Despite the wealth of factual inaccuracies highlighted in our review, Christopher Ferguson devotes much of his response to characterizing us as moral crusaders, a continuation of his red herring approach to attacking good science (Bushman, Rothstein, & Anderson, 2010). Given his own success in creating a moral panic among gamers, our own status as avid gamers, and our leadership in research on positive game effects (e.g., Anderson, Gentile, & Dill, 2012), this charge is particularly ironic. The criticisms in his book and response are old and have been thoroughly addressed many times, and yet are repeated in even his most recent publications as if he were unaware of the contradictory evidence.

Ferguson’s obsession with Anderson and Dill (2000) and the competitive reaction time task (CRT) is misguided; that article clearly explained the rationale for that particular version of the CRT, and the data are fully reported. Further, dozens of experiments have replicated that experimental effect, and hundreds of studies have validated the CRT in a wide array of contexts. The claim that media violence researchers choose to report the variation of the dependent variable that works best is insulting and ignores the Methods and Results sections of dozens of studies in which multiple CRT measures are reported and shown to yield the same effects.

Ferguson’s bizarre claim yields interesting implications. One is that most violent media effects researchers worldwide must be engaging in blatant malpractice for the literature to lean heavily toward a Type I error. This is both unlikely and insulting. Another is that such a CRT bias should produce larger effect sizes than those of studies using other measures of aggression. This prediction was directly tested in Anderson et al. (2010); they found slightly smaller effects in CRT studies.
Ferguson’s response to our criticism of drawing strong conclusions about psychological processes from societal-level data—that “he did it, too”—is both inadequate and inaccurate. Bushman and Anderson (2001) clearly noted that societal data cannot be considered strong evidence for a psychological effect. But using societal concerns and trends to generate psychological hypotheses is appropriate.

Ferguson also recalls Pollard-Sacks, Bushman, and Anderson (2011), in which the expertise between proponents for and against violent media effects conclusions was compared, and likens this discussion to a “mine is bigger than yours” contest. This is an odd criticism because number of truly expert scholars, based on superior quantity and quality of research publications, is a useful indicator. In fact, the majority of media effects scholars (66 percent vs. 18 percent) and pediatricians (91 percent vs. 3 percent) agree that violent media use increases aggression in children (Bushman & Huesmann, 2013).

Ferguson’s response is revealing in that it essentially ignores the empirical issues we raised, instead continuing his longtime character attacks on Anderson and colleagues. Even odder is Ferguson’s reactivity to being labeled as a “denialist” while frequently referring to Anderson and colleagues as “anti-media scholars.” Top media scholars have been incredibly tolerant of his excessive claims and personal attacks, a passivity that some have interpreted as acquiescence.

The answer to the scientific debate lies in the data, and perhaps the answer to the bias claim lies there as well. In a recent meta-analysis Greitemeyer and Mügge (2014) found that, of violent video game studies conducted since 2009, those conducted by the Anderson and Bushman teams reported an average effect size of $r^+ = .19$. Ferguson’s average effect size was $r^+ = .02$. Studies conducted by everyone else yielded an average $r^+ = .20$. These data ironically suggest that the search for methodological impropriety is focused on the wrong party. Perhaps reporting biases or other poor methodological practices (e.g., high suspicion) account for Ferguson’s frequent failures to replicate what everyone else is finding. Bender, Rothmund, and Gollwitzer (2013) found that highly identified gamers gave violent video game hypothesis-disconfirming responses on a transparent aggression measure but not on a nontransparent measure. Maybe some of Ferguson’s studies include suspicious/sabotaging participants.

**References**


