

Michael Little

QU 301

Professor Advocate

5/10/16

Video Games: Do they Create a Community and Culture or do they Destroy them

Video games are an ever-changing media that continues to keep progressing. As it progresses it influences more and more people. This raises the question of as they influence more and more people to do video games create and represent different communities in the world, if so how do those communities influence culture not only on a national level but on the generational level and political level as well? The answer to this is yes video games do form different communities, for example, the league of legends and the competitive smash bros community these different communities help make up part of this culture. The culture has influenced many laws makers to take a look at this type of media in order to decide who should play certain games and also if some types of games should be played. On a national level culture has grown from only a select few in the national community play games to now where most people play some form of a video game from mobile games like Angry Birds to the console games like Halo.

To understand gaming culture we first have to understand its communities and to understand that we must talk about communities in general. In “The Individual in the Community” by Sean Duffy we learn a few different meanings of the word community like the example he gives for the meaning of community for Quinnipiac University is an environment that promotes civility and respect, where students can become positive and active members of the University (Duffy1). A community in the way we are talking about it is a group of people who share the same interests but view themselves as their own separate group inside of the larger community/society. An example of this would be the people in the fighting game community and the massively multiplayer online game community. They both see themselves as part of the video game community but separate from each other. This concept can be compared the states of this nation to the nation as a whole. Connecticut is a separate entity and follows its own laws

from say Idaho, but they both fall under the same nation and adhere to its laws because they belong to it. Since we have already talked about them let's dissect these two gaming communities and look at them at their core. At their core, these two communities are completely different. The Massively multiplayer online, or MMO for short, gaming community is about teamwork and togetherness which stems from the actual game genre that it is because in MMO's you have hundreds of players interacting with each other and trying to complete a similar goal. While in the fighting games community it is usually about one on one fighting and bettering yourself because fighting games tend to be one on one fights against another player putting your skills against someone else's and ultimately there can be only two outcomes either you win or you lose. Even though these two communities are completely opposite they do share that they are communities that bring people together albeit for different reasons but still because the people in them still have similar interests to one another. This plays into the concept of intersectionality. Most people have a problem talking about the intersectionality. Intersectionality can be described as the way one's different identities interact with each other and affect each other. It can be broken down into distinct concepts. Some of these concepts are "considering lived experience as a criterion of meaning, conceptualizing marginally and focusing on politics of location, employing both/and thinking and centering multiracial feminist theorizing, shifting towards an understanding of complex subjectivity, analyzing systems of oppression as operating in a "matrix" and challenging false universals and highlighting omissions built into the social order and intellectual practices" (Susan M. Shaw). I found the last-mentioned concept the most interesting because it explained how intersectionality exposes how the experiences of some are often universalized to represent the experiences, needs, and claims of all group members. This concept called intersectionality has to do with video games because a player can be part of many

different sub-communities and the way they interact with each other is a small model of how the larger video game community functions as a whole with its sub-communities. As these communities keep growing so does their influence over people. This can be likened to the “Frontier Thesis” by Fredrick Turner. In the thesis, Turner described the American frontier line is that is an ever-expanding line between civilization and the wilderness that continually moves west (Turner). The line can be symbolized as the video game community as a whole, while the wilderness can be seen as the people who have not experienced the media of video games. The civilization is the people who are already in the video game community and are creating its culture. As the wilderness gets turned into civilization or as people become part of the video game community at large, they start creating the culture of video games or for lack of better words video game culture.

Culture is defined as the beliefs, customs, arts, etc., of a particular society, group, place, or time, it is also defined as a way of thinking, behaving, or working that exists in a place or organization (Merriam-Webster). To describe video game culture we would have to blend the two definitions together. Thus the definition of video game culture would be the beliefs, customs, the way of thinking and behaving if those who play video games or a person who is a part of one or more of the sub-communities that make up the larger community of those that play video games. This culture like any other has had an influence on language, media, and politics.

The video game culture has created its own terms and integrated others in order to form its own language. These terms range from ways to praise others to ways to say to belittle other players. For example, the term GG which stands for good game is a way for players to show good sportsmanship by basically saying how the gamer found that the game was well fought and it doesn't matter if they won or lost the game was played fair and square. An example of a term

or phrase that would be considered the opposite would be “get rekt” which stands for get wrecked and means how a player feels like they totally obliterated another player or team and it is said to lower the ambition and spirits of others and it is generally viewed as very unsportsmanship like to say to others. There are terms that are more personal and are more in response to an individual like “noob” and “3lite”. Noob is a term for new players or players are not experienced at the game. While 3lite is leet speak for elite and means that not only just good but really good, one of the best. Terms are even different within the sub-communities. For example, the term “flashed” has various different meaning between various different games. In Call of Duty, it means either you or someone else got hit with a flash grenade and are blind for few seconds while in League of Legends the term flashed means that someone used the ability flash to A. try to escape or B. try to get closer to an enemy to kill them. This video game language of sorts is a key factor in how it is portrayed in media.

