Columbine Shooting: Killer Kids Essay, Research Paper

On April 20th, 1999 two teenagers, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold walked into their school in Columbine Colorado and began a one-hour long killing spree, which ended in the death of 12 of their fellow classmates and one teacher and left another 28 wounded. The shooters then took their own lives. The two teenage gunmen did not have a previous history of violence but were both enthusiasts of killing-oriented video games. The violence in video games was a major factor in teaching these kids how to shoot other people in real life. Violent video games can and have led children to committing acts of violence against other children and adults.

Growing children are easily influenced by the examples laid out before them. A young boy who plays hockey and follows the sport closely is probably more likely to resort to violence to solve a conflict than a boy whose role model is a pacifist folk-singer simply because violence and fighting is a prominent overtone of the sport. The same goes for a child who is very interested in one or more of the numerous video games available that focus on killing as their main theme. A child who plays violent video games will resort to violence more easily when faced with a problem than a child who has never been exposed to such interactive killing. Violent video games do not teach any other way to deal with a conflict. So a young, impressionable youth will be susceptible to resorting to violence if that child has been exposed to violent video games.

Violence in video games can also act as a gateway to more serious forms of violence. If a child who has no interest or knowledge in guns and weaponry begins to play a “shoot-em-up” video game where the sole purpose is to kill other people that child could become interested in guns and move on to something more realistic such as pellet and paint ball weaponry. From there the child could move into actual guns when he/she is able to acquire such weapons and this could lead to an act of violence against another human being. Violent video games can foster an interest in guns and violence in children, which can lead them to more realistic violence.

Video game companies are continuously releasing more and more realistically violent video games onto the market in order to sell more copies, because market statistics clearly show that violence sells: all the most popular video games include a violent main theme. Many games include very real-life scenarios with existing weaponry that were created to be as close to the real thing as possible. This can teach children all about the way a gun works and how to use it. If a child is killing people in an almost perfectly realistic virtual world, it would quickly desensitize that child, making it easier for him/her to commit such acts in real-life. A young boy brought his dad’s gun to an American school one day and used it to shoot a boy who had been bullying him. In the video games the boy played, when a person was shot, the person would simply fall to the ground with a quiet grunt or moan, and in some cases a shot with a less powerful gun to a person in a video game is not enough to kill the character so that person will continue doing whatever it was that he/she was doing. In real life the boy’s victim moaned and screamed in agony while rolling in a puddle of blood on the ground, leaving the boy who shot him incredibly traumatized by what he had done. As realistic as video games are, they still lack certain aspects of real life; the difference between shooting a video game character and shooting a real living, breathing human being is it is easy to shoot an object you do not even perceive as alive.

Violent video games can teach a person how to aim and use a handgun. In an article of the July issue of Shift magazine, the editors addressed the issue by giving a young man who had played violent arcade games all his life a real handgun at a shooting range where he could test his shooting ability for the first time. Even the young man himself was perplexed when he missed an incredibly low percentage of the shots fired. He was shooting with deadly accuracy and he had never even held a real gun before in his life. Similarly, a man in the United States walked into a church with a Glock .18 16-shot pistol and killed twelve people with it and injured another two. Twelve of the sixteen shots he had available to him were so accurate, he was able to kill a fleeing person in a single hit?shooting accuracy that many trained law enforcement officers cannot equal. The unsettling part of the story is that the man had never shot a handgun before, not even before he walked into the church that morning. However, for many years he had played arcade games where the player holds an electronic pistol and shoots targets on the screen and was outstandingly good at the game.

Therefore, violence in video games for any medium is a dangerous thing to children who are at an age where they are easily influenced by the subjects around them. Video games promote an interest in guns, present a distorted reality, and may actually train people to be marksmen. Incidents like the Columbine school shooting, the worst school shooting in the history of the United States, are proof of the influence of heavy violence in today’s games.