Video Game Addiction

Jared Beckham
Roughly 97% of American children ages 12-17 play video games in their spare time\(^1\)
- 22 million kids

The DSM-V defines addiction as “a maladaptive pattern of substance use leading to clinically significant impairment or distress”

- Substance-related addictions
  - Dependency on a substance
  - E.g. alcohol, cocaine, heroin

- Behavioral addictions
  - Dependency on a particular behavior
  - E.g. gambling, shopping, eating disorders
Are video games really an addiction?

- Not yet a reliable medical model for diagnosing it
  - DSM recently christened the phenomena “internet gaming disorder” in Section III of the DSM-V
  - “Persistent and recurrent use of the internet to engage in games, often with other players, leading to clinically significant impairment or distress”

- Observable withdrawal effects
  - Mood swings, depression, anxiety, physical illness

- Question of whether the addiction is specific to the medium of games or a subset of a more general media addiction

- Question of whether game addiction is the result of an underlying psychological disorder
Incidents

- Lee Seung Seop
  - South Korean who died after playing StarCraft for 50 hours straight

- Kim Sa-Rang
  - Three-month-old Korean child who died of malnutrition while both her parents were raising a virtual child in Prius Online

- Rebecca Christie
  - Woman who was sentenced to 25 years in prison after allowing her daughter to starve while preoccupied with World of Warcraft
Experts estimate that more than 3 million American children between the ages of 8-18 could be suffering from video game addiction.

Study of school-aged children in Singapore found 9% showed signs of video game addiction.

- 84% of those who were addicts when the study began were still addicted two years later at the end of the study.

The average male gamer plays about an hour on weekdays and 6-11 hours on weekends.

- Roughly 750 hours, over 31 days out of the year.

Expanding problem
- Many parents view the iPad as the new babysitter
- Video game companies now hiring psychologists to ensure games are as addictive as possible.
Hooks

- **Timing**
  - Short enough to be played in short sessions
  - E.g. bejeweled

- **Social feedback and competition**
  - Build relationships with others, become accepted in the online community which draws them back to the game
  - Competition with peers
  - E.g. World of Warcraft, Farmville

- **Repetition**
  - Repetitive activity
  - Tetris effect
  - E.g. Tetris, Angry Birds
Skill

- Player skill increases as they play more which makes the game more enjoyable to play
- E.g. Dance Dance Revolution, Street Fighter

Role-Playing

- Emotional attachment the character
- E.g. Dragon Age, The Elder Scrolls
Shy or socially awkward kids
- Escape into game world because they are uncomfortable dealing with people in the real world

Unemployed
- Increases risk of game addiction 3x

Males under 30
- While playing video games males exhibit greater activity in the nucleus accumbens, amygdala and orbitofrontal cortex

The majority of people can play games safely in moderation without any adverse effects on their real life, however there is a subset who become addicted
Treatment options

- One-on-one or group therapy
- Online support groups
  - Computer Gaming Addicts Anonymous (CGAA.info)
  - Online Gamers Anonymous (olganon.org)
- Rehab centers, wilderness camp
- Efficacy?
  - Research is ongoing and few clinical trials have been conducted
Questions?
References

- http://www.teenink.com/opinion/movies_music_tv/article/82305/Video-Game-Addiction/
- http://blog.infrared5.com/2010/08/7-key-ingredients-for-designing-addictive-games/
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EHmC2D0_Hdg
- http://www.video-game-addiction.org/
- http://www.academia.edu/1081814/Online_gaming_addiction_classification_prediction_and_associated_risk_factors