

R18+ Classification Category for Computer Games

to the

Classification Review

Attorney General's Department

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Submission

by



Media Standards Australia Inc.



Media Standards Australia submits that:

- While an R18+ Classification category for Computer Games may seem to be a reasonable outcome for Australia, there are possible negative consequences, and no guarantees,
- There are numerous studies which amply demonstrate the real and serious risks, and these are not to be ignored,
- The government has an opportunity **now**, to help to restrict access to the excesses of violence and pornography that R Rated material provides,
- The interactive element of computer games gives them a particularly powerful “virtual reality” effect, and trains users in the simulated behaviour,
- Simulated reality also trains the user’s brain to block natural human emotions, such as sympathy for the victim.
- Australia need not follow the trend of the world, in having R Rated computer games, since consensus does not imply correctness or appropriateness to the national situation,
- The current classification system needs to be more stringently applied, and each computer game judged on its own merits (or otherwise),
- The vested, financial interests of those in the Computer Gaming Industry should never be allowed to override the genuine interests of the youngest and most vulnerable in our society,
- To this end, the Government should be encouraging the Industry to produce more suitable computer games material for children and families.

Should there be an R18+ Classification Category for Computer Games?

Media Standards Australia accepts that this appears a very reasonable question and, on the surface, if an adult is asked this, the logical answer may be, yes. However, if asked if there should be more violent, realistic and very graphic video games, with or without sexual content, to be celebrated as entertainment, most adults would be more inclined to say no. This is exactly what Australians are being asked by this Discussion and Submission process, in reality, even though the discussion paper suggests that having an R rating does not necessarily mean having **more** violence.

MSA suspects that the reason why the Government has asked for submissions is purely because of the undue pressure from the computer industry makers and gamers. It is obvious that there would be significant financial losses, at least for the industry, by being denied this highly lucrative revenue stream. When Western Australia decided against gaming machines, this same element of vested interests came into play to muddy the waters of the argument, and is also no small factor in the government balancing of budgets.

Embedded in the whole debate is the vital question: **What cost to society?** This was well-researched in South Australia, with regard to gaming machines, and Western Australia took the results seriously into

account. The social costs are immediate and remain long term. It is ironic that when something like a fire destroys a whole community, people in higher authority are held to account, and pro-active legislation is put in place. This issue under scrutiny has impacts far beyond a single community.

The time has already arrived when there is enough research to indicate the clear relationship between the media messages and the development of social behaviour (see substantial research below). We recommend that this government weighs this up rationally and strategically, rather than waiting until the clean up programme is urgently required, and then attempting to rectify the damage.

R Classification for Adults only

The real question being asked is, in fact: “Why can’t adults have an R rating for themselves?”

The Classification system states that “adults should be able to see and hear what they want”, and we fully understand this. Concurrent with this, however, is the statement that “children should be protected” from unsuitable material.

While most people, including those involved in the computer game industry, clearly acknowledge that children should be protected, while adults should have the freedom to see and hear what they want, our investigations have uncovered a gathering body of research, both anecdotal and statistical, that **young adults** do indeed copy what they have been immersed in, whether it be violent movies, violent video games, pornographic material, or even Barbie dolls. Advertisers would quickly stop advertising if **constant exposure** to consumers didn’t translate into consumer **action at the tills**.

It isn’t just children who are copying fatalistic acts from their favourite violent computer games, however, but primarily young adults, aged between 18 and 30. Why provide these same young adults with yet more graphically violent and pornographic material than they already have access to? The interests of some adult consumers cannot be more important than the verifiable dangers as well as further ramifications for the larger community.

MSA does NOT support an R rating Classification in Video Games

There is abundant evidence to demonstrate the negative aspects of the media trends in our society, towards ever more graphic, gratuitous violence and sex, and more of it being used as a tool for entertainment and spectacle, even going so far as to promote the taking of pleasure in the sufferings of others.

The promotion of this R classification is yet another example of the pursuit of the exaltation of the rights of some individuals over the rights of the young and of the common social good, and one which MSA cannot support.

Media Standards Australia is a nationwide group made up of concerned individuals and families. We have noted, with the same issues coming up year after year, that it is highly evident that Australian families **do not want more** hard-core, gratuitous and/or sexual violence in video games, or other media material, and nor for these themes to be celebrated as entertainment.

Every day, we see violence in the media, and in news reports of innocent citizens being targeted for no particular reason. Even off-duty policemen have been caught up as victims in this worrying, growing

trend. Already, too, very young children are being desensitized to violence, and sexualized too young. Society should be doing all it can to **stem these trends**, not add to them.

The Computer Game Industry will present multiple arguments **for** having hard-core sex and violence in computer games put under an R rating, but, when scrutinized, none of those arguments are sound, and nor can they guarantee a healthy outcome for the future.

Further, many young people will say that they have enjoyed violent music, and video games, and then say: “Look at me; I’m okay!” This is the same specious argument used by the ninety-year-old woman who says that she has been smoking all her life, and there’s nothing wrong with her, and so, therefore, tobacco should not be blamed for premature deaths.

The Classification System is not Draconian

Some in the Computer Game industry may say that the Classification system is irrelevant, outdated, and even draconian, because **you can download all banned material from the Internet anyway**. We reject this statement because there must be some guidelines to which parents, and the general public, can refer. **Our society must have a set of rules and criteria**, in order to clearly state what ordinary Australian people deem offensive, and what they deem acceptable. We already see these parameters in the community, with the issues of child pornography, bestiality, paedophilia, sexual violence and terrorism. The Classification system is the most precious system set up in our democratic society and it is specifically set up to protect the vulnerable in our great country.

In fact, in a democracy where freedoms are paramount, there is an understanding that while Governments must acknowledge freedom of speech, and freedom of expression, in society, **that it should also be the responsibility of producers of material to understand that they have moral obligations as well**.

Unfortunately, it will never be, because, through the history of entertainment in the media, there are always people who insist on **pushing boundaries** only for their own profit. So, when certain members of the computer game industry produce material and the Government puts a Refused Classification on that material, it is declared to be “draconian censorship”. This is more so if that material has had prior, widespread advertising on the Internet, thus rendering it highly desirable. It also then follows that the more the controversy, the more the appeal.

“Safety measures” set up by the Computer Industry

The computer industry maintains that the R classification system will have in-built safety provisions, expressly to protect the young.

Yet, despite the safety measures claimed to have already been put in place by the computer industry, young children all around the world have been able to hack into systems with little effort. It recently took a young lad mere minutes to hack into a National Filtering system.

IDs are easily counterfeited and young adults can be careless with R rated films, leaving them around the house, not even thinking that younger siblings can easily get their hands on them. It is also easy to imagine a drunken or drug-induced “high” (or otherwise irresponsible) adult gamer playing an R rated computer game, forgetting that there is a younger person sitting close by, watching the game. These are real scenarios, and ones which should cause real concern.

Worse still, the OFLC says that they are **not in the business** of enforcing, or policing, people who break the law by supplying children with “Adult” material. This stated lack of responsibility is appalling, considering the fact that even those (like the police and other responsible adults) who **do** attempt to take it upon themselves to prevent children from gaining access to unsuitable products, such as cigarettes and alcohol, are by themselves fighting a losing battle. With such a denial of responsibility from an official body, where is the guarantee that the R classification for computer games will be any different?

