

History of Video Games

1972, the year the first home video game system, named Odyssey, ^{past tense ==> was} is released by Magnavox. This main games featured on this system were a light gun game and a tennis game. During the same time, a game by the name of Pong is a success in the public. It is because people wanted to play Pong in the comfort of their own homes, that they bought Odyssey. The system only sold around 100,000 units since Magnavox only sold the game system from their own stores, making consumers believe that the game system would only work on Magnavox TV sets.

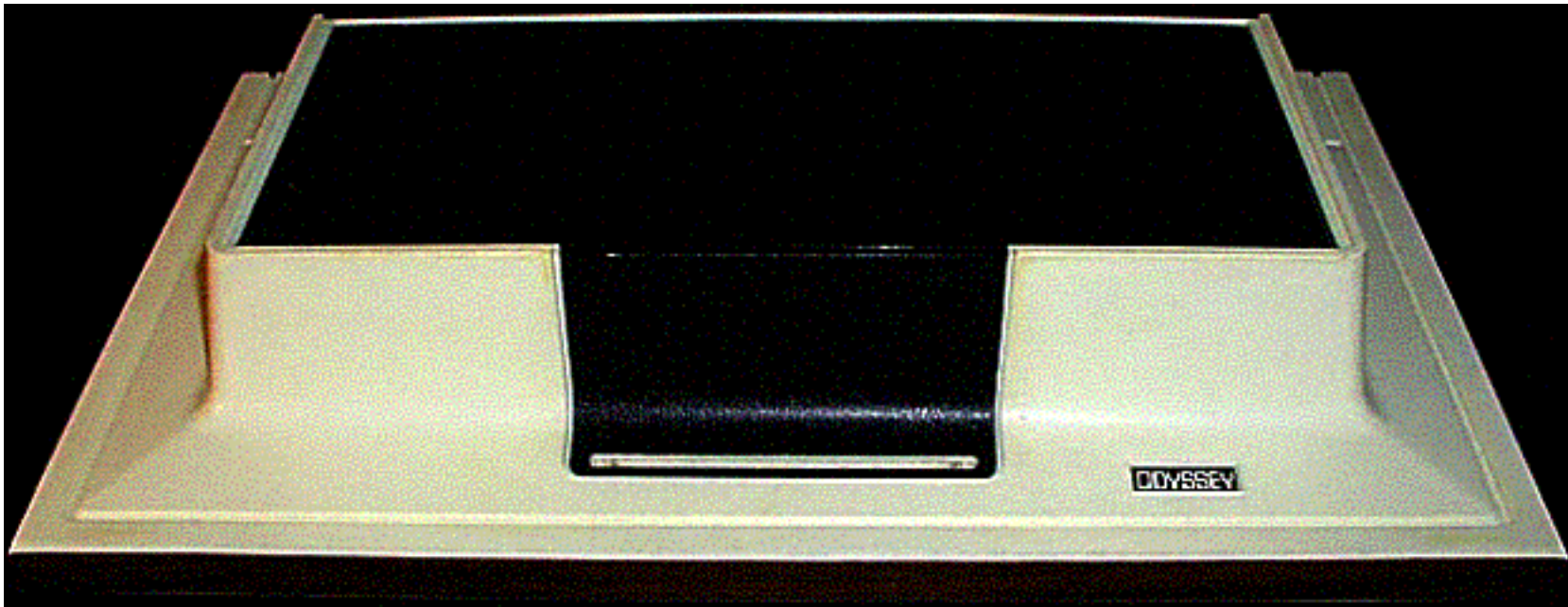


Figure 1 Odyssey by Magnavox

Things stay quiet until 1976. With the success of Atari (the makers of Pong), many game companies arise and try to release their own gaming systems. Due to the sudden high demands for electronics parts, many companies did not receive their products on time. During this time, Fairchild Camera and Instruments releases their game system, titled the Video Entertainment System, later renamed as Channel F. This is the first home system to have programmable video games via game cartridges. Users can now change games with by swapping in and out a game cartridge (which is about the size of a 8 track tape). ^{reference?}

1977, Atari opens Pizza Time Theatre, a restaurant with coin operated arcade games and dancing and singing mechanical animals. Interestingly enough, the mascot of Pizza Time was a giant rat by the name of Chuck E. Cheese.

Seeing the success they had with software, Atari decided they would debut their own

cartridge based video game console, known as the Atari 2600.

