 on Candy Crush. Video game players, like other media fans, often attempt to discredit or criticize more enthusiastic fans all while being a part of the same fandom. The market has become so saturated with game options that the line between casual player and "addicted" player have become fainter than the average casual player would portray.

With an overly saturated market, video games easily overcome most barriers to accessibility. Although television, movies, and music have moved to streaming services to be more accessible, they are often accompanied with a subscription fee. The film and television market saturation led to a diversification that ultimately hurts the consumer. Companies are starting to roll out new streaming services that provide access to media unique to the platform. Thus, consumers must purchase subscriptions to multiple different platforms in order to access all of the media they desire. While the video game industry is a for-profit industry, it has not faced the same issues with accessibility and exclusivity. In fact, the gaming industry has a number opportunities for free gaming experiences. This goes beyond free online games and includes free versions of games where players can access portions of the game, differing from the traditional streaming service model of a limited time free trial. Removing cost limitations opened the video game industry to the formation of the online gaming community. In addition to internet-based games, most notably the Mass Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Game (MMORPG) genre, a lot of other video games have adopted similar traits. This industry's ability to cater to a larger demographic due to its accessibility has been a large contributing factor in the growth and appeal of playing games.

As a result of online gaming and high accessibility, comes the social reward of interaction and connectivity while playing games. Playing video games is statistically an incredibly social activity. According to the Entertainment Software Association, 17% of players play with online friends and groups, 30% of players have met a spouse/friend/significant other through gaming, 40% of gamers have met people through gaming that they would not have met otherwise, and 65% of players play with other people (ESA 6-7). Online gaming has allowed for gamers to play games together without having to physically be in the same room. In addition to online gaming and MMORPGs, there are programs such as Discord that allow players to create servers for specific interests and includes both messaging and voice chat options. Discord is most famously used to create servers for specific video games where players from the games can be a part of the same online community and organize times to play together, stream live games, and interact in more casual ways as well. The formation of these communities allows for piqued interest for video games so far as interaction both with other players and with the game itself.

The interaction between players of the same game and players with the game itself is rooted in the game's ability to provide agency for its players. The element of agency in video games sets it apart from other media formats leading it to be more interactive and also for it to raise speculation for addiction. Agency in video games refers to a player's ability to make choices for their characters and avatars. Where other media formats are considered complete works when they are published and distributed, video games are essentially a blank slate where the story has not even begun. In modern and narrative driven video games which now dominate the industry, players are often able to

choose characters or customize them to their own personal preference. In a lot of cases for players this means creating a character that either resembles themselves or a person they would like to be. These massive open ended narrative worlds become interactive and expansive for players in a way that novels, television, comic books, and movies have failed to provide. This choice driven gaming format creates a game that is a direct result of the choices a player makes and sometimes creates situations with moral dilemmas. Popular examples of this are games like *Bioshock*, which is driven by morality challenging choices and more notably, *Grand Theft Auto*, a game that has frequently been at the forefront of video game criticism for its graphic depictions of sex and violence. The level of immersion provided by video games allows a unique experience not only to each player, but for each time the game is played with a new set of choices.

The effect of the pandemic has exaggerated the role video games play in society. As a result of the lockdown, many young adults turned to video games to fill the influx of newfound free time. As the pandemic progressed, it was discovered that

...videogames and their peripheral technologies can and do have a role to play in continuing and enhancing social connections, relationships and engagements, from within the ecosystem and/or across WiFi communications. It is important to note the unique contribution that games provide to mediated socialization...They allow individuals to connect through play, which is an important facet of psychological well-being throughout the lifespan (Marston).

