Bang! Bang! You're Dead!

Sociology

The concern surrounding video games, particularly violent ones, stems from their conflict resolution through fighting, immersing children in an alternate reality where violence is the appropriate response. This challenges traditional themes of childhood which tend to focus on creativity, learning and play, especially in the classroom. The uncertainty of the affects of video games is another reason as to why it is hard to want to incorporate them into children's lives and lessons. However, problems are not solved by wielding machine guns or stealing cars in the real world, in contrast to what is portrayed in some games. While these are valid concerns for many, there has been research that has found no conclusive link between violent video games being a direct connection to creating violent behavior in children. Tom Kalinske, former president and CEO of Sega America, argued in a speech at the Commonwealth Club of California that video games do not promote violence and, in some cases, may even have positive effects. Relating education to what is relevant in the world and can keep kids' attention is a tool that could have the potential to help teacher get through to some students. As educators, it is impossible to control what students are exposed to outside the classroom, including the media they consume. While violent video games may increase exposure to aggressive content, playing them does not automatically lead to violent behavior in every child.

Implications for Practice

In my classroom, the decision to allow video games will likely vary from year to year. While I personally find them more challenging than beneficial as a teaching tool, I recognize that some students may learn best through interactive online experiences. However, any online games used in class must be age-appropriate, approved by parents and the school, and with educational objectives that align with class content. There are many learning-based games where students must complete spelling or math challenges to defeat a monster and progress to the next level. While these games incorporate elements of competition and mild violence, I do not believe they would encourage violent behavior, especially when carefully selected for school use. Instead, they could enhance student engagement by making learning more interactive and motivating. Therefore, when it comes to video games being used in my own teaching practice in the near future, it is fair to assume that although it isn't an area that I understand much of, I can appreciate that they can be used in class to help students learn when used appropriately.