

SEARCH THE APA WEB SITE

WEBSITE HELP

SEARCH APA PRESS RELEASES

▶ ARCHIVED RELEASES

▶ RELEASES HOME PAGE

Date: August 17, 2005
 Contact: [Public Affairs Office](#)
 (202) 336-5707 (until 8/17)
 (202) 962-4204 (between 8/18-8/21)

APA CALLS FOR REDUCTION OF VIOLENCE IN INTERACTIVE MEDIA USED BY CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

Research Shows Playing Violent Video Games Increases Aggressive Behavior and Decreases Helpful Behavior; Learning Critical Evaluating Skills May Reduce Negative Effects

WASHINGTON — Based on an examination of the research that shows the negative influences of violence in interactive media on youth, the American Psychological Association (APA) today adopted a resolution recommending that all violence be reduced in video games and interactive media marketed to children and youth. Additionally, the APA also encourages parents, educators and health care providers to help youth make more informed choices about which games to play.

The policy decision, made by the APA Council of Representatives, was adopted at the recommendation of a special Committee on Violence in Video Games and Interactive Media of the Media Psychology Division of APA, which reviewed the research indicating that exposure to violence in video games increases aggressive thoughts, aggressive behavior, and angry feelings among youth. In addition, this exposure reduces helpful behavior and increases physiological arousal in children and adolescents.

Research on media violence also revealed, that perpetrators go unpunished 73 percent of the time in all violent scenes. "Showing violent acts without consequences teach youth that violence is an effective means of resolving conflict. Whereas, seeing pain and suffering as a consequence can inhibit aggressive behavior", says psychologist Elizabeth Carll, PhD, co-chair of the Committee on Violence in Video Games and Interactive Media.

Studies on learning also show that active participation may influence learning more than passive observation. "Violence in video games appear to have similar negative effects as viewing violence on TV, but may be more harmful because of the interactive nature of video games," says Dr. Elizabeth Carll, who is a private practitioner in New York and a past president of the Media Division of APA. "Playing video games involves practice, repetition, and being rewarded for numerous acts of violence, which may intensify the learning. This may also result in more realistic experiences which may potentially increase aggressive behavior," added Carll.

Teaching children how to view television critically helps them to differentiate between fantasy and reality, identify less with aggressive characters and helps children to better understand what they are watching. "Teaching critical viewing, also referred to as media literacy, can be helpful in reducing the negative effects of interactive media as well," says Dr. Dorothy Singer, co-chair of the Committee on Violence in Video Games and Interactive media, and a Senior Research Scientist at Yale University and Co-Director of the Yale Family Television Research and Consultation Center. "Media literacy programs have been successful in teaching children how to better understand what happens when someone gets hurt or killed on TV. Children end up not feeling as frightened and sad after witnessing these violent events", explained Singer.

#

Based on the findings, the APA recommends:

- Teach media literacy to children so they will have the ability to critically evaluate interactive media.
- Encourage the entertainment industry to link violent behaviors with negative social consequences.
- Develop and disseminate a content-based rating system that accurately reflects the content of the video games and interactive media.
- Developers of violent video games and interactive media address the issues that playing these games may increase aggressive thoughts and behaviors in children and adolescents and that these effects may potentially be greater than the effects of exposure to violent television and movies.

Committee on Violence in Video Games and Interactive Media: Elizabeth Carll, PhD, and Dorothy Singer, EdD co-chairs; Craig Anderson, PhD, Brad Bushman, PhD, Karen Dill, PhD and Lilli Friedland, PhD.

Full text of the resolution is available from the APA Public Affairs Office and at: <http://www.apa.org/releases/resolutiononvideoviolence.pdf>

For more information/interview contact: Dr. Elizabeth Carll at 917-941-5400 or 631-754-2424 or by [E-mail](#) or Dr. Dorothy Singer at 203-432-4565 or by [E-mail](#).

The American Psychological Association (APA), in Washington, DC, is the largest scientific and professional organization representing psychology in the United States and is the world's largest association of psychologists. APA's membership includes more than 150,000 researchers, educators, clinicians, consultants and students. Through its divisions in 53 subfields of psychology and affiliations with 60 state, territorial and Canadian provincial associations, APA works to advance psychology as a science, as a profession and as a means of promoting human welfare.