“Stopping Piracy with the R Rating” Argument

Another weak argument from the computer game industry is that the introduction of the R Rating will stop piracy. This is weak, because those who illegally download computer games, already feel free to download **anything they wish** from the Internet, including music and movies. A recent lawsuit brought by Nintendo, against a young man, states that they had located about 50,000 Internet downloads of the innocent *Mario* game. Those who use pirated material do so **to save money** regardless of the content, and this is not going to change

“Standardising the Classification system so there is a same rating for all” Argument

This argument in favour of an R18+ computer game classification completely ignores the facts that:

1. Interactivity is more powerful than passive watching,
2. Computer simulations train the user in the practised behaviour, and
3. The user’s brain is trained to ignore the natural, human sympathy for victims of violence.

If an R18+ classification were to be introduced, would the currently classified MA15+ computer games be automatically placed in the R category, due to the intense nature of their content? We think not, despite the fact that there are good grounds to refuse them classification altogether, even now.

Interactive Nature of Computer Games

Computer games and films have historically had separate ratings because of the interactive nature of the former. Much more caution, is therefore required. The interactivity magnifies the impact, and other effects, on the viewer. It becomes virtual reality, with all the implications that follow. **Lt Col. Grossman** (see also below) contends that interactive video games constitute **violence simulators**, exactly like flight simulators used for training pilots. They act as an effective teaching aid for the behaviour being simulated. This alone should ring alarm bells for any concerned legislators.

“Australia the only Democratic Society without an R rating” Argument

MSA accepts that Australia is the only democratic country without an R rating in computer games. This does not automatically imply that our nation’s stance is wrong. Years ago in Tasmania, Martin Bryant went on a killing spree. It was found out subsequently that he had been fed on a diet of violent entertainment media. In response to this shocking knowledge, the then Prime Minister, John Howard, recalled automatic firearms through a buy-back scheme and placed a tough restriction on violent material. We may never appreciate what could have happened had this policy not been implemented. We do know, however, what has been happening in the U.S. where they do have an R rating in computer games. There are regular copycat shootings in shopping centres and schools.

Professor Brand’s contention, that Australia should have an R classification based on the fact that we are the only democratic country without one, is clearly nonsense.

- Australia does not need to be a sheep, following other nations wherever they may go,
- Consensus doesn't necessarily mean correctness,
- Australia's laws are for Australians alone to decide on, and no one else's precedent need be followed,
- Comparisons with the Classification guidelines of other countries are likely to be meaningless, considering the fact that different classifications mean different things in different countries.

Furthermore, the other countries with an R rating in computer games still had to ban several computer games for their content. Even in Professor Brand's own report, he quotes that 53 submissions from interested parties "sought restrictive classification in violence".

In an article in *The Australian* (7/4/2008), "*R-rated games a cave in to powerful interests*", Journalist Ross Fitzgerald points out, among other things, that Australia's censorship threshold is much lower than that of many other countries. We are, therefore, not directly comparing "apples with apples".

Expert Evidence and Studies

The Computer Game Industry will, no doubt, provide evidence to say that computer games are benign. These will be from health experts and will claim that they do not necessarily lead to aggression. **MSA would generally concur with that.**

However, it is the **level of violence** that concerns us, the **repetition of the violence** and also the **power of the interactive medium, in relation to impact.**

- Retired US army infantry officer and psychologist **Lt. Col. Dave Grossman** says that "through video games there was a learned behaviour". He also said, "There is a giant leap between being a normal citizen, and somebody who's able to take another human being's life". He called games such as "House of the Dead 2" murder simulators, just like flight simulators and driving simulators. Lt. Col. Grossman also said, "We are feeding our children death and horror and destruction, as entertainment".
- An interesting study by **Klaus Mathiak**, University of Aachen in Germany, found that simulated violence activated cognitive parts of the brain, while shutting down emotional centres, and that the human brain reacts to violent content within video games **as if it is for real.**

This proven effect on the brain demonstrates that interactive games have an effect on the brain similar to real exposure to violence. This has much more impact than the more passive, detached exposure to violence experienced by just watching violence on TV or film.

It further, and more disturbingly, shows that users are inured to the emotional effects of violence on the human being, thus de-sensitising them, and insulating them from the natural impulse towards compassion for the victims. **This aspect has highly dangerous ramifications for society.**

There are over 1,000 empirical studies about detrimental media effects, and, in particular, how violence in media causes aggression. The most particular concern, however, is the effect on those from violent backgrounds.

- In a study by Psychologist, Biologist and Criminologist, **Professor Kevin Browne**, Head of the Clinical Criminology Department, Birmingham University, it is shown that **those people who come from a home of domestic violence will be drawn to violent computer games and then take that aggression out into the streets.**
http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/podcasts/details/09_04_browne.php

- The Dunedin Multidisciplinary Health and Development Study

Dr Ritchie Poulton is in charge of the longest running, and largest, study in the world, of the Health and Development of Children. This is a longitudinal study based in Dunedin, New Zealand. Subjects were most recently tested at age 26. (See Appendix 2 for full description of study.)

This ongoing study has found that, for the 26 year olds:-

- The MAOA Gene was found to regulate brain serotonin levels.
- About 11% of males had adult convictions for violent crimes.
- There was no significant linear association between low or high serotonin/IQ levels or maltreatment & IQ levels.
- Poor Parental Guidance, abuse or mistreatment to children did NOT correlate to violence in later life.
- Poor Parental Guidance, abuse or mistreatment to children plus a low MAOA Gene activity (low serotonin level) DID CORRELATE to violent behaviour in later life.....IN 85% OF CASES!!
- The violent behavioural lineage could be followed down through previous generations.

From the information above it should seem fairly obvious just how important parental guidance is. Without it, youngsters, and teenagers, born with a defective MAOA gene (resulting in low serotonin levels to counteract the Dopamine & Adrenaline rush instigated by the Emigdula) WILL become EXTREMELY VIOLENT AND AGGRESSIVE INDIVIDUALS, well known to actively seek out what has been termed "toxic entertainment" in violent games, films, DVD's & music! It is obvious that providing more and more violent forms of computer games material is hardly likely to help improve an already serious situation.

<http://mediastandards.org/neuropsych.html>

- **Teens' brains aren't finished until 20-something!**

An article by Mara Rose Williams has shown that people don't reach full maturity until after they are at least 20. This explains why teenagers are so willing to take serious risks – making foolish judgements, indulging in risky behaviour, and experimenting with sex, drugs and alcohol.

Scientists have now made a connection. They've discovered that one of the last parts of the brain to mature is the prefrontal cortex -- the very part responsible for self-control, judgement, emotional regulation, organisation and planning.

"The teen-age brain is a work in progress," said Sandra Witelson, a neuroscientist at McMaster

University in Hamilton, Ontario, who has done research on the subject.
(See full article in Appendix 2)

In Australia, 18 year olds are already treated as adults, and the 18+ classification is designed for them. Yet, as this, and other studies have shown, brain maturity is not reached until well beyond the age of 18. This fact alone should prompt caution in relaxing legislation.

Computer Violence and Violent Crimes

Evidence abounds to show the link between violent media material and the criminal (and tragic) actions of some individuals:

- **18-year-old Devin Moore** said to police, “*Life is like a video game. Everybody’s got to die some time*”, after he was apprehended for fatally gunning down two police officers and an emergency dispatcher.

Moore’s comments to police suggested that he had been playing the video game *Grand Theft Auto—Vice City*, for hours on end, before the murders. Later, at trial, it was revealed that he was a compulsive, violent video game-player, who suffered from childhood abuse-related post-traumatic stress disorder. Moore’s defence attorneys argued the “*GTA* defence”— that he was not guilty by reason of insanity, and that he had lost touch with reality and was acting out, in real life, the virtual violence experienced in *Grand Theft Auto*.

