The Tron Legacy: A Closer Look at the Effects of Video Gaming on Political Trust

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Abstract

Robert Putnam defines social capital as the "connections among individuals-social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them." Although he presents compelling evidence to suggest a decline over the last four decades, he fails to take into account more recent technological advancements that could further weaken our social connectedness. The advent of video games in society has become such a significant phenomenon that they should lower social capital on an individual level and will adversely affect our levels of trust in government. By using GSS data, I will see whether a random sample of American respondents produces interesting findings on video game use and its effect on political trust. I found that the more one plays games over the span of a month, the less likely they are to trust in the legislative branch.

Introduction

When I moved into my intern house in the fall of 2008, I was elated to find a house full of active political science students such as myself. I figured, with such a momentous period as the 2008 election, there would be plenty of time to take in politics alongside my housemates. When my roommate brought an X Box 360 to our living room from back home, I thought nothing of it. However, by week eight of our internship experience, the guys living with me gave up going to receptions and dinners at night. In fact, they had given up taking in the sights of Washington, D.C. altogether. From three in the afternoon until someone was able to wrangle the television from them, they would play video games all night, every day of the week. Aside from any other time-consuming experience, video games had beaten out the other forms of entertainment in our household. After this isolated experience, I wanted to investigate the true effects produced by video gaming in society.

The emergence of video gaming as a significant portion of our entertainment medium has not gone unnoticed by the media and politicians running our government. In fact, the Pew Research Center recently conducted a study that found that 81% of the twenty one million children that use the internet regularly play games online (Lenhart et al, 2005). However, controversy has followed the more mature video games in the last ten years. As games become more realistic, government officials believe violent and inappropriate content for children will affect our youth psychologically. Not surprisingly, psychology has been the leading field in analyzing video game use over the last few years. However, previous research has narrowly focused on emotional effects from violence and how children learn from games (Anderson and Bushman, 2001; Anderson et al, 2003; Troseth et al, 2006). I would argue that video games also have serious implications in the realm of political science as well, if not more so.

However, it's the role of gaming as a determinant of social capital that this paper seeks to investigate. Of the problems created through a decline in social capital, I would argue that lowered trust in our institutions in this most important reason to care. Because video games have emerged as a powerful force in American society, one could argue that an increase in video game usage would directly affect our levels of trust in society as any other determinant of social capital would.

This paper seeks to look at video game use as determinant of social capital and I will see whether or not our institutional trust is greatly affected by extensive video game usage. By looking at responses recorded by the General Social Survey, we can see how gaming has affected our levels of trust. More specifically, we should see a decline in governmental trust by those that play games more than five times a month. By the end of data collection, we should see clear changes in the respondent's levels of trust in our governmental institutions. With the public's level of trust in government hovering around 20%, we need to find a culprit for this decline as soon as possible (Sidoti, 2010).

Background

Trust

Trust in government is an important area of study because of the normative consequences incurred upon our political efficacy. Efficacy has been a source of intensive study over the years (Easton 1975, 1979; Easton and Dennis, 1967). However, external efficacy, which is a sense that one's political activities will have an influence on what the government and public officials actually do (Conway, 2000; Rosenstone & Hansen, 1993), is at most risk. Recently, Chung-Li Wu (2003) has found that political efficacy is affected by an individual's evaluation of

government responsiveness. With a decline in governmental trust, people would naturally be disinclined to participate. Because of this, we can immediately identify the difficulty today for people to become politically involved, which explains the necessity for a solution to our trust woes.

Many scholars contend that trust and reciprocity are essential to our success in the future as a nation. Francis Fukuyama wrote in 1995, that governments no longer have the ability or need to rely on the welfare state, which makes a civil society based on trust all the more necessary (pg. 4). Similarly, Rahn and Transue (1998) argue that trust has been on the decline since the last generational shift, due to the increasing amount of materialism the younger generation has developed (pg. 557). With that said, the majority of previous research has revealed poor findings to support the notion that trust plays a part in political participation. Trust doesn't increase involvement in politics (Citrin, 1974), trust hasn't been conclusively proven to help or hinder political participation (Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993), but has instead only yielded indirect results (Miller et al, 1979). However, some scholars still believe trust is essential to understanding political activity.

