

## OUTLINE

- Intro
  - Summarize paper
  - Thesis
  - Show position
- Body
  - Explain ratings
  - Parents not treating how they should
  - Studies and statistics (not complete)
  - Solutions (Not complete)
- Conclusion
  - Restate thesis
  - Tie together
  - CYA NERDS

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### Video Game Ratings

This paper is about video game ratings, and how they are perceived and how they have changed over the course of the years. Age ratings in video games were implemented for one crucial reason, to keep a handle on who plays what type of game. So what now makes age ratings on video games seem almost non-existent? Some people believe that it is the ratings that have managed to slide by and get away with a lower rating. Others believe that it is the parents that are the problem, and they are not paying enough attention to what their kids are playing. Ratings are here for a reason but I believe they are ineffective with some children because of their parents. Parents are not checking the ratings when they purchase video games for their children, and they are not researching the game either. This makes for some children getting into games that can lead to them learning the wrong idea with some social issues. When asked, many parents said they were not even aware of what their kids were playing. A lot of this has to do with peer pressure, and not wanting their kids to be “left out” from the rest of their friends. Video game ratings have a problem because parents are not paying attention to them as much as they should. This could be fixed by enforcing a more strict purchasing policy, making parents more aware of ratings and what their child is playing, educating the public on why ratings on video games exist, and getting game companies to market more towards the correct audience.

The first thing to be covered is the rating system itself. It is very similar to the ratings on movies, which is G, PG, PG13, R, and A. Similarly, video game ratings are as follows, E, E10+, T, M, and A. A quick rundown of each shows exactly what, and why that rating is given to a game. The “E” rating is classified on the ESRB (Entertainment Software Rating Board) as “Content is generally suitable for all ages. May contain minimal cartoon, fantasy or mild violence and/or infrequent use of mild language.” This is what most kids games are classified as, because the “Everyone” rating looks really nice when and if a parent does check a rating when purchasing a game for their child. The “E10+” rating is classified as “Content is generally suitable for ages 10 and up. May contain more cartoon, fantasy or mild violence, mild language and/or minimal suggestive themes.” This is basically the same as the E rating, but is more lenient on what sort of themes and actions they can put in the game. The “T” rating is classified as “Content is generally suitable for ages 13 and up. May contain violence, suggestive themes, crude humor, minimal blood, simulated gambling and/or infrequent use of strong language.” This is where things get a bit risky as far as ratings go because this is not enforced on its 13 and up policy, and is allowed to have violence, language, and suggestive things that may be harmful to some younger children. The “M” rating is classified as “Content is generally suitable for ages 17 and up. May contain intense violence, blood and gore, sexual content and/or strong language.” This is the biggest rating that causes the most issues. This rating is enforced in stores and requires you to be at least 17 years old to purchase a game with this rating on it. The problem with that, is that parents are allowed to buy it for their kids who are much younger than 17, while the parents do not even know why the game has a Mature rating, because they do not look into it. The last rating, “A”, is classified as “Content suitable only for adults ages 18 and up.

May include prolonged scenes of intense violence, graphic sexual content and/or gambling with real currency.” This rating is rarely ever used or seen, because no game has the reason to go to the extent of this, but this rating is extremely enforced and rarely has any problems, mainly because you do not see it much at all.

One of the biggest issues that video game ratings face is actually how people treat them. In Aaron Birch’s article, *Why are age ratings on videogames so often ignored*, Birch states that, “Most parents wouldn’t take their children to see an 18+ or R-rated movie... and even at home many parents carefully police their kids’ viewing habits... However, when it comes to games, this level of awareness and restriction isn’t practiced anywhere near as much.” This shows how parents treat video game ratings compared to ratings on other media forms, such as movies and music. They simply do not think that it is the same thing. This is why so many kids these days are able to crack open a flashy new copy of rated M games such as “Call of Duty” or “Grand Theft Auto”, video games that clearly were not made for those under the age of 17, hence the big M for mature stamped onto it. For example, let’s say that a child wanted to go see a movie like “Deadpool”, a movie which is rated R, but his/her parent says no because the movie is rated R. The next week, that same child wants to get a game such as “Call of Duty” which is rated M, and asks his parent for it, along with saying that his friends have it as well. The parent buys the child the game because they see no harm in it, even with the M rating on it. They do not check the game or bother to research why the game is rated M. This is the attitude that is making ratings not work anymore. Video game ratings should be treated like any other age restriction, and not thought of lightly because it seems not harmful.