- Wade Frankum was, like Australian Martin Bryant, a serial killer. Like Bryant, he was obsessed with violent pornography. As Journalist Robert Manne writes: “For unbalanced males like Wade Frankum, sexual and violent fantasy are obscurely connected parts of a pathological, psychic, whole...” He further states, “This is an advertising age. And yet in this one area of depicted violence and pornography- there is the claim that it has no effect. That it sways no one. There is a widespread refusal to acknowledge what is before our noses that depicted violence and pornography constitute one of the most important causes of psychopathology in contemporary life.”

These men were probably already unbalanced, but the obvious conclusion can still be drawn that this material was likely to be the final straw to push them over the edge.

- Games are a "big indicator of crime," says **Kym Worthy**, prosecuting attorney for Wayne County, which encompasses Detroit — which [a recent Congressional Quarterly study](#) called America’s "most dangerous city."

"No one can convince me that there isn’t a link between some of the gory, gritty, horrendous crime that we’ve been seeing in the past few years, particularly in the 18-25 year old group, [and] these games," she told Wired News.

Worthy says that she has seen "copycat crimes" in Detroit that "mimic" videogames.

(See full article in Appendix 2)

The Department of Correctional Services in Australia has policies that stipulate limitations on the media material to which convicted criminals are permitted to have access (see Appendix 2). This demonstrates at least a tacit **acknowledgement of the connection** between this violent and pornographic material, and the flow-on effects of criminal behaviour in society.

The Ubiquitous Reality of Virtual Games – Positives and Negatives

Virtual games, such as *World of Warcraft*, *The Sims*, and *Second Life*, are played by thousands, worldwide, every day, allowing people to connect and share information. In fact, the virtual "worlds" that can be created in these games are now being used to make money (through buying and selling virtual objects), to form partnerships and friendships, and even to conduct business; it is easy to see how many become engrossed in this alternative "life".

- In a report by Tara Brown, of *Sixty Minutes*, in 2003, **Bill Gates** admits that the "computer game industry is bigger than the movie industry", that "the games are becoming more realistic" and that "the key is to bring that level of realism to a point where people forget they're playing a game".

What happens, however, if such a person's computer is taken away, or its use is severely restricted?

- According to psychiatrist **Jerald J. Block, MD**, the sudden restriction of computer use may cause adverse reactions, and may have been a trigger in the Columbine High School shootings in 1998.

As he told *Psychiatric Times*, "There were several things that made Harris and Klebold change from bright children to terrorists. A childhood medical ailment, bullying, the copycatting of prior school shootings, mental illness, and alcohol abuse were all important factors."

However, the one factor Block believes has been neglected by investigators is the youths' **computer restrictions preceding the shootings**. Block found evidence, while looking through documents, including the boys' personal writings, that their use of computers was restricted at home (in Harris's case, this was at the recommendation of his therapist) and at school, with each restriction leading to more violent threats and behaviour from the adolescents.

(See full report in Appendix 2)

Violent computer games, therefore, not only cause concern regarding their content alone, but also by the nature of the violence combined with withdrawal from access to the "virtual reality" of the games, in some individuals.

Modern Computer Games and Ethical Concerns

At a recent Melbourne conference, **Jonathan Blow**, creator of upcoming time-bending game *Braid*, and a prominent independent games developer, labeled modern games such as *World of Warcraft* "unethical". Games can be art, but Jonathan is concerned about what they are really teaching players. "I believe that games are important to the future of humanity," Mr Blow says. "It sounds like a grand statement but it's obviously true for other forms of art that we're very familiar with. Films and novels have drastically shaped the society that we live in; without them our lives would be very different.

"I don't think games are there yet but if we are good about it we can develop games into a medium that's more relevant to the wide swathe of humanity." Mr Blow believes developers need to think about what their games are teaching players when they reward them for performing certain actions.

"That kind of reward system is very easily turned into a Pavlovian or Skinnerian scheme," he says. "It's considered best practice: schedule rewards for your player so that they don't get bored and give up on your game. That's actually exploitation."

Developers should provide activities that interest players "rather than stringing them along with little pieces of candy so that they'll suffer through terrible game play, but keep playing because they gain levels or new items", he says.

"I think a lot of modern game design is actually unethical, especially massively multiplayer games like *World of Warcraft*, because they are predicated on player exploitation," Mr Blow says.

He believes players will naturally avoid boring tasks, but developers "override that by plugging into their pleasure centres and giving them scheduled rewards and we convince them to pay us money and waste their lives in front of our game in this exploitative fashion".

He said that developers should design innovative, ethical and personal art because players are hungry for inspiring new games.

What would a change to the classification really mean?

MSA questions the effects of any change to the current Computer Games Classification system.

Of most serious concern is the fact that computer games such as *BMX XXX*, which features topless female riders and video clips of strippers, as well as the ultra-violent *Manhunt*, could begin to be sold in Australia.

<http://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/national/r-rated-games-could-get-nod/story-e6frf7l6-1225810391370>

Under the United States ESRB rating system, titles rated M (Mature) have content that are deemed suitable for persons aged 17 and older. Titles in this category may contain intense violence, blood and gore, sexual content, and/or strong language. One such game with the M rating, in the U.S., is *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas* which requires the player to steal a police SWAT team tank, machine-gun rival gang members and incinerate employees of a rival crack-dealer. Concerns that the games industry is failing to protect children are heightened with publicity surrounding cases such as that of Devin Moore (quoted previously) who claims that a previous version of *Grand Theft Auto* inspired him to kill three officers (two of them police) when he was only 16.

In addition, with games such as *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas*, MSA has noted the way pornography and violence has "crossed the line", despite the fact that the makers of *GTA* refuted any knowledge of the sexual content hidden in the programme. (See also Appendix 1)

It is highly questionable that Australia really needs these types of computer games to be more freely available. Sexual violence is already on the increase in our society, and violent computer games, including sexual content, combined with the interactive elements of the games, would only serve to make bad matters worse.

Furthermore, authorities would have no control over the access to R rated material, just as is already happening, at great cost, in our communities.

A positive outcome for all

The Australian Government is well-apprised of the dangers, to society, of the effects of violence practised, perfected, and then used against others. We trust that this current Discussion and Submission process will not lead to government acceptance of yet more damaging material being made available, under the guise of an R18+ classification category for computer games.

We contend that there is no real reason to allow an R rating in computer games, since the Computer Game Industry has not given any reasons that can withstand scrutiny, and nothing that can provide guarantees. In fact, the worrying trend of computer games is that 90 per cent of mature-rated computer games have some sort of violent theme, many have a sexual element, and killing is almost always seen as justified in the games. Furthermore, players are rewarded for their acts of violence.

There is a need, however, for the current computer game classification guidelines to be more accurately adhered to, and applied more rigorously, by judging each game on its own merits, and not tending to a softening of the parameters to please vested interests.

Technology is constantly changing and developing, as the computer industry strives for realism in its games. It is quite possible that the R rating of other countries could become problematic in the future and be removed, because of the concern that players are finding it hard to distinguish between what is real and what is not, and the effects on others in society. Australia need not be a sheep, following a trend that has negative consequences for the future.

MSA encourages the Australian Government to work with the Computer Games Industry, by setting up schemes and incentives for them to create non-violent games, which are interactive for families/students/schools, etc.