Marc J. Hetherington believes that trust *can* tell us about people's inclinations to participate politically. Through his research (1998) he has shown how our level of trust in government institutions directly influences how we perceive them, both positively and negatively. He has also discovered that when the American public experiences a surge of distrust in the federal government, there tends to be an increase in voting for third party candidates (Hetherington, 1999). Clearly, trust plays a role, although that role has yet to be definitively defined. With the success of Hetherington's research, it's important to consider the determinants of trust that have been outlined by previous scholarship.

Scholars have been interested in the determinants of trust for decades now. Trust can be primarily influenced by ones socio-economic situation (Nye, 1997). Furthermore, ethnicity has also been a factor when considering trust in recent years (Michelson 2003, 2005). However, this has a lot to do with the current economic situation, as well as the level of poverty and crime found within a given society (Chanley et al, 2000). Lastly, trust tends to increase if the neighborhoods or regions are homogenously organized (Marschall and Stolle, 2004; Bahry et al, 2005). Governmental decisions also have a lot to do with our levels of trust.

Recent events have proven the effect of governmental activity on trust. The Supreme Court case, Bush v. Gore, caused a substantial outcry from the public in 2000 when it ruled against a recount of the votes in Florida. Shortly after the election cycle, Virginia Chanley (2002) saw trust in government more than double after the events of September 11th, 2001 (pg. 469). Overall, scholars have found that public opinion and trust are both dependent on the political actions of the government at any given time (Miller, 1974a, 1974b).

Clearly, trust is an important factor when discussing our conceptions of federal institutions. However, many scholars have linked our levels of trust with social capital in the last decade or so. With large amounts of literature proving that generalized trust can improve society (Kelley and Anthony, 1970; Rotter, 1980; Yamagishi, 2001; Putnam 2000), it only makes sense to analyze trust and social capital alongside each other to test our current levels of trust in government institutions.

Theory

In the last few decades, a new movement has emerged in the realm of political science though the form of social capital research. Notable works have been published by several

prominent scholars over the last century (Hanifan 1916; Coleman 1990; Putnam 1993, 1995, 2000; Fukuyama 1995; Brehm and Rahn, 1997). Putnam defines social capital as "connections among individuals-social networks and the norms of reciprocity and *trustworthiness* that arise from them" (Putnam, pg. 19). Essentially, it is the level of social networks one has and how they affect relations in a community through trust and reciprocity. While the definition has been debated for many years, few have challenged the notion that social capital is on the decline in the United States.

The effects of declined social capital on our political culture have given rise to increased scholarship in the field. Putnam (2000) has seen American society becoming more shrill and less trusting because of our lowered community involvement (pg. 342). Furthermore, areas with low social capital have proven to have lowered levels of interpersonal trust, which has a direct correlation with political participation and civic engagement (Brehm and Rahn, 1997). However, not all political scientists share this pessimism regarding our levels of trust. Lake and Huckfeldt (1998) tested to see how improved social capital leads to better political participation. Similarly, Schneider et al (1997) analyzed four school districts and found that districts with freedom of school choice had a richer level of social capital than an area with limited school choice. Since these societal effects have far reaching consequences across America, it would be foolish to ignore them.

Clearly, there is indeed a strong link between social capital and trust because they are affected by each other. Because of this correlation between trust and social capital, we have a theoretical basis to assume that a weakened state of social capital should also lead directly into a weakened trust in our federal institutions. Therefore, to understand what could potentially cause

a decline in institutional trust, we require a stronger understanding of the various determinants that affect our levels of social capital.

While most scholars would argue that social capital is indeed on the decline, very few have come to an agreement as to what caused this supposed decline over the last several decades. As previously suggested, scholars have found that lowered trust tends to diminish social capital. Rahn and Transue (1998) believe growing materialism directly resulted in declined trust, which led to a decrease in social capital (pg. 561). Uslaner (1998) found that optimism was the solution that could recover our drop in social capital and that pessimism and general distrust had destroyed it. However, it was Putnam's notion that television and generational shifts caused the decrease in social capital that caused a considerable stir within political science.