A year later, Midway games imports arcade game Space Invader by Japanese developer Taito, to the US. The game was a great success. Then in 1980, Space Invaders arrives on the Atari 2600, resulting in an increase in sales. In the same year, Atari pushes out a new product, Battlezone, which features a three-dimensional first person view. Battlezone puts players in the seat of a tank as it roams around destroying other tanks. This greatly interested the US Military, as they asked Atari to develop a more advanced version of Battlezone to for Military training. We also see the debut of Pac-Man in the arcades; Pac-Man soon becomes one of the most popular games to date.

In 1981, after many failures to produce a hit title, Nintendo of Japan's Shigeru Miyamoto creates Donkey Kong, a game featuring a plumber named Jumpman, on a mission to save his girlfriend from the crazed ape, Donkey Kong. Jumpman was later renamed Mario by Nintendo of America. It is also in this year that US video game arcade hits its highest ever revenue to date, five billion US Dollars.

From 1982 to 1984, it was a dark time for the video game industry, as companies started mass producing and saturated the market with games. This is most evident in Atari, who released titles that had more units than the number of Atari 2600 owned by consumers. Due to bad sales, many developers go out of business. The games developed by these out of business companies were discounted heavily, causing still in business companies high losses. Things take a turn for the worse as Atari executive Ray Kassar resign after insider trading. Due to this chaos, a lucrative plan between Atari and Nintendo falls apart (Nintendo made a deal to have Atari distribute its Famicom gaming system, previously available in Japan, in the US). Nintendo watches carefully and plan their next moves as US video game industry begins crumble.

each time you make a declarative statement of fact, there should be a reference. How did you arrive at the information presented? It certainly wasn't from your head, where did you get it from?



Figure 2 The Nintendo Famicom

After successful testing in New York, Nintendo brings the renamed and redesigned Famicom system, now called Nintendo Entertainment System (NES for short), to US nation wide with Super Mario Brothers for the NES. The main design difference was in the Cartridge system. The original Famicom had top loading cartridge about the size of an audiocassette while the NES had a slot-loading cartridge with the size of a five and a quarter floppy with the thickness of an audiocassette. With the mass attention that the NES is getting, SEGA releases its SEGA Master System in the US to compete with Nintendo. At the same time, Atari decides to reenter the scene by introducing its 7800 game system to the public. However, the fire that is Nintendo could not be put out, as it out sells its competition 10 to 1. Seeing this, many Atari developers leave to join the winner.

In 1989, two major game consoles were released, the portable monochrome Nintendo Game Boy, and Sega's 16bit Sega Genesis console (the NES was 8bits). The Game Boy was hailed as a portable game system, and with its simple design and fun games, it was immensely popular. To this day, the Game Boy is still the best selling game system. The Genesis offered superior graphics and sound compared to anything that had previously been available to home users; it delivered a much more realistic arcade feel.

The Super NES, Nintendo's 16bit machine debuts in 1991 in the US with a price tag of \$249 dollars. This is also the year in which Sega choose their mascot, Sonic the Hedgehog, to compete with Mario. During this year, Nintendo and Sony announced that they would develop a CD player

for the SNES. However, in 1992, Nintendo decided to join forces with Phillips to develop a CD system. Sony, after spending money and time developing a prototype CD system, now scrapped its project and ended its contract with Nintendo. It own focus on a next generation CD only gaming system aimed at defeating Nintendo. This Sony system later became the Sony Playstation (32bit) released in 1995.

Along with the Playstation, other companies such as Nintendo and Sega releases their own 32bit system. In the end the Sony machine comes out on top. Meanwhile, Nintendo sticks with their cartridge based design and releases the 64bit Nintendo 64 gaming system. Unfortunately, due to high cost and limiting factor of cartridge systems, not many developers hopped on board.

Fast forward to today, we have three major players in the field, Nintendo's Gamecube, Sony's Playstation 2 and the new comer, Microsoft's XBOX. Sony still remains on top while XBOX and Gamecube fighting fiercely for number 2.

For a complete history of video games, please visit Gamespot.com.