###

© 2005 American Psychological Association

Office of Public Affairs

750 First Street, N.E. • Washington, DC • 20002-4242

Phone: 202-336-5700 • TDD/TTY: 202-336-6123

Fax: 202-336-5708 • [E-mail](#)

[PsychNET®](#) | [Terms of Use](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Security](#)

Resolution on Violence in Video Games and Interactive Media

WHEREAS decades of social science research reveals the strong influence of televised violence on the aggressive behavior of children and youth (APA Task Force On Television and Society; 1992 Surgeon General's Scientific Advisory Committee on Television and Social Behavior, 1972); and

WHEREAS psychological research reveals that the electronic media play an important role in the development of attitude, emotion, social behavior and intellectual functioning of children and youth (APA Task Force On Television and Society, 1992; Funk, J. B., et al. 2002; Singer, D. G. & Singer, J. L. 2005; Singer, D. G. & Singer, J. L. 2001); and

WHEREAS there appears to be evidence that exposure to violent media increases feelings of hostility, thoughts about aggression, suspicions about the motives of others, and demonstrates violence as a method to deal with potential conflict situations (Anderson, C.A., 2000; Anderson, C.A., Carnagey, N. L., Flanagan, M., Benjamin, A. J., Eubanks, J., Valentine, J. C., 2004; Gentile, D. A., Lynch, P. J., Linder, J. R., & Walsh, D. A., 2004; Huesmann, L. R., Moise, J., Podolski, C. P., & Eron, L. D., 2003; Singer, D. & Singer, J., 2001); and

WHEREAS perpetrators go unpunished in 73% of all violent scenes, and therefore teach that violence is an effective means of resolving conflict. Only 16 % of all programs portrayed negative psychological or financial effects, yet such visual depictions of pain and suffering can actually inhibit aggressive behavior in viewers (National Television Violence Study, 1996); and

WHEREAS comprehensive analysis of violent interactive video game research suggests such exposure a.) increases aggressive behavior, b.) increases aggressive thoughts, c.) increases angry feelings, d.) decreases helpful behavior, and, e.) increases physiological arousal (Anderson, C.A., 2002b; Anderson, C.A., Carnagey, N. L., Flanagan, M., Benjamin, A. J., Eubanks, J., Valentine, J. C., 2004; Anderson, C.A., & Dill, K. E., 2000; Bushman, B.J., & Anderson, C.A., 2002; Gentile, D. A., Lynch, P. J., Linder, J. R., & Walsh, D. A., 2004); and

WHEREAS studies further suggest that sexualized violence in the media has been linked to increases in violence towards women, rape myth acceptance and anti-women attitudes. Research on interactive video games suggests that the most popular video games contain aggressive and violent content; depict women and girls, men and boys, and minorities in exaggerated stereotypical ways; and reward, glamorize and depict as humorous sexualized aggression against women, including assault, rape and murder (Dietz, T. L., 1998; Dill, K. E., & Dill, J. C., 2004; Dill, K. E., Gentile, D. A., Richter, W. A., & Dill, J.C., in press; Mulac, A., Jansma, L. L., & Linz, D. G., 2002; Walsh, D., Gentile, D. A., VanOverbeke, M., & Chasco, E., 2002); and

WHEREAS the characteristics of violence in interactive video games appear to have similar detrimental effects as viewing television violence; however based upon learning theory (Bandura, 1977; Berkowitz, 1993), the practice, repetition, and rewards for acts of violence may be more conducive to increasing aggressive behavior among children and youth than passively watching violence on TV and in films (Carll, E. K., 1999a). With the development of more sophisticated interactive media, such as virtual reality, the implications for violent content are of further concern, due to the intensification of more realistic experiences, and may also be more conducive to increasing aggressive behavior than passively watching violence on TV and in films (Calvert, S. L., Jordan, A. B., Cocking, R. R. (Ed.) 2002; Carll, E. K., 2003; Turkle, S., 2002); and

WHEREAS studies further suggest that videogames influence the learning processes in many ways more than in passively observing TV: a.) requiring identification of the participant with a violent character while playing video games, b.) actively participating increases learning, c.) rehearsing entire behavioral sequences rather than only a part of the sequence, facilitates learning, and d.) repetition increases learning (Anderson, C.A., 2002b; Anderson, C.A., Carnagey, N. L., Flanagan, M., Benjamin, A. J., Eubanks, J., Valentine, J. C., 2004; Anderson, C.A. & Dill, K. E., 2000); and