Putnam argues that since the emergence of television in the 1950's as the staple commodity for any home, we can correlate the drop in social capital with the rise in television use (Putnam, 1995). He found that television absolutely hinders the ability to build social capital and makes viewers more passive and lethargic, and weakens civic mindedness (Putnam, pg. 245). A mere five years later, in his book *Bowling Alone,* he shifts his focus towards generational shifts. With every passing generation, the youth have grown more materialistic and less trusting, which directly affects participation in government (Putnam, pg. 258).

Although these scholars have noted the importance of social capital and the causes of its decline, there hasn't been enough emphasis on the role of technological advancement and how it has affected the youngest generation. Since Putnam's book was written, we have seen the explosion of the internet and other advancements in the way we communicate socially, i.e. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and video games to name a few. Furthermore, the youngest generation is embracing these advancements in technology at an alarming pace, distancing

themselves even further from their parents and grandparents. A recent study by the Pew

Research Group found that 89% of children rely on new technology to make their lives easier,

compared to only 71% of their parents (Macgill, 2007). We can infer that the technological

disconnect is most likely even greater for the grandparents of these children. These

advancements are changing the way our society interacts and communicates, not only between

the generations, but between people of similar ages. Because of this drastic change in the last ten

years, video games are likely to be a determinant that influences social capital and deserves as

much attention as any other variable such as television or checkers.

To show how video games have become a new social medium, it's important to look at

a few statistics. Today, there have been approximately 145 million home consoles sold, showing

an increase in console sales by 150% over the previous generation of consoles in the 1990's (no

author, 2010). This number doesn't even take into account the various video games played on

computers and handheld devices that are placed in millions of American homes. Even software

companies have given the movie and entertainment industry reason to fear them. At the end of

2009, a video game juggernaut titled Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2 released and sold an

astonishing $550 million dollars worth of games in its first week alone. To place this into

perspective, it beat Batman: the Dark Knight in first day and first week sales, which were $66.4

million and $203.80 million respectively. It also beat out the highest grossing book in first week

sales, that being Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows raking in $220 million dollars (Reilly,

2010). To be sure, video games are an extremely significant part of American society and are

only projected to further infiltrate our lives in the future. But how gaming affects social capital

and trust in government is the true directive of this paper.

With no previous work on video game usage, we will work under the assumption that video games will produce outcomes similar to television research in recent literature. In his research, Putnam (2000) found that for every hour watching television, we lose an hour of potential social capital growth and community involvement (pg. 228). With nothing gained from television viewing, it can be argued that a sense of community is unable to flourish. With a poor quality of interaction among a community of individuals, interpersonal trust and perhaps trust in government would greatly be reduced. The use of video games follows a very similar set of criteria as television in the sense that it also keeps people limited to their living rooms and prevents the growth of social capital. Furthermore, gaming is an isolated experience, played by only one person at a time. Because people that watch television frequently participate less, we can hypothesize:

H1: As an individual increases his or her level of video game usage, we should see a detrimental decline in trust in our federal institutions.

Many political scientists would scoff at the idea of analyzing video game use, but video games have become so prevalent across American society that they deserve attention. If television usage had long lasting implications throughout society in the 1950's and 1960's, it only seems fitting in this new era of technological advancement that video games receive the same treatment today.

Methodology

Finding a means to test the effects of video games on society is hardly an easy task. At present, video games haven't received much attention in the realm of academia. Nevertheless, to understand how people are affected by video games, I saw it fit to use survey data from the last few years. While the tools and resources needed to run a completely random sample of a small university population are beyond my capabilities, the General Social Survey (GSS) luckily has enough information available to the public to construct a usable model from its data. By using GSS data we can see a representative percentage of the population. Although no more than three or four thousand people participate, this should be more than enough responses to get statistically significant results.

