

# THE IMPACT OF VIOLENT VIDEO GAMES ON EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING AND AGGRESSION

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## ABSTRACT

Previous research suggests a causal link between violent video games and aggression (Anderson; 2004; Anderson & Bushman, 2001), but the underlying mechanisms remain unclear. Here, event-related brain potentials (ERPs) were recorded from 83 undergraduates who were randomly assigned to play a nonviolent or violent video game for 20 min prior to completing a go/no-go spatial Stroop task and an impulsive aggression task. Task order was manipulated between subjects. Results showed that, relative to nonviolent video game participants, violent video game participants had difficulty with cognitive control, but only after an intervening aggression task. Violent video games also caused increases in post-game aggressive behaviors, but only for dispositionally angry and low executive functioning (EF) participants. Trait aggressiveness also was found to moderate the relationship between violent video game exposure and both evaluative and regulatory control. These findings underscore the importance of individual differences in understanding violent media effects on both aggression and neurocognitive function.