WHEREAS the data dealing with media literacy curricula demonstrate that when children are taught how to view television critically, there is a reduction of TV viewing in general, and a clearer understanding of the messages conveyed by the medium. Studies on media literacy demonstrate when children are taught how to view television critically, children can feel less frightened and sad after discussions about the medium, can learn to differentiate between fantasy and reality, and can identify less with aggressive characters on TV, and better understand commercial messages (Brown, 2001; Hobbs, R. & Frost, R., 2003; Hortin, J.A., 1982; Komaya, M., 2003; Rosenkoetter, L.J., Rosenkoetter, S.E., Ozretich, R.A., & Acock, A.C., 2004; Singer & Singer, 1998; Singer & Singer, 1994)

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that APA advocate for the reduction of all violence in videogames and interactive media marketed to children and youth.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that APA publicize information about research relating to violence in video games and interactive media on children and youth in the Association's publications and communications to the public.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that APA encourage academic, developmental, family, and media psychologists to teach media literacy that meets high standards of effectiveness to children, teachers, parents and caregivers to promote ability to critically evaluate interactive media and make more informed choices.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that APA advocate for funding to support basic and applied research, including special attention to the role of social learning, sexism, negative depiction of minorities, and gender on the effects of violence in video games and interactive media on children, adolescents, and young adults.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that APA engage those responsible for developing violent video games and interactive media in addressing the issue that playing violent video games may increase aggressive thoughts and aggressive behaviors in children, youth, and young adults and that these effects may be greater than the well documented effects of exposure to violent television and movies.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that APA recommend to the entertainment industry that the depiction of the consequences of violent behavior be associated with negative social consequences.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that APA (a) advocate for the development and dissemination of a content based rating system that accurately reflects the content of video games and interactive media, and (b) encourage the distribution and use of the rating system by the industry, the public, parents, caregivers and educational organizations.

REFERENCES

- American Psychological Association. (1993). *Violence and Youth: Psychology's response: Vol 1: Summary Report of the American Psychological Association Commission on Violence and Youth*. Washington, DC: Author.
- American Psychological Association, Advertising Council, & National Association for the Education of Young Children. (2002). *Adults and Children Together [ACT] Against Violence Campaign*.
- American Psychological Association Task Force on Television and Society. (1992). *Report on televised violence*. Washington, DC: Author.
- Anderson, C.A. (2000). *Violent video games increase aggression and violence*. U.S. Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee Hearing on "The Impact of Interactive Violence on Children." Tuesday, March 21, 2000. Hearing Chaired by Senator Sam Brownback, Kansas.
- Anderson, C.A. (2002a). FAQs on violent video games and other media violence. *Small Screen*, 179-180, September & October issues.

- Anderson, C.A., (2002b). Violent video games and aggressive thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Chapter in S. L. Calvert, A. B. Jordan, & R. R. Cocking (Eds.). *Children in the digital age*, (pp. 101-119). Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers.
- Anderson, C.A., & Bushman, B.J. (2002). The effects of media violence on society. *Science*, 295, 2377-2378.
- Anderson, C.A., Carnagey, N. L., Flanagan, M., Benjamin, A. J., Eubanks, J., Valentine, J. C. (2004). Violent Video Games: Specific Effects of Violent Content on Aggressive Thoughts and Behavior. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 36, 199-249.
- Anderson, C.A., & Dill, K. E. (2000). Video games and aggressive thoughts, feelings, and behavior in the laboratory and in life. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 78, 772-790.
- Bandura, A. (1977). *Social learning theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Berkowitz, L. (1993). *Aggression: Its causes, consequences, and control*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Boland, M. (2001, December 17). Left in the dust: Oz distrib defies vidgame restriction. *Variety*, 385, p. 7.
- Booth, L. (2001, November 26). Do you enjoy showering with men and picking on sissies? Join the military. *New Statesman*, p. 83.
- Braun, C., & Giroux, J. (1989). Arcade video games: Proxemic, cognitive and content analyses. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 21, 92-105.
- Brown, J.A. (2001). Media literacy and critical television viewing in education. In D.G. Singer & J.L. Singer (Eds.). *Handbook of children and the media*, (681-697) Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Bushman, D.D., & Funk, J.B. (1996). Video and computer games in the '90s: Children's time commitment & game preference. *Children Today*, 24(1), 12-15, 31.
- Bushman, B.J., & Anderson, C.A. (2001). Media violence and the American public: Scientific facts versus media misinformation. *American Psychologist*, 56, 477-489.
- Bushman, B.J., & Anderson, C.A. (2002). Violent video games and hostile expectations: A test of the general aggression model. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 28, 1679-1686.
- Bushman, B. J., & Cantor J. (2003). Media ratings for violence and sex: Implications for policymakers and parents. *American Psychologist*, 58(2), 130-141.
- Bushman, B. J., & Huesmann, L. R. (2001). Effects of televised violence on aggression. In D. Singer & J. Singer (Eds.). *Handbook of children and the media* (pp. 223-254). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Calvert, S. L., Jordan, A. B., Cocking, R. R. (Eds.) (2002). *Children in the digital age: Influences of electronic media on development*. Westport, CT: Praeger
- Carll, E. K. (1999a). *Effects of exposure to violence in interactive video games on children*. New York State Senate Hearings, Senate Majority Task Force on Youth Violence and the Entertainment Industry Hearing on "Video Game Violence: Fun and Games or Deadly Serious?" October 6, 1999 & November 23, 1999. Hearings chaired by Senator Michael A. L. Balboni.
- Carll, E. K. (1999b). *Violence in our lives: Impact on workplace, home, and community*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Carll, E. K. (2003). *New media technologies and social change in the 21st century: Psychology's role*. Symposium, New media technologies, psychology, and social change, Carll, E. K., chair. American Psychological Association Annual Convention, Toronto, Canada.
- Dietz, T. L. (1998). An examination of violence and gender role portrayals in video games: Implications for gender socialization and aggressive behavior. *Sex Roles*, 38, 425-442.
- Dill, K.E., & Dill, J.C. (2004). *Video game violence exposure correlated with rape myth acceptance and attitudes towards women*. Unpublished manuscript.
- Dill, K. E., Gentile, D. A., Richter, W. A., & Dill, J. C. (in press). Violence, sex, race and age in popular video games: A content analysis. In E. Cole and J. Henderson Daniel (Eds.), *Featuring females: Feminist analyses of the media*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Donnerstein, E., & Malamuth, N. (1997). Pornography: Its consequences on the observer. In Schlesinger, L. B. and Revitch, E. (Eds.) *Sexual dynamics of antisocial behavior*. Pp. 30-49.
- Emes, C.E., Is Mr. Pac Man eating our children?. *Canadian Journal of Psychiatry*, May 1997; 42(4):409-14.

