

Violent video games remain hotly debated, very popular

Some argue the games incite violence but others say they can't be censored

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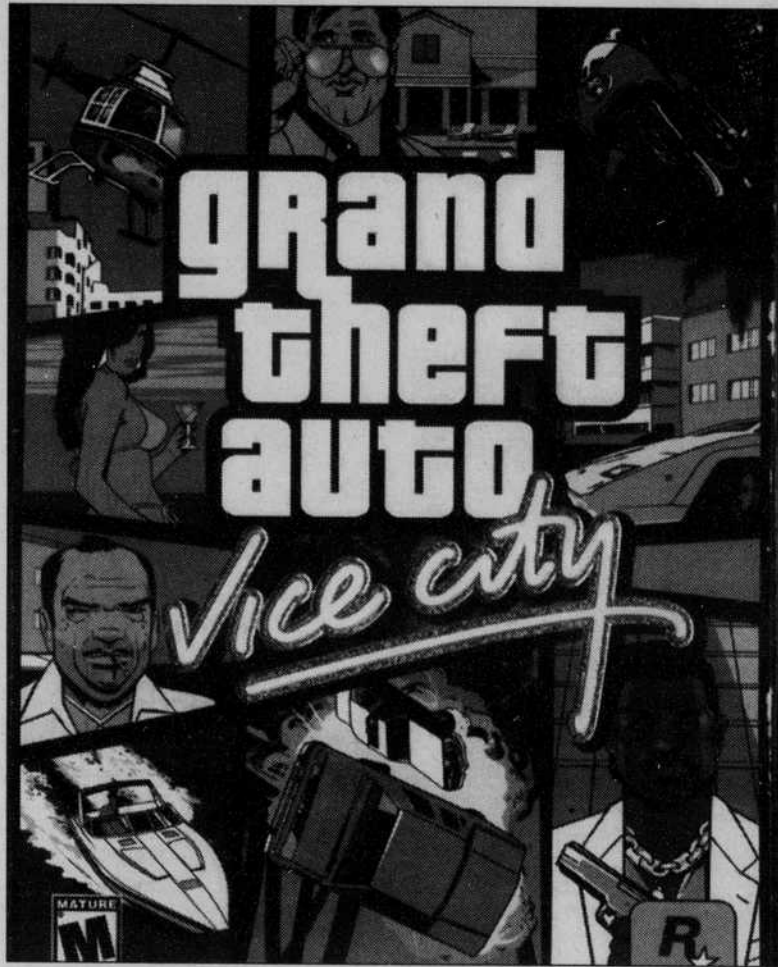
Whether it's stealing cars and shooting thugs or lopping off heads with a sword, violent video games have been a point of contention for years among various interest groups in America.

At issue is whether explicitly violent video games — most recently games like "Grand Theft Auto," in which a player can steal cars and pick up prostitutes — influence people to mirror the actions and whether these games should be restricted.

In 2000, the American Psychological Association released a study that supported the behavioral theory.

According to the study, which included examinations of the classic games "Doom," "Wolfenstein 3D" and "Mortal Kombat," playing violent video games could potentially increase aggressive behaviors, feelings and thoughts.

"One study reveals that young men who are habitually aggressive may be especially vulnerable to the aggression-enhancing effects of repeated exposure to violent games," psychologists Craig



Courtesy

The American Psychological Association connects video games such as "Grand Theft Auto" with an increase in aggressive behavior due to violent content.

because it instructs players at one point to "kill the Haitians."

Responding to the perceived threat, the mayor of Miami, a Haitian American, proposed a law that would restrict violent video games from children.

"If you say 'kill the bad guy,' I have no problem," he said of the Haitian threat in the game.

In January, the North Miami City Council passed an ordinance that would fine video game retailers \$500 per day if they fail to get written parental approval before allowing teenagers younger than 17 to buy or rent violent video games.

On the West Coast, California Assemblyman and child psychologist Leland Yee proposed limiting violent video game sales. His method: add the games to other laws that regulate minors from obtaining "harmful matter."

But while the legal challenges are piling up, many agree that these measures are unnecessary censorship at best and an overstep of governmental power at worst.

"Have they ever watched Cartoon Network?" North Miami video store owner Bob Richardson told the Miami Herald. "It's the most violent network on television."

Video Software Dealers Association President Bo Andersen had similar sentiments.

"What you have is government trying to step in and take control of what is a parental responsibility," Andersen told USA TODAY. "We don't ever get complaints from parents that the rating system is broken."

Still, opponents of violent video games are loyal to the cause, with no sign of letting up any time soon.

"This is not about censorship, it's about inciting violence," Miami Mayor Joe Celestin told CNN. "We're going to take it all the way."

Contact the managing editor at janmontry@dailyemerald.com.

"One study reveals that young men who are habitually aggressive may be especially vulnerable to the aggression-enhancing effects of repeated exposure to violent video games."

Craig A. Anderson & Karen E. Dill
psychologists/Ph.D

A. Anderson, Ph.D., and Karen E. Dill, Ph.D., said in a press release. "The other study reveals that even a brief exposure to violent video games can temporarily increase aggressive behavior in all types of participants."

Others say analyses like the APA studies are inherently faulty, however.

The Free Expression Policy Project, a think tank that provides research about censorship issues, filed a brief in 2002 along with 33 university researchers that criticized studies showing the violence correlation, according to Wired magazine.

"Seemingly common-sense notions do not always turn out to be correct," the brief stated. "And researchers who attempt to reduce the myriad effects of art and entertainment to numerical measurements and artificial laboratory experiments are not likely to yield useful insights about the way that viewers actually use popular culture."

While the scientific debate appears in a stalemate, the legal debate about violent games peaked last month when "Grand Theft Auto: Vice City" created an uproar in Florida. Officials decied the game

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