

Violent video games don't always reduce subsequent helpfulness

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Violent or antisocial video games like Call of Duty or Grand Theft Auto do not reliably reduce helpful behaviors in players shortly after playing, according to research published July 3 in the open access journal *PLOS ONE* by Morgan Tear and Mark Nielsen from the University of Queensland, Australia.

Participants in the research played one of four video games for 20 minutes. At the end of the test, a researcher pretended to drop some pens and assessed how many players helped pick them up. Regardless of the game played, only about 40-60% of participants helped pick up pens at the end of the study. In a second test, they found that participants were more likely to exhibit the helpful behavior when pens were dropped half-way through the experiment rather than at the end of the exercise. 75% of people helped pick up pens if they were dropped during the task, compared to only 31% who helped if the pen-drop exercise occurred at the end of the experiment. Again, the type of video game did not influence the number of participants that helped pick up pens.

Based on these results, the authors suggest that contextual differences in the design of this experiment could change the baseline rates of [helpfulness](#) observed, but they did not find a correlation between violent or anti-social video [game play](#) and helpful behavior. The paper concludes, "We fail to substantiate conjecture that playing contemporary [violent video games](#) will lead to diminished prosocial behavior."

Tear adds, "Historically, failures to replicate in the field violent video

game research have struggled for exposure. These studies highlight not only that intuitions about violent video games don't hold, but also that using the exact same procedures of past research doesn't reveal the same results."

More information: Tear MJ, Nielsen M (2013) Failure to Demonstrate That Playing Violent Video Games Diminishes Prosocial Behavior. *PLOS ONE* 8(7): e68382. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0068382

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