With people unable to physically connect with one another, virtual connections become imperative. As the world navigated the rise of Zoom calls and conferencing, the video game industry already had the groundwork laid for international connectivity. A 21-year-

old student from the University of New Haven who had never played Fortnite before began playing after the pandemic started. She claims that she started playing because it was a free game available on her Nintendo Switch. She played “almost every night from 8 pm til sometimes 2 or 3 in the morning...I met other people who played it. It was almost like a common ground to just hang out. I never thought of myself as a gamer type and I still don’t, but Fortnite wasn’t too hard to learn”. As the industry has grown, accessibility has been one of the strongest growth factors. Multiple college students noted that their video gameplay increased during the early months of quarantine. When asked, New Haven junior Nahtali Simpson explained “it was the easiest way to pass time”. Wood’s study of gamers would argue the opposite, that playing video games “...provided temporary relief from the stress of everyday life. It showed that they were enjoying themselves so much that time passed quickly” (171). Video games have been proven to be a form of leisure for many people which again poses the question, “...does spending a lot of time doing something define an activity as addictive or problematic?” (171). It is impossible that every person who has such free and enhanced access to video games would refuse to participate in gaming as a new activity or in an increased amount. Especially with the pandemic, accessibility combined with excess free time and boredom led to an inevitable uptick in game play. None of which inherently classifies new players or players with increased screen time as addicts. The increase of video game play as a result of the pandemic is not entirely indicative of the social connotation behind video game addiction. In fact, it frames the opposite viewpoint that video game addiction is a direct result of situational and societal norms. Ultimately, gamers become both a product and standard to the conditions in which they are living.

As technology improves, the video game industry is bound to expand. Currently, video games lead other media formats in accessibility and immersion to the story world. Though it is the newest media type, it has no shortage of content for gamers to divulge in. Its unique genre system caters more specifically to players than any other style of genre organization. With that, players are able to more quickly identify the type of games that they enjoy and the communities that also enjoy those games. Once engaged in these communities, players are able to create bonds and connections within these communities through online and in person formats. Modern video gaming is becoming increasingly social and drives the internet gaming aspect of the industry to grow and improve. As online gaming improves and becomes more accessible to players across the globe, video games as a whole become recognized more as commonplace leisure activities and less as niche and obscure hobbies. However, this double-edged sword of popularity and notoriety exposes video games to the inaccurate assumption of what constitutes video game addiction. The pandemic and subsequent quarantine shifted the social norms for what is considered an excess of playing video games. Yet, the long-term effects of this paradigm shift are still unknown. After society is completely free from the restrictions of quarantine, the social definition of excess could shift again and with it, the colloquial definition of addiction. Going forward, the effects of the pandemic on video game criticism are inevitable.

## **CRITICISMS OF THE VIDEO GAME INDUSTRY**

The video game industry is only the latest in a long line of literatures that have come under scrutiny and criticism for their potential effects on society. Since the creation of the Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB) was established in 1994, a plethora of articles, case studies, reports, and even court cases have arisen to advocate against the effects of video games, especially violent ones, usually as it relates to children (“A Timeline of Video Game Controversies”). Just as the historical pattern with previous media and literature criticisms, the discussion around video games is starting to make a turn for its positive merits. However, the long history of negative criticism is unprecedented. The introduction of interactive technology has taken the issue of violence that is found in other medias and made it a central focus for arguments against gaming. The criticisms the industry currently faces are strikingly similar to the issues with the early emergence of the novel, movies, and television. This criticism however has taken a turn to the extreme and created a sect of people worried about video game addicts, a phenomenon unique to the rise of gaming in the context of media criticism. The use of the term addiction in most cases as it refers to video games is nothing more than a colloquialism. However, the rising popularity in using the phrase has created an influx of fear and stigma around gaming. The reality of video game addicts is not as grotesque as the modern media has portrayed it to be. As such, the issue of video game addiction in casual use is drastically overstated.

The video game industry has managed to garner criticisms in both the mass media format as well as from a purely academic and medical standpoint. Over the past couple of

decades, a number of sources have expressed concerns with the long-term effects of video gaming. In 2003, the APA released an article arguing the harmful effects of

“...the arrival of a new generation of ultraviolent video games beginning in the early 1990s and continuing unabated to the present resulted in large numbers of children and youths actively participating in entertainment violence that went way beyond anything available to them on television or in movies. Recent video games reward players for killing innocent bystanders, police, and prostitutes, using a wide range of weapons including guns, knives, flame throwers, swords, baseball bats, cars, hands, and feet”

This statement by the APA was only one of many attempts to negatively portray video games as a negative monolith while disregarding the wide expanse of both gaming genres and plot lines. They later released a 2005 *Resolution on Violence and Interactive Media* stating:

“...that exposure to violent media increases feelings of hostility, thoughts about aggression, suspicions about the motives of others, and demonstrates violence as a method to deal with potential conflict situations...studies further suggest that sexualized violence in the media has been linked to increases in violence towards women, rape myth acceptance and anti-women attitudes. Research on interactive video games suggests that the most popular video games contain aggressive and violent content; depict women and girls, men and boys, and minorities in exaggerated stereotypical ways; and reward, glamorize and depict as humorous sexualized aggression against women, including assault, rape and murder...”



