

Science Still Doesn't Understand Video Games

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Pacific Standard:

Last spring, Gunwoo Yoon, a doctoral student at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, recruited 194 undergraduates and tasked them with blasting their way through a *Space Invaders*-style video game. After five minutes of play, he gave each student a cup filled with chocolate or chili sauce. Give it a taste, he said, and spoon some onto a plastic dish for the next participant. That person will have to clear the plate.

Yoon told everyone the game and food components of the experiment were unrelated, but this was a lie. Under the guise of collecting separate reviews of the game and foods, he was looking for the answer to a hotly debated research question: How do video games shape who we are? He designed his game to assign each student randomly to one of three characters: Superman, Voldemort, or a nondescript circle. Superman and Voldemort had been pretested as representations of the most archetypal hero and villain; the circle was a control. Just five minutes of play as an icon of good or evil, Yoon predicted, would sway the amount of food the students served each other (though the food wasn't actually passed on).

Read the whole story: [*Pacific Standard*](#)