Bioterrorism in Videogames

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Although it may seem like a fun past time for children, video games have developed into much more over the past decade. Their evolution from a “kiddy” audience to the adult mainstream has brought upon several issues, such as violence and sexuality. However, as plot lines become more complex and character development is stressed as much as game play, video games become a medium through which we are able to see the anxieties and fears of the human population. For some time now, terrorism has played a large role in video game storylines, as it has done in popular film genres of the time as well. Recently, however, there has been an increase in games that focus on man-made diseases and the possible threat of outbreaks via bioterrorists. Examples of this include Parasite Eve, Metal Gear Solid, and of course, the Resident Evil Series.

In the Resident Evil series in particular, a pharmaceutical company named Umbrella has ties to terrorist organizations, in which they deposit the dreaded “T-virus” for funds. Although the T-virus causes, of all things, humans to transform into zombies, the method speaks volumes about the fears held in society today. Also, in many of these games, race and culture are taken into account (Resident Evil 4 and 5), which also has societal implications about the anxieties of who bioterrorists are and what their purposes is. All of these things have great tie-ins to the study of communications, gender and racial studies, and even art.