

## Twenty-Five Years of Research on Violence in Digital Games and Aggression Revisited. A Reply to Elson and Ferguson (2013)

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European Psychologist, 19(1), 47-55

### Abstract:

In this commentary, we first analyze Elson and Ferguson's (2013) attempt to offer a theory that would explain why exposure to family, community, school, and media violence could be related to increased aggression, but not cause such aggression. We conclude that the "new" theory they offer is not very "new." It differs from dominant social learning theories only in its claim that the relation between exposure to violence and aggression is almost entirely due to people who are genetically or biologically predisposed to be aggressive also exposing themselves to more violence. We show this assertion is strongly contradicted by existing experimental and longitudinal data. We also show that Elson and Ferguson's so-called "exhaustive review" of empirical data on the topic is seriously flawed; that their claim that effect sizes are trivial is not supported by the math; and that their claim that scholars who believe that violent video games cause aggression are an "extreme" group in a divided field is contradicted by surveys that show the vast majority of researchers believe violent video games increase aggression. We point out that their claim that scholars who believe in media violence effects are having a "moral panic" has no theoretical or empirical support, whereas the contrasting argument that researchers who produce violent media themselves, or use it extensively, are biased by the force of cognitive consistency and experience a "reactance" of "regulatory panic" does have support from psychological theory.

Keywords: violent video games, aggression, violence