However, one issue with using GSS data is that the timeline needs adjustment. While there are a few questions concerning games in the GSS data, only a few select years have produced any results on questions in the first place. Therefore, this research focuses on the response data from 2004. 2004 holds the most recent information on video game use provided by GSS. Furthermore, 2004 had the best survey questions suited for my research. Although the GSS asked gaming questions for the years 2000, 2002 and 2004, 2004 proved to be the most useful and relevant for this research. After all, internet-based computer gaming has been around since the early 2000s and there has been a considerable amount of growth in the gaming industry since then.

Although the data is over six years old now, it should still represent the gamers of today. Since gaming has seen an explosion over the last few years, we could infer that the results obtained by analyzing older research would only be increased even further if analyzed today. Where we won't find suitable data is in the age groups of the previous and next generation.

Furthermore, it's unfortunate that we will be unable to see the results after most Americans living today will have been around to experience games for themselves. Nevertheless, based on the information available today, the results will suffice for the time being. Hopefully someone will see fit to run a similar model after gaming is fully integrated into our society.

The questions surveyed very rarely ask questions concerning video games. However, the few that are related to video games hold some very interesting implications if studied right. Of the cohorts available for selection, the independent variable in my research will be video game use over time. More specifically, the question surveyed asks how many times a month each respondent plays games on the computer. From here, I will compare various dependent variables regarding the level of trust and confidence in the three branches of our federal government: the executive branch, the legislative branch, and the judicial branch. By using the General Social Survey's tools, I will be able to test whether the findings are statistically significant or not.

After completing a basic tabulation between gaming and the several dependent variables listed, I will do a more thorough analysis of four variables inside the GSS data. While keeping age, income, education and gender constant, I wish to see how gaming affects our levels of confidence concerning Congress, the Supreme Court and the Presidency through a logit regression. Similarly, I will test to see how other social capital indicators affect the significance of confidence in our institutions. More specifically, I will do individual tests on political participation, volunteer activity, the number of close friends one has and the amount of television viewed per day. These variables should produce similar results to gaming. Although the GSS breaks gaming down into a five point scale, I will separate the responses generated between those with an absence of game use and those that play over five times a month as my comparison for simplicity's sake. For the purposes of this research, those that play more than five times a

month will be considered serious gamers, and those that play any less than that will be non-gamers or casual gamers that don't play regularly. Because of this, we should see a clear difference in results between the people that play games over five times a month and those that don't play at all

By the end of data collection we should see some obvious differences between respondents. As the frequency of gaming increases, we will likely see the level of trust in our institutions and trust in each other will suffer due to the immediate decline in social capital caused by the increasingly introverted individuals who participated in the survey. While voting and political participation is a key aspect of our theory, data won't be analyzed concerning these cohorts. However, some aspects of participation will be used as a control when analyzing game use. Furthermore, if we find statistical significance through lowered trust in our institutions, we will have room for growth and analysis for future research on the direct effects on political participation.

It should be noted in closing that, while it would be relevant to see the difference between online gamers that interact with each other and gamers that play games by themselves, the data just isn't there to analyze. In fact, a large portion of the gaming community will be excluded altogether since I only have data concerning computer game use and not console or handheld gaming. With the data available to test my Hypothesis, the research can now be conducted.

Results

The results of this project confirm my theoretical predictions. After testing for trust in other people, age, income, education and sex, I found that there is a significant link between extensive gaming over a month's time and the level of trust in the legislature. In fact, gaming

over five times a month generated a p value of .004. Although GSS combined both the Senate and the House of Representatives in its question prompt, these findings still produce powerful implications. Furthermore, the model used for gaming also showed significance between trust in others, one's level of income, and one's age. However, not all of the results produced were easily predictable.

Before running any tests, I wanted to see what separated our respondents socially. According to table 1, gamers are on average thirty nine years of age, have thirteen years of formal education and generally make a yearly income ranging from $20,000 to $25,000. Non-Gamers on the other hand were on average forty one years of age, had fifteen years of formal education and also made between $20,000 and $25,000 a year (See Table 1). Furthermore, men are much more likely to play games over women by about 20% (See Table 2). Although gamers look very similar to non-gamers, education is what separates these groups from each other. It would seem that non-gamers are better educated than their gaming counterparts, gaining an additional two years of education. After analyzing the respondents, we must now look at the data generated regarding their levels of trust.

