

TOPIC #12: Do violent video games contribute to youth violence?

Some people believe that there is no relationship between violent video games and youth violence, while others argue that these games contribute both to bullying and school shootings.

In your response, analyze the two articles taken from www.procon.org to determine which position is best supported. Use relevant and specific evidence from both articles to support your response.

Article 1

- (1)** Violent juvenile crime in the United States has been declining as violent video game popularity has increased. The arrest rate for juvenile murders fell 71.9% between 1995 and 2008. The arrest rate for all juvenile violent crimes declined 49.3%. In this same period, video game sales more than quadrupled.
- (2)** A causal link between violent video games and violent behavior has not been proven. Many studies suffer from design flaws and use unreliable measures of violence and aggression such as noise blast tests. Thoughts about aggression have been confused with aggressive behavior, and there is a lack of studies that follow children over long periods of time.
- (3)** A 2004 US Secret Service review of previous school-based attacks found that one-eighth of attackers exhibited an interest in violent video games, less than the rate of interest attackers showed in violent movies, books, and violence in their own writings. The report did not find a relationship between playing violent video games and school shootings.
- (4)** The small correlations that have been found between video games and violence may be explained by violent youth being drawn to violent video games. Violent games do not cause youth to be violent. Instead, youth who are predisposed to be violent seek out violent entertainment such as video games.
- (5)** Playing violent video games reduces violence in adolescent boys by serving as a substitute for rough and tumble play. Playing violent video games allows adolescent boys to express aggression and establish status in the peer group without causing physical harm.
- (6)** Violent video games provide healthy and safe opportunities for children to virtually explore rules and consequences of violent actions. Violent games also allow youth to experiment with issues such as war, violence, and death without real world consequences.

Article 2

- (1) Increasing reports of bullying can be partially attributed to the popularity of violent video games. The 2008 study *Grand Theft Childhood* reported that 60% of middle school boys who played at least one Mature-rated game hit or beat up someone, compared to 39% of boys who did not play Mature-rated games.
- (2) Violent video games often reward players for simulating violence, and thus enhance the learning of violent behaviors. Studies suggest that when violence is rewarded in video games, players exhibit increased aggressive behavior compared to players of video games in which violence is punished.
- (3) Violent video games desensitize players to real-life violence. It is common for victims in video games to disappear off screen when they are killed or for players to have multiple lives. In a 2005 study, violent video game exposure has been linked to reduced P300 amplitudes in the brain, which is associated with desensitization to violence and increases in aggressive behavior.
- (4) A 2000 FBI report includes playing violent video games in a list of behaviors associated with school shootings.
- (5) Violent video games teach youth that violence is an acceptable conflict-solving strategy and an appropriate way to achieve one's goals. A 2009 study found that youth who play violent video games show lower belief in the use of nonviolent strategies and are less forgiving than players of nonviolent video games.
- (6) Violent video games require active participation, repetition, and identification with the violent character. With new game controllers allowing more physical interaction, the immersive and interactive characteristics of video games can increase the likelihood of youth violence.