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