Again, the APA provided a one-sided perspective on the incredibly complex topic of video games and their effect on society. The emphasis on violence in video games that the APA highlights, again disregards the positive social impact that gaming has on individual players. It also does not make any definitive claims, but rather provides the framework for a negative viewpoint on games and the industry without proper resolution. The fearmongering technique has also spanned across news outlets. A 2006 NBC article headline reads “Does game violence make teens aggressive?” as it suggests that video games can make kids more violent (Kalnig). In 2007, The Washington Post released an article quoting Governor Mitt Romney’s reaction to the shooting at Virginia Tech earlier that year, in which he blamed the tragedy on violence in music, movies, TV, and video games (Bacon). In 2009, the AAP released a policy statement on media violence stating that “Exposure to violence in media, including television, movies, music, and video games, represents a significant risk to the health of children and adolescents” (Strasburger). Harvard Medical School released an article in 2010 based on studies by the AAP and the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP) “. . .that video games are particularly harmful because they are interactive and encourage role-playing. . . [and] fear that these games may serve as virtual rehearsals for actual violence” (Violent video games and young people).

Finally, the state legislators of California appealed a case to the Supreme Court in 2010, *Brown v. Entertainment Merchants Association*, to impose a law that would “restrict minors’ ability to purchase deviant, violent video games. . .” (Supreme Court of the US 08-1448). Ultimately the court decided in a 7-2 decision that restricting any sales and/or distribution of arguably “violent” video games was unconstitutional (Supreme

Court of the US 08-1448). The majority opinion established video games as protected under the First Amendment, saying that ‘speech about violence is not obscene’ and they are ‘as much entitled to the protection of free speech as the best of literature’ (“A Timeline of Video Game Controversies”). Judge Scalia ultimately noted that “...playing violent video games “is not different in ‘kind’ from reading violent literature” (564 U. S. 786 (2011) Opinion, Scalia). Yet, this decision did not stop or even slowdown the onslaught of disparagements towards the industry. In 2013, CNN had released an article that questioned the effect video games had on the perpetrator of another American mass shooting (Bushman). Although this article moves away from placing explicit blame on the role of video games in making players violent, it still overplays the inherent negative effects of video games. In 2018, both USA Today and NBC reported on then President Donald Trump’s accusations that video games are to blame for mass shootings in the United States (Snider) (Arkin). Again, in 2019, ABC analyzed a study that linked video games and gun violence arguing that young kids are becoming addicted to video games (Best).

Obviously, video games are not unique in their ability to garner criticism. However, the industry has been unique in that it uses its platform to create new opportunities for consumers rather than solely adjusting the social standards provided. Video games have been criticized for graphic depictions of violence, their use of agency and for creating conditions void of physical activity. The most prominent of these issues and criticisms is by far the portrayal of violence. Entire studies, articles, and books have been focused on the long-term effects of violent video games on children. What most of these critical studies have found is that video games are no more violent than any type of

media or literature society has been previously exposed to. Novels, movies, television, comic books, even the Bible, all have a history of telling violent stories. Even games that would not usually be considered violent include elements of violence and gore. “A game of chess, after all, is a simplified portrayal of warfare in which pawns (commoners) are readily sacrificed to protect more valuable pieces” and yet, there are no calls to pull games of chess off the shelves (Kutner, Olsen 14). The issue in most of these games is not so much an issue of violence, but rather a matter of unfamiliarity. “This is a pattern seen in the introduction of all new technologies” and a pattern that we will continue to see repeat itself (Kutner, Olsen 14). All of these instances of violence have been debated and ultimately mitigated by the creation of genres and limitations. Even then, these standards and limitations continue to grow and change over time. Though one of the main causes for criticism, violence is not objectively the only issue the modern media finds with video games.

