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MEDIA RELEASE

New research: violent video game play does make more aggressive kids

A new study published today in the March 2010 issue of the Psychological Bulletin, an American Psychological Association journal, reports that “exposure to violent video games is a *causal* risk factor for increased aggressive thoughts and behavior, and decreased empathy and prosocial behavior in youths”

Lead author of the group of cross-national researchers, Distinguished Prof Craig Anderson of Iowa State University, said "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 ... 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 research also included new longitudinal data which provided further confirmation that playing violent video games is a causal risk factor for long-term harmful outcomes.

Prof Elizabeth Handsley, Vice President of the Australian Council on Children and the Media said today that this research provided a compelling reason why the Government should not proceed to legalise R18+ games. Council spokesman Dr Wayne Warburton presented evidence today to the House Committee inquiring into youth violence. He said “Government policy decisions, as well as the decisions of media outlets, parents, and others responsible for the development of our children, should be more based on what we know about media effects, rather than on common misconceptions, loud minority views, or pressure from the industries that produce media.”

The newly published study was conducted by a team of eight researchers, including Brad Bushman, a former Iowa State psychology professor who now is on the faculty at the University of Michigan. Also on the team were the top video game researchers from Japan – Akiko Shibuya from Keio University and Nobuko Ihori from Ochanomizu University – and Hannah Rothstein, a noted scholar on meta-analytic review from the City University of New York.

The team used meta-analytic procedures—the statistical methods used to analyse 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.

Dr Warburton urged those concerned with prevention of youth violence to take the opportunity to hear Prof. Anderson presenting this new research in Sydney on March 19 at the “Growing up fast and furious conference” www.childrenandmedia.org.au

ACCM is a unique national community organisation which strives for a media environment that supports the health, safety and wellbeing of Australian children. It is committed to promoting healthy choices and stronger voices in children’s media. Parents, caregivers and the general community can access information and advice about the impact of the media on children by calling the Children and Media Helpline (1800 700 357, national, freecall, 24/7) or visiting the ACCM Website (www.childrenandmedia.org.au).

*For more information or to arrange an interview,
please call Wayne Warburton (NSW) on (02) 9850 8643;
Elizabeth Handsley (08) 82105256/ (08) 82721170
or Barbara Biggins on (08) 8234 9396, 0403 005 736
US contact: Mike Ferlazzo, News Service, (515) 294-8986, (515) 450-2908 (c),
ferlazzo@iastate.edu*

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