

Is there Evidence of Greater Aggressive Behavior in Youth Ages 11-18 who play Violent Video Games?



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CONCLUSIONS The research conducted on the effect of violent video games on the behavior of youth that play them has shown that there is a relationship. By looking at the observation study of Kunter and Olsen (2008) it shows that those kids who play mature and violent video games are more likely to be involved physical fight and bullying. The work of Anderson and his co-workers show how playing violent video games desensitizes the players to violence in real life and explores the psychological effects of playing these games. Uhlmann and Swanson showed how players of violent video games more readily associate themselves with aggression even after just 20 minutes of game play. This research shows that awareness needs to increase and action needs to be taken to reduce the acceptance and game play in the youth.

INTRODUCTION

Over the last 3 decades it has been observed that violence among youth has been increasing with the rise of bullying both in school and online with 1 in 3 school children reporting being bullied in some way. Furthermore, We are in a day of age where there is a school or mass shooting every couple of months a tragic phenomenon that has come into existence the last couple decades. This rise in aggression has been going on around the same time that violent video games have risen in popularity in our society. It is recorded by Harvard health that 97% of American teens play video games and 66% play video games that include violence. Now the question of how these video games affect the behavior of the youth remains. This research paper is seeking to answer the question if violent video game play among middle to high school ages kids (11-18) is associated with aggressive behavior. The paper will provide scientific data and experimental support to show how there is an association between violent video games and acts of aggression. Understanding how and how much violent video games influences youths behavior can help us understand the types of measures need to reduce aggression in our society.

METHODS

There are many ethical challenges when testing the effects of violent video games on the action of youth that play them and these challenges are handled by studying aggression vs violence. Violence cannot be ethically induced in a laboratory because violence is aggressive behavior with intent to cause extreme harm to others (Anderson, 2012). This project will explore 3 different experimental methods for measuring aggression.

Study 1: Observational study of over 1,000 7th and 8th graders (Kutner and Olsen 2008).

Study 2: Craig A. Anderson and his coworkers in et al. (2006) measured heart rate and Galvanic skin response to real footage of violent actions after playing violent and nonviolent video games.

Study 3: Measured using an implicit Association tests to see how people associated them selves with aggression before and after playing violent and non violent video games (Uhlmann and Swanson. 2004).