The ability for players to assume first person experiences of violence has caused a fear of correlation between simulated violence and real-life violence. However, “While many [young teenagers] enjoyed the ability to shoot people, drive tanks, blow up buildings, steal cars, evade the police, massacre aliens and stab zombies, they recognized that these actions were fantasies” (Kutner, Olsen 24). The causality between simulating violence in video games and emulating violence in real life has been proven faulty. Even further, “the active role required by video games...helps educational video games be excellent teaching tools for motivational and learning process reasons” (C. Anderson). Video games have also been blamed for an uptick in childhood obesity just as watching television has been (Warner). Yet, multiple games have come out that encourage physical

activity such as the Wii Sports suite, Just Dance, and the very popular Pokémon go app. Unlike other media criticisms, the video game industry hasn't stopped at reconfiguring what is considered acceptable. Rather, the industry provides games that serve as useful and productive additions to society. There is no complacency in the criticism or even in meeting a quota. Video games have consistently pushed beyond the scope of expectation.

Though they are often in the limelight for their negative attributes, video games have been noted to have a net positive impact on the lives of players. Different gaming genres include educational and non-educational games; however, video games take genre intersectionality to a new level. Where other forms of literature provide dual-genre pieces such as romantic comedies, video games provide a more subtle kind of duality.

Contrary to common misconception, playing video games does not intrinsically have a negative impact on the social aptitude of gamers. Originally, playing video games such as Pokémon allowed children "...a non-threatening common experience to talk about. This let them build relationships and explore new social roles" (Kutner, Olsen 15). As gaming and technology has progressed to more interactive games with violent themes and narrative structures, there remains a common theme of social and moral growth. With the modern technology used in gaming, players can now experience social situations with other people both virtually and in reality. Using platforms like Discord and MMORPGs provided to players, they are able to connect with other players on a global scale. This opens another opportunity for players to foster relationships that can span outside the scope of playing games. These relationships then provide a chance to learn about other cultures and connect in a way entirely unique to this generation.

As the criticisms of video games have morphed over time, the most recent iteration of these claims is the propagation of the phrase “video game addict”. Until the DSM-5’s classification of internet gaming disorder in 2013, the validity of video game addiction was still entirely up for debate. Even with the clinical classification, the debate runs forward. The AAP, APA, and other medical groups in conjunction with mass media sources have continued to evaluate and study the multifaceted effects of video games on players. A 2018 article posted on the *Insider* website titled “There’s even more evidence that video games could be making children violent” notes that “...in the long term, video games can desensitise [sic] people to seeing aggressive behaviour, and even decrease someone’s ability to feel empathy” (Dodgson). Even now, the debate for and against video games continues as scientists try to understand what, if anything, makes video games “addictive”. Currently, as IGD is present in the DSM-5, it is as a condition that requires further study and analysis before it can be classified as a disorder (APA). This means, the current use of the term “addiction” is inaccurate at best.

Video games are going to continue to grow alongside technology, the same way that other medias have done. As it stands, novels, films, television, and comic books have all overcome the negative stigma attached to their emergence in society. The video game industry has already begun to shift into the literary and cultural praise that other formats have benefitted from. However, the industry is still fairly deep in the negative side of their criticisms. The criticisms against the video game industry are mostly based in complacency. One day, the novelty and wonder of video games will wear off and society will move on to criticizing some other form of literature. Ultimately, “...when the latest state-of-the-art entertainments seem to offer unprecedented levels of stimulation and

lifelike gore—yesterday’s popular culture always seems innocent and quaint” (Kutner, Olsen 20). Eventually, video games as we know them will fall into a category of complacent, harmless, and maybe even academic media. Until then, the stigma against video games remains at the forefront of social and psychological studies.

## WHAT HAPPENS NEXT? / CONCLUSION

The issue of addiction and the video game industry is entirely rooted in fear. Video games are just the latest in a long history of criticizing the unknown. As the newest media format, they will remain in a negative light until the world progresses. However, it is clear that video games are not the inherently problematic media that they've been portrayed as. In fact, video games have provided a substantial amount of positive progress in society as well as technological advances. As the years go on and the industry continues to grow, the role video games play in society and in academia will continue to shift for the better.