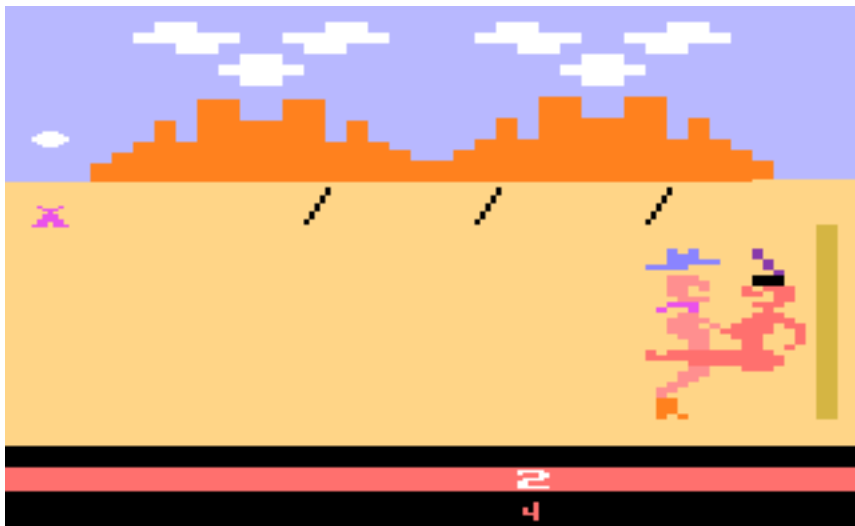
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you should provide a citation
for each fact.

Violence and Sexuality in Video Games

Unlike popular belief, the first violent video game was not Mortal Kombat (although it probably had the most controversy around it). Everything started with a game called Death Race 2000 released in 1976 by Exidy Software. It was based on a B movie by the same title and features the main theme of the movie in the game: to run people over. You control the car to run over people, and the people you have killed become a cross. Needless to say, the game was quick to draw attentions towards it. The criticism from Americans all over the nation eventually got the game pulled off the market. One would think that the game must have been pretty intense and gruesome if it attracted such a response. Nope...not a bit...in fact, this is how the game looks:



The graphic was just as it looks, nothing fancy about it. This shows that just the concept of such a game disturbed people, and there were no need for intense imagery.

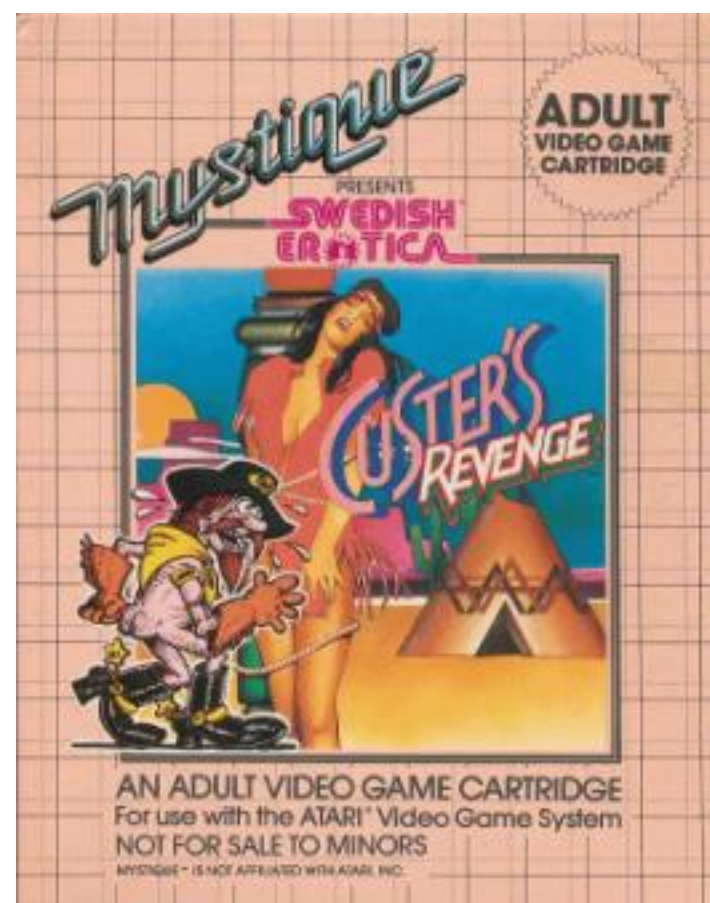


Things stay quiet until the 1980's in which the Atari 2600 debuts. Out of the flood of titles being produced, someone decided that sex sells, even in videogames (geez...what a concept...). So a company by Mystique released Custer's Revenge. The game had the player control a man named General George Custer going after a Native American maiden named Revenge, hence the title, Custer's Revenge. Unfortunately, this game did not

involve anyone saving a Native American princess; instead, the player has to control Custer and help him cross the playing field safely, while dodging cactus and arrows from Native Americans. Awaiting Custer on the other side of the field is Revenge, and the reward was that Custer gets to have sex with Revenge, on the screen, depicted by a group of flesh colored pixels (as shown on the left).

