

## Beyond "Pac Man"

### What is video game violence?

It is estimated that about 145 million Americans play computer and video games. Most of these games are given an age-appropriateness rating through an industry-created system that also includes descriptors found on the packages. While this rating is published, there is no enforcement mechanism in place to prohibit retailers from selling violent and sexually explicit games to children.

- Mature (M) titles have content suitable for persons ages 17 and older and may include intense violence or language and/or mature sexual themes.
- Mature-rated games are now the fastest growing segment of the video game industry.  
Knight-Ridder Newspapers, 1/5/03
- In a 2005 study, 44 percent of children under age 17 were able to purchase Mature-rated games. Some of these children were as young as seven.  
National Institute on Media and the Family
- Children playing Mature-rated games may participate in simulated murder of women, police, minorities and innocent bystanders. Violent acts are graphically depicted and may include victims being beaten, shot, decapitated, burned alive, and urinated upon.

According to a national survey by the National Institute on Media and the Family, 87 percent of eight to seventeen-year-olds play video or computer games at home. 14 percent of 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> graders who play video games are addicted to the games.

### What is the problem?

Media violence can have a great effect on children, causing them to

- *Increase antisocial and aggressive behavior*
- *Become less sensitive to violence and those who suffer from it*
- *View the world as violent and mean, and become more fearful of being a victim of violence*
- *Desire to see more violence in entertainment and real life*

National Institute on Media and the Family

### Remember . . .

Because we affirm that all children are a gift of God . . . [and] because we believe that children depend upon adults for safety and security in a world that does not always value children . . . Therefore we hope for a world where all children can find a safe place . . . where all adults hear the voices of children and speak with as well as for them.

From "A Vision for Children and the Church"  
1993 PC(USA) General Assembly Statement

### Protect children by . . .

- . . . looking for games that are challenging and exciting but not violent.
- . . . looking for games that involve two players, to encourage cooperative play and socialization
- . . . renting games to preview before purchasing
- . . . setting time limits on children's total screen time (video games, television, movies, computer)
- . . . placing television and video and computer games in common areas of the house
- . . . talking with children about what they are seeing, hearing, and feeling
- . . . encouraging local store managers to post information on the video game rating system and separate the adult-rated and violent games from those intended for children
- . . . sharing this information with other parents, grandparents, and adults

**Violence (homicide, suicide, and trauma) is the leading cause of death for children, adolescents, and young adults, more prevalent than disease, cancer, or congenital disorders.**

American Academy of Pediatrics, 2001

### Additional Resource

This information was adapted from *Children & Violent Video Games* published by the Child Advocacy Office of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). It contains additional information and resource notes and is available online at [www.pcusa.org/child](http://www.pcusa.org/child) and [www.pcusa.org/family](http://www.pcusa.org/family).



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