The act of playing or even enjoying video games is not inherently a gateway to video game addiction. In fact, the idea of video game addiction isn't actually real. The fear of video game addiction is entirely rooted in the unfamiliarity we as a society have with the art and literature format. A number of studies have been conducted in an attempt to understand the social and physical effects of playing video games. While the implicit effects have been studied, most of these studies disregard the more important social connotations of playing games. The data collected in studies of video games are "...subjected to lynch mob mentality with almost any evidence used to prove guilt" (Kutner, Olsen 7). The raw data in these studies are ultimately inconclusive which allows scientist to relay data and form conclusions with the agenda of discrediting video games. The video game industry has proven its social and academic merits despite criticism and will continue to do so. The industry has forced technological advances in the form of virtual reality and even eSports. Because of video games, the internet is being forced to reach new levels of capability by hosting international game servers for players,

streamers, and watchers alike. Though only recently recognized, video games have pushed forward social acceptance more than any other media format has.

In the past decade, video games have started to garner academic accreditation, going so far as to being incorporated in job training. As this trend continues, society is going to continue seeing a shift in what we consider to be acceptable. There was a time when video was seen as a mockery of life, now it's a revered art form. Virtual reality and immersive gaming simulations have been considered dangerous for allowing players to experience violence firsthand without proper consequences. However, this same technology is now being used to train members of professional fields. Members of the military, doctors, surgeons, and even FBI agents have begun using video games and simulators as a way to train for their professional field. All of these simulations were once provided through written literature or video materials. Video games are showing their versatility and value outside of leisure activity. Video games are now able to replace other literature formats in a multifaceted sense. The growth of the video game industry has also created the phenomenon of eSports.

Where playing video games was once considered entirely leisurely, now people can compete professionally and even gain monetary prizes for their efforts. Recently, eSports have become increasingly popular "...driven by the growing provenance of (online) games ..." (Hamari 219). As this subindustry grows, society has seen an influx of eSports athletes and a growing acceptance of professional gamers. eSports have normalized the culture and activity surrounding gameplay. Because of this, "...video games and gamers are becoming more socially acceptable, especially in America" (Hadzinsky 36). Video games are slowly becoming socially acceptable and a part of our



culture. As we continue to involve video games in daily life the way that we have accepted novels, film, and television as literature, the criticism of video games will continue to shift from a place of negativity and into a critical sense of academia.

Technology is going to continue advancing alongside time. The nature of the human condition that has been the focus of literature across time will continue to serve as the catalyst for growth. Society is always going to look for better and more efficient ways to convey information. Video games will continue to be studied and like with all things; the issue lies in an overindulgence. There's no way to know for sure what technology will come next to replace the novelty of video games. However, it can be inferred that whatever comes next will be more interactive and immersive as well as stimulate the mind in ways we have not yet seen. The appearance of new and better technology in conjunction with significant shift in the standards of social acceptance will finally push video games from their amateur level of criticism into a place of reverence.

The timeline on a cultural literature shift is essentially unpredictable. The two requirements for literature to move from ridicule to reverence as defined are the emergence of new technology and a shift of social norms. There remains a chance that either or neither of these instances could occur sometime soon, if at all. However, there could come a time when there is no more technology to be made or advanced. Alternatively, as society continues to grow both literally and in its acceptance of individuals, there could come a day when there is nothing more to be accepted. If either of these instances occur before the next literature format is established, the considerable societal shift required for the social acceptance of video games will be prolonged. Yet, the sentiment remains that video game addiction is not what it was once assumed to be.

In literature, video games included, there will continue to be bad games and bad stories. For this reason, negative criticism will remain rampant in conversations around literature. As long as society finds a way to continue advancing and developing, the harsh and mostly unfounded arguments against video games will begin to fade. Video games are not inherently addictive or as harmful as society would push us to believe. They do have the potential to become addictive when gameplay moves from an interest to an obsession, like with anything. The narrative and stigma around video games have deconstructed and hindered the growth of one of the most influential media formats in modern times. One day, society should be able to look back and find preposterous the idea that video games were anything more than a tool with untapped potential.