The game received heat from women's advocate groups and the Native American communities. Custer's Revenge was so bad that many retailers refused to carry it, and those that carried it decided to keep it in the back room somewhere. Needless to say, a concept such as this was doomed to fail for the start since the ideas of this game were just blatant. I mean just look at the cover art of the game! It features a pretty much naked cowboy around the vaginal area of a Native American girl, who just happens to have an orgasmic look on her face.

Moving on to 1992, two games were released that probably became landmark of violent and sexual video games. One is the infamous Mortal Kombat by Midway, while the other is Night Trap by Digital Pictures.



Gaming graphics and technology has come a long way since the 80's and gone are the awful looking 3, 4 colored pixels. With the improvement in graphics and sound, things started to look more realistic. Because of its more realistic depiction of violence, Mortal Kombat was the center of mass controversy. Unlike Street Fighter, which used and still uses 2D sprites, Mortal Kombat featured human modeled characters. The characters in Mortal Kombat had been motion captured and were

modeled after the actors that portrayed them.



Figure 3 Mortal Kombat (Left) and Street Fighter (Right)

The portrayal of a much more realistic violence compared to that of cartoon like characters start to draw attention of many teenagers and parents. The main reward of playing Mortal Kombat was the chance to perform a fatality on your opponent once you win. The fatalities as shown on the



left side, are often gruesome and bloody. The game had the attention of the mass media as new groups started to interview children around the US about the appeal of the game. Soon the game caught the attention of Congress. Congress discussed the possible causes violent games can have over children, while at the same time, two senators, Herb Kohl and Joseph Lieberman advocated banning video games.

"I was startled. It [Mortal Kombat] was very violent, and as you know, rewarded violence. And at the end, if you did really well, you'd get to decide whether to decapitate... how to kill the other guy, how to pull his head off. And there was all sorts of blood flying around... [Night Trap] ends with this attack scene on this woman in lingerie, in her bathroom... I thought it sent the wrong message." - Senator Joseph Lieberman [reference?](#)

And this quote leads us to our next controversial game, Night Trap. This game was one of the first to fully make use of FMV or Full Motion Video. Pretty much it was like watching a movie on you video game console while trying to interact with it. The games premise was to protect five girls in their pajamas from getting killed by vampires. With an idea like this and the fact that the game used real live actors/actresses; it was no doubt a target for controversy.

The Impact

Now that the grounds for controversy have been established, we would like to know, “Do violent and sexual video games affect children?”

The answer for this question is a resounding yes.

Organizations such as [Children Now](#) and [The Nation Institute of Media and the Family](#) along with researchers from American Medical Association and American Psychological Association has determined that playing violent video games do indeed increase aggressive behavior in children, especial young children. A number of factors contribute to this: reference? your citations need to be explicit.

- **Video games are predominately violent.** Of almost all the games in existence, a high percentage of them contain violence of some sort, either serious violence or comical violence. In fact, 61 out of 70 games that Children Now looked into contain one of these violence categories.
- **Lack of Consequence with Violence.** Violence in video games often results in no negative consequence for the player. Instead, violence is often the way to get things done and is advocated so in videogames via positive reinforcements such as money, items, story/plot advancement, etc.
- **Use of weapons.** Children Now found that about 50 percent of the games it surveyed contains violence without the use of a weapon, most likely hand to hand combat, such as that depicted in fighting games. Of games that do use weapons, guns were the most popular devices to be used, with bludgeoning items such as bats following.
- **Interactivity.** The effects of video games on children are amplified compared to watching a violent movie or TV program because of its interactivity. Games require playing and thus require more focus than laying back watching TV. In other words, games are active while TV shows are passive, thus a stronger impression is made on the mind.

With these factors in mind, lets take a look at an example: Grand Theft Auto: Vice City by Rockstar. With its debut on the Playstation 2 on October 21, 2002, over 1.4 million copies of the

game were sold within 2 days! Sales are expected to reach 10 million. That is a lot of copies of an extremely violent video game floating around in the home of US consumers (and this is not counting its predecessor Grand Theft Auto 3, which grossed over 6 million copies in 2002). The game has the player running around doing different jobs for mobsters and gangsters. The scariest part about the violence in the GTA is the interactivity the player can have with the environment. It is possible to stand on top of the roof of a building and snipe innocent pedestrians or if stalking your prey is not your cup of tea, you can run around the stop a car in the middle of the street, pull out its driver and steal it. While in you car, you can go around and run down pedestrians or hire prostitutes while trying to avoid the police. The situations in the game itself have caught the eyes of Children Now, The National Institute of Media and the Family, as well as other family oriented and women groups. But, one last element of the game has generated a massive public outcry. This element deals with having the ability to hire a prostitute to replenish the players health, and after sex, the player can kill the prostitute and regain the cash he just spent. The National Institute of Media and the Family has some interesting facts that went along with these disturbing elements of the game:

