

Video games can lead to aggressive behavior, professor says

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AMES, Iowa (KCCI) —

An Iowa State psychology professor's groundbreaking research on the behavioral effects of video games could suggest that President Donald Trump is within reason to believe graphic depictions of violence in video games can lead to more aggressive behavior.

Critics, including Republican Sen. Marco Rubio of Florida, who attended Trump's listening session with video game executives, have long denounced the link between extensive video game exposure and increases in violent behavior, such as the mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. Trump attributed recent mass shootings to violent video games, which some political pundits say is a deterrent for speaking out on issues like commonsense gun reform and mental health.

"When you look at all the research, it is clear that habitually playing violent video games is a causal factor for later physical, aggressive behavior," said Craig A. Anderson, who has studied media violence for decades.

The aggressive behavior can take form in criminal acts or physical aggression, Anderson said. In 2013, Anderson and other researchers started the next generation of research on violent video games. They are sifting through research dating back to the 1950s on any type of screen violence.

"We can address one risk factor by simply recognizing the well-documented harm of violent entertainment media, and subsequently reducing children's and adolescents' exposure to violent screen media," Anderson wrote in a guest column posted in the Des Moines Register.

"Parents and other caregivers are well positioned to do this, once they learn the scientific truths about the harm caused by such media. This costs almost nothing."

Anderson said violent video games aren't the single cause of mass shootings. Media violence "is neither the largest risk factor, nor the smallest, but falls in the middle in terms of its size or importance," he said.