

Reply to Ferguson's study:

Supposedly there are no effects of violent video games.

We can point out wrong claims, methodical distortions, obscure assertions in the evaluation of the collected data and ignorance concerning the already established research.

Summary

Ferguson's study is very obscure, presenting methodical problems, gimmicks and contradictions, which point toward the suspicion of attempted manipulation.

Video Games and Youth Violence: A Prospective Analysis in Adolescents

Christopher J. Ferguson

J Youth Adolescence

DOI 10.1007/s10964-010-9610-x

Received: 24 September 2010 / Accepted: 9 November 2010

Springer Science+Business Media, LLC 2010

Published online: 14. December 2010

"No Aggression caused by violent video games" is the title of 2010 www.springer.com as of December 14, along with: 'Contrary to worldwide opinion, there is no real connection between video games or movies featuring violence and aggressive actions of young people of Latin-American descend in the U.S.' The above study by Ferguson was acclaimed in Germany as a proof of no effects of violent video games. But what and how much of this study is accurate?

In the abstract of his study Ferguson writes as follows: *"Although several prospective studies of the effects of video game violence have been conducted, none have employed well validated measures of youth violence, nor considered video game violence effects in context with other influences on youth violence such as family environment, peer delinquency, and depressive symptoms."* (2010)

Symptoms of "depression" within the objects of observation in studies of violent video effects conducted up to now were hardly included, specifically not because relevant signs of depression pertaining to aggression have to be captured in a very specific fashion (according to age, category of depression, culture specific perception).

Ferguson's claim that variables of everyday surrounding like for instance paternal and maternal force, acceptance, poverty etc. or juvenile delinquency have up to now not been considered in studies about violent video games **is wrong**. It could be assumed, that based on his university activities, through which Ferguson should have made himself familiar with the state of the research, Ferguson is **intentionally acting ignorant and selective**.

Studies in context of social influences

Many international and national studies on effects of violent video games researched conditions (third variables) of social context. We want to name but a few examples: The 6-months longitudinal study of "elementary school students" included parental engagement concerning media use (Anderson, Gentile, Buckley 2007, 114); the cross-sectional study by Moessler et al. (2006) researched among others educational level and manner of education of the parents; in the longitudinal study "Media Violence and Youth Violence- A 2-Year Longitudinal Study" (Hopf, Huber, Weiss 2008) Acceptance in Education, Poverty, physical parental force and Media Instruction as well as delinquency (theft, forceful criminal activity) were subject matter.

Because of a number of reasons it is worthwhile mentioning that Ferguson does not touch in his study on the above mentioned 2-years german longitudinal study:

1. Ferguson composed for the french game co. "gamingsince198x" a critic on the above mentioned 2-year longitudinal study, which later was being published on the german webpage www.stigmavideospiele.de, 2010. Feb 7th 2010 the contents of this critic was being acknowledged via mail by Ferguson, using the words: "It is indeed correctly attributed", because an authentication was being demanded. The authors of the above mentioned study answered this critic march 2010 under the title: C h r i s t o p h e r F e r g u s o n s " K r e u z z u g " ... (http://www.mediengewalt.eu/downloads/Ferguson_Stellungnahme.pdf)

Ferguson was quite familiar with this study before his research reached the printing co. 24 Sep 2010. The results by Hopf, Huber and Weiss (2008) found in a similar age group (12-14 yrs) totally contradict the research by Ferguson: *"The frequency of exposure to media violence and eight additional risk factors were path-analyzed in a 2-year longitudinal study. The exposure to media violence (total score) affected students' later violence ($\beta = .28$) and later violent delinquency ($\beta = .30$). (...)The results of our study show that the more frequently children view horror and violence films during childhood and the more frequently they play violent electronic games at the beginning of adolescence the higher will these students' violence and delinquency be at the age of 14."* (Hopf, Huber & Weiss, 2008).
Is this the main reason that Ferguson ignored this longitudinal study?

2. Furthermore is he basing the justification of the path analysis, which is to check out the effect hypothesis of his study, on the study by Moeller and Krahe (2009; Exposure to video games and aggression in German adolescents: A longitudinal analysis. *Aggressive Behavior*, 35, 79-89). This study does not contain any variables ("third variables") in the social context of the observed youths. To call back to memory - Ferguson is demanding in his abstract, effects of violent video games "in context with other influences on youth violence such as family environment, peer delinquency, and depressive symptoms." Thus he is using studies at random, when they serve his needs.