- Eron, L.D., Huesmann, L.R., Lefkowitz, M.M., & Walder, L.O. (1972). Does T.V. violence cause aggression? *American Psychologist*, 27, 153-263.
- Eron, L.E., Gentry, J.H., & Shlagel, P., (Eds.). (1994). *Reason to hope: A psychological perspective on violence and youth*. Washington: American Psychological Association.
- Fisher, S. (1995). The amusement arcade as a social space for adolescents: An empirical study. *Journal of Adolescence*, 18(1), 71-86.
- FTC, (2000). *Marketing violent entertainment to children: A review of self-regulation and industry practices in the motion picture, music recording, & electronic game industries*. Report of the Federal Trade Commission. Federal Trade Commission. Available online: www.ftc.gov/reports/violence/.
- Funk, J.B., & Buchman, D.D. (1996). Playing violent video and computer games and adolescent self-concept. *Journal of Communication*, 46(2), 19-32.
- Eron, L.E., Gentry, J.H., & Shlagel, P., (Eds.). (1994). Reason to hope: A psychological perspective on violence and youth. Washington: American Psychological Association.
- Gentile, D. A., Lynch, P. J., Linder, J. R., & Walsh, D. A. (2004). The effects of violent video game habits on adolescent aggressive attitudes and behaviors. *Journal of Adolescence*, 27, 5-22.
- Golde, J. A., Strassberg, D.S., Turner, C. M., & Lowe, K. (2000). Attitudinal effects of degrading themes and sexual explicitness in video materials, *Sexual Abuse*, 12, 223-231.
- Herbert, B. (2002, November 28). The gift of mayhem. *The New York Times*. p. A35.
- Hobbs, R. & Frost, R. (2003). Measuring the acquisition of media-literacy skills. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 38,(3), 330-355.
- Hortin, J.A. (1982). Innovative approaches to using media in the classroom. *Educational Technology*, 22(5), 18-19.
- Huesmann, L. R., Moise, J., Podolski, C. P. (1997). The effects of media violence on the development of antisocial behavior. In Stoff, D. M., Breiling, J., et al. (Eds.) *Handbook of antisocial behavior*, (pp. 181-193). John Wiley & Sons, Inc., New York, NY.
- Huesmann, L. R., Moise, J., Podolski, C. P., & Eron, L. D. (2003). Longitudinal relations between children's exposure to TV violence and their aggressive and violent behavior in young adulthood: 1977-1992, *Developmental Psychology*. 39(2), 201-221.
- Huntemann, N. (executive producer and director). (2000). *Game over: Gender, race and violence in video games*. [video]. (Available from the Media Education Foundation, 26 Center Street, Northampton, MA 01060)
- Huston, A., Donnerstein, E., et al. (1992). *Big world, small screen*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Jhally, S. (executive producer and director). (1994). *The killing screens: Media and the culture of violence*. [Video]. (Available from the Media Education Foundation, 26 Center Street, Northampton, MA 01060)
- Kirsh, S.J. (1998). Seeing the world through "Mortal Kombat" colored glasses: Violent video games and hostile attribution bias. *Childhood*, 5(2), 177-184.
- Komaya, M. (2003). Media literacy for Japanese third graders (No.132, ISSN 1346-8618, pp.45-60). Tokyo: National Institute for Educational Policy Research.
- Lanis, K. & Covell, K. (1995). Images of women in advertisements: Effects on attitudes related to sexual aggression, *Sex Roles*, 32, 639-649.
- Linz, D., & Donnerstein, E. (1989). The effects of counter-information on the acceptance of rape myths. In Zillman, D., & Bryant, J. (Eds.) *Pornography: Research advances and policy considerations*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum. Pp. 259-288.
- Linz, D., Wilson, B. J., & Donnerstein, E. (1992). Sexual violence in the mass media: Legal solutions, warnings, and mitigation through education. *Journal of Social Issues*, 48, 145-171.
- Knapp, D. (1996, October 16). Adolescent males blamed for violent gaming trend. Retrieved January 16, 2003 from <http://www.cnn.com/TECH/9610/16/video.games/>
- Marriott, M. (2002, November 7). Game formula is adding sex to the mix. *The New York Times*. p. G1.
- Mulac, A., Jansma, L. L., & Linz, D. G. (2002). Men's behavior toward women after viewing sexually-explicit films: Degradation makes a difference. *Communication Monographs*, 69, 311-328.
- National Television Violence Study (1996). Mediascope: Studio City, CA.
- Phillips, C.A., Rolls, S., Rouse, A., & Griffiths, M.D. (1995). Home video game playing in school children: A study of incidence and patterns of play. *Journal of Adolescence*, 18(6), 687-691.
- Potter, W. J. (1999). *On media violence*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