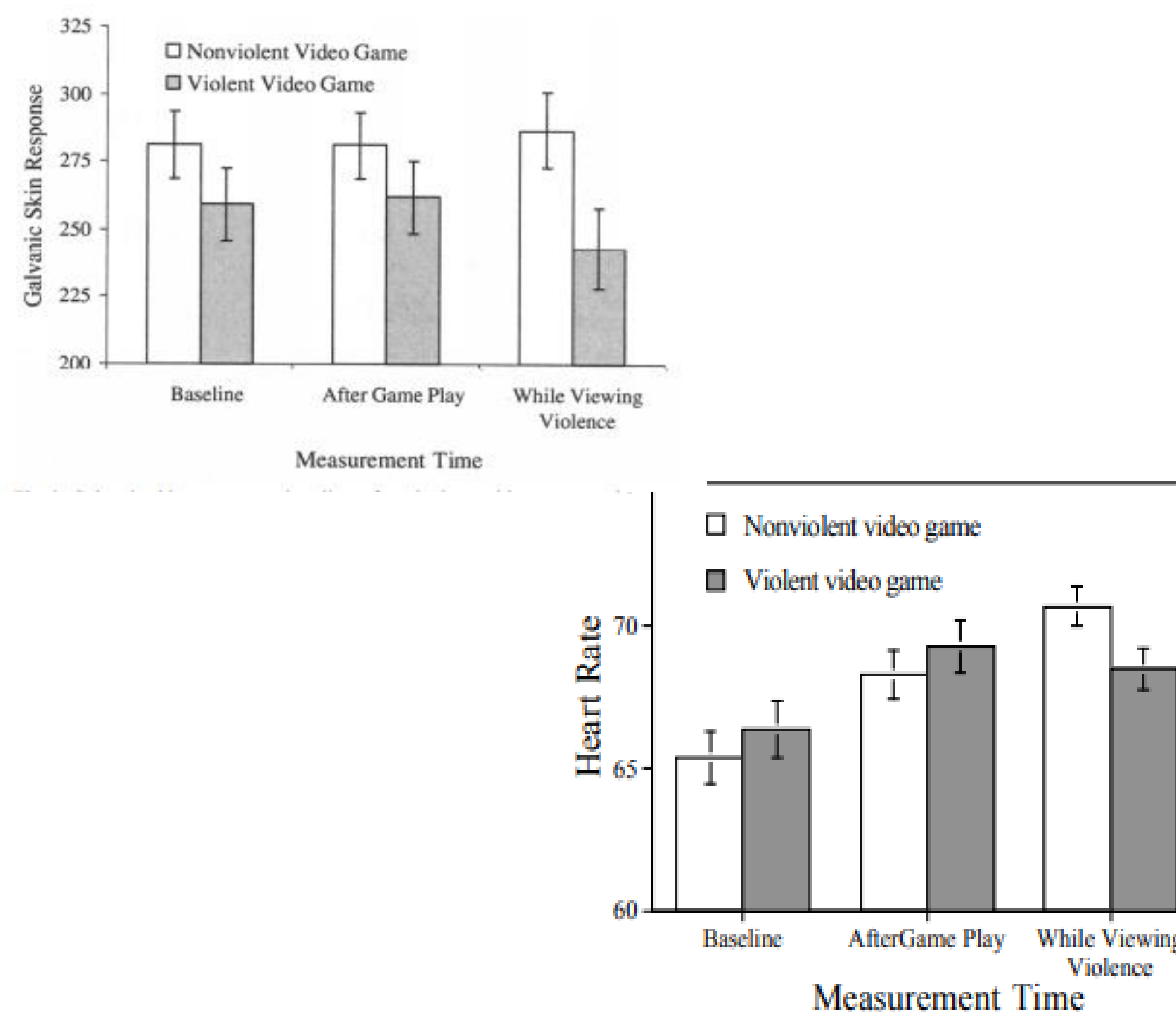


Figure 2: After 20 minutes of playing Violent video games galvanic skin response was lower and heart rate was higher while viewing real violent footage in comparison to those who played a non-violent game. (Anderson et al. 2006)

RESULTS

- **Study 1:** For males in study of M rated video game playing youth 51% of them had been in a physical fight, 60% had hit or beat up someone while only 28% of player who didn't play M rated games had been in a physical fight and 39% had hit or beat up someone (Kutner and Olsen. 2008). For females 40% of M rated games had been in a physical fight and 49% hit or beat up someone while only 14% of non M rated video game playing female children had been in a physical fight and 29% had hit or beat up someone.
- **Study 2:** After playing Violent video games for 20 minutes in comparison to those who played non violent video games for 20 minutes while viewing actual footage of violence those who played violent games had lower heart rates and Galvanic Skin response (Anderson et al. 2004)
- **Study 3:** It was found that players who played Doom a "shoot them up" game when compared to Mahjongg a puzzle game it was found that those playing the game doom automatically associated them selves with aggression. Scores were calculated by subtracting the mean latency Self=peaceful from Self= Aggressive critical IAT Block thus the less negative the score the more the associate them selves with aggression.

