

Overview

The last few decades have seen dramatic changes in the video game industry. Along with vast improvements to graphics that make characters look human, games have also become much more explicitly violent. Existing literature has supported the idea that exposure to violent video games raises one's aggression (Anderson et al., 2010, Greitemeyer & Mugge, 2014, Saleem et al., 2012). Although there is substantial research on the link between video games and aggression, there has been little work exploring empathy. Empathy is especially important to examine because it characterizes our ability to understand and connect with others' emotions. If exposure to violent video games has a negative effect on empathy, then the ability to emotionally understand others may be damaged. The present research attempts to explore whether individuals show a decrease in empathy after playing violent video games.

Study Aims

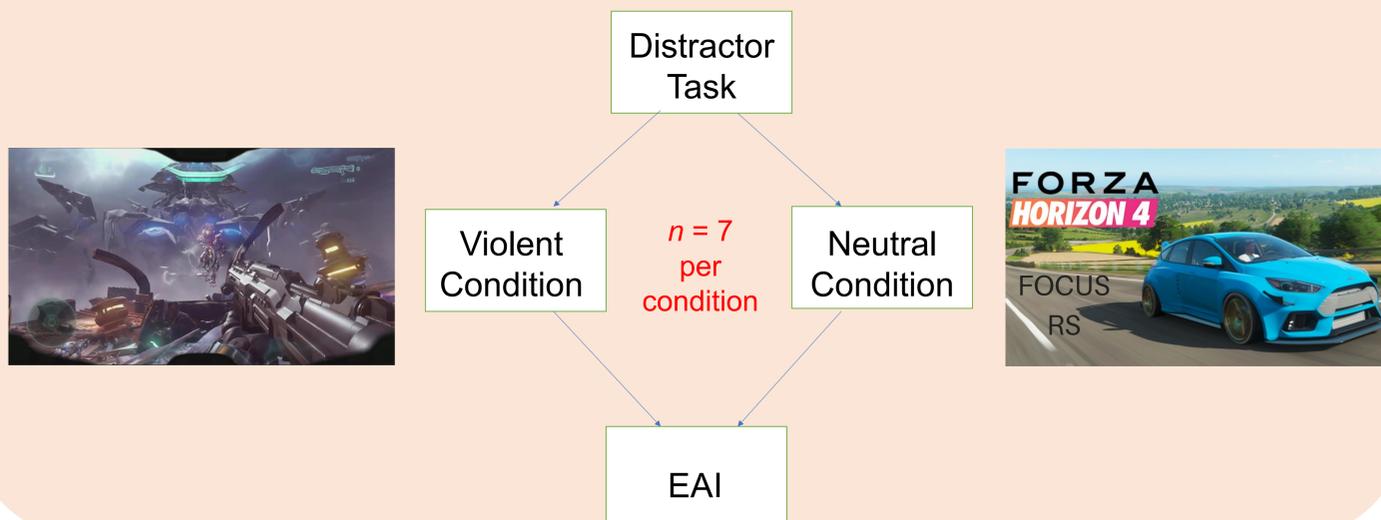
- Use two video game conditions (Violent: Halo 5 Vs. Neutral: Forza Horizon 4) in a between-subjects design
- Examine if violent video games decrease empathy

Methodology

All participants took a pre-study survey (distractor task). This survey asked participants about their general media usage. Questions asked about phone usage, streaming platforms, and other media-related usage.

Participants were randomly assigned to a neutral or violent video gameplay condition. Neutral condition participants played a racing game (Forza Horizon 4) while violent condition participants played a first-person shooter game (Halo 5)

Following the game, all participants completed the Empathy Assessment Index (EAI; Lietz et al., 2011) to assess differences in empathy between game conditions.



Scan for sample
gameplay:
Halo 5



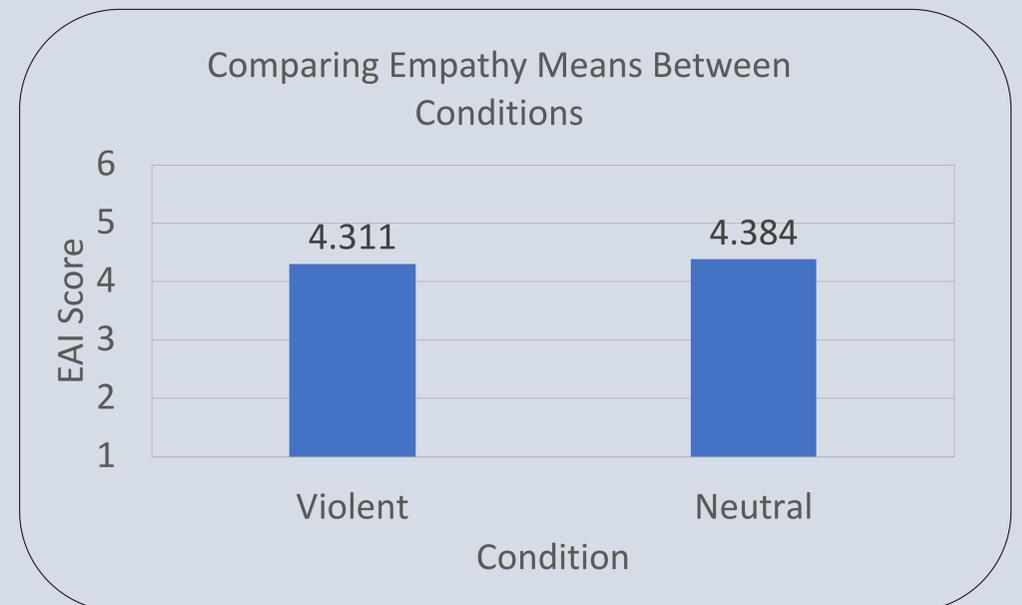
Scan for sample
gameplay:
Forza Horizon 4



Results

Statistically Insignificant Difference in Empathy Means

When comparing the violent condition ($M = 4.311$, $SD = 0.431$) and the neutral condition ($M = 4.384$, $SD = 0.293$) on empathy score means, there was not a statistically significant difference, $t(12) = 0.371$, $p = 0.717$, $d = .198$.



Conclusions and Limitations

Exposure to violent video games did not reliably lower empathy relative to non-violent video games

Study was underpowered ($N = 14$) with only seven participants per condition

Participants only exposed to video game for ten minutes. A longitudinal study would be a preferable alternative for future research