

# Capitolo 13

## Case Study 1

### Aggressive models in the media

Bushman, Baumeister, and Stack (1999) [DOI:10.1037/0022-3514.76.3.367] investigated whether the endorsement for catharsis in the media produces a self-fulfilling or a self-defeating prophecy. In their first study, participants read either a procatharsis or an anticatharsis message. The procatharsis message stated that aggressive action is good for relaxation and a reduction of anger feelings, while the anticatharsis message stated that it was not good for relaxation and reducing anger. Participants who read the procatharsis message had a greater desire to hit a punch bag than participants who read the anticatharsis message.

In Study 2, participants could actually punch the bag. Bushman et al. measured the noise intensity and duration while participants were punching the bag, in order to measure aggressive behavior. Participants who read the procatharsis message showed more aggressive behavior, and thus made more noise when punching, than participants who read the anticatharsis message. These results contradict the catharsis and the self-fulfilling prophecy prediction; hitting a punch bag increased aggression rather than decreasing it. In sum, exposure to messages endorsing aggression increased people's desire to hit.

### Reference

- Bushman, B. J., Baumeister, R. F., & Stack, A. D. (1999). [DOI:10.1037/0022-3514.76.3.367]. Catharsis, aggression, and persuasive influence: Self-fulfilling or self-defeating prophecies? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 76(3), 367–376.

## Case Study 2

### This just in – Playing violent video games really does make you more aggressive, really

Imagine the following conversation...

*Joe:* So, does playing violent video games *really* make people more aggressive?

*Pete:* Yes.

*Joe:* But all of the research is correlational and you know that correlation does not equal causation.

*Pete:* Actually, a number of empirical, longitudinal *and* correlational studies have all shown that playing violent video games makes people more aggressive.

*Joe:* But surely not all of the studies show the same effect?

*Pete:* Joe, if you don't believe me, please read below about researchers who conducted a meta-analysis in which they combined the results of over 130 articles published on this topic. These articles describe both non-experimental and experimental studies conducted on over 130,000 participants of all ages, all over the world. Once you've read over this summary, let me know what you think.

Here's the summary...

In 2010, Anderson and his colleagues ([DOI: [10.1037/a0018251](https://doi.org/10.1037/a0018251)]) in the United States and Japan, scoured databases from the East and from the West for research on the topic of video game-playing and aggression. They analyzed the results of studies reported in over 130 articles and found that across all study types, across all ages and sexes, and across both Eastern and Western cultures, playing violent video games makes people behave more aggressively. They also found that playing violent video games led to less empathy toward others, greater desensitization to violent material, and a decreased likelihood of engaging in prosocial behavior.

Do these results mean that anyone who plays violent video games will immediately behave in an aggressive manner? No, it does not. But, the size of the effect of playing violent video games on aggressive behavior is similar to the influence of poverty, substance use, and parental abuse on an individual's aggressive behavior. So, playing violent video games doesn't automatically make every person more aggressive, but it certainly increases the likelihood of such behavior.

- *Pete:* So, Joe, what do you think?
- *Joe:* I guess I'm convinced. I think I'll tone down the violent video game-playing, and I'm definitely going to tell my sister not to let my young nephews play such games.
- *Pete:* Good for you Joe. My mission here is complete.

## Reference

- Anderson, C. A., Shibuya, A., Ihori, N., Swing, E. L., Bushman, B. J., Sakamoto, A., Rothstein, H. R., & Saleem, M. (2010). [DOI: [10.1037/a0018251](https://doi.org/10.1037/a0018251)]. Violent video game effects on aggression, empathy, and prosocial behavior in Eastern and Western countries: A meta-analytic review. *Psychological Bulletin*, *136*, 151–173.

## Case Study 3

### Alcohol-related priming makes people more aggressive

There is a good deal of evidence to suggest that alcohol consumption increases people's aggressive behavior, but did you know that even being exposed to alcohol-related material can also make people more aggressive?

Pedersen and colleagues (2014) [DOI: [10.1177/0146167214534993](https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167214534993)] conducted a study in which participants were first asked to write an essay that they were told would be reviewed by another participant (actually a confederate). After writing the essay, the participants took part in a task on the computer in which they simply indicated whether strings of letters were real words or not (e.g., “purple” is a real word and “kopaj” is not). Unbeknownst to the participants, before each of these letter strings appeared on the screen, other words were also being presented but they were being presented so quickly that they could not consciously be seen. Half of the participants in this study were subliminally primed with non-alcoholic beverage words (e.g., milk, juice) and the other half of the participants were subliminally primed with alcoholic beverage words (e.g., beer, wine). After completing this task, the students received the ostensible feedback from the other participant. Half of the participants received hostile feedback, indicating that their essay was the worst essay the other participant had ever read. The other half of the participants received more ambiguous feedback indicating that the other participant didn’t even know where to start, in reading their essay. As the final task in this experiment (and there was a cover story that made each of these different tasks seem to make sense as part of the same study), participants were asked to determine for how much time the other participant would have to spend with their hand placed in a bucket of ice water. This is called a *cold pressor* task and it was used as the dependent measure of aggression in this study.