Thank you in anticipation,

Yours sincerely,



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Appendix 1 (of 2):

Games where people have taken video games into real life

Please note the ages of the people conducting the crimes!

COUNTERSTRIKE

Rating(s) ESRB: M
OFLC: MA15+
PEGI: 16+

30-Apr-2002 -- LifeSite News

HIGH SCHOOL SHOOTER IN GERMANY ADDICTED TO VIOLENT VIDEO GAMES

ERFURT, Germany, (LSN.ca) - Robert Steinhauser, the 19 year old former student who killed 16 people and injured 10 others in a shooting massacre at a high school in Germany was heavily involved in violent computer video games. Der Spiegel magazine reports that Steinhauser spent much of his time playing the games with his favourite being Counterstrike" in which anti-terror units wearing masks battle each other to death. Steinhauser also wore a black mask and dark clothes to carry out his attack.

<http://www.ewtn.com/vnews/getstory.asp?number=26063>

More from The Guardian UK.....

Robert's parents told the magazine that he had been obsessed with television and computer games for years, and was a particular fan of violent computer games. 'We tried to reduce his consumption,' said Mrs Steinhauser.

Yesterday Germany's conservative opposition called for a ban on the distribution of violent videos and restrictions on the broadcasting of violent television programmes.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2002/may/05/schools.education>

MANHUNT

Call to ban video game in UK after boy's murder

The Age, London July 29, 2004

Pressure is growing for a bloodthirsty video game to be banned after it was blamed for the horrific murder of a 14-year-old boy by an older friend.

Warren Leblanc, 17, faces life behind bars for repeatedly battering Stefan Pakeerah with a claw hammer and stabbing him to death after luring him to a local park. The Leicester teenager pleaded guilty to murder at Leicester Crown Court yesterday.

Outside the court, Stefan's parents said Leblanc had mimicked Manhunt - described by its promoters as "sado-masochistic" game in which players gain extra points depending on the viciousness of their killings.

One of the skills involves sneaking up behind a victim before attacking them.

The court heard yesterday that Leblanc had struck Stefan over the head with a claw hammer from behind, sparking the prolonged assault.

Stefan's mother Giselle claimed her son's "inherently evil" murderer was "obsessed" with the game and called for it to be banned.

It also emerged last night that the game was banned by censorship officials in New Zealand six months ago, while a US campaigner had written to its producers warning the "murder simulator" could lead to copycat killings.

"The way Warren committed the murder this is how the game is set out, killing people using weapons like hammers and knives," Stefan's father, Patrick said. "There is some connection between the game and what he has done."

[MSA Comment](#)

The British Board of Film Classification (BBFC) classified this computer game 18 and it should not have been in the possession of a juvenile.

Teens bring Grand Theft Auto to life on crime rampage

By Kieran Crowley June 28, 2008 01:22am Article from: [Herald Sun](#)

[BBFC: 18](#)^{[8][9]}
[ESRB: M](#)
[OFLC: MA15+ \(cut and uncut versions\)](#)^{[10][11]}
[OFLC: R18](#)^[12] NZ
[PEGI: 18+](#)^[13]

THE world's top-selling video game has been blamed for a two-hour crime rampage by a gang of six teens in New York.

The gang decided to take *Grand Theft Auto IV* from the television screen to the streets of Long Island.

In the video game, which has sold more than 8.5 million copies worldwide, players shoot police, sell drugs and car-jack vehicles.

The game, released in Australia last month, is the No 1-selling game on the Xbox 360 console and is rated MA15+ in Australia,

In the real-life re-enactment of the game, the crazed youths' rampage involved mugging, several break-ins and an attempted car-jacking in Garden City.

"They decided they were going to go out to commit robberies and emulate the character Nico Belic in the particularly violent video game *Grand Theft Auto*," said Nassau County Police detective-lieutenant Raymond Cote.

"These teens have difficulty separating fact from fiction, fantasy from reality. It was quite alarming."

Police said that the rampage began at 11.30pm on Tuesday when teenagers Brandon Cruz, 15, Gurnoor Singh, 14, Samuel Philip, 16, and Jaspreet Singh, 17, were sitting in Memorial Park in New Hyde Park looking for something to do.

Police said the youths decided to act out the game, in which players live out the life of Belic, an Eastern European criminal who uses murder and robbery to rise to the top of the underworld in "Liberty City", which has a close similarity to New York City.

"They were bored and decided this was a good idea," Lt Cote said.

According to police, the boys first mugged a man at a bus stop near the park, beat him and knocked out some teeth.

They then broke into some sheds and garages, stole bats and crowbars and met up with a couple more teens to continue the rampage.

The six then attempted to stage some car-jackings in Garden City. It was game over when one of their would-be victims - a 23-year-old woman in a 2008 BMW - called the police, who quickly arrested them.

All four of the original teen plotters were arrested, along with the two youths who joined them, Stephen Attard, 18, and Dylan Laird, 17.

They were all charged with first-degree robbery, except for Jaspreet Singh, who was charged with possession of stolen property. Other charges were pending.

Police would not say specifically how they knew the teens' crimes were motivated by *Grand Theft Auto* and not by some other motive. They said they discovered it during their investigation.

New York Post

AND... ..

From Times Online August 4, 2008

http://technology.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/tech_and_web/article4457144.ece

Grand Theft Auto withdrawn in Thailand after copycat killing

Thai distributors have pulled GTA IV after a 19-year-old killed a taxi driver while recreating a scene from the game



(Reuters) Police officers watch as Polwat Chino (second from right) re-enacts his attack on a Taxi driver in Bangkok

Jonathan Richards

One of the largest video game distributors in Asia has halted sales of the *Grand Theft Auto IV* in Thailand after a teenager confessed to robbing and murdering a taxi driver while trying to recreate a scene from the game.

New Era Interactive said it had sent a note to all of its Thai stores telling them to pull the game off the shelves after a 19-year old high-school student confessed to killing a taxi driver with a knife he bought at a local branch of Tesco.

Police in Bangkok said that the youth "had wanted to find out if it was as easy in real life to rob a taxi as it was in the game."

"We are urging all video game arcades to pull the game from service," said a spokesman for New Era Interactive, which has offices in Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Indonesia, and the Philippines.

Polwat Chino, described by his parents as polite and diligent, was arrested late on Saturday after he was found trying to steer a cab backwards out of a Bangkok street with the severely wounded driver in the back seat, according to local newspaper reports.

He had paid to play the game at a local shop in Bangkok, and said he had needed more cash to continue playing it and that the taxi driver looked like an easy target.

Neighbours in the Bang Phlad district in central Bangkok called police after Mr Chino was heard pressing the car's horn while reversing down a dead end street. He had been trying to drive away - apparently in an attempt to recreate a scene from the game in which a criminal steals a car to evade police - but was unable to control a real car, police said.

The victim, a 54-year-old man from the poor northern province of Maha Sarakham, had been stabbed ten times.

A police spokesman said Mr Chino, an obsessive player of *Grand Theft Auto*, showed no sign of mental problems during questioning and had confessed to committing the crime because of the game.

In a statement, Mr Chino told police: "I needed money to play the game every day. My parents give me only 100 baht a day, which is not enough. I am also fed up with them fighting. They are civil servants and do not make good money."

"My mother gave me 500 baht, so in the evening I went to the Tesco Lotus superstore and bought two knives." Police have charged Mr Chino with robbery, causing death and possessing offensive weapons. If found guilty, he faces death by lethal injection.