## Works Cited

- “2020 Essential Facts About the Video Game Industry.” Entertainment Software Association, 2020.
- “A Timeline of Video Game Controversies.” *National Coalition Against Censorship*, 6 Jan. 2020, [ncac.org/resource/a-timeline-of-video-game-controversies](http://ncac.org/resource/a-timeline-of-video-game-controversies).
- Adams, Ernest. “The Designer's Notebook: Sorting Out the Genre Muddle.” *Gamasutra*, 9 July 2009, [www.gamasutra.com/view/feature/132463/the\\_designers\\_notebook\\_sorting\\_.php?page=2](http://www.gamasutra.com/view/feature/132463/the_designers_notebook_sorting_.php?page=2).
- Anderson, Craig. “Violent Video Games: Myths, Facts, and Unanswered Questions.” *American Psychological Association*, American Psychological Association, Oct. 2003, [www.apa.org/science/about/psa/2003/10/anderson](http://www.apa.org/science/about/psa/2003/10/anderson).
- Anderson, Greta. *Institutions Introduce Undergraduate Degree Programs in Esports*, 5 Nov. 2019, [www.insidehighered.com/news/2019/11/05/institutions-introduce-undergraduate-degree-programs-esports](http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2019/11/05/institutions-introduce-undergraduate-degree-programs-esports).
- Apperley, Thomas H. “Genre and Game Studies: Toward a Critical Approach to Video Game Genres.” *Simulation & Gaming*, vol. 37, no. 1, Mar. 2006, pp. 6–23., doi:10.1177/1046878105282278.
- Arkin, Daniel. “Here's What We Know about the Links between Video Games and Violence.” *NBCNews.com*, NBCUniversal News Group, 2 Mar. 2018, [www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/here-s-what-we-know-about-links-between-video-games-n852776](http://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/here-s-what-we-know-about-links-between-video-games-n852776).
- Bacon, Perry. “Romney Reaches to the Christian Right.” *The Washington Post*, WP Company, 6 May 2007, [www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/05/05/AR2007050501081.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/05/05/AR2007050501081.html).
- Best, Tiffany. “Study Sees Link between Video Games and Play.” *ABC News*, ABC News Network, 31 May 2019, 7:03 pm, [abcnews.go.com/Technology/study-sees-link-video-games-play/story?id=63398606](http://abcnews.go.com/Technology/study-sees-link-video-games-play/story?id=63398606).
- Bellegarde, Jennifer D, and Marc N Polenza. “Neurobiology of Pathological Gambling.” *What Is Addiction?*, edited by Peter Collins et al., MIT Press, 2010, pp. 27–51.
- Bezrutczyk, Destiny. “Video Game Addiction - Get Help Today.” *Addiction Center*, 20 Nov. 2020, [www.addictioncenter.com/drugs/video-game-addiction/](http://www.addictioncenter.com/drugs/video-game-addiction/).

“Brown v. Entertainment Merchants Association.” Oyez, [www.oyez.org/cases/2010/08-1448](http://www.oyez.org/cases/2010/08-1448). Accessed 29 Mar. 2021

Bushman, Brad. “Do Violent Video Games Play a Role in Shootings?” *CNN, Cable News Network*, 18 Sept. 2013, [www.cnn.com/2013/09/18/opinion/bushman-video-games](http://www.cnn.com/2013/09/18/opinion/bushman-video-games).

“Demographics of Mobile Device Ownership and Adoption in the United States.” *Pew Research Center: Internet, Science & Tech*, Pew Research Center, 14 Apr. 2021, [www.pewresearch.org/internet/fact-sheet/mobile/](http://www.pewresearch.org/internet/fact-sheet/mobile/).

Dodgson, Lindsay. “There's Even More Evidence That Video Games Could Be Making Children Violent.” *Business Insider*, Business Insider, 2 Oct. 2018, [www.businessinsider.com/video-games-make-children-violent-according-to-study-2018-10](http://www.businessinsider.com/video-games-make-children-violent-according-to-study-2018-10).

Doyle, Ray Gibbins. “The Movies Through Fifty Years.” *The New York Times*, 31 Dec. 1949.

