

Rhonda's raping me again

By Paul Gathercoal
and Alan Pope

It had been a lovely lunch, if a little trendy. Chablis, chicken from the Weber, fruit and cheese — all under the pergola. Adelaide suburban life at its best. Interrupted only by the sound of lawnmowers and the neighbour's kids. Until the host's youngest rushed down the stairs, indignant tears streaming.

"Mum! Mum! 's not fair. Rhonda's raping me again!"
I'll admit I laughed. Nervously. Some sort of joke. Incest in the boss' family? Impossible.

"But I never win — she's too good at it!"
Some sort of game? Sounded odd. I know Ludo's obsolete but this was too progressive for me. Or aggressive. What sort of game ends in rape?

"It's not fair — she ends up raping me every time on the video!"

Video? I thought the Government had the X rated video scene under control.

The kid left and the conversation started to drag. It was one of those uncomfortable artificial social situations, despite the wines. Gently I steered a new conversation into the video area hoping to get to the bottom of the outburst. Their blasé dismissal of the kid had me wondering if I was hearing things. I wasn't, but as it turned out I was on the wrong track. Both the boss and his wife are all for controlling explicit porno videos. Wouldn't have them in the house. So what were the kids doing with a video that led to the scene we'd just witnessed?

Simple really. It wasn't a video. Just a kids' computer game. They've tapped into loads of programs since the boss set them up with a computer, decked out with a modem for communicating with other computers. Well, that even I understood. I saw that movie — you know, where the kids tap into the Defence Department computer. Didn't seem all that bad at the time. Not that I knew much about the technicalities; really somewhat of a computer moron. Still, couldn't let on to that with the boss around.

Luckily the boss offered to show us the new toy. Upstairs in the computer room. Now that's trendy! A simple home computer linked to the telephone and a color TV set. Nothing to worry about at all. I'd let my kids on it any day. Glad we left them home or I'd be pestered to hit SATISFAC for the cash. Consumer education's got a lot to answer for in our house — can't even cry poor these days.

Ended up with a full demonstration. Now, if your experience of computer games is like mine and goes back a few years then you too are light years out of date. Now-a-days the computer is linked up to an interactive video system that does away with the simple computer depictions of the past. Now you can play games on a computer where the variations seem endless, where the game in-

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cludes video clips so realistic that you can actually imagine yourself in them. No longer are you just there in front of the computer twiddling that joystick or hitting keys. Now you're in the midst of the action. After a couple of



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tries on these new computer games I was sucked in. They are brilliant and you are no longer a bystander. You're totally involved.

So what's wrong with that, you educators say. No more passive "videots", soaking it all up uncritically. Just what we want, kids actively involved with the media, implementing strategies, predicting outcomes and having to make decisions. Fits *Our Schools and Their Purposes* beautifully. After all, we know kids learn better when they are interested and actively involved.

True. But learning what? I soon started to have doubts. Cops and Robbers wasn't too bad. Not that the Police Commissioner would approve of the values involved — the players are definitely not on their side. Still, what's new? Custer's Last Stand deepened the doubts. I gave it a try and managed to reverse history, entitling me to massacre a few Indians in full color, graphic details, complete with groans and screams. Al Grassy would freak out. But the real shock came when the boss' brats came back for more of what had started the interruption in the first place. It was a gruesome, violent game, again featuring full video clip effects. Game over — the earlier screaming of "Rape" became clear. The winner, after proving their skill at killing, gets to conduct a simulated rape of the loser's characters. Sort of an interactive surrogate rapist experience. And I worried about my kids seeing *Deep Throat*.

Where did the boss get all these exciting games? I'd heard his stories about Bangkok so I assumed he'd

brought them back. Only some, he told me. The others came via Videotex from overseas. Still it didn't sink home. I could understand him smuggling them in but surely there are some controls on the sale of this sort of thing to kids. Talk about naive. First, no need to smuggle them in. You see, he explained, they can't be previewed like a video. Where the computer program takes you depends on your choices each time you play. That's their great advance over the old games — there can be many different versions. Almost impossible to view and classify quickly. Second, there are no controls over what comes in over the telephone line. Sure, Telecom's got the odd regulation to cover the heavy breather but, once you've got the gear and subscribe to an overseas service, the computer world is yours.

Well, it shattered me. Makes a farce of that conference on Peace Education I just attended. Even on my best day I'll never overcome the values being espoused in these sorts of barbaric, sexist, racist computer games. Can't see how they'll ever be controlled either. The clerics and cultural watchdogs can scream all they like, looks like it will be out of control within a few years. Maybe Partington's right, perhaps I will retreat to value free teaching. Seems hopeless to counter that lot if they are going to be the game of the future.

Can't let it get me down. Might drag the old Monopoly set out tonight. Wonder if the kids have ever played it? Better get out to see the Media Studies mob soon too. They must be tackling this somehow? Are they still there I wonder, or have they been rationalised too?

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