The video game culture has a vast influence on other types of media such as TV, movies, art and books. Television has been really influenced by video game culture especially in the last couple of years with its TV shows and ads for video games. In most TV shows there is at least one character playing some sort of video game may it be a console game or a mobile game it really doesn't matter because they are still showing the viewers that it is normal to play these games and that is steadily increasing the influence of games to other people. Some TV shows are even based on the development of games like the Disney Channel show “Game Lab”. In fact, some movies are even based off of video game franchises like Super Mario Bros, Assassins Creed and more recently released Ratchet and Clank. The latter was criticized for focusing too much on the fact that people have played the franchise before and because of this, it gave less background information about the characters and the world. One movie directly inspired by

video game culture is the movie starring Adam Sandler called Pixels. This movie tried to honor video game culture but it was a flop. I went as far as to get the original creator of Pac-man as a part in the movie where his own creation eats his arm.

As the quality of games went up the question of whether people should consider this media as a type of art. While some people may say no I personally believe so because video games are able to transport you and some of your sense to another world. Art is something that stimulates the mind. People consider movies works of art because of the way the story, characters, and setting are displayed. Video games are just like interactive movies in fact often time to help convey the story games will have mini-movies called cinematic in them. The video game culture has recently changed to independent development team art being highlighted more than the blockbuster triple-A titles, don't get me wrong the triple A titles still look amazing but some "Indie" games are just pushing the art to a whole new level. There's this indie game called Cuphead which is just a gorgeous game that has an art style like the 1930's cartoons and is very reminiscent of cartoons like steamboat Mickey. While some people see the influence the gaming culture has had on art some only see the politics in it.

Video game culture also influences politics the more it influences. In the early 1990's the Electronic Software Rating Board to restrict who could buy games and who couldn't. This board was created in direct response to the increase of violent video games with gratuitous violence. At this time there was no age limit to buy a video game like Mortal Kombat where a player can rip out the spine of their opponent. Violent video games like that target adolescent boys and tries influence the relationship between them and teen violence. Violent video games tend to glorify violence and desensitize the players to the suffering of individuals. If a country does not like what they see in a game they have been known to block the game from being sold there. An

example of this how when Call of Duty Modern Warfare 2 had this infamous level where you have to play as a terrorist and you must gun down civilians in an airport. Germany didn't allow the game unless they were given copies in which this level was completely removed from it, which the developer did. Iraq and Iran completely disallowed the game to be sold in their countries because of the way they felt their game was being portrayed in the game. While there are some political battles that the video game culture must tackle it still brings together communities at a national level.

While connected underneath a global community of players the culture of video games varies from country/market to country/market. In the U.S the typical gamer playing Call of Duty is ““bro element” of gamers, with frat boy mentalities and interests such as marijuana, underage drinking, living in their parents’ basements, they curse often, with little creativity, but with a lot of passion, and they are young, between the ages of 7 and 20” (Kevin). If you were to play Call of Duty somewhere else with non-Americans the amount of cursing and trash talking would go down drastically. For example, if Call of Duty were to be played somewhere like Hong Kong then It seems like cursing at strangers and saying things like “your mom” is an American thing. Each region where gaming is popular that region has a certain genre and sub-community it is better at than the rest of the regions. The U.S, for example, is the best at fighting games like Tekken and Street Fighter. While Japan excels at Massively Multiplayer Online Role Playing Games or MMORPG’s for short. Europe is actually the best at First Person Shooters called FPS, think of games like Call of Duty, Battlefield, and Halo. In South Korea is the best at two things Real Time Strategy games called RTS these are games like StarCraft II and they also the best at Multiplayer Online Battle Arenas called MOBAS, these are games like League of Legends, Smite and Heroes of the Storm. Another difference in video game cultures is how we treat the

electronic sports or e-sports players and teams. In for example South Korea the general public treats their e-sports players like rock stars and they akin to celebrities like actors. While here in the U.S the general public doesn't really consider playing video games competitively as a sport, which means the players are not regarded as the athletes that they are. Where there are games there's culture and where there is a culture there is a community and where there is a community there are people and where people there are human rights.

