

Growing up Digital: Media Research  
Symposium  
Chicago, IL

**Health and Developmental Impact:  
Violence and Aggression**

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\* Thank you for your interest in this presentation. Please note that analyses included herein are preliminary. More recent, finalized analyses may be available by contacting CiPHR.

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*Decoding how technology influences and can improve public health*

**What incentives to decrease aggression should we consider for game makers, parents and children?**

- We need to make non-violent games and other media just as fun and engaging as violent media so that players / users get just as much out of it.
- We could offer government incentives to media companies that have a certain percentage of non-violent content
  - ...but this could end up being Toyota-like (the Prius makes up for their gas-guzzling trucks and SUVs)

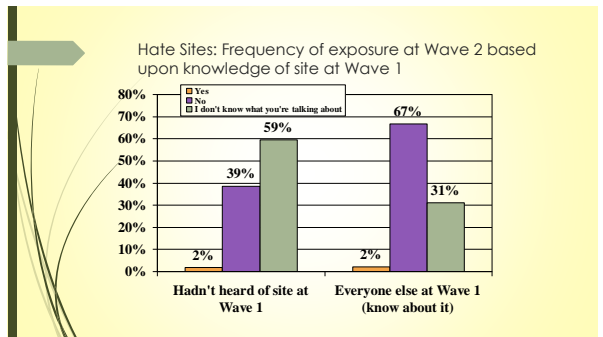
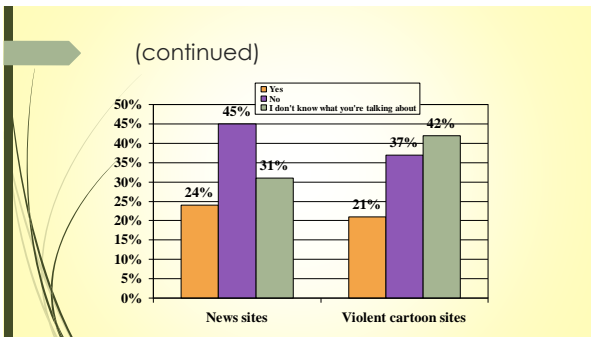
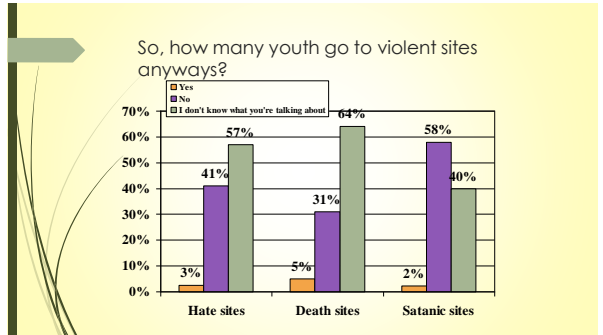
**Is there anything preventative against aggression that is perhaps attributable media violence exposure?**

- Yes:
  - Being female (Ybarra et al., 2008)
  - Intelligence - among boys, at least (Bjvank, Konijn & Bushman, 2012)
  - A lack of exposure to violent media may be protective against aggressive behavior. (Ybarra & Diener-West, 2008)
    - even just moving youth from 'many', 'most/all' to 'some' violence may be influential.
  - Involved parenting, including:
    - Strong parent child communication (Wallenius & Punamäke, 2008)
    - Setting limits on the amount and content of children's media (McDonald, Anderson, & Gentile, 2012; Gentile, Reimer, Nathanson, Walsh, & Eisenmann, 2014)

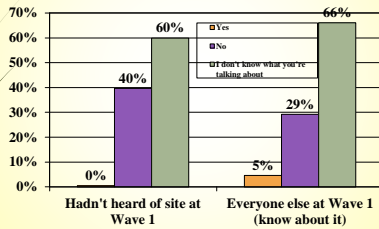
If it's built,  
Will they come?

NO

..or at least, not always..



Death Sites: Frequency of exposure at Wave 2 based upon knowledge of site at Wave 1



### Psychosocial profile of seekers of violent sites

- Violence and aggression
  - Seriously violent behavior: OR = 2.2, p=0.008
  - Frequent physical bullying: OR = 4.6, p<0.001
  - Frequent physical fighting: OR = 6.1, p<0.001
  - Carrying a weapon to school in the past 30 days: OR = 3.4, p=0.02
- Other psychosocial issues
  - Alcohol use: 2.7, p<0.001
  - Marijuana use: 4.2, p<0.001
  - Poor parental monitoring: 1.2, p=0.01
  - Poor emotional bond with caregiver: 1.1, p=0.02

So we can think of going to violent websites as a signal to have a conversation about what's going on

### Access to media and handheld games will increase in all communities. What can we do beyond education?

- Accept it. Media isn't bad in and of itself. It's the content on the media and games that can influence behavior
- Parents assume that 'everyone is doing it' i.e., that all kids are being allowed to play violent video games - in the same way that kids who are having sex, or are drinking assuming that everyone is doing it. Assure them that it is possible to raise your children in violence free zones:
  - One in twenty (6%)** of our youth said that **none / almost none** of the TV they watch, the music they listen to, the games they play, and the websites they go to depict violence.
- Give parents concrete tools (e.g., refusal skills) so that they feel empowered to say no to their children when they plead for the newest, most popular (violent) game

### What can/should pediatricians be doing?

- One of the biggest confusions parents have is how there can be linkages between violent video games and aggressive behavior if they and their friends grew up playing these games and are fine.
  - Anticipate this confusion.
  - Use concrete examples to explain why it's not a 1:1:
    - Even though we know cigarettes are associated with cancer, not everyone who smokes will get cancer. Odds ratios are not the same as prevalence rates.
    - Everyone knows someone who has a story about an 80 year old grandmother who smoked a pack a day until she died - in a car accident. There are always outliers.
    - As with violence, cancer is a "multiple hit". We are learning more and more about how genetics and environment work in concert with (or in protection of) cigarette smoking. Violent media exposure is likely a similar exposure with similar genetic and environmental influences.
- Point to make to parents: Will shielding their youth from violent media be the end-all-be-all? No. But, it won't hurt them either, and only helps to stack the deck in their favor.

### What can/should the American Academy of Pediatrics be doing?

- Lobby Congress to have better laws that regulate youth access to violence. If we can protect them from sex, why can't we protect them from extreme violence?
- Resist the urge to hop on the violent media band wagon when gun violence grips the country. We work so hard to get folks to believe that violent media might actually be a 'thing' that we are flustered when the NRA points to it as an influence in shootings and other violent acts. Violent media may be part of the problem, but it is not The Problem in these situations. Poor gun control laws are.

### Conclusion

- Violent media is associated with an increased odds of aggressive and violent behavior. It is one of many important exposures of which parents need to be aware.
- Pediatricians are busy. Perhaps asking a more encompassing question can invigorate a conversation that leads to violent media - as well as other potential exposures that are concerning to parents. For example:
  - Johnny's at an age where there's a lot going on developmentally, so I like to check in with parents about how things are going. Is there anything that you're concerned about, including maybe behaviors that you've seen, that you'd like to talk about?

To be concrete about this: Prevalence of violent, bullying, and fighting behavior based upon violent media exposure