After testing for confidence levels concerning the legislative, executive and judicial branch, I surprisingly only found significance in the legislative model. Actually, the legislative regression proved to be quite a hit with four of the six variables tested being significant, those being trust, income, age and extensive game use. This is perhaps not surprising considering previous scholarship (Fenno, 1978; Parker 1989; Parker and Parker, 1993) has found that our representatives are continuously trying to maintain public trust on an individual level to remain in office. Therefore, if something caused us to be less trusting in general, the branch most closely associated to the people would be the first to experience serious repercussions. However,

the executive and the judicial branches proved insignificant and only education and age mattered for their regressions, which will be discussed later (See Table 3).

Because I was unsure how powerful gaming would be as a determinant of social capital, I also used other measures in separate models to see if they likewise affected our levels of confidence in the government. These variables were: the amount of television watched per day, the level of volunteer work completed for charities, the level of political involvement one had and the number of close friends each respondent had in a time of need. Each variable could be used to separately explain positive and negative relationships between social capital and trust. Surprisingly, there wasn't a shred of statistically significant evidence to show that these variables affected trust like gaming did. However, they produced similar results with age and income every time, regardless of the branch of government in relation to gaming.

This vast difference of results for the various social capital questions creates several questions. The social capital variables used were well rounded and representative of social capital, so why would a weakened level of volunteering and political activism not decrease trust, but gaming would? Perhaps it's the inherent nature of gaming that separates respondents. Most of the respondents that said they game often are probably young and thus more likely to be less confident in institutions as many young people are. If that were true, then we'd have to assume that most people who said they volunteered were of an older age group, which isn't an easy assumption to make. What seems more probable is that those that responded negatively to these social capital variables probably engaged in other activities instead. For example, those that don't volunteer may spend their time in informal organizations or may play sports. Basically, their levels of social capital were never really diminished, but instead just shifted into another aspect of life. However, for those that play games constantly while isolated from their peers, we

can infer that these respondents, through a weakened state of social capital and trust, had a similar weakening of their trust levels in our government institutions.

Another alternative could be that a weakened state of social capital through friendship, volunteering and political participation doesn't have any correlation with trust in the first place. This could simply be an inherent flaw in my assumptions. If that were true than we would have expected gaming to have produced negative results also. This either proves the power of gaming as a determinant of social capital or weakens other said variables as measures of trust. However, it can't do both.

Another important question worth answering is why didn't television produce similar results as video games? To be honest, the answer to this question is beyond my grasp. Since we only tested for offline gaming and not online games where you can socialize, the affect should have been similar to watching television. After all, Putnam (2000) stated that for every hour of television use a day, you lose an hour of potential social capital growth (pg. 228). As previously stated, a diminished state of social capital should translate into lowered trust. However, at least in this particular model which had the most observations capping at 546, I found no evidence to support the notion that television *does* affect trust. Either television doesn't affect social capital as much as previous scholars have believed or, and probably more realistically, there's something about television viewership that doesn't diminish trust in government institutions.

The idea that television won't damage trust levels doesn't make much sense considering negative ads and aggressive debate shows which depress voter turnout and make us more cynical when thinking of politics. While not all Americans watch these negative shows and ads, it's hard to imagine any aspect of television that can't be bad for our image of government. Another strange occurrence was that the control variables fluctuated drastically when switching between

the federal institutions. While only age was an important variable when testing Congress, one's sex, income and education were all statistically significant when analyzing the judicial and executive branch. We should have also seen some significant results when looking at television and trust in the legislative branch, since this branch relies on television more than any other government institution to get re-elected and to get initiatives moving and passed. Again, it proved to be inconsequential like the judicial and executive branches in the regression. Even with a confusing outcome, this statistical paradox leaves room for further comparisons between television and gaming in the future.

