

Reply

To the Editor:

Zimmerman and Strasburger¹ offer numerous errors, omissions, and polemics rather than meaningful dialogue. We offer a point-by-point rebuttal:

- (1) Of the articles they say we “missed,” most did not meet inclusion criteria (no measure of aggressive behavior, no contrast between violent and non-violent media). The remainder were published or indexed in PsychINFO after the time of our study search. They present a rather dishonest list, failing to inform the readers why these studies were not included.
- (2) They puzzlingly assert omission of a study² that was included.
- (3) Our article does not refer to attenuation because of unreliability, which Zimmerman and Strasburger¹ reference, rather unstandardized assessments of aggression. Unstandardized assessment allows researchers to select outcomes that best fit a priori hypotheses. Indeed it’s possible to notice that sometimes even the same author uses an aggression measure differently across studies,³⁻⁵ which is poor science. Suggesting that unstandardized assessments may bias results is hardly controversial.
- (4) Zimmerman and Strasburger¹ criticize our publication bias analysis. We stand by our results. Readers need not take our word for it because evidence for publication bias is readily available elsewhere. For instance, the meta-analysis by Anderson et al⁶ includes both published and unpublished studies. Of the published studies (n = 32), 19 were supported, 9 were inconclusive, and 4 were non-supported. Of the unpublished studies (n = 11), 1 was supported, 1 was inconclusive, and 9 were nonsupported. The difference between published and unpublished studies is rather obvious. Furthermore, there is good reason to expect publication bias in this particular field.⁷⁻¹¹
- (5) The next comment made by Zimmerman and Strasburger¹ is simply false. We only examined media violence exposure on aggressive behavior.
- (6) They lastly suggest we indulge in “mind reading” regarding political influence on media violence research.

Zimmerman and Strasburger¹ fail to note that this issue has been well examined.⁷⁻¹⁰ One also only need examine the record of political intrusion into media violence with efforts to censor it, a process wherein scholars have often presented misleading information to the public. The tone and hyperbole of this Letter in stating that we have “done violence to that literature” ironically underscores our own concerns about the degree to which some scholars view this research area as an ideology to be protected rather than a set of hypotheses to be examined critically.

Christopher John Ferguson, PhD

Texas A&M International University
Behavioral, Applied Sciences and Criminal Justice
Laredo, Texas
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