A senior official at Thailand's Culture Ministry, which has been pursuing tougher regulation of violent games such as *Grand Theft Auto*, said the murder was a wake-up call for authorities, and urged parents to take note of what their children were playing.

"This time-bomb has already exploded and the situation could get worse," the official was quoted as saying. "Today it is a cab driver but tomorrow it could be a video game shop owner." Thai authorities have been pushing for a rating system on video games, as well as restrictions on how long youths can spend playing games in video arcades.

Grand Theft Auto, which is published by the Scottish company Rockstar and has raised more than \$1 billion (£500 million) this year, has been criticised for depicting violent scenes such as beatings, car-jackings, and drive-by shootings.

A spokesman for Rockstar could not immediately be reached for comment.

Simon Everitt's alleged killers 'copied scenes from horror film'

By staff writers and wires NEWS.com.au April 29, 2009 07:33am

<http://www.news.com.au/murder-accused-copied-horror-film/story-0-1225704734153>



Grisly ... the court heard that Everitt's death was inspired by the 2006 film *Severance* / Dan Films

A TEENAGER had petrol poured down his throat and was set on fire in a murderous re-enactment of a spoof horror movie, a British court has heard.

Simon Everitt, 17, was lured to a meeting and attacked after beginning a relationship with Fiona Statham, 19, prosecutor Karim Khalil told a court in Norwich.

Jimi-Lee Stewart, 25, and Jonathan Clarke, 19 - who had both been involved with Miss Statham - are said to have then thrown him into the boot of a car driven by a friend, Maria Chandler, 40.

The group drove Everitt to a wooded area near Great Yarmouth in Norfolk where their victim's hands and ankles were bound and he was doused in petrol before a burning match was thrown at him, the court was told.

The court heard the gang later returned to the spot and dragged the engineering student's body to a shallow grave nearby, [Britain's Daily Mail reports](#).

Everitt's remains were not found until three weeks after he disappeared, the court was told.

Mr Stewart, Ms Chandler and Mr Clarke all deny murder.

Mr Khalil said the attack was inspired by a scene from the 2006 Christopher Smith movie *Severance*, in which a young man is similarly tied to a tree and set ablaze.

"It recreates, doesn't it, some of the worst aspects of the film," Mr Khalil said, after showing jurors at Norwich Crown Court a clip from the movie.

"When Mr Clarke watched that DVD he made a comment to this effect: 'Wouldn't it be wicked if you could actually do that to someone in real life?'," Mr Khalil said, quoting a woman who had watched the film with Mr Clarke, a father of five, about a year before the killing.

Thousands of P-plate time bombs who must wake up to themselves

<http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/thousands-of-p-plate-time-bombs-who-must-wake-up-to-themselves/story-e6freuy9-1225828935560>

By Rhys Haynes and Chelsea White From: [The Daily Telegraph](#) February 11, 2010 12:00AM



Inexperienced ... P-platers (L to R) Joshua Thomson, 19, Kylie Junge, 19, Casey Pringle , 18 and Dean Lowe, 19 / Pic: Robert Mckell *Source: The Daily Telegraph*

MORE than 6000 P-platers were caught speeding last year, with a further 1000 fined for drink driving or breaking strict curfew laws, according to exclusive police data.

Young drivers yesterday admitted their peers lacked experience, showed off to their mates while behind the wheel, were too young to drive and needed to wake up to themselves.

Dean Lowe, 19, from Belmont North, said P-platers needed to understand they were not only endangering their own lives but the lives of others on the roads.

"I think people need to realise what is going on and need to wake up to themselves," the green P-plate driver said. "They're trying to impress their friends and it's stupid. I don't want to be injured because of someone else's stupidity."

The data shows P1 drivers copped 2786 fines for exceeding their maximum speed of 90 km/h in 2009, with 540 caught speeding this year.

Police also said 3401 drivers with P2 licences had been fined for breaking the 100 km/h maximum in 2009, with 714 caught so far this year.

The alarming statistics also show that 501 with L or P plates were caught drink-driving with a PCA of zero to 0.02, and 61 were under the influence this year.

And there were 496 P1 licence holders younger than 25 who in 2009 broke a curfew and drove between 11pm and 5am with more than one passenger younger than 21. So far police have caught 79 this year.

Sydney teenager Bilal Said has only had his licence for just over three months but said he couldn't imagine his life without his car.

"I would die without my licence," the 17-year-old from Lakemba said.

With both his friends without licences - one lost his Ps only recently - it is up to him to drive them around.

"It is peer pressure (that leads to crashes). They try to show off in front of their mates and stuff," he said.

Casey Pringle, 18, believes P-platers, including herself, are not experienced enough to be trusted fully on the roads. Ms Pringle, from Branxton, said the legal age for learning to drive should be increased because 16 was too young to start to learn how to drive and being in control of a car on their own at 17 could be dangerous.

"I wouldn't say I'm a very good driver but I try to be careful. We just don't have enough experience or self-control. I don't think there would be so many car crashes if we were experienced enough," Casey said. "They just want to show off."

NSW Police Commissioner Andrew Scipione yesterday said teenagers caught driving recklessly could be being influenced by video games.

"Slamming into a pole isn't fixed by simply resetting the PlayStation, it's game over."

The commissioner said the recent spate of crashes involving P-players was shocking.

"We're certainly seeing more younger drivers being involved in serious accidents," he said.

In 2009 there were 21 fatalities from P1 driver crashes and 38 fatalities from P2 driver crashes. Up to February 7 there have been 12 fatalities from P1 crashes and seven from P2 crashes.

Taser stash lands Jackass fan in strife

Bellinda Kontominas July 18, 2008 - 6:50AM

<http://www.theage.com.au/national/taser-stash-lands-jackass-fan-in-strife-20080717-3gie.html>

AT AN alcohol-fuelled house party Tiernan Quinn and a group of friends used a taser-style device to shock each other in dares similar to those shown in the television series Jackass.

Later, when a passer-by, Ali Gungor, insulted a group of men standing outside the Darlinghurst property, he was set upon in a vicious attack - punched, kicked and then shocked with the taser on his neck and back.

Yesterday Quinn, 26, was sentenced in the Downing Centre Local Court to 200 hours' community service and a \$2500 fine for being an accessory after the fact to the assault occasioning actual bodily harm, and for possessing 10 taser-style guns known as anti-personnel devices.

The court heard Quinn came to possess the tasers after a work friend brought them back from China, where they are legal.

Quinn's lawyer, Gerard Mitchell, told the court: "He said, stupidly, [that] he'd have some; maybe his friends might like some." Mr Mitchell said that the first time Quinn had opened any of the weapons was during the party and that they were used by some of those present to "periodically shock each other".

"I'm not sure if Your Honour has seen the movie called Jackass?" he asked. The magistrate, David Heilpern, replied that he had seen the show with his two sons and tended to "enjoy them myself".

Mr Mitchell said his client had not been involved in the physical altercation which resulted in Mr Gungor being taken to hospital.

He said Quinn had pulled his two friends, brothers Sam and James Nott, off the man. The court heard that James Nott, considered the "major protagonist", was sentenced to 200 hours' community service, while Sam Nott was dealt with under mental health laws.

Mr Mitchell said Quinn had initially lied to police about what had happened but later co-operated fully, providing DNA samples and alerting them to the whereabouts of the other weapons.

Since the incident, Quinn had distanced himself from the other two offenders, had cut down on his drinking and had been seeing a counsellor and life coach in an attempt to "move on in a positive way".

Mr Heilpern said the offence appeared to be "completely out of character".