Now to answer the question of why gaming matters as an indicator of trust in Congress. Clearly, the greater one plays games, the greater their levels of trust in government are affected. It's interesting that only after someone played over five times a month, did the data become significant. There is indeed a difference between casual gamers and serious or "hardcore" gamers. Hardcore gamers are of considerable interest to this study since they have a weakened level of trust in Congress. Perhaps the games people play make them less trusting. Maybe games that have great deals of violence or inappropriate language somehow depress one's level of trust in others. Also, since trust in others was correlated with trust in Congress, perhaps the lack of time spent with others resulted in diminished trust in the legislative branch. However, this declined trust failed to extend into the other federal branches of government.

While the data concerning Congress proved relevant, why than did gaming not have an adverse effect on the Supreme Court and the Presidency? Explaining the results for the Supreme Court is relatively easy. I'd be hard pressed to find a variable that *could* weaken our trust in the Supreme Court, probably because this is the one institution that has typically had high levels of trust in it. Because the office has no attachment to public opinion and mostly deals with issues

without large publicity, gaming would have a very hard time trying to weaken the image of the judicial system.

Explaining the results for the executive branch is a little more elusive to understand though. I originally thought that the executive would have similar results as the legislative because they are both tied to public opinion and to the media. However, the legislative is much closer to the people. Since the President governs the entire nation, one may or may not be affected directly by his actions. Congress on the other hands is tied to your specific district, which makes that connection between representative and constituent much more intimate. Therefore, if one were to be less trusting of our federal institutions, it makes sense to target members of the government closest to home.

There should also be a brief discussion of the other variables measured alongside gaming. Not surprisingly, trust in others proved to be statistically significant in all three measures of our government institutions. It would have been strange to see otherwise. However, one interesting change was that education was relevant in the measures for the legislative and the executive branch, but not for the legislative branch. This makes sense considering most people tend to learn more about the Supreme Court and the Presidency with more education which increase trust in the institution. Congress, on the other hand, almost always has terribly reduced confidence, usually numbering below 50% on any given poll conducted. Because of this, people of all educations tend to be less trusting of the institution off the bat.

The legislative branch again sticks out as the outlier in the story. Replacing education as a significant variable, income is more important to confidence in Congress. This might have to do with who feels represented by Congress. If someone comes from a wealthy background, they may feel well represented as their money can usually translate into support. However, a

member of the lower class may feel less trusting either because of less education or because they believe their tax money is used improperly.

Without a doubt, video games are producing changes in our society. This data has shown how gaming has clearly become a detriment to our levels of trust in government. Regardless, these results give scholars plenty to work with in the future. With that said, it seems fitting to discuss the current implications for this research.

Conclusion

Perhaps the results produced through this social experiment were to be expected. After all, gaming has worked its way into American society as a silent juggernaut over the last twenty five years. Nevertheless, the implications this research holds for political science are unquestionably significant. Since gaming has proven to indirectly lower our levels of trust in government, we have reason to believe hardcore gamers are less likely to vote and participate alongside their non-gaming counterparts. As gamers become an ever increasing sect of the population, we shouldn't scoff at this realization. Some critics would argue that this is irrelevant because gamers are typically young and young people don't vote anyway. However, television proved to affect the lives of an entire generation, so why shouldn't gaming. The data found in this article shows that gaming has more of an effect than television does. Recent studies have presented similar results showing our youth have increased game usage has gone up 14% in a five year time span (Lenhart, 2005). Therefore, if long lasting repercussions do occur, we could see an even greater decrease in voter turnout or our external political efficacy in the next decade or so. With that said, it's important to outline what the expectations of this paper were.

To be honest, I expected to see significance in the model for our trust in Congress and the President. Nevertheless, the final data set shows that gaming is important to trust and political science. However, this doesn't mean I'm completely satisfied with the end result. I'm still concerned with the serious lack of interest in video games in the realm of political science. There hasn't been a significant work produced yet in the field. Similarly, GSS doesn't ask a single question concerning video games or their affects on the individual any other time besides 2000, 2002 and 2004. Yet, games have been around for 25 years and the market continues to grow every year. Since psychologists have found clear indicators of psychological change in our youth, why wouldn't gaming affect the way we act politically? The biggest concern I have concluding this research is the lack of genuine interest in the realm of advancing technological advancement for our youth and its effects on our political actions.

