

Dokument 1 von 1

The Telegraph

telegraph.co.uk

December 4, 2013 Wednesday 12:55 PM GMT

Should grown men (and Prince William) be allowed to play video games?; After the Duke of Cambridge hints that he's reined in his gaming instincts, Jake Wallis Simons wonders whether men should be allowed to be boys and play video games

BYLINE: By Jake Wallis Simons

LENGTH: 690 words

When Prince William, the Duke of Cambridge, was granted a sneak preview of the new PlayStation 4 at the BAFTA headquarters, his remarks will have resonated with men up and down the land.

"It's very addictive," he said. "I'd like to get one but I'm not sure how my wife would feel about it." He later described himself as an "enthusiastic but quite useless gamer". (Perhaps it's the lack of practice.)

Now, I don't mean to fuel the cliché. Many women are keen gamers, of course, and many men are not. But the paradigm of a husband secretly wishing he could be allowed free rein on the console, only to be thwarted by his no-nonsense wife, is one that will strike a chord in many households.

Including, to some extent, my own. When I was growing up, video games were a part of life. I spent many a happy hour on my Sega Mega Drive playing Sonic the Hedgehog and Thunder Force III, and my Gameboy was never far from my reach. Indeed, I remember pausing Mario Bros for the duration of an entire double period at school, because I had reached an advanced level; after the lesson, I went on to complete the game.

My wife, however, was exposed only to Donkey Kong, and even then rarely. Video games leave her cold; to her, they are associated only with inanity at best, and violence at worst. Not to mention their reputation for causing addiction, physical and mental lethargy, and social isolation.

That's not to say we are in daily disagreement now. Although I wouldn't mind the occasional dabble in the world of video games - which I'm told have evolved many light-years since my day - I work long hours and have three small children, and barely get time to read fiction or watch telly as it is. The introduction of a new time consuming hobby into my week would be impossible (and there are others I would choose instead).

But it's the principle of the thing. My wife is of the view that children should spend their time away from the screen, ideally playing outside, with the occasional bit of telly as a treat. Broadly speaking, I agree; but I wouldn't mind them getting into computer games a little bit, so long as it's within reason.

Should grown men (and Prince William) be allowed to play video games?; After the Duke of Cambridge hints that he's reined in his gaming instincts, Jake Wallis Simons wonders whether men should be allowed to be boys and play video games telegraph.co.uk December 4, 2013 Wednesday 12:55 PM GMT

The problem is that the video game is a new phenomenon, and evidence can be found in support of both arguments.

On the one hand, for example, there is the recent research carried out by Dr Ulrich Weger at Melbourne University. He found that spending long periods in "immersive games", associating with a digital character with its "mechanistic inertness, rigidity and a lack of emotion and warmth", causes gamers to become numbed to physical pain and indifferent to other people's unhappiness.

On the other is the recent study conducted by the German researcher **Simone Kühn**, for the Max Planck Institute for Human Development and Charité University Medicine St Hedwig-Krankenhaus. It found that a 30 minute session of playing Super Mario 64 led certain areas of the brain to become better developed, including the right hippocampus, right prefrontal cortex and cerebellum.

These areas are responsible for spatial navigation, strategic planning, memory formation and fine motor skills; Ms Kühn concluded that video games may be of benefit to patients with mental disorders such as schizophrenia and Alzheimer's syndrome.

Overall, it seems that the main danger of video games is that they will lead to a deterioration in social sensitivity in the gamer, as well as - for children - a reduced interest in imaginative play and outdoor games. Indeed, there is nothing worse than seeing a family sitting at a restaurant table with the children all plugged into screens.

But the fact remains that the video games industry is vast and growing all the time, and it has become a buzzing hotbed of creativity, ingenious storytelling, puzzles, and sheer entertainment to rival Hollywood.

It would be glib to conclude with a "moderation in all things" sentiment. But so long as we teach our children the value of proper manners, consideration for others, outdoor play, respect for their elders and so on, perhaps video games deserve a place in modern childhood. And - in Prince William's case, at least - in adulthood too.

LOAD-DATE: December 5, 2013

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

PUBLICATION-TYPE: Web Publication

JOURNAL-CODE: WEBDTNS