He accepted that the weapons were not as dangerous as the higher voltage police tasers but said the offence had to be treated seriously as the weapons were illegal in Australia.

Police curious about similarities between deadly beating and video game

December 08, 2002 By Ken Kolker, The Grand Rapids Press
http://www.thefreeradical.ca/Grand_Theft_Auto_similarities.htm

In his blue race-car slippers, 4-year-old Tyler Robinson's focus is on the big-screen TV, where "Grand Theft Auto: Vice City" takes him to a sinister world.

It is one of his favorite places to go after preschool.

Armed with a PlayStation 2 controller, Tyler becomes a gangster who runs down pedestrians with a car then gets out to pound them with video fists. He can even shoot cops and prostitutes with make-believe Uzis.

It was at Tyler's Wyoming home where fantasy may have brushed up against reality.

Two men accused of running down Jerry Steinberg with a car, then beating and kicking him into a coma, visited the boy's home about two hours before the Nov. 17 attack.

They had spent part of the previous night drinking beer and playing "Grand Theft Auto III" at another Wyoming home, friends and relatives of one of the suspects have said.

After attacking Steinberg, they played the video game again, police were told.

Meanwhile, about five miles away, Steinberg's family gathered at Saint Mary's Mercy Medical Center, where hospital monitors surrounded the slenderly built man.

Doctors told them Steinberg had less than a 10 percent chance of survival. The 38-year-old father of three died six days later.

Wyoming Police Lt. Paul Robinson said detectives are intrigued by the possibility that Brian Davidson, 24, and his alleged accomplice, 18-year-old Michael Emery, of Kentwood, were playing out a scene from Grand Theft Auto. Steinberg apparently was an arbitrary victim -- in the wrong place at the wrong time.

"It certainly is an interesting twist," Robinson said. "You can certainly see the parallels."

Considering the violence of today's video games, Robinson said, he wouldn't be surprised by such a link.

"When we were kids, we played cops and robbers, and we always wanted to be the cops," he said. "The cops were the good guys. Look at what this game portrays. The good guy is the killer."

Grand Theft Auto III is the third in a series of *Grand Theft Auto* video games. It has been the top-selling video game in recent years, but was banned in Australia for its sexual violence.

The fourth and latest edition, "Vice City," includes the music of Ozzy Osbourne and Michael Jackson. It is among the Top 12 most violent toys and games of this Christmas season, according to a watchdog group.

"Grand Theft Auto III" and "Vice City" carry a "Mature" rating for audiences 17 and older.

The men charged with killing Steinberg last month embraced the games -- as did friends and family, according to those who move in their circles.

Indeed, similarities between the game and what happened to Steinberg are uncanny, police say.

In the game, players use cars to run down pedestrians. They can choose the "fist" symbol to beat victims, leaving a bloody body on the sidewalk or street.

It sounds a lot like what happened to Steinberg shortly after 5 a.m. on Nov. 17, police said.

Davidson was driving his dark blue Honda Accord, police said, when he and Emery saw a potential target: a Press carrier delivering Sunday's paper on a bicycle south of 36th Street near South Division Avenue. She apparently was spared because somebody in the car knew her.

Next they spied a couple strolling through a restaurant parking lot. As the Honda raced towards them, the couple jumped to safety, police said.

Then there was Steinberg, riding his bike on Walter Street, just east of South Division. The Honda slammed into Steinberg, police said, sending him to the ground. Steinberg was unconscious when his attackers returned a short time later, now joined by two females.

But this was not a mission of mercy -- the men and one of the girls, 16-year-Natasha Toothman, took turns stomping and punching Steinberg, police said. He suffered at least 20 blows, fracturing his skull, breaking his nose and four ribs.

The suspects never told police they were re-enacting the game. But attorney John Beason, who is defending Davidson, said he also is intrigued by possible parallels. Although he isn't familiar with *Grand Theft Auto*, he said he plans to rent it to see for himself.

"I'm going to get my grandson to show me how to play it," said Beason, whose grandson is 23 years old.

'Dirty Dozen'

"Grand Theft Auto: Vice City" made this year's "Dirty Dozen" list of violent "toys to avoid" published by the Lion & Lamb Project, a Maryland-based watchdog group.

Group founder Daphne White said she's not surprised such violent games could be connected to real-life violence.

But research cannot provide a direct link between video games and violence, White acknowledged. "The video game industry will say we can't prove it. That's true, but the correlations are there."

A spokeswoman for Take-Two Interactive Software Inc., the New York-based parent company of Rockstar North, which created the *Grand Theft Auto* series, refused to comment on the potential link to the death.

She also refused to comment about violence in the game. "We would like to extend our deepest sympathies to those affected by these tragic events," spokeswoman Dawn Berrie wrote in an e-mail response.

Other possible factors

Friends and relatives of the Wyoming suspects said if the game played a role in the attack, it was minor. Alcohol and other factors contributed, they contend.

Besides being drunk, Davidson, who was unemployed, was dealing with the break-up of his marriage and was unable to see his young child, friends said. As his marriage dissolved, he returned this summer to Wyoming after living with his family in Mount Pleasant.

Davidson told investigators he punched Steinberg and kicked him, police said in a court affidavit.

Toothman admitted kicking the man two to four times in the head, police said. The tiny, brown-haired 16-year-old from Wyoming has a history of assaults dating back to when she was 11.

Emery has refused to talk with police.

For Davidson and his friends, it wasn't unusual to party into the early morning, which is what they did on Sunday, Nov. 17, according to those with them.

For part of the night, they were drinking beer and playing Grand Theft Auto III on the big-screen TV at a home on Eastern Avenue SE near 36th Street, according to James "Pudgy" Robinson, Davidson's childhood friend.

Davidson, Toothman, Emery and Emery's girlfriend, 18-year-old Krystyne Kiogima, were among the group, said Robinson, 24.

In the wee hours of the morning, Davidson, Emery and the women left, he said. Kiogima and Toothman were dropped off at Toothman's home nearby. Davidson and Emery then drove off.

Davidson grew up in Wyoming and attended Godwin Heights High School. He was a scrawny kid but wanted to box and later joined the Golden Gloves, recalled David Robinson, the brother of James Robinson.

Davidson is now 6 feet tall and weighs 265 pounds with tattoos up and down his arms. He has a history of minor crimes, including marijuana possession.

About 3 a.m. Nov. 17, Davidson and Emery appeared on David Robinson's doorstep in a working-class Wyoming neighbourhood of older homes. Robinson's son, Tyler, slept inside. The two-story home on Burt Street SE is just two blocks from where Steinberg was staying.

Though "stumbling drunk" and carrying a bottle of Budweiser, Davidson was allowed inside. Emery, however, was told to stay on the porch -- "I didn't know him," said David Robinson's wife, Tracy.

Like Davidson, Emery also has a criminal history, but with more serious offenses including burglary and car theft.

Davidson had a favour to ask. His estranged wife wanted to have a tattoo party. The Robinsons agreed to host it at their home the following weekend.

After the 10-minute visit, Davidson and Emery left in Davidson's car.

Police believe the two then started targeting pedestrians.

John Marzean, 22, said he was pushing his bicycle while walking a girl home shortly after 5 a.m. when he spotted the blue Honda Accord with a loud exhaust. It came at them in the parking lot of Wendy's restaurant.

The driver, Marzean said, had "an angry look on his face." They barely escaped.

Marzean owns one of the earlier versions of *Grand Theft Auto* and knows the game well. "It felt like the same exact thing," he said.