Besides that, one of the questions is, does the age really matter in how games affect those who play them? A group of psychologists in Germany conducted a study of 276 video game players aging 14 to 21 on both whether the use of violent games predicts physical aggression and whether physical aggression predicts the subsequent use of violent games. They found that in the age group 14-17, they did not support the use of violent video games causing physical aggression, but they did support that physical aggression cause the use of violent video games. In the age group of 18-21, they found that they did not support either hypothesis. This is extremely supportive to my position because it shows that there absolutely should be more strict enforcement on who can buy or play video games. It is interesting to see that kids who are more aggressive in life, feel the need to play more harsh, violent video games. It shows that parents should be more cautious in what they purchase for their children if they are using violent video games as a way to get their aggression out, instead of getting real help from someone to make the aggression less, or go away completely. It is also extremely nice to see how those who are 18 and older do not show any signs of being negatively affected or attracted to video games. This nearly proves that the age rating on a game is there for a reason, to show that those who are old enough to purchase a video game with a higher age rating are able to handle the game without being negatively affected by it. This study really stood out to me and is extremely helpful for the point of trying to get parents and people to enforce age restrictions more than they are now,

Another study conducted by a journalist at Empirical Research was done to see whether or not children with pre-existing health problems may be influenced adversely by exposure to violent video games, even if other children are not. They conducted this study with 377 children with an average age of around 13 displaying clinically elevated depressive or deficit issues. The

results showed no support of the hypothesis. They stated they they saw no change in delinquent behavior among the children after exposure to violent video games. This is a really interesting study because it almost proves people wrong when they say that their children who have mental conditions do bad things in life because of violent video games. That being said, the parent should never have purchased them the video game in the first place if they knew their kid had an issue. They should realize that sometimes there are other things in the child's life that negatively affect them and the video game isn't doing any harm. The study is really nice to see because it also shows that parents are not paying enough attention to what they are buying their kids. The parents need to be educated on why ratings exist and that they really need to pay more attention and be careful on what they choose to let their kids play.

With all of that in mind, solutions are clearly possible for this issue. The first solution is for the parents. The parents must be educated and informed on the games they are purchasing their children. Parents should be encouraged to research and see what the game is like before deciding whether or not it is healthy for their kid to play it. With that, the amount of play time should be strictly monitored so the child is not being exposed too much to something that could possibly cause harm later on. The second solution is for the retail stores who sell the games. They should be more strict on how they sell a game, and to whom they sell it to. If they see a parent purchasing the game for the child, the cashier should inform the parent on the game and tell them what it is and why it is rated in such a way. Doing this would help decrease the amount of children getting video games without their parents really knowing what is going on. The third solution is to make game companies show a more detailed description of the game to make it

clearly obvious as to why the rating is there, instead of just having the little side tags saying what possibly shows up in the game.

Video game ratings have had a serious problem because parents are not paying attention to the ratings as much as they need to be. This could be fixed by enforcing a more strict purchasing policy, making parents more aware of ratings and what their child is playing, educating the public on why ratings on video games exist, and getting game companies to market more towards the correct audience. Seeing that there are so many statistics on children who have been observed and adults as well, it shows really why age ratings are there. If a parent needs to be under oath to buy a video game for their child saying that they are completely aware of what they are buying, then let that be. Hopefully this really is an eye opener to those who are trying to get a grasp on why age ratings do not work out as well they should be. Thank you for reading, and I hope that things will change seeing the clear evidence stated.

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