

From <www.GrandTheftChildhood.com>

Myths about violent video games and children

MYTH: The growth in violent video game sales is linked to the growth in youth violence—especially school violence—throughout the country.

FACT: Video game popularity and real-world youth violence have been moving in opposite directions. Violent juvenile crime in the United States reached a peak in 1993 and has been declining ever since. Between 1994 and 2004, arrests for murder, forcible rape, robbery and

aggravated assaults fell 49 percent, resulting in the lowest juvenile arrest rate for violent crimes since at least 1980. Murder arrests, which reached a high of 3,790 in 1993, plummeted 71% to 1,110 by 2004.

School violence has also gone down.

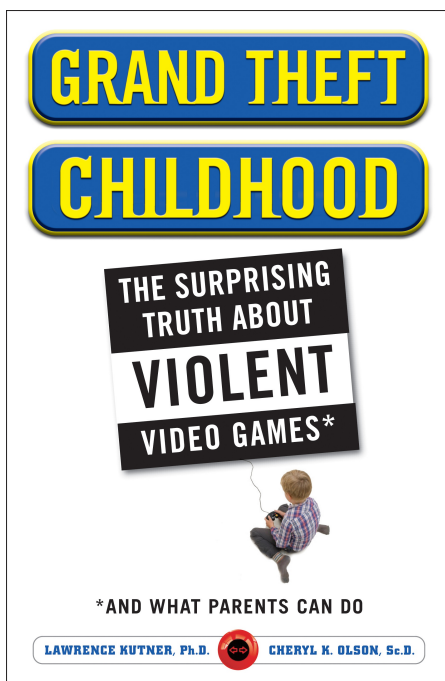
MYTH: Girls don't play violent video games like *Grand Theft Auto*.

FACT: Our survey of more than 1200 middle school students found that 29 percent of girls who played video games listed at least one M-rated game among the games they'd "played a lot" during the previous six months. One in five specifically listed a *Grand Theft Auto* game. In fact, among these 12- to 14-year-old girls, the *Grand Theft Auto* series was second only to *The Sims* in popularity.

MYTH: Within hours of the 2007 shootings at Virginia

Tech, pundits were on the airwaves and the Internet blaming video games for Seung-Hui Cho's violent behavior. For example, media darling and pop psychologist Phil McGraw, appearing on CNN's *Larry King Live*, stated, "Common sense tells you that if these kids are playing video games, where they're on a mass killing spree in a video game, it's glamorized on the big screen, it's become part of the fiber of our society.... The mass murders [sic] of tomorrow are the children of today that are being programmed with this massive violence overdose."

Former Massachusetts governor and presidential candidate Mitt Romney, in an address to new graduates of Regent University, said, "Pornography and violence poison our music and movies and TV and video games. The Virginia Tech shooter, like the Columbine shooters before him, had drunk from this cesspool."



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FACT: The official report of the Virginia Tech Review Panel specifically dismissed the purported links between Cho's use of video games and his extremely violent behavior. In the chapter on Cho's mental health history, video games are mentioned on only three pages. When he was nine years old, "he was enrolled in a Tae Kwon Do program for awhile, watched TV, and played video games like *Sonic the Hedgehog*. None of the video games were war games or had violent themes." (p. 32)

In college, "Cho's roommate never saw him play video games." (p. 42) During his senior year of college, his roommate "never saw him play a video game, which he thought strange since he and most other students play them." (p. 51)

MYTH: In August 2005, the American Psychological Association issued a resolution on violence in

video games and interactive media, stating that "perpetrators go unpunished in 73 percent of all violent scenes, and therefore teach that violence is an effective way of resolving conflict."

FACT: The allegation that "perpetrators go unpunished in 73 percent of all violent scenes" is based on research from the mid-1990s that looked at selected television programs, not video games.

MYTH: School shooters fit a profile that includes a fascination with violent media, especially violent video games.

FACT: The U. S. Secret Service intensely studied each of the 37 non-gang and non-drug-related school shootings and stabbings that were considered "targeted attacks" that took place nationally from 1974 through 2000.

(Note how few premeditated school shootings there actually were during that 27-year time period, compared with the public perception of those shootings as relatively common events!) The incidents studied included the most notorious school shootings, such as Columbine, Santee and Paducah, in which the young perpetrators had been linked in the press to violent video games. The Secret Service found that that there was no accurate profile. Only 1 in 8 school shooters showed any interest in violent video games; only 1 in 4 liked violent movies.

...from ***Grand Theft Childhood: The Surprising Truth About Violent Video Games and What Parents Can Do***

by Lawrence Kutner, Ph.D. & Cheryl K. Olson, Sc.D.
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