

Eduqas GCSE Unit 3A Close Study Products Student Workbook 2025

Fortnite

This is the Note Pack for use with **EDUSITES EDUQAS SET PRODUCTS UNIT 3A GCSE MEDIA STUDIES**. All of the notes refer to the content of this unit of work. They are designed to help you create a useful set of notes to help you with understanding the ideas covered in this examination, to support you in your Home Learning and be a clear revision aid in your preparations for the final examinations that you are required to take. You need to always keep in mind the examination board Assessment Objectives that your work is to be assessed with.

Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of:

- the theoretical framework of media contexts of media and their influence on media products and processes.
- Analyse media products using the theoretical framework of media, including in relation to their contexts, to make judgements and draw conclusions.
- Create media products for an intended audience, by applying knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework of media to communicate meaning.

Create products for intended audience and evaluate communication of:

- Demonstrate Knowledge & Understanding of the theoretical framework – the key concepts
Contexts of media products & production
- Analyse products by application of the framework /concepts /context

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Teacher's Standards

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Lesson 1

The Paper One Set products.

The Eduqas GCSE Media Studies specification is based on the theoretical framework for analysing and creating media, which provides the tools to develop a critical understanding and appreciation of the media. The framework consists of four inter-related areas:

- **media language:** how the media through their forms, codes, conventions, and techniques communicate meanings
- **representation:** how the media portray events, issues, individuals, and social groups
- **media industries:** how the media industries' processes of production, distribution and circulation affect media forms and platforms
- **audiences:** how media forms target, reach and address audiences, how audiences interpret and respond to them, and how members of audiences become producers themselves.

Section B

This section will assess **knowledge and understanding of media industries and audiences** in relation to any of the four forms studied for this section: film, newspapers, radio and video games.

Question 3 will be a **stepped question assessing knowledge and understanding of media industries** in relation to one form studied.

Question 4 will be a **stepped question assessing knowledge and understanding of audiences** in relation to a different media form from that assessed in question one.

The SET PRODUCTS have been selected by EDUQAS. The intention is to promote the study in breadth and depth of a range of media products that cover all the platforms - *print; moving image; e-media* - and a range of different products – *print advertisements; TV advertisements; TV shows; music videos; magazines; film; newspapers; web sites/blogs etc.*

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Each study contains products from different periods in the development of media production and from different platforms. Each is requiring work on related products for understanding of the issues.

1. *How media production has shaped public attitudes and behaviour. You are expected to compare products from different times with a study of what those times were like.*
2. *The values contained in products to do with attitudes towards different groups of people, how they are represented or under-represented.*
3. *You are also **expected to study similar types of products to consider how they reflect generic ideas, the conventions of such products and the audiences that consume them.***
4. *You also need **understanding of the media industry that produces them – the intentions of their work - often reduced to their desire to maximise profits and audience - and the attempts to control and regulate their work.***

The nature of media production

the impact of production processes, personnel and technologies on the final product, including similarities and differences between media products in terms of when and where they are produced.

- the effect of **ownership and control of media organisations**, including conglomerate ownership, diversification, and vertical integration
- the impact of **the increasingly convergent nature of media industries** across different platforms and different national settings
- the importance of different **funding models**, including government funded, not-for-profit and commercial models.
- how **the media operate as commercial industries on a global scale** and reach both large and specialised audiences
- the **functions and types of regulation** of the media; the challenges for media regulation presented by 'new' digital technologies

Online video gaming must be studied in relation to media industries and audience.

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Learners should have an understanding of *Fortnite* as a contemporary online game which explores the convergence of media platforms and technologies in the context of the study of media industries and of related audience issues

To develop an awareness of the game as a contemporary product, learners should consider selected key pages from the website, including the homepage and at least two other pages chosen by the centre.

Extracts from the game must only be considered in relation to the industry or audience issues exemplified.

Lesson 2

The Market

Games – even more than blockbuster films – rely for their marketing on the ability to use established franchises or brand names. Hence the success of Mario and Pokémon as the two best-selling/highest grossing video game franchises of all time. Many of games and gameplay could be adapted for new characters but association with a brand name does much of the work in constructing the audience for these games.

Domestication Theory: developed by Silverstone to help understand the adoption and use of new media technologies by domestic households. *The process involves an early tentative familiarisation where the user gets to grips with the possibilities provided by the technology, followed by a period of developing their own ideas as to its use in practice which shapes future technological improvements as the product becomes 'essential'.*

Silverstone describes four steps as:

- New technologies are **integrated** into everyday life and adapted to daily practices (**Appropriation**)
- **The user and their environment change and adapt** accordingly to fit the technology. (**Objectification**)
- These adaptations **feedback into innovation processes** in industry, shaping the next generation of technologies and services. (**Incorporation**)
- The way that the **technology represents status and culture** of a household. (**Conversion**)

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For an industry that was initially seen as an entertainment for children to thrive for over forty years, and to have evolved into a format with more adult players than teenage, would seem to make the point that it is an industry able to adapt to serve the changing needs of its audience.

