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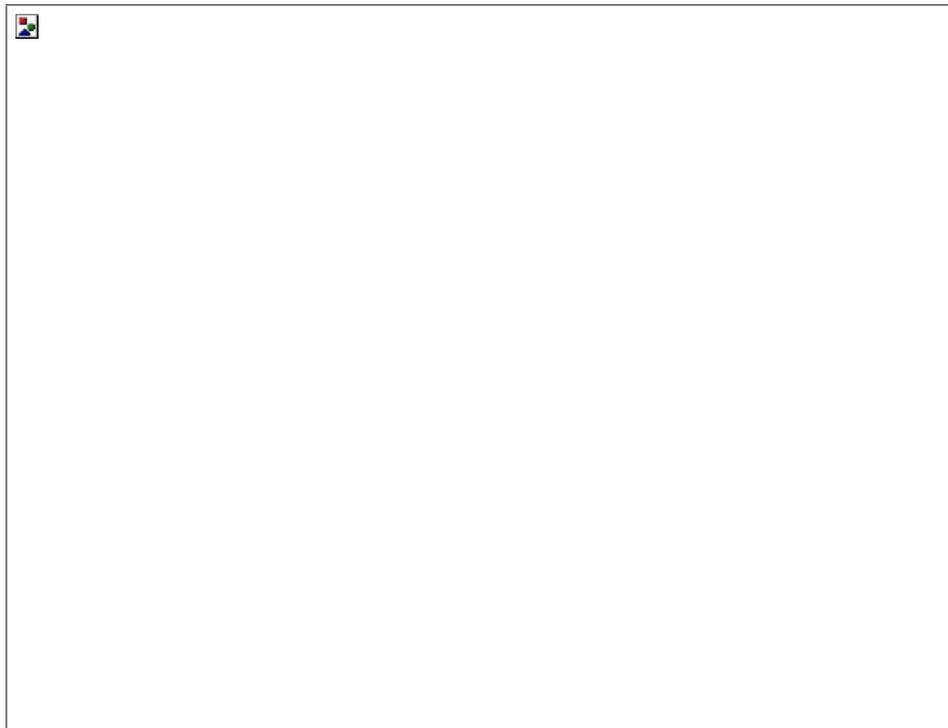
New Site Explores Whether Violent Videogames Contribute to Youth Violence

ProCon.org allows people to check out the facts and have an open dialogue on games and violence debate

Article | 01.19.10 | By John Gaudiosi



With a record December sales triumph, the videogame industry has weathered the recession quite well. The biggest game of 2009, Activision and Infinity Ward's Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2 is rated Mature, fueling the violence and videogames debate. ProCon.org, a nonpartisan 501(c)3 nonprofit public charity dedicated to promoting critical thinking, created the new website <http://videogames.procon.org> to explore the core question "Do violent videogames contribute to youth violence?"



According to the site, 97% of 12-17 year olds in the U.S. played videogames in 2008. That year, 10 of the top 20 best-selling video games in the US contained violence. In 2009, videogames accounted for \$19.66 billion in sales in the U.S. alone. And only three of the top 10 games of 2009 were rated Mature. The rest were rated E for Everyone.

Violent videogames have been blamed for school shootings, increases in bullying, violence towards women, and other violent criminal behavior. Critics of violent videogames argue that these games desensitize players to violence, reward players for simulating violence, and teach children that violence is an acceptable way to resolve conflicts. Some of those critics are quoted on the website, including Hillary Clinton, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Dr. Phil, and Mitt

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Romney.

Videogame advocates contend that a majority of the research on the topic is deeply flawed and that no causal relationship has been found between videogames and social violence. They argue that violent videogames may reduce violence by serving as a substitute for rough and tumble play and by providing a safe outlet for aggressive and angry feelings. These advocates include the videogame industry, numerous researchers, and the gamers themselves.

Concerns over the link between violent videogames and youth violence have prompted politicians and several states to attempt to regulate the sales of violent videogames to minors. While the courts have prevented these regulation attempts by citing free speech concerns, the debate continues as technology improves, games become more graphic and realistic, and videogames remain popular.

The latest ProCon.org website explores many pro and con arguments and includes sources, images, videos, reader comments, and a section of little known facts called "Did You Know?" The findings should help readers think critically, educate themselves, and make informed decisions about video games.

Did You Know?

Sales of video games have more than quadrupled from 1995-2008, while the arrest rate for juvenile murders fell 71.9% and the arrest rate for all juvenile violent crimes declined 49.3% in this same period.

The 2008 study Grand Theft Childhood reported that 60% of middle school boys that played at least one Mature-rated game hit or beat up someone, compared to 39% of boys that did not play Mature-rated games.

In 2008, 298.2 million video games were sold in the U.S., totaling \$11.7 billion in revenue. Six of the top ten best-selling video games included violence, with four of the games carrying a Mature rating recommended for persons aged 17 and older.

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John Gaudiosi has been covering videogames for the past 16 years for outlets like The Washington Post, CNET, Wired Magazine and CBS.com. He has focused on the convergence of entertainment and videogames for outlets like Video Business, Home Media Magazine, The Hollywood Reporter and Variety. He currently serves as Editor-in-Chief of Gamerlive.TV and is also a freelance game columnist for Reuters and writes for outlets like Playboy Magazine, GamePro Magazine, Official PlayStation Magazine, Entertainment Weekly, DasGamer.com, AOL Games, and Yahoo! Games. John also serves as the video game expert for NBC in Washington D.C. John was named one of the Top 50 Game Journalists in the world by Next-Gen.biz in 2007.

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