The ?'s that keep us up at night

Are video games to blame?

No solid scientific evidence to prove that video games are a factor in enabling people to be violent, monsters

I had heard in the news recently that President Donald Trump had said that he's surprised violent video games don't affect a small percentage of kids in a negative way. This isn't the first time he's talked about violent video games.

Trump tweeted in 2012, "Video game violence and glorification must be stopped - it's creating monsters!"

I'm expecting people to hold that opinion after what President Trump recently said, and attack video games all over again. Let me preempt those arguments and say this, I have 18 years of video gaming experience, most of which revolved around violent video games that involved guns or killing characters, and I haven't been negatively affected because of games or otherwise.

So what I don't understand is how Trump claimed violent video games are affecting people, especially when according to Laramie County Community College psychology instructor Luanne Gearhart, the studies go back and forth in saying violent video games do and do not affect children. According to Gearhart, psychologists are saying video games do not make young children violent.

"There really isn't any solid scientific evidence that says

violent video games make people violent," Gearhart said.

Knowing that, I state that violent video games do not turn people into shooters.

My reasoning is to point back at my track record. Most of my high school days were spent playing one of the more fast paced, violent multiplayer games of the era, "Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2." When I asked Gearhart if violent video games specifically make a person violent, she said that the video games could be a factor, but you can't pin the blame on them.

"I will not say this carte blanche, but when you look at the behaviors of violent people, violent video games did not make that happen," Gearhart said. "I have never met a gaming nerd who has even fantasized about picking up a weapon and harming another human being."

I can personally speak to the stories I've experienced and I've felt a broad range of emotions over the years through gaming. Even saying that

however, frustration is probably the most negative emotion I've felt toward others when playing a game, typically after losing a multiplayer match.

Whether or not that was influenced by me playing the game in the first place, I really couldn't say. LCCC's information assurance instructor, and gamer since 1980, Roger Findley thinks games do affect players.

"Whether that effect is positive or negative depends on a lot of factors," Findley said. "Humans are individually unique. As the sun rises, it may affect a person in one way and affect another differently."

I had said similar in response to a question from Gearhart: What makes me different from people who do turn into shooters? I said gaming may be a factor, but it's not the only one. How I was raised, the environment I grew up in and the people I was around were the examples I immediately listed, and I would dare not say this encompasses
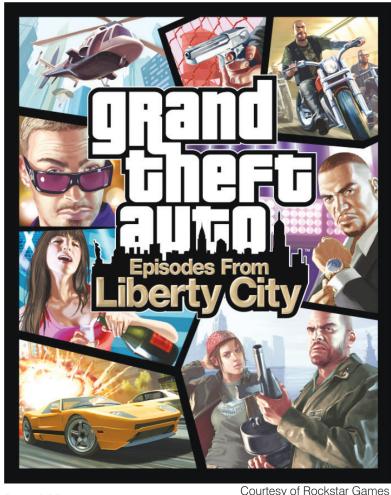
the half of what would cause someone to turn violent.

This isn't the first time that media has been blamed for affecting the populace negatively. I can vaguely remember when rap music was blamed for turning kids into gangsters. Even further back, books have been blamed for turning people into murderers, or when parents were concerned Elvis Presley would corrupt their children with his hips.

"My first exposure to media, for example music, being blamed for something was Ozzy Ozborne and his song 'Suicide Solution,' and it being blamed for the suicide of a teenager," Findley said. "However, plenty of people have heard that song and have not committed suicide."

As for the pushback against video games, Gearhart said that video games, like the media blamed in the past, challenges the views and values of people who had not grown up with them, and that they're afraid of that. She said the best way to handle what you fear is to control it through legislation. Though I have my own thoughts as to why video games might be attacked, Findley made a statement that I agree with.

"Very unscientifically, I would have to

Courtesy of Rockstar Games

Rated M:
Video games such as Grand Theft Auto and Call of Duty have violent content and have been criticized for influencing behavior. However, there is no concrete evidence contributing to such claims.

state that, rather than a passive interaction with this form of entertainment, such as a movie or something like that, video games are more immersive," Findley said. "You have an interactive part in them versus just watching a movie."

Though, for the time being, it is scientifically un-

clear if video games themselves negatively affect people, and according to ProCon.org, the US Supreme Court ruled that violent video games do not cause youth to act aggressively.

So keep in mind the content played, but don't worry about being changed for the worse by it. Just remember to put down

the controller before it's bedtime, because there's a lot more out there than a virtual world.