12 months later - the Time 2 (T2) assessment

"Participants in the current study were recruited from a prior study of youth violence (Ferguson et al., 2009). This study examined cross section data on correlates of youth violence in a sample of 603 mainly Hispanic youth." (Ferguson 2010). The

Hispanics lived in a small town close to the Mexican border: "As this sample was drawn from a small city hispanic majority on the Mexican border, this small sample of youth were almost all (519; 96.8 %) hispanic." (Ferguson 2010). In the prior study the average age was 12,34 yrs (10-14). The youths and families were addressed in local radio stations, to take part in a study for "adolescent health". The follow-up assessment 12 months later included 302 youths of the prior study.

Ferguson is referring to the data collection T1 of his prior cross section study. **But the Time T2 assessments were conducted by telephone interviews using "a trained research assistant".** "T2 assessments were conducted via phone interview with a trained research assistant using a standardized scripted interview comprised mainly of items taken from the outcome assessments (CBCL, OBS, NLE) and video game use." (Ferguson 2010).

1. The interviewer "using a standardized scripted interview comprised mainly of items taken from the outcome assessments (CBCL, OBS, NLE) and video game use." (Ferguson, 2010). No reader may control, which items were deleted or used. **From "well validated measures of youth violence", what Ferguson claimed in his abstract, is no reason to speak about.**

We want to emphasize at this point: Ferguson over and over again is laying claim in his publication, that no other studies on the effect of the consumption of violent video games have "employed well validated measures".

2. **The validity of data originated in media video games through telephone interviews is extremely doubtful, because the quality of data collection is especially of central importance as far as effect studies are concerned.** Lies, exaggerations and adapted answers are beyond control. Those performing tests may control some border conditions within a data evaluation situation only. Ferguson is putting himself on the level of opinion gathering and once again is he disregarding his own measuring system.

"Path Analysis "

Ferguson (2010) writes: "Path analysis can be used to test the temporal sequence of video game violence exposure and aggressive behavior, using each variable and T1 and T2."

Ferguson has orientated his 2-variables Path Analysis to Moeller & Krahe's (2009) model: "The basic path analysis was based on that used by Moeller and Krahe (2009)...". There is a tendency of predictability as far as the result of his "Path Analysis" is concerned because of his methodical proceeding as shown above:

"Neither of these proved to be good fits to the data, nor did a combined path exposure analysis with T1 aggression and video game violence exposure both leading to T2 aggression and video game violence exposure."

Principally the question arises, which concern the methodical behavior of Moeller and Krahe (2009) as well as Ferguson (2010), if a two-variable path analysis can furnish a proof for the effect - or selective hypothesis, since both factors, video violence consumption and aggression form the uppermost level of a path model. The dependence on a series of additional influences of the lower levels of the path model, without which **they are not directly effective** towards the terminal variable.

The shortcomings of the method of collection and statistical procedures, especially the problematic of the cultural-specific perception of any depression by Hispanics (Lewis-Fernandez et al. 2005) **put a question mark behind the validity of this study**. Ferguson's study is very obscure, presenting problems, gimmicks and contradictions, which point toward the suspicion of attempted manipulation.

References:

Anderson, C. A.; Gentile, D. A.; Buckley, K. E. (2007). *Violent Video Game Effects on Children and Adolescents*. University Press: Oxford.

Hopf, W. H.; Huber, G. L.; Weiß, R. H. (2008). Media Violence and Youth Violence. A 2-Year Longitudinal Study. *Journal of Media Psychology*, Vol. 20 (3) 79-96.

Lewis-Fernández, R.; Das, A. K.; Alfonso, C.; Weissman, M. M. and Olfson, M. (2005). Depression in US Hispanics: Diagnostic and Management Considerations in Family Practice. *The Journal of the American Board of Family Practice* 18:282-296

Möller, I., & Krahe, B. (2009). Exposure to violent video games and aggression in German adolescents: A longitudinal analysis. *Aggressive Behavior*, 35, 79–89.

Möble, T. Kleimann, M., Rehbein, F & Pfeiffer, C. (2006). Mediennutzung, Schulerfolg, Jugendgewalt und die Krise der Jungen. *Zeitschrift für Jugendkriminalität und Jugendhilfe*, 3, 295-309