

Violence has been an integral component of entertainment media for the entirety of recorded human history, but what role does violence play as a form of entertainment? What is the relationship people have with the violent content to which they submit themselves willingly? Every new breakthrough in media technology has faced its share of controversy directed at its ability to adversely affect the behaviors of its audience, as is the case with video games. The interactivity of video games puts the audience into an active role as an agent that performs potentially, and commonly, violent acts, which has alarmed parents, policy makers, and academics. The first person shooter format used by some of the most popular contemporary video games especially pushes the immersive quality of video games, putting the player into increasingly more realistic environments and exposing the player to increasingly more detailed depictions of violence. The bulk of significant studies directed towards video games focuses on the effects the games have on players. This study intended to shift this focus instead on the players and look at why violence is appealing outright, not necessarily the immediate and long-term behavioral effects of violent content. Using case studies of related inquiries and a game created for the purpose of analyzing player's physical and emotional reactions to different characteristics of violence, this study finds that the presence of increasingly more graphic content enhances the enjoyment of games for players that seek more "realistic" and "immersive" games. However, players that either play video games less frequently or do not seek fantasy fulfillment in games see violence as something that takes away from an entertaining experience. Violence in video games improves player performance and enhances virtual fulfillment of fundamental psychological needs due to validation of fantasy play, but only when that validation is sought after from the audience.