

VIDEO GAMES AND OTHER MEDIA: RESEARCH PRIORITIES



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Priority Research Topics

- **Link between media violence exposure and suicide, including by firearms**
- **Risk and protective factors for other and self-directed violence, including firearm-related violence**
- **Preventive interventions to reduce violence, including firearm-related violence**



Suicide (2010 Data)

- **Suicide - top 10 leading cause of death**
- **More suicides than homicides each year**
 - Suicide – 38,364/100,000
 - Homicide – 16,259/100,000
- **Firearm-related suicides**
 - 19,392/1000,000 – firearm-related (> 50%)
 - 748/100,000 - 10-19 year olds
 - 16,962/100,000 – males versus females
- **Many mass shooters commit suicide**



Media Coverage and Suicide

- **Media coverage is a risk factor for copycat suicide, particularly if**
 - **Suicide of a celebrity**
 - **A true versus fictional report**
 - **A suicide completion not attempt**
 - **A female suicide**
- **Media reporting more associated with increases in male than female suicides**



Social Media and Suicide

- **How to descriptions on suicide**
 - Message boards and forums
 - Video sharing websites (e.g., YouTube)
- **Cyberbullying/harassment (victimization)**
- **Social engagement**
 - Chatrooms
 - Online suicide pacts
 - Extreme communities



Video Games and Suicide

- **Relative dearth of information on this topic**



Why Link?

- **Greater access to information**
- **Media contagion**
 - Imitation/mimicry
 - Glamorized
- **Desensitization effect**



Possible Interventions

- **Educate journalists/programmers about ways to present suicide to reduce imitation and encourage help-seeking**
- **Use social media platforms**
 - **Share survivor stories (National Suicide Prevention Lifeline)**
 - **Report cyberbullying/cyberharassment (e.g., panic buttons – ClickCEOP)**
 - **Report suicidal content (e.g., FACEBOOK)**
 - **Provide help awareness and resources information**



Study

- **Utilize an interdisciplinary multi-method (e.g., self-report, timeline follow-backs of exposure and posts, informant report, observational) approach to examine**
 - **Links between various forms of media violence (e.g., television, print, social media, video games) and the continuum of suicidal behavior (e.g., ideation, attempts, completions)**



Risk and Protective Factors

- **Approach – pattern of intrapersonal, social/situational, and cultural/environmental risk and protective factors**
- **Media is one possible risk and/or protective factor**
- **Not intended to answer why factors have their effect, but rather what they are and how they work together**



Risk and Protective Factors

- **Few studies examine risk and protective factors that impact the media exposure-violence toward self and others link**
 - **Overlap and difference in factors associated with self versus other directed violence**
- **The following factors are associated with either side of this link and thus are worthy of study as mediators and moderators**



Intrapersonal Factors

- **Gender**
- **Genetics**
- **Biology (serotonin, HPA and HPG axis)**
- **Physiological arousal**
- **Temperament - easy versus difficult**
- **Precipitating crisis events**



Intrapersonal Factors

- **Empathy and altruism**
- **Hostile attribution bias**
- **Self-control and affect regulation**
- **Risk taking/impulsivity/aggression**
- **Past violent acts**
- **School/work problems**
- **Psychopathology**
- **Substance use**



Social/Situational Factors

- Attachment patterns
- Parenting
 - Parenting style (uninvolved parent)
 - Parental monitoring
 - Physical punishment/abuse
- Sibling relationships
 - Attachment
 - Aggression
- Family problems (e.g., conflict, violence)



Social/Situational Factors

- **Peer relationships and acceptance (popular, rejected, neglected)**
- **Social isolation and loneliness versus social connection**
- **Bullying, including cyberbullying/cyberharassment (particularly as victim)**
- **Gang involvement**



Cultural/Environmental Factors

- **Availability of drugs**
- **Neighborhood crime and violence**
- **Community disorganization**
- **Collective efficacy (interconnected group of neighbors that monitor and if necessary intervene with activities of local and nonlocal residents)**
- **Societal “fit”**



Study

- **Use an interdisciplinary, culturally-informed, multi-method (e.g., self-report, informant report, observational) approach to examine**
 - **Intrapersonal, social/situational, and cultural/environmental risk and protective factors, in isolation and in combination, that mediate and/or moderate the link between various forms of violence exposure and the continuum of self- and other-directed violence**



Preventive Interventions

- **Combine universal and targeted prevention approaches**
- **Focus on individual children, peers, teachers, parents, siblings, community**
- **Reduce risk factors and enhance protective factors**
- **Consider both self- and other-directed violence as outcomes**



Prosocial Effect of Media Games

- **Increase flow**
- **Enhance cooperation**
- **Improve problem-solving**
- **Foster initiative**
- **Reduce in-group bias**



Media Game Interventions

- **Prosocial games increase**
 - Prosocial cognitions
 - Positive state affect
 - Empathy and helping behavior
- **Prosocial games reduce**
 - State hostility
 - Hurtful behavior
 - Aggressive cognitions, affects, behaviors



Media Game Interventions

- **Cooperative team player games**
 - Promotes cohesion and bolsters trust
 - Increases online bonding and bridging social capital and civic engagements (no impact on offline behavior)
 - Reduces bias between members of different groups



Media Game Interventions

- **Health-Related Behavior Change**
 - Video games are linked to positive health-related changes
 - Stories allow for
 - Modeling
 - Vicarious identifying experiences
 - Learning a story's moral



School-Based Media Interventions

- **Teach critical viewing skills**
- **Educate youth that violence in the media does not tell them about the world and should not be imitated**
- **Use games that address cognitive, attitudinal, psychological, and social factors related to violence and suicide**
- **Teach skills for problem-solving and decision-making**



What Can Parents Do?

- **Select appropriate games (content, developmental level)**
- **Set clear rules about content and playing time in and outside the home, monitor, and enforce**
- **Offer appropriate warnings**
- **Co-view and co-play**
- **Comment on the program**
- **Talk with other parents**
- **Model appropriate game usage**



Study

- **Randomly assign classrooms/schools at different developmental stages to media (video game, social media) intervention versus another active treatment (both designed to reduce self- and other- directed violence) versus a control group to ascertain short- and long- term efficacy and effectiveness vis-à-vis the continuum of aggressive behavior from physiological arousal to gun violence, with attention paid to mechanisms of change**