As a culture that is attached to such a fast growing media, there was bound to be some human rights issues. The main issue is the mistreatment of women and the misrepresentation of female players. In most games, women are typically over sexualized this is especially true of games from the 80's to the early 2000's where women portrayed in them are treated as sex objects and nothing more than eye candy. This was back when "nearly 30 percent of American households own video games" (Lindstron). It wasn't acceptable then and it definitely isn't acceptable now. Especially now since women now make up 42% of the players in games, which is almost nearly half of the gaming population. Now in games, we have strong female leads who are trying to correct these misguided errors. An example of a strong female lead the female option for Commander Shepard which some call Femshep, She is just as strong and courageous as her male counterpart and this is achieved through the spectacular acting of the voice actress. These type of female characters show the progressive change happening within the industry itself as it moves away from the "only boys play" standpoint to the everyone plays games standpoint. But we are still facing challenges because combat armor is slimmed down and covers less just because they are a female character in respect to their male counterparts. Which makes it is easy to see why people would say that women in games are only viewed as sex objects much of the time. Another issue is the way that women who play games are treated by the males who play the

same games. There is a stereotype going around called the girl gamer and it basically means that an attractive girl would only typically play a “guy game” such as Call of Duty for attention and money. This is just perpostourus to say because someone looks a certain way that they can’t play a certain type of game without an ulterior motive. Men who use this stereotype are just like the guards in the Zimbardo study who “were dressed in identical uniforms of khaki, and they carried a whistle around their neck and a billy club borrowed from the police. Guards also wore special sunglasses, an idea I borrowed from the movie Cool Hand Luke. Mirror sunglasses prevented anyone from seeing their eyes or reading their emotions, and thus helped to further promote their anonymity. We were, of course, studying not only the prisoners but also the guards, who found themselves in a new power-laden role” (Zimbardo). This because these men think that because the majority and have the self-perceived power that they can push around women because they are inferior and make derogatory gestures because they know they can’t do anything to stop them besides reporting them trying to rule their games. Since the video game culture is always evolving we should evolve away from these barbaric thoughts. The reason I feel so strongly about this is because I am a global citizen.

As a global citizen, I identify with being part of the evolving world community and I feel my actions contribute to the construction of this community's values and practices. The way I act and portray myself affect the global community because of the values that I was taught through my religion of Christianity and USNSCC have drilled into me to always try to do what I think is right and to try to help others in areas in good at and to stay in my “lane”. These values affect the global community because as I interact with people it affects people and even if they don’t know it can change how they think even by the smallest degree which is then transferred to other

people and it is then spread throughout the world. With these values, I believe that I can bring change to the game industry and change the hypocritical way it thinks for the better.

In conclusion, video games create and represent different communities in the world and work together to create a global community of people who play games. This creates a video game culture. The definition of video game culture would be the beliefs, customs, the way of thinking and behaving if those who play video games or a person who is a part of one or more of the sub-communities that make up the larger community of those that play video games. The video game culture has created its own terms and integrated others in order to form its own language that has established terms for various meanings. As a culture that is attached to such a fast growing media, there was bound to be some human rights issues. We must work together in order to correct these wrongdoings and create a better stronger community.

Works Cited

- Duffy, Sean P. *The Individual in the Community*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt, 2008. Print.
- Hartley, Deanna. "The Cultural Effects of Video Gaming - CertMag." *Certification Magazine*. N.p., 03 Apr. 2009. Web. 05 May 2016.
- Kevin. "An American Gamer in Hong Kong." *Gaming Culture*. N.p., 31 Aug. 2011. Web. 05 May 2016.
- Lindstron, Bob. "The Gaming Globe; Different Cultures Play Different Games. Or Do They?" *The Gaming Globe; Different Cultures Play Different Games. Or Do They?* N.p., n.d. Web. 05 May 2016.
- "Multicultural, Cross-cultural & Intercultural Games & Activities." *Multicultural, Cross-cultural, & Intercultural Games & Activities*. N.p., n.d. Web. 05 May 2016.
- Shaw, Adrienne. "Sign In." *Sign In*. N.p., n.d. Web. 05 May 2016.
- Shaw, Susan M., and Janet Lee. *Women's Voices, Feminist Visions: Classic and Contemporary Readings*. 6th ed. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2015. Print.
- The New Merriam-Webster Dictionary*. Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, 1989. Print.

Turner, Frederick Jackson. "The Significance of the Frontier in American History."

American Historical Association. Chicago Worlds Fair. Chicago, 12 July 1893. E 179.5.T958

1966