
Symposium SP-1
Saturday, July 29, 2006

Exposure to violent video games and aggressive affect, cognition, and behavioral intentions

Ingrid Möller & Barbara Krahe
University of Potsdam, Germany



Two experiments analyzed the effects of violent vs. nonviolent video games on aggressive affect, cognitions, and behavioral intentions. In Study 1 (N = 77), participants with high vs. low experience of video game playing watched a trailer for a violent video game or a nonviolent video game. They then completed an impression formation task in which they rated a stimulus person in terms of aggression-related and positive attributes. In addition to a main effect for trailer, significant interaction effects were found for both aggression-related and positive attributes: The tendency to attribute more negative and less positive attributes to the stimulus person following the trailer for the violent game was higher for players than for nonplayers. In Study 2 (N = 77), experienced male video game players played either a violent or a nonviolent racing game (violent content) in which they either lost or won (frustration). Anger affect and aggressive behavioral intentions were higher after playing the violent game than after playing the nonviolent game, regardless of outcome. For availability of aggressive cognitions, an interaction was found between video game violence and participants' trait aggressiveness: Reaction times for identifying aggressive words were unaffected by video game violence in respondents with low trait aggressiveness. However, respondents with high trait aggressiveness showed significantly shorter reaction times for aggressive words after playing the violent game than after playing the nonviolent game. The findings are discussed with reference to the General Aggression Model.