Gould, Jack. “What Is Television Doing to Us.” *The New York Times*, 12 June 1949, pp. 7–28.

Grant, Jon E, and Samuel R Chamberlain. “Expanding the Definition of Addiction: DSM-5 vs. ICD-11.” *CNS Spectrums*, U.S. National Library of Medicine, Aug. 2016, [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5328289/#:~:text=The%20DSM%2D5%20specifically%20lists,%3B%20stimulants%3B%20and%20tobacco](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5328289/#:~:text=The%20DSM%2D5%20specifically%20lists,%3B%20stimulants%3B%20and%20tobacco)).

Hadzinsky, Chad, "A Look into the Industry of Video Games Past, Present, and Yet to Come" (2014). CMC Senior Theses. Paper 842. [https://scholarship.claremont.edu/cmc\\_theses/842/](https://scholarship.claremont.edu/cmc_theses/842/)

Hamari, Juho, and Max Sjöblom. “What Is ESports and Why Do People Watch It?” *Internet Research*, vol. 27, no. 2, 2017, pp. 211–232., doi:10.1108/intr-04-2016-0085.

“Internet Gaming Disorder.” American Psychiatric Association, 2013.

Kalning, Kristin. “Does Game Violence Make Teens Aggressive?” *NBCNews.com*, NBCUniversal News Group, 8 Dec. 2006, [www.nbcnews.com/id/wbna16099971](http://www.nbcnews.com/id/wbna16099971).

Kutner, Lawrence, and Cheryl K Olsen. *Grand Theft Childhood The Surprising Truth About Violent Video Games and What Parents Can Do*. Simon & Schuster, 2010.

Lee, Ming-Chi, and Tzung-Ru Tsai. “What Drives People to Continue to Play Online Games? An Extension of Technology Model and Theory of Planned Behavior.”

*International Journal of Human-Computer Interaction*, vol. 26, no. 6, 2010, pp. 601–620., doi:10.1080/10447311003781318.

- Levi, Lili. “The FCC's Regulation of Indecency.” First Amendment Center, 2008.
- Loton, Daniel, et al. “Video Game Addiction, Engagement and Symptoms of Stress, Depression and Anxiety: The Mediating Role of Coping.” *International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction*, vol. 14, no. 4, 2015, pp. 565–578., doi:10.1007/s11469-015-9578-6.
- Marston, Hannah R., and Rachel Kowert. “What Role Can Videogames Play in the COVID-19 Pandemic?” *Emerald Open Research*, F1000 Research Limited, 2 June 2020, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7453828/.
- Milani, Luca, et al. “Internet Gaming Addiction in Adolescence: Risk Factors and Maladjustment Correlates.” *International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction*, vol. 16, no. 4, 2017, pp. 888–904., doi:10.1007/s11469-017-9750-2.
- McKernan, Luke. “The Cinematograph.” *Picturegoing*, 5 June 2015, picturegoing.com/?tag=o-winter.
- Michael Munday. “The Novel and Its Critics in the Early Nineteenth Century.” *Studies in Philology*, vol. 79, no. 2, 1982, pp. 205–226. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/4174117. Accessed 15 Apr. 2021.
- North, Anna. “When Novels Were Bad For You.” *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 14 Sept. 2014, op-talk.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/09/14/when-novels-were-bad-for-you/.
- Oliphant, James, et al. “Early Criticism of the Victorian Novel from James Oliphant to David Cecil.” *The Victorian Novel*, 1 Jan. 2002, pp. 17–45., doi:10.1002/9780470690109.ch1.
- Orgera, Kendal, and Jennifer Tolbert. “The Opioid Epidemic and Medicaid's Role in Facilitating Access to Treatment.” *KFF*, 15 July 2019, www.kff.org/medicaid/issue-brief/the-opioid-epidemic-and-medicaids-role-in-facilitating-access-to-treatment/.
- People Staff Writers. “Over 70 Percent of Americans Have Developed a Video Game Habit in Quarantine, Survey Finds.” *PEOPLE.com*, 17 Feb. 2021, people.com/human-interest/over-70-percent-of-americans-have-developed-a-video-game-habit-in-quarantine-survey-finds/.
- Redish, A. David. “Addiction as a Breakdown in the Machinery of Decision Making.” *What Is Addiction?*, edited by Peter Collins et al., MIT Press, 2010, pp. 27–51.

