D꩜C A | Database of Variables for Content Analysis

Violent acts (Video Games)

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BRIEF DESCRIPTION
The depiction of violence is the focus of many content analyses of video games. Typically, the occurrence and nature of acts of violence or aggression are coded to quantify the amount of violent content in a particular game.

FIELD OF APPLICATION/THEORETICAL FOUNDATION
Quantifying the amount of violence in video games can inform media effects research that looks at the relationship between the exposure to violent video game content and aggression. This allows for more precise measures and hypotheses than simply coding a game as violent or nonviolent which is often done in experimental research in this area. What is commonly coded in content analyses of violent content in video games is the number and nature of aggressive or violent actions. Specific attributes of these acts, such as their realism, graphicness or (narrative) justification (Tamborini et al., 2013) are only considered in a few studies (e.g., Lachlan et al., 2005). While the focus in most studies is on acts of physical aggression/violence in interactions with/between game characters, there are also studies that have investigated verbal aggression between players (Holz Ivory et al., 2017).

REFERENCES/COMBINATION WITH OTHER METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION
Content analysis of violence in video games can be complemented by survey data asking players about the games they play and their rating of the degree of violence they contain and/or age rating from institutions like ESRB or PEGI (see Busching et al., 2015).

EXAMPLE STUDIES
see Table 1

Table 1. *Example studies.*

Coding material	Measure	Operationalization	Unit(s) of analysis	Source(s) (reported reliability of coding)
Video recording of playing session	Number and duration of violent interactions (attacking and being attacked)	(a) combat: "periods of playing time in which a player [i.e., the character controlled by the player] fires his gun" (p. 1021) (b) "under attack–the player is attacked by an opponent before or after using his own weapon" (p. 1022)	Distinct phases/ events in up to 12 minutes of solo play of the first-person shooter game Tactical Ops: Assault on Terror	Weber et al., 2009 (Cohen's kappa = 0.81)

Coding material	Measure	Operationalization	Unit(s) of analysis	Source(s) (reported reliability of coding)
Video recording of the whole game	Depictions of injury (present/not present)	"An injured or dead character lying on the ground or remnants of blood from a known violent act" (p. 403)	1-second intervals of the game recordings	Thompson et al., 2006 (Cohen's kappa = 0.93)
Video recording of the whole game	Depictions of violent acts (present/not present)	"Intentional acts in which the aggressor causes or attempts to cause physical injury or death to another character" (p. 403)	1-second intervals of the game recordings	Thompson et al., 2006 (Cohen's kappa = 0.93)
Video recording of the first 10 minutes of gameplay	Depicted harm/pain (none, mild, moderate, extreme) in aggressive exchanges between in-game characters	"physical injury or incapacitation of the victim" (p. 64)	"an aggressive exchange that occurs between a perpetrator (P) engaging in a particular type of act (A) against a target (T)" (p. 63)	Smith et al., 2003 (coefficient according to "Potter and Levine-Donnerstein's (1999) reliability formula for multiple coders", p. 65: 0.87)

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