Knowing When to Put the Controller Down

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When I was a kid, I used to make presentations for my parents on why I should be able to play a specific game. I would proudly state my case, sharing evidence on how I'm responsible, but my parents would say, "No." In the article "I Make Video Games. I Won't Let My Daughters Play Them" from *The New York Times,* William Siu (2022) expresses how parents aren't regulating their children's playing time as much as they should be. He mentions how video games are slipping past some government regulations that try to protect children from online dangers, such as the bill that was signed in California, but other regulations are stricter on video games, like rules placed in China. Siu, being a former game designer, goes on to explain how holding the attention of his audience and getting them to go for their wallets were the focuses of video game companies. After getting kids of his own, he's noted that the habits games create can lead to awful addictions and gaming disorder. While his mission was to make a successful game company, he doesn't let his own daughters play the video games he's made due to the dangers he sees in those games. Overall, Siu believes that video games are designed to be addictive, and that children should be supervised before they get a gaming disorder. I agree with Siu (2022) that video games can become highly addictive among children and that parents should be doing more to protect their children. He covers most of the bases on why video games are so dangerous, but not as much on how to go about avoiding these dangers. Siu (2022) could've gone into more depth on how parents could do more to protect their children. Furthermore, he doesn't go into enough depth on the effectiveness of stricter regulations such as China's. He also fails to state if playing video games caused the side effects in the 10% of the study, and better ways parents can become these gatekeepers to protect their children.

In his opening paragraphs, Siu (2022) says, "I don't think parents are doing enough to protect kids from the potential harms of video games." While I strongly agree that parents could do more to protect their children, he doesn't explain how they should go about doing so. Siu (2022) creates a list of ways to think about how gaming addiction should be addressed, "Finally, strike a balance. Games can be fun, of course; we just need to find moderation. […]. With technology so integral to our lives, we need to

treat digital wellness like physical wellness and make sure we encourage behavior that's good for us." This is a great way to think about why we should protect the next generation, but it doesn't tell the parent that's struggling to protect their children from these dangers how they should change and improve. First note, is that every console has ways to counteract youth gamers from playing too long called parental controls, and I'll go more in depth on that in the fourth body paragraph. Second note is that before the fourth body paragraph, I will explain why mass prohibition isn't the way to protect the youth from gaming, and why video games aren't always to blame for gamers negative habits and behaviors.

After Siu (2022) explains, "Last year, China acted: It prohibited minors from playing video games on school days and more than an hour on weekend and holiday nights," he doesn't come back to this later to say how the outlaw of video games affected the children in China. Blocking responsible youth that might've deserved extra playing time or hindering video game companies from being successful is too wide of a net to catch several fish. According to Lu-Hai Liang's (2022) article, "Over Half of Young Chinese Gamers Stick to The Government-Mandated Time Limits," she says that "the total number of youth gamers, which is defined as those aged 6 to 17 who play games for at least an hour each month, has dropped from a peak of 122 million in 2020 to the current number of 83 million." This means a massive amount of over 30 million youth gamers aren't indulging in videogames as time goes on. Not only does this imply that the other less than half are actively breaking the rules by playing, but that the video game industry in China is also paying the price because those kids' attention is their market.

Furthermore, Siu (2022) says "Compared with the other group in the study, these players displayed higher levels of depression, aggression, shyness, problematic phone use and anxiety by the time they were emerging into adulthood." I somewhat agree with this, but he doesn't specify whether this is a direct outcome from playing video games, which makes this an unreliable source for Siu to use in his article. In Cami Buckley's (2020) article, "Is Video Game Addiction Real?" she states, "This was despite the groups being the same in all these variables at the initial time point, suggesting that video games may have been important in developing these negative outcomes." She also goes on to say, "Two main

predictors for video game addiction were found: being male and having low levels of prosocial behavior." Buckley's (2020) article gives off red flags as it does not state the premise of how the 6-year study was operated and who took part. There are many pieces of this study that are invalid, from her claiming she composed a study of different people that all had the exact same levels of an emotional state, to her concluding that being a male makes you more prone to video game addiction. She never states exactly how many people were included in the study, their living conditions, and how the study was measured. This makes me believe that it's safe to say that the article around the study is invalid and not reliable to diagnose side effects of playing video games.

Lastly, in the first point of his list, Siu (2022) explains, "I get that sometimes we need to occupy our kids, and it's very tempting to hand them a phone. But we need to be better gatekeepers." I agree with this statement, but he could go deeper into how the parent could do more. Amy Iverson (2022) wrote, "How to Make Video Gaming Safer for Kids" and remarked that, "Allowing the Console to tell the kid that times up could be easier than a parent trying to enforce it. Plus, it could save a lot of arguments for 'one more game.'" She then goes on to list ways parents can protect their children from video game addiction utilizing safety, and parental control features on different consoles. This is extremely helpful and important because many parents might buy a console and complain that their child is playing on it too much without even knowing that these features exist let alone built into the console itself. I can't name a single console without parental controls, and no one should be having trouble with their child playing too long on a Nintendo device because their devices point you towards setting up playing times from the time you turn them on. Being a young adult myself I find these mentions of parental controls annoying, but for parents not to know they exist only tells me that they aren't setting up the console itself with their kid. Taking the time to set up the console with the child will eliminate this problem and it might even bring the child more joy to have the parent there with them.

From my research, I've learned how big gaming actually is. China has the largest population of gamers at over 600 million gamers, and this is the same place the heavy ban on video games was dropped.

I don't feel like it's necessary to punish all those people for investing time into a hobby they're passionate about, however, finding ways besides bans to address the issue would be a step in the right direction. Different ways I could think of are placing advisory messages in the streams people flocked to when videogames were banned, or within games themselves. When I'm a parent, I want to be able to know when my child is ready to play video games, so when they present their case on why they should be able to play, I can confidently say, "yes."

References

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