The results showed that, regardless of prime, those participants who received the unambiguously hostile feedback (*Really, it’s the worst essay you’ve ever read?*) recommended that the other participant spend more time completing the cold pressor task. In contrast, when the feedback was more ambiguous (*I’ll tell you where to begin, start at the beginning!*), it was the participants who had previously been exposed to the alcohol-related primes that recommended that the other participant spend longer with their hand in the ice bucket. In contrast, those who were exposed to the non-alcoholic beverage primes recommended less time spent on the cold pressor task.

In a second, similar study, the researchers found that these priming effects tend to not last very long (they decline steadily over a 15-minute period), and that the relation between the alcohol prime and aggressive behavior could be explained by participants perceiving ambiguous feedback to be more hostile after having been primed with alcohol-related words. So, with alcohol-related concepts activated in one’s mind even the smallest slight is perceived to be hostile, leading to the potential for aggressive retaliatory behavior.

## Reference

- Pedersen, W. C., Vasquez, E. A., Bartholow, B. D., Grosvenor, M., & Truong, A. (2014). [DOI: [10.1177/0146167214534993](https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167214534993)]. Are you insulting me? Exposure to alcohol primes

increases aggression following ambiguous provocation. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 40, 1037–1049.

#### **Case Study 4**

##### **“We are the world”: Exposure to prosocial music decreases aggression**

A large section of this chapter focused on how exposure to violent, antisocial media, weapons, etc. leads people to behave in more aggressive ways. Perhaps you were curious about whether the opposite effect could be found. Specifically, does exposure to prosocial media decrease people’s likelihood of behaving aggressively? A study by Greitemeyer (2011) [DOI: [10.1016/j.jesp.2010.08.005](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2010.08.005)] set out to test that very question.

Across five studies, participants from Germany and the UK listened either to music with prosocial lyrics (e.g., Michael Jackson’s “Heal the World” or LiveAid’s “We are the World”) or to music with neutral lyrics (e.g., Michael Jackson’s “On the Line” or “Octopus’s Garden” by the Beatles) and then their cognitions, affect and behavior were assessed. The results showed that participants who listened to prosocial music were thinking less aggressive thoughts, they indicated more negative attitudes toward war and other acts of violence, they were lower in state hostility, and they made more favorable judgments of a fictitious job candidate.

In the final study, participants again listened to either prosocial or neutral music after which they wrote an essay that was then evaluated by another (fictitious) participant. Each participant received negative feedback about their essay from the other participant and then they were asked (as part of an ostensibly separate market research study) to allocate a certain amount of hot sauce to the participant. They were told that the other participant had agreed to sample the sauce, although they didn’t know how much they would have to consume. In addition, the participant was told that the other participant would not be told who had determined how much hot sauce they had to taste. (As mentioned in the text, this hot sauce allocation is a common measure of aggression.)

The results showed that, compared to the participants who had listened to neutral music, participants who listened to the prosocial music gave less hot sauce to the other participant.

Additional analyses revealed that participants in the prosocial music condition allocated less hot sauce because they felt less hostility toward the other participant.

Overall, this study showed that listening to prosocial music decreases our aggressive thoughts, our aggressive feelings, and even our aggressive behavior toward someone who gives us negative feedback. So, can listening to music really heal the world and make it a better place? It’s certainly a step in the right direction!

#### **Reference**

- Greitemeyer, T. (2011). [DOI: [10.1016/j.jesp.2010.08.005](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2010.08.005)]. Exposure to music with prosocial lyrics reduces aggression: First evidence and test of the underlying mechanism. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 47, 28–36.

## **Case Study 5**

### **The negotiation process**

De Dreu (2005) [DOI:10.1111/j.0963-7214.2005.00349.x] discusses four key variables that affect negotiation: (1) power balance; (2) accountability to the process; (3) cooperative motivation; and (4) time, grouped under the acronym PACT:

1. When one side of the involved parties has more power than the other, the power holders' behavior, cognitions, and motivation have a bigger impact on negotiations than those of their powerless counterparts.
2. Accountability to process refers to situations in which parties have to account to their constituents for what they did during negotiations, making people self-critical, and motivated to analyze a situation from multiple perspectives.
3. People who have pro-social motivation desire a good outcome for their counterparts as well as for themselves, and see negotiations as collaborative games in which harmony, fairness, and joint success are key. People with pro-self motivation see negotiations as competitive games in which power and personal success are key.
4. Time pressures undermine the motivation to engage in thorough information processing; they increase tendencies toward naïve realism, and may offset the advantages of power balance and process accountability.

### **Reference**

- De Dreu, C. K. W. (2005). [DOI:10.1111/j.0963-7214.2005.00349.x]. A PACT against conflict escalation in negotiation and dispute resolution. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 14 (3), 149–152.