- Every day millions of boys and young men are entertaining themselves with a game that denigrates women and glamorizes violence against them. The theory that it is a game that only adults are playing is simply not valid. Our recent survey of boys showed that it is extremely popular with pre-teen and teen males.
- Parents and other adults are almost totally unaware of the content of the game. We have surveyed over 600 parents and teachers over the past month and less than 3 percent have any knowledge of the anti-female content of the game.
- Studies of exposure to sexual violence suggest that watching even short amounts of sexual violence can desensitize viewers to it. For example, in an experimental study, viewers of films including sexual violence expressed significantly less sympathy for domestic violence victims, and rated their injuries as less severe, than did a no-exposure comparison group.

These facts are taken directly from The National Institute of Media and the Family's web site. [Link?](#)

Due to these concerns, many have linked school shootings with video games. Lieutenant Colonel David Grossman, author of Stop Teaching Our Kids to Kill, is a strong believer of video game violence affecting children. He says that games, especially first person shooters, such as Quake and Half-Life, are "murder simulators." Lt. Grossman finds that games will desensitize children to violence and actually make it fun for them to enjoy. [reference?](#)

"Number one, it teaches you to associate pleasure with human death and suffering. You're learning to like it. Number two, it's providing you the motor skills that make you capable of extraordinary acts of accuracy with the weapon." –Lt. Grossman in an interview on 60

minutes. (See the entire transcript [here](#).)

John Sherry, a professor of communications at Purdue University, is researching on a link between children and video games. He concludes that the violence in video games do not necessary cause aggression in games, *however*, he says that with the newer games, the violent content **with in it** seems to have a stronger affect than before. Sherry also mentions that violence also causes fear in children and being expose a long time it can lead to desensitization

Aside from the violent imagery featured in video games, many are becoming concerned with the gender issues that video games are presenting to the public. Researchers are worried the way females are represented and treated in games will have a negative affect on a girl's self image, as well as the affect it will have on young men's attitude towards themselves and the opposite sex. Statistics for genders in video games are as follows:

- **Female are a minority in video games.** Male characters out number female characters about 4 to 1 on average. On top of this, most male character are player controlled characters while female player controlled characters are low in numbers. A quick way to see this statistic in action is to look at a fighting game such as Street Fighter and do a quick count of female v. male fighters.
- **Female characters often do not have major roles.** Most female characters surveyed by Children Now are usually 'props.' This means that the female characters were usually bystanders that do not interact much, and when they do, they do not provide much use for the progression of game.
- **Gender Stereotypes are all over video games.** Action wise and emotionally, male characters are often physically aggressive and use force to solve their problems while female characters use verbal aggression and instead of force, use mental skills to solve problems. Also, females depicted in video games are more likely to play a mother figure (nurture), share, and make friends. Physical structures of video game characters are equally stereotyped. Males often appear as buff and masculine while females appear with unrealistic body types, such as very large breast or pelvic areas and a thin waist or a Barbie style body.
- **Female characters are often less clothed.** Female characters in video games are often outfitted with very revealing clothing to 'show off' their 'incredible' figure.

With imagery like this, video games create an unrealistic and unhealthy image of both sexes. The situation is especially bad for girls. The female characters in video games will give rise to self-esteem problems in girls as well as affect their actions towards others. Boys will likely to receive the wrong message from video games and treat the opposite sex in inappropriate ways (take a look at Grand Theft Auto for example).

It would seem like from all these facts that there are no regulations on video games at all. This is far from the truth. Due to all the fiasco that Mortal Kombat has cause, Senator Herb Kohl and Joseph Lieberman and Congress pushed to establish a rating board. And so, in 1994, the [ESRB](#) (Entertainment Software Rating Board) was created. The ESRB has created a system of [ratings](#) from rated E for everyone to rated M for mature. Besides the rating system, the ESRB has also established a list of content descriptions.