Regardless of the future directions of the field of gaming, this project could have been conducted differently. Time and resource constraints prevented me from doing a local survey of University students in Albuquerque, which would have been preferable to the massive survey conducted by GSS. Furthermore, the confidence variables dropped our observations from well over a thousand to around 200 for any given regression. However, this goes back to the constraints of GSS. I originally wanted to create a model testing several social capital related questions and other variables such as political donations and corruption. Unfortunately, the data just wasn't there to test along side with video games as a variable. In fact, the variables capable of comparing with my Games30 question were few and far between. Of those that were capable of being tested along with gaming, they produced similar reductions in observations dropping them well below 100 respondents. It would have also been nice to have separate confidence

variables for the Senate and the House of Representatives, but GSS put them into a single category as the legislature. Confidence in general has always fluctuated between the House and the Senate and separating them into two different variables in the future could produce vast changes in data collection when mining GSS for data in the future. Hopefully this minor fault will one day be remedied and will give someone else cause for future research.

Although my data collection has ended with some luck, political scientists shouldn't be turned off to the study of video games in the future. This study focuses solely on trust, but other variables could be used to test the effects of gaming. Similarly, through the use of video gaming as a determinant of social capital, the amount of work available is greatly expanded. However, one may not need to test games as a form of social capital and could use it as a separate entity altogether if they chose to.

Now that there has been some significance found in the study of gaming, one may choose to take my research one step further. Since I could simply speculate on the reasons behind significant variables, someone could create a similar survey tool and ask specifically whether or not people trust Congress and why they do or don't. Then, they could compare the results of gamers and non-gamers and see what they come up with. Furthermore, another scholar could shy away from survey data and may instead decide to compare turnout over time and see how gaming has affected it. The point being is that with such a new and unexplored field, gaming has the potential for a variety of research techniques. Although the end result turned out differently than television use, gaming can still receive the attention and methods that television did during the 1990's.

Whether we like it or not, games are becoming a key part of the lives of our youth. Children are attaching to games at an alarming rate and our elders are slowly catching on to the

trend also. Yet, unlike other fads, this trend has continuously increased over the last decade.

Like the introduction of television into our everyday lives, gaming will and has begun to change

the foundations of our society. The sooner political scientists realize the importance of gaming

in our society, the sooner we can begin to understand these changes in the long run.

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Table 1: Composition of Participants.

Variable	Gamers COEFFICIENT (Observations)	Non-Gamers COEFFICIENT (Observations)	Total COEFFICIENT (Observations)
Age (years)	39.15	40.21	40.04
	(269)	(1381)	(1650)
Income*	11.27	11	11.39
	(260)	(1363)	(1623)
Education (years)	13.49	14.73	14.53
	(269)	(1385)	(1654)

*Note: Income is measured as a category. 11 is representative of those that make between $20,000 and $24,999 per year in income. However, this finding is likely due to a loss in observations and fails to accurately represent the average wealth of the respondent.

Table 2: Gender Breakdown of Participants

Variable	Gamer COEFFICIENT (Observations)	Non-Gamer COEFFICIENT (Observations)
Female (%)	41.62	40.40
	(112)	(560)
Male (%)	58.36	59.60
	(157)	(826)
Total (%)	100.00	100.00
	(269)	(1386)

Table 3: Coefficients Affecting Trust in Federal Institutions.

VARIABLE	Legislature COEFFICIENT (SE)	Executive COEFFICIENT (SE)	Judicial COEFFICIENT (SE)
Trust	.91*	1.0*	1.19*
	(.35)	(.43)	(.37)
Sex	.56	-.02	-.19
	(.38)	(.42)	(.36)
Education	-.03	.32*	.24*
	(.07)	(.10)	(.07)
Income	-.16*	.05	.09
	(.08)	(.08)	(.07)
Age	-.05*	-.04*	-.02*
	(.02)	(.02)	(.01)
Never plays games	.26	.34	.15
	(.39)	(.52)	(.42)
Games over 5X	-2.4*	-.02	.28
	(.82)	(.62)	(.51)
Constant	2.52	-3.61	-2.59
	(1.28)	(1.57)	(1.26)
Observations	221	146	267

*indicates p- value greater than .05