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Hostile Media: Violent Video Games

Violence in video games portray a reality that enables consumers to freely devastate without limitations. Users are subject to media of character-on-character violence, shooting, fighting, dismembering, and more covered with bloody-bone crushing effects. The research on the matter is extensive and are known effects when exposed to violent video media. Theory of rewards and punishment in violent media effect on aggression is debatable, while the General Aggression Model assists in pursuit in generating the results from numerous research studies.

Because violent video games are a relatively new type of violent media, the literature examining negative effects on players is small compared with the literature on negative effects of television and film violence. However, a clear consensus has already been reached: Playing violent video games increases aggression. Numerous studies have demonstrated that exposure to violent video games increases aggressive affect (e.g., Anderson & Ford, 1986; Funk, Flores, Buchman, & Germann, 1999), aggressive cognitions (e.g., Calvert & Tan,1994;Kirsh, Olczak,& Mounts, 2005; Krah &Moller, 2004), and aggressive behavior(e.g., Anderson & Dill, 2000; Irwin & Gross, 1995).Recent meta-analyses of the effects of violent video games on aggressive behavior and other aggression-related outcome variables (e.g., Anderson et al., 2004) have demonstrated average effect sizes (in correlation terms) in the .2–.3 range (Carnagey 882).

The most recent type of media violence to come under the research microscope is the violent video game. Despite the recency of this genre and the relatively small size of the research literature, there is sufficient research to conclude that violent video game exposure can cause increases in aggressive behavior and that repeated exposure to violent video games is linked to serious forms of aggression and violence (Anderson & Bushman, 2001; Anderson & Dill, 2000) (Bushman 1680).

Following the April 2007 Virginia Tech massacre, in which Seung-Hui Cho killed 32 students and professors, considerable debate emerged regarding the impact of violent video games and other forms of violent media as a causal agent in such serious violent acts. Prompting studies that covering the impact of violent media.

It was something of a shock when investigators concluded that Cho had little to no exposure to violent video games (Virginia Tech Review Panel, 2007). Similarly, Sulejman Talovic (age 18), who killed five in a Utah mall on February 12, 2007, was found not to be in possession of computer or video games (Carlisle & Hunt, 2007). As of this writing, no evidence has emerged to suggest that the more recent (February 14, 2008) Northern Illinois University shooter, Steven Phillip Kazmierczak, was an avid player of violent games, although this may change with further investigation. These recent shootings differ markedly from the Columbine High shooting, in which the perpetrators Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold were known to have been avid players of Doom(Anderson & Dill, 2000). Although much speculation persists regarding the role of violent video games and school shootings, this speculation is seldom based on factual evidence. (Ferguson 1-2)

The General Aggression Model (GAM) is an integration of several prior models of aggression (e.g., social learning theory, cognitive neoassociation) and has been detailed in several recent publications (Anderson & Bushman, 2002; Anderson & Carnagey, 2004; Anderson & Huesmann, 2003). It is not specifically a model of media effects, but can easily be applied to such effects. GAM describes a cyclical pattern of interaction between the person and the environment. Input variables, such as provocation and aggressive personality, can affect decision processes and behavior in three primary ways: by influencing current cognitions, affective state, and physiological arousal(Carnagey 883). The GAM provides a useful framework for understanding violent media effects and guided the design of the present research on the priming effect of violent video games on hostile biases.

Using the General Aggression Model to guide a study participants were tested individually. They were told that they would complete a number of different tasks that would help the researchers select stimuli for future studies. After giving their consent, participants were randomly assigned to play either a violent or a nonviolent video game for 20 mins. We used four violent video games (Carmageddon, Duke Nukem, Mortal Kombat, Future Cop) and four nonviolent video games (Glider Pro, 3D Pinball, Austin Powers, Tetra Madness) to make the findings more generalizable (Wells & Windschitl, 1999) (Bushman 1681). As predicted by the GAM, playing a violent video game for just 20 mins produced significant increases in expectations that potential conflict situations would be handled aggressively. Violent videogame participants expected more aggressive thoughts, feelings, and behaviors from the main characters in the stories (Bushman 1681).

References

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