Violent video games make kids hostile?

Posted By <u>Mike Ferlazzo-Iowa State</u> On March 1, 2010 @ 12:03 pm In <u>Top Stories</u> | <u>No Comments</u>

"From a public policy standpoint, it's time to get off the question of, 'Are there real and serious effects?' That's been answered and answered repeatedly," Craig Anderson says. "It's now time to move on to a more constructive question like, 'How do we make it easier for parents—within the limits of culture, society, and law—to provide a healthier childhood for their kids?'" (Courtesy: iStockphoto)

IOWA STATE (US)
—Exposure to violent video games makes kids more aggressive, less caring—regardless of their age, sex, or culture. That's the conclusion of a study analyzing 130 research reports that included more than 130,000 subjects worldwide.

"We can now say with utmost confidence that regardless of research method—that is experimental, correlational, or longitudinal—and regardless of the cultures tested in this study [East and West], you get the same effects," says Craig Anderson, <u>Iowa State University</u> [1] Distinguished Professor of Psychology.

"And the effects are that exposure to violent video games increases the likelihood of aggressive behavior in both short-term and long-term contexts. Such exposure also increases aggressive thinking and aggressive affect, and decreases prosocial behavior."

The findings by the research team are reported in the March 2010 issue of the *Psychological Bulletin* [2], an American Psychological Association journal. The team used meta-analytic procedures—the statistical methods used to analyze and combine results from previous, related literature—to test the effects of violent video game play on the behaviors, thoughts and feelings of the individuals, ranging from elementary school-aged children to college undergraduates.

The research also included new longitudinal data that provided further confirmation that playing violent video games is a causal risk factor for long-term harmful outcomes.

"These are not huge effects—not on the order of joining a gang vs. not joining a gang," says Anderson. "But these effects are also not trivial in size. It is one risk factor for future aggression and other sort of negative outcomes. And it's a risk factor that's easy for an individual parent to deal with—at least, easier than changing most other known risk factors for aggression and violence, such as poverty or one's genetic structure."

The analysis found that violent video game effects are significant in both Eastern and Western cultures, in males and females, and in all age groups. Although there are good theoretical reasons to expect the long-term harmful effects to be higher in younger, pre-teen youths, there was only weak evidence of such age effects.

The researchers conclude that the study has important implications for public policy debates,

including development and testing of potential intervention strategies designed to reduce the harmful effects of playing violent video games.

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But Anderson knows it will take time for the creation and implementation of effective new policies. And until then, there is plenty parents can do to protect their kids at home.

"Just like your child's diet and the foods you have available for them to eat in the house, you should be able to control the content of the video games they have available to play in your home," he says. "And you should be able to explain to them why certain kinds of games are not allowed in the house—conveying your own values. You should convey the message that one should always be looking for more constructive solutions to disagreements and conflict."

Researchers from the University of Michigan, from Keio University and Nobuko Ihori from Ochanomizu University in Japan, and the City University of New York contributed to the work.

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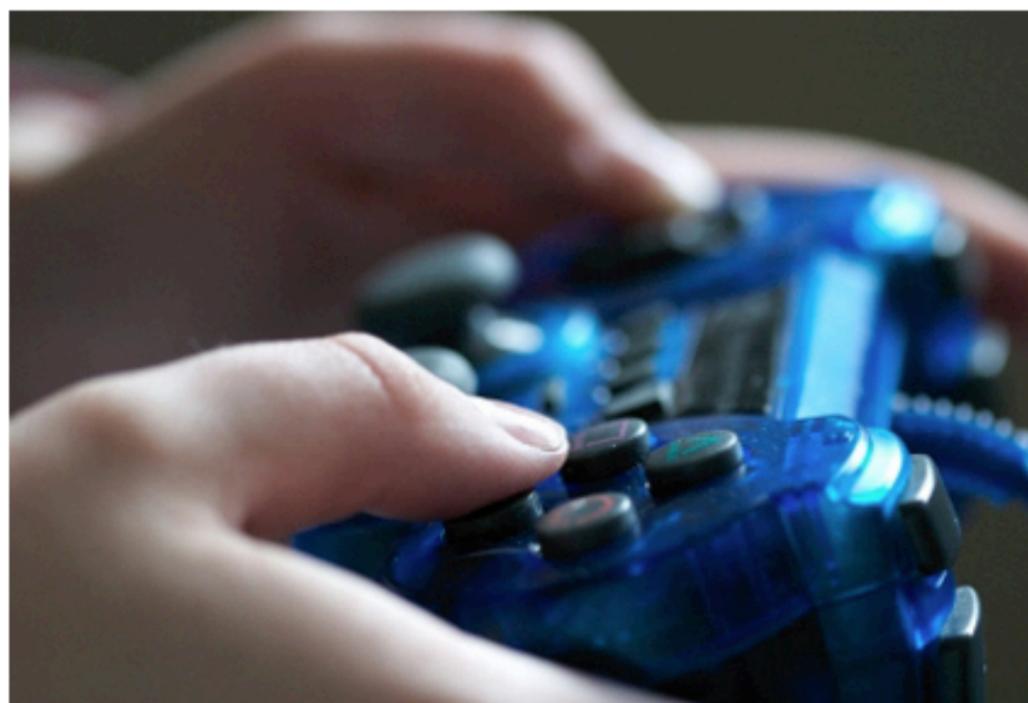
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