“Resolution on Violence in Video Games and Interactive Media.” APA Council of Representatives, Aug. 2005. Archived in August 2015

Roettl J, Terlutter R (2018) The same video game in 2D, 3D or virtual reality – How does technology impact game evaluation and brand placements? *PLoS ONE* 13(7): e0200724. [https:// doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0200724](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0200724)

Scharper, Julie. “Are You Addicted to Your Phone? ...Not to Mention Video Games? (Psst: They’re Designed to Do Just That!).” *Scholastic Choices*, vol. 33, no. 5, Feb. 2018, p. 10. EBSCOhost, [search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=cookie,ip,cpid&custid=s9437114&db=mfi&AN=127500037&site=eds-live](https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=cookie,ip,cpid&custid=s9437114&db=mfi&AN=127500037&site=eds-live).

“Sitcoms.” *PBS*, Public Broadcasting Service, 8 Jan. 2013, [www.pbs.org/wnet/pioneers-of-television/pioneering-programs/sitcoms/#:~:text=In%20the%201940s%20and%20'50s,blended%20families%20or%20whole%20communities](http://www.pbs.org/wnet/pioneers-of-television/pioneering-programs/sitcoms/#:~:text=In%20the%201940s%20and%20'50s,blended%20families%20or%20whole%20communities).

Strasburger, Victor C. “Policy Statement--Media Violence.” *PEDIATRICS*, vol. 124, no. 5, 19 Oct. 2009, pp. 1495–1503., doi:10.1542/peds.2009-2146.

Snider, Mike. “Study Confirms Link between Violent Video Games and Physical Aggression.” *USA Today*, Gannett Satellite Information Network, 8 Aug. 2019, [www.usatoday.com/story/tech/news/2018/10/01/violent-video-games-tie-physical-aggression-confirmed-study/1486188002/](http://www.usatoday.com/story/tech/news/2018/10/01/violent-video-games-tie-physical-aggression-confirmed-study/1486188002/).

“The Decay of Lying.” *Intentions*, by Oscar Wilde, Brentano's, 1905, pp. 1–17, [virgil.org/dsw/courses/novel/wilde-lying.pdf](http://virgil.org/dsw/courses/novel/wilde-lying.pdf).

United States Supreme Court. *Brown, Et Al. v. Entertainment Merchants Assn. Et Al.*, 564 U.S. 786. 27 June 2011. *Justia US Supreme Court*.

“Video Game Addiction Symptoms and Treatment.” Edited by Meredith Watkins, *American Addiction Centers*, 8 Feb. 2021, [americanaddictioncenters.org/video-gaming-addiction](http://americanaddictioncenters.org/video-gaming-addiction).

“Violent Video Games and Young People.” *Harvard Health*, Oct. 2010, [www.health.harvard.edu/newsletter\\_article/violent-video-games-and-young-people](http://www.health.harvard.edu/newsletter_article/violent-video-games-and-young-people).

Warner, Jennifer. “Video Games, TV Double Childhood Obesity Risk.” *WebMD*, WebMD, 2 July 2004, [www.webmd.com/parenting/news/20040702/video-games-tv-double-childhood-obesity-risk#:~:text=Researchers%20found%20that%20each%20hour,or%20a%20father%20who%20smoked](http://www.webmd.com/parenting/news/20040702/video-games-tv-double-childhood-obesity-risk#:~:text=Researchers%20found%20that%20each%20hour,or%20a%20father%20who%20smoked).

Wood, Richard T. "Problems with the Concept of Video Game 'Addiction': Some Case Study Examples." *International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction*, vol. 6, no. 2, 2007, pp. 169–178., doi:10.1007/s11469-007-9118-0.

"Words Matter: The Language of Addiction." *Partnership to End Addiction*, 17 Nov. 2020, [drugfree.org/article/shouldnt-use-word-addict/](https://drugfree.org/article/shouldnt-use-word-addict/).