Steve Robinson, the brother of James and David, said the three suspects and Kiogima stopped by his house either Sunday or early Monday. He had heard nothing about the beating, and nobody talked about it, he said.

They played euchre and *Grand Theft Auto III* on his big-screen TV, he said.

"It's a game that everyone plays," Steve Robinson said. "Who doesn't play it?"

But, he said, everyone knows it's just fantasy.

"Real life is working 12 hours a day and paying my bills," he said. "There are (video) games where you can jump off buildings and not get hurt. Do you see kids doing that?"

About 3 a.m. Tuesday, Nov. 19, Wyoming Police Officer Shad McGinnis was working radar patrol on Eastern Avenue SE, south of 36th, when he spotted a blue Honda Accord with flip-up headlights and a loud exhaust.

He stopped the car, which matched the description of the vehicle in Sunday's attack. McGinnis should know -- he was the first officer on the scene of the beating two days earlier.

Tracy Robinson said she couldn't believe it when she saw Brian Davidson on the news, accused in the Sunday attack.

"I was speechless," she said. "That's not him. He's a sweetheart, very polite, very respectful."

But there is another side of Davidson, her husband said. He likes to fight, he said, and he's easily influenced.

"Brian is the kind of person, who, once he starts to fight, he's a knockout person. He hits hard, he kicks hard, he goes to the extreme," David Robinson said.

What's real, what's not?

Tracy Robinson said the game should not be blamed for the death.

"It doesn't take a genius to figure out it's just a game," she said. "If you can't figure out what's real and what's not, don't play it."

At age 4, her son, Tyler, has become good at "Grand Theft Auto: Vice City."

He was playing it last week after preschool when his father took the controller to demonstrate the game.

The player is a gangster and earns money for his sinister acts. He can get ahead in the game by hiring a prostitute, then beating her to get his money back.

"You can choose guns, Uzis, swords, Molotov cocktails," David Robinson said. "Here, I'm going to blow up a boat. Watch it sink."

"It's sinking," his son pointed out.

David Robinson chose a sword as his weapon and slashed at a make-believe man. Blood squirted from his victim.

"Any car that comes by, I can steal it," he said. "There's a person, I just ran him over. I can just run down the sidewalk and run over anybody."

David Robinson said he believes the game isn't bad for his son. "This doesn't teach him anything," he said. "I teach him everything he knows."

"Daddy, you're dying," the boy pointed out as his father's character was shot repeatedly.

"He can play this game all day long, but he knows I've got shotguns and rifles in the closet," his father said. "He won't touch them. He knows they kill."

Grand Theft Auto a Bad Influence

Author: Craig Lyndall – **Published:** Oct 23, 2003 at 2:15 pm
<http://blogcritics.org/scitech/article/grand-theft-auto-a-bad-influence/>

'Grand Theft' under fire in suit

CHICAGO (Reuters) - A fatal sniping spree by two teen-age Tennessee boys who said they were mimicking the video game "Grand Theft Auto III" has triggered a \$246 million damage lawsuit against the game's creator and others.

One person was killed and another wounded in the incident last June.

The case, filed Monday in Cocke County Circuit at Newport, Tennessee, named Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc., a unit of Sony Corp. (SNE: Research, Estimates), Rockstar Games, a subsidiary of Take-Two Interactive Software Inc. (TTWO: Research, Estimates), and Wal-Mart Stores Inc. (WMT: Research, Estimates), which sold the game, the parents of the two boys involved, and the boys themselves.

The lawsuit alleges that the parties being challenged should have known the game would lead to "copycat violence."

The boys in a court appearance in August admitted they traded off firing a rifle from a wooded hilltop overlooking a highway, killing Canadian Aaron Hamel, 45, and wounding a woman motorist. A passenger riding with Hamel was also injured when his car ran off the road.

Prosecutor Al Schmutzer said the boys told authorities they were mimicking the video game by trying to hit the sides of passing trucks.

Joshua and William Buckner, 14 and 16 years old, respectively, have been ordered held until they reach age 19 after pleading guilty to reckless homicide, aggravated assault and reckless endangerment.

The suit was filed on behalf of Hamel's parents, the wounded motorist and two people who were passengers in each of their vehicles. It seeks \$200 million in punitive damages and \$46 million in actual damages.

Take-Two said it would seek a dismissal of the suit.

"The Company believes that the claims against it are without merit and are similar to lawsuits brought and uniformly dismissed by courts in other jurisdictions where the plaintiffs' sought to hold entertainment companies responsible for the violent behavior of individuals who used those company's products," Take-Two said in a statement.

Appendix 2 (of 2):

Miscellaneous Studies, etc.

The Dunedin Multidisciplinary Health and Development Study

Dr Ritchie Poulton is in charge of the longest running, and largest, study in the world, of the Health and Development of Children. The Dunedin Multidisciplinary Health and Development Study was constituted when participants were aged 3 and consisted of a cohort of consecutive births between April 1972 and March 1973 in the town of Dunedin in New Zealand. The cohort was representative of the full range of socio-economic status of the general population of New Zealand's south island. Comprehensive follow-ups have been carried out at ages 3,5,7,9,11,13,15,18,21 and most recently at age 26. DNA extraction and genotyping was carried out in the most recent follow-up. Samples were taken from the 953 individuals which represented 97% surviving to this age and of the group 51% were male and 49% female. Childhood maltreatment during the first decade of life (age 3 - 11) had been ascertained. The possible mediating impacts of low or high IQ were tested against enzymatic activity of serotonin levels. Regression analysis found no significant linear association between low or high serotonin and IQ level or maltreatment and IQ. Anti-social behavioural outcomes were measured from independent data sources in adolescence and in adulthood at ages 11,13,15 & 18. A "lifetime" conduct disorder was diagnosed if there was a persistent pattern of behavior that violated the rights of others, including physical harm, measured according to the criteria of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV). According to the DSM, conduct disorder is not usually diagnosed after the age of 18. For the ages greater than 18, Court records for violent convictions were searched from the Australian and New Zealand Police. About 11% of males had 174 convictions for violent crimes (e.g. Common and aggravated assault, weapons injury, domestic violence, manslaughter and rape). Symptoms of Anti-social personality disorder were also ascertained by questionnaire and by psych interview.

This ongoing study has found that the 26 year olds had:-

- The MAOA Gene was found to regulate brain serotonin levels.
- About 11% of males had adult convictions for violent crimes.
- No significant linear association between low or high serotonin/IQ levels or maltreatment & IQ levels.
- Poor Parental Guidance, abuse or mistreatment to children did NOT correlate to violence in later life.
- Poor Parental Guidance, abuse or mistreatment to children + a low MAOA Gene activity (low serotonin level) DID CORRELATE to violent behavior in later life.....IN 85% OF CASES!!
- The violent behavioural lineage could be followed down through previous generations.

Removal of Access to Computer Games and Columbine Massacre

Study by Psychiatrist Jerald J. Block, MD,

In an article published in *The American Journal of Forensic Psychiatry*, and subsequently reported on in the *Denver Post*, Block details the possible motivations behind Columbine shooters Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris's attacks. He explores many possible motivations behind the shootings, which killed 15 and injured 24, including traumatic childhoods, bad parenting, psychosis, bullying, copycat killing, and peer pressure. As he told *Psychiatric Times*, "There were several things that made Harris and Klebold change from bright children to terrorists. A childhood medical ailment, bullying, the copycatting of prior school shootings, mental illness, and alcohol abuse were all important factors."