- Reid, P., & Finchilescu, G. (1995). The disempowering effects of media violence against women on college women, *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 19, 397-411.
- Robinson, T.N., Wilde, M.L., Navracruz, L.C., Haydel, K.F., & Varady, A. (2001). Effects of reducing children's television and video game use on aggressive behavior: A randomized controlled trial. *Archives of Pediatric Adolescent Medicine*, 155, 17-23.
- Rosenkoetter, L.J., Rosenkoetter, S.E., Ozretich, R.A., & Acock, A.C. (2004). Mitigating the harmful effects of violent television. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 25, 25-47.
- Ryan, J., & Wentworth, W. M. (1999). *Media and Society*, Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Singer, D.G. & Singer, J.L. (1994). *Creating critical viewers; a partnership between schools and television professionals*. New York: National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, Denver, CO: Pacific Mountain Network.
- Singer, D.G. & Singer, J.L. (1998). Developing critical viewing skills and media literacy in children. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 557, (164-179).
- Singer, D.G. & Singer, J.L. (Eds.). (2001). *Handbook of children and the media*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications
- Singer, D.G & Singer, J.L. (2005). *Imagination and play in the electronic age*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- St. Lawrence, J. S., & Joyner, D. J. (1991). The effects of sexually violent rock music on males' acceptance of violence against women, *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 15, 49-63.
- Strasburger, V. C., & Wilson, B. J. (2002). *Children, adolescents, and the media*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Surgeon General (2001). Youth violence: A report of the Surgeon General. Rockville, MD: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
- Surgeon General's Scientific Advisory Committee on Television and Social Behavior. (1972). *Television and growing up: The impact of televised violence*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- Thompson, K.M., & Haninger, K. (2001). Violence in E-Rated Video Games. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 286, 591-598.
- Turkle, S. (2002). E-Futures and E-Personae. In Leach, N. (Ed.) *Designing for a digital world*. London: John Wiley & Sons.
- Video game industry gets an "F." (2002, December 19). Retrieved January 16, 2003 from <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2002/12/19/eveningnews/main533790.shtml>
- Walsh, D., Gentile, D. A., VanOverbeke, M., & Chasco, E. (2002, December). MediaWise video game report card. Retrieved January 15, 2003, from http://www.mediafamily.org/research/report_vgrc_2002-2.shtml