However, the view towards the ESRB has been both positive and negative. Consumers in general (especially) parents welcome the warnings and descriptions about the contents of the games. Senator Lieberman and Kohl still supports the rating system till this day and continues to give it high remarks. On the flip side of the coin, family groups often find the ESRB ratings inadequate. In fact, The National Institute for Media and the Family recently giving ESRB ratings a D on their annual [report card](#). The reason for the grade is the lack of accuracy in rating, certain games originally received a M for excessive violent content, but later received a T rating after removing blood from the content but still leaving the violence intact. Also, the report card indicates that the content descriptions are simply not adequate to describe the variety of themes in games, and with newer and more innovative games, description for game content becomes more problematic.

Analysis

Professional Issues

- Should developers concentrate on making games that features equal amount of male and female characters?
- Should major console (Microsoft, Nintendo, Sony) makers have a restriction for the type of games made for their system? Maybe censorship?
- Profit margin can decrease due to restrictions = less games.
- Should developers cut down on the amount of violence and sexual themes?

Legal Issues

- Currently there are no laws in the US that prohibit video games with violent and sexual themes.
- Developers can make what they want to make, freedom of speech.
- Countries such as Australia have banned Grand Theft Auto due to its contents.

Ethical Issues

- Should game companies keep on making such violent games? Should they tone excessively graphic games down?
 - Game companies might just use the holes in the rating system to get by, such as leaving in violence but removing blood, language, etc...
- Should major chain store/retailers sell violent and sexual video games on the floor or in a back room?
- Again, should major console makers have a restriction for the type of games made for their system?

Stakeholders

- Children, both sexes
- Parents
- Game console makers
- Game developers
- Retailers

Possible Actions

1. Leave things as it is, let the parents try to be the censors
2. Improve enforcement of ratings
3. Governmental Regulations

Consequences

1. By leaving things as it is, the games are just going to continue to influence our children. The situation might just continue to get worse as games becoming increasing more realistic. On the flip side, companies will continue to profit and producing with no restrictions.
2. By enforcing ratings at the retailer level we get the greatest control. Companies can continue to make and release games they want; the retailers now have a responsibility to enforce what

children buy, similar to how movie theatres need to check ID's for R rated movies, retailers will need to check ID's for people buying M rated games.

3. All else fails, have the government act as middleman to filter out games that are excessively violent or sexual, such as what Australia did with Grand Theft Auto. Or make buying Mature games illegal unless you are a certain age (similar to legal drinking age.)

Individual Rights

1. The consumers still have the ability to choose what games they want to buy and the game makers will make whatever kind of games they want with no restrictions. Retailers can choose to carry certain titles or not.
2. Consumers can still buy the games they want, but now there are limitations to certain age groups. Game makers can still make the kind of games they were making before, but not have as much of a profit return due to restrictions. Retailers have to watch who they are selling their games to.
3. Game content is now extremely restricted, since it has to pass governmental regulations. Overall profit loss to retailers and game companies. Consumers have fewer titles to choose from. New governmental agency to regulate games equal more money equals more money out of the people's wallet.

Common Good

1. The common good will not increase with option one.
2. Society will benefit since the new generation will **no** be as easily corrupted as before.
3. Creativity is limited; children and future generations will benefit since there are no more excessively violent and sexual games in the market.

Final Decision

I choose option number 2, the middle ground. I believe that leaving things as they are now will not benefit society or our children's mental health. The fact that a 9 or 10 year old can have easy access to games such as Grand Theft Auto is just scary. I found option number 3 to be too extreme. Regulations are necessary, but option 3 would leave companies very restricted in terms of creativity and set a sense of fear in the game developers. Also, option 3 will impede one's right to

purchase the game one wants, without the eyes of big brother watching. Overall, option 2 is the most balanced, it deals with the weakest part of the rating system, and that is the enforcement of the ratings. Most retailers now do not enforce the ESRB's rating system; almost anyone can buy whatever game they want without fail. With option 2, the retailers are now more responsible than before in watching what their customers buy. This way, we can keep Mature games out of the hands of young children, yet adults can buy them if they wish to.

References? Where are they?

You obviously used several references to derive your facts. You included a link to at least the general ones, but you not only should provide the links, but you NEED to cite the references in full somewhere in your paper.

Please check with the library on the proper methods to be used in citing reference materials.

The overall paper is interesting and deals with a MOST controversial topic. You have provided a decent ethical analysis, although using a more rigorous approach of indicating what a utilitarian, duty, justice, virtue, etc perspective might look like is preferred.

The use of HTML is adequate but limited.

Grade H-85, C-93, R-70.