However, the one factor Block believes has been neglected by investigators, is the youths' **computer restrictions preceding the shootings**. Block found evidence, while looking through documents, including the boys' personal writings, that their use of computers was restricted at home (in Harris's case, this was at the recommendation of his therapist) and at school, with each restriction leading to more violent threats and behaviour from the adolescents.

Klebold and Harris were known to be avid players of a computer game, *Doom*. They often made references to the game in their writings, and created levels and characters to share with others on the Internet. "The amount of time spent playing could have led to confusion between the virtual world and reality", Block notes. He cites dreams that Harris wrote of in class papers. "Harris wrote of a dream in which he and a friend were attacked by Doom-like 'shadows that seemed to have evil, demented inhabitants' that made an 'evil growling.'"

Yet, Block does not believe that the boys necessarily "acted out" because of the violence they viewed through the computer screen. "The computer acts like a heat sink for aggressive, depressed, angry, and sexual emotions," he told *Psychiatric Times*. He noted that restricting computer use in a person, **who uses the computer as an outlet for his or her emotions**, may be "profoundly upsetting." As a result, the gamer may feel attacked, underestimated, and misunderstood. Without their computers to turn to, Harris and Klebold may have focused their aggression on the real world.

Teens' brains aren't finished until 20 - something!

Area that regulates judgment is the last to reach maturity.
Knight Ridder Newspapers

By Mara Rose Williams,

(Published September 25, 2000)

KANSAS CITY, Mo. -- On the outside, teen-agers appear to be nearly grownup. But inside the skull, a vital part of their brain is closer to a child's than an adult's.

New findings in neuroscience and pediatric psychiatry link brain immaturity to teens making foolish judgments and reckless decisions. Some teens have sex too soon. Some experiment with drugs and alcohol. Some see how far their car will fly on a hilly road.

Adults have long been puzzled about why otherwise "good" kids -- smart kids -- take deadly

chances. But now scientists have made a connection. They've discovered that one of the last parts of the brain to mature is the prefrontal cortex -- the very part responsible for self-control, judgment, emotional regulation, organisation and planning.

"The teen-age brain is a work in progress," said Sandra Witelson, a neuroscientist at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario, who has done research on the subject.

The old belief was, that by the time a child reached the age of puberty, the brain's hardware was completely connected. But by using magnetic resonance imaging, researchers got pictures that helped prove that the brain has a good deal of developing to do well beyond the start of adolescence. The brain does reach about 95% of its maturation by age 5. But the corpus callosum, a cable of nerves that connects the right and left halves of the brain, continues growing beyond 20-something. The corpus callosum is linked to intelligence, consciousness and self-awareness. The prefrontal cortex matures the most between the ages of 12 and 20. Add to this brew of disconnected neurons a healthy dose of active hormones spiked with the power of peer pressure and a need for autonomy. That can be a recipe for risky teen-age behaviour.

CHILDREN DO NOT FAVOUR VIOLENT CONTENT - Canadian National Survey

http://interact.uoregon.edu/MediaLit/CAMEO/CTFsurvey/kids_take_on_media.pdf

Canadian children's and adolescents' attitudes and behaviour regarding media is wide-ranging. The *Canadian Teachers Federation* has released the results of *Kids take on the Media*, a landmark national survey of students in Grades 3 to 10. 75% favoured "exciting and funny", with "violent" coming in last. However 75% of Grades 7 - 10 (especially boys) watch restricted movies at home.

More than half students surveyed in Grades 7 - 10 say they had witnessed real acts of violence that mimicked computer games ... and young people acknowledge a need for supervision. They consider that younger children should not be watching *The Simpsons*, etc. They also recognised the power of interactivity in video games, saying there should be tighter restrictions on mature-rated video and computer games than on R-rated films.

Detroit Prosecutor: Videogames Are 'Big Indicator Of Crime'

- By [Susan Arendt](#) December 4, 2007 |



Detroit's plan to cut crime? Crack down on violent videogames.

Games are a "big indicator of crime," says Kym Worthy, prosecuting attorney for Wayne County, which encompasses Detroit — which [a recent Congressional Quarterly study](#) called America's "most dangerous city."

"No one can convince me that there isn't a link between some of the gory, gritty, horrendous crime that we've been seeing in the past few years, particularly in the 18-25 year old group, [and] these games," she told Wired News.

This week, Worthy released a list of ten games she thinks parents should avoid buying for their children this holiday season. It includes games such as *Grand Theft Auto* and *Scarface*.

Worthy says that she has seen "copycat crimes" in Detroit that "mimic" videogames.

"I'm telling you, things are getting much more gory, much more horrific...I'm not saying it's the only link, I'm not saying that it's a direct link, but it's there," she says.

Worthy puts out her list every year to help warn parents about the type of games their children might be playing. All of the games on the list are M-rated, and therefore not actually intended for children, but Worthy brushes such arguments aside.

"That means nothing to me really, because we have kids playing these games who are under the age of being mature," she says.

Worthy writes off any arguments that violent games are a way to act out aggression in a safe environment. These, she says, are "silly" arguments made to justify a "billion-dollar industry based on the most violent of scenarios."

"Why can't they just go play football?" she asks. "I don't understand why anyone would want to be a part of glorifying violence."

The use of the word "game" to describe something like *Manhunt*, she says, is "very disturbing."

"A game to me is Candyland, Monopoly, the games we used to play as a child. Scrabble. These are games."

To compile the list, Worthy had Detroit-based "community research group" Hood Research poll members of the Detroit community about the violent games they played and wanted.

Other games on Worthy's list include *50 Cent Bulletproof*, *God of War*, and *300*.

It also, amusingly, features [long-forgotten titles like *Killer 7*](#), which no parent was ever in danger of buying their child this holiday.

While Worthy says that she is aware that there are many newer, more popular titles that are not on the list, a gag order on a case with which she is currently involved prevents her from mentioning those games, she says.

Although her list is numbered, it is not meant to be perceived as a ranking of any kind. But Worthy did say that *Grand Theft Auto* belongs at the top of the list because of its glorification of "carjacking" and other violent crimes.

Worthy says she finds the ability to kill a prostitute after engaging her services in GTA particularly abhorrent. "It rewards you, give you points for mistreating the woman after you've had your way with her," she says.

As passionate about she is about the link she is certain exists between violent games and real-world crime, Worthy says she limits her efforts to underage players.

"I can't monitor, nor would I want to, what adults are doing," she says.

<http://www.wired.com/gamelife/2007/12/prosecutor-kym/>

MSA Comment

Worthy's final comment is more of the same thinking that allows this type of material to be available in huge amounts in society. Adults do not, in fact, have the right to do exactly as they desire, since some actions are demonstrably detrimental to society.

Australian Prisons Act Limitations

Permitted and Prohibited Material (Prisons Act [Section 95](#) Refers)

Type	Classification	Permitted	Supt's Discretion	Prohibited	
Computer Games	G - General	Permitted			
	PG - Parental Guidance	Permitted			
	M - Mature		Discretionary		
	MA(15+) - Mature Accompanied		Discretionary		
	RC - Refused Classification			Prohibited	

http://www.correctiveservices.wa.gov.au/dcsrules/ac_rules/policy_directives/PD_02_-_Use_of_Computers_by_Prisoners.htm

MSA Comment

MSA believes that this policy is at least an acknowledgement of the clear connection between the use of adult-rated material and criminal behaviour, despite the fact that some MA classified material is permitted in prison facilities. We question the necessity for this inclusion of MA material in the policy, and can only trust that the discretionary powers are always used wisely.