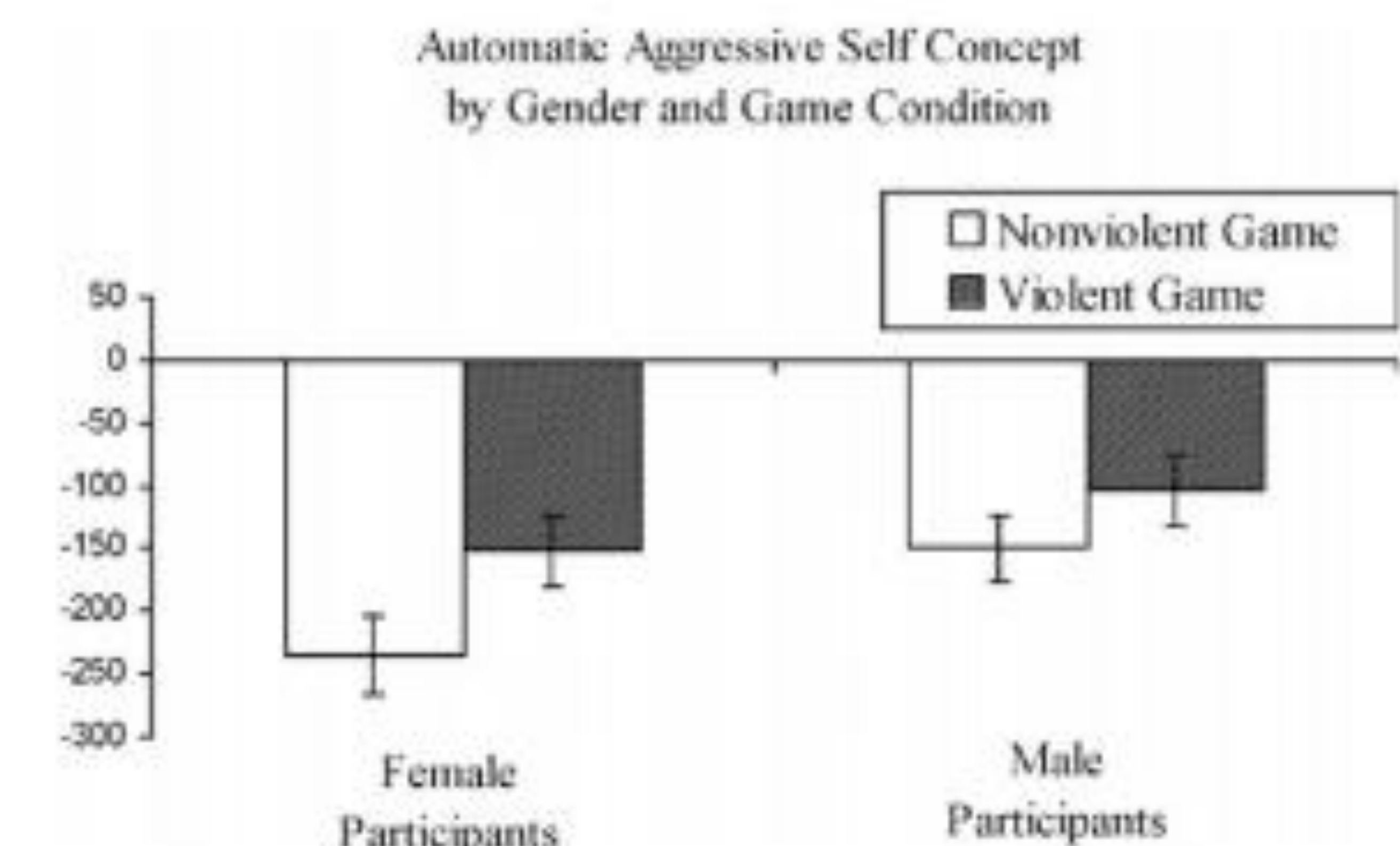


Figure 3: Exposure to violent video games increases self-association with aggression. (Uhlmann and Swanson, 2003)

FUTURE WORK

Now that research has confirmed that violent video games is associated with aggressive behavior the next step in research should be how influential is this compared to other influences on the lives of youth. This work is important because it can show what factors are the most influential on the behavior of the youth and thus can identify what needs to be focused on. Furthermore, Research can be conducted about different games too see if certain games can cause different levels of aggression. This type of research can help reduce violence and bullying in our youth.

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Problem Behaviors and M-Rated Game Preferences: Boys

PROBLEM AREA	TYPE OF BEHAVIOR PREVIOUS 12 MONTHS	OVERALL PERCENTAGE OF BOYS INVOLVED IN BEHAVIOR	PERCENTAGE OF M-GAMERS	PERCENTAGE OF NON-M-GAMERS
AGGRESSION AND BULLYING	Been in a physical fight	44.4%	51%	28%**
	Hit or beat up someone	53.2%	60%	39%**
	Took part in bullying another student [†]	9.2%	10%	8%

Problem Behaviors and M-Rated Game Preferences: Girls

PROBLEM AREA	TYPE OF BEHAVIOR PREVIOUS 12 MONTHS	OVERALL PERCENTAGE OF GIRLS INVOLVED IN BEHAVIOR	PERCENTAGE OF M-GAMERS	PERCENTAGE OF NON-M-GAMERS
AGGRESSION AND BULLYING	Been in a physical fight	20.9%	40%	14%**
	Hit or beat up someone	34.5%	49%	29%**
	Took part in bullying another student [†]	4.4%	6%	4%

Figure 1: Percentage of 7th and 8th grade boys and girls displaying aggressive behavior is greater in those that play M-rated games. From Kutner and Olsen (2008)