Clearly, one way is the expansion from the console platform-based gaming of the Nintendo, PlayStation and now defunct Sega consoles of the 1990s into one that can take advantage of the evolving technology of tablets and mobile phones.

The rise of what are termed '*casual gamers*' – *those that will game on their phone rather the more static console gamers* – has seen the demographic of the gamer change. In 2016, the mobile gaming market was estimated to have taken over \$38 billion in revenue of the total \$75billionsn of all video game formats.

The tasks for Component 1 Section B for film is focused on gaming as an industry which in turn requires an understanding of audience. For the most part the tasks set require a focus on the marketing of games and the way audiences are constructed by such representations.

The role and purpose of gaming in the modern world – *implies context*

- The audience for such games and how they are addressed – *implies context*
- The way such games are financed
- The way they are promoted in the modern global market – *focus on context*

How theoretical models help us understand the industry and how this shapes its output

- As with all the set products, study of the set product is a means by which to study broader ideas and concerns of the Media Framework.
- The set product enables us to explore these ideas in a practical manner. We **use examples from the product to illustrate our understanding.**
- **The gaming industry is highly significant in terms of its economic wealth and in its social impact.** It can be seen to illustrate some sense of the values of society or sections of society.
- In looking at the games industry through the example of *Fortnite*, we may **consider how the ideas of media theorists are relevant in explaining these things that shape contemporary culture** and reflect the ideas and beliefs present in society

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Lesson 3

The Game

Produced by Epic Games, the *Fortnite* franchise is a series of multiplayer **free-to-play** battleground games available

on several platforms and devices launched in July 2017

- The franchise includes *Fortnite: Battle Royale*,
- *Fortnite: Save The World*, and *Fortnite: Creative* ***Fortnite: Battle Royale* is the most successful free-to-play videogame ever, making \$1.2 billion in the first 10 months of release.** Initially, players had to buy ‘battle passes’ to play, but in September 2018 the *Battle Royale* version was offered for free.
- The *Fortnite* franchise had **revenue** of £2.4 billion in 2018
- The franchise has helped make Epic Games a hugely successful company. In 2012 they were worth \$825 million; in 2018 they were worth \$5.8 billion.
- *Fortnite: Battle Royale* won ‘Best Ongoing Game’ in the *PC Gamer* and *IGN* awards in 2018.

Video games were traditionally played on a computer or games console. The growth of the use of tablets and smartphones means that these are now the most popular platforms.

Mobile gaming has several attractions:

- The games themselves are designed to appeal to a larger audience than more conventional gaming.
- The widespread access to smartphones means more people can access games easily and conveniently at any time.
- An investment in specialist gaming equipment is not required.

Smartphone games are mostly free to play.

Fortnite is created by Epic Games. Epic are part owned by Chinese entertainment company, Tencent.

The investment from Tencent enabled Epic to move to a new business model of creating free-to-play games.

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Along with producing games such as *Fortnite* and *Infinity Blade*, Epic acts as a broker selling games made by different producers via its website.

This is an example of vertical integration as Epic Games is now involved in the different stages of production and distribution. In addition, Epic owns other game developer companies, including Psyonix, and Tonic Games Group.

This is an example of **horizontal integration**. The objective is that such diversification will enable the objective of building 'powerful games, content and experiences.'

Genre is an industrial process:

- To guarantee **pleasure and meaning for the audience**.
- To **offset financial risks of production** by providing assurance

Media products rely on the intended audience finding pleasure in familiarity - *recognition of familiar elements in games and the way those elements are linked, and unfamiliar elements might be introduced.*

Genre relies on audience expectation (*what they believe the game to be based on prior knowledge of similar products*) interacting with the actual playing of the game.

Genre provides a **template for construction of messages and content**.

For marketing, **genre provides assumptions about the audience**.

To the audience, **genre identifies a pleasurable formula** providing engagement and understanding.

Online gaming is a social activity.

Players develop geographically distant virtual friendship groups, becoming identified as part of the software game tribe

Gaming is now an activity spanning generations and interests. The games may be shooting games or puzzle solving. They may involve virtual quests or the construction of virtual worlds.

Whatever the game, players are encouraged to delve deeper. The depth of immersion is then used to generate income through the sales of 'in-game' add-ons. These may be the purchase of better weapons or costumes. In this way, games may be offered 'free' to download and play but depend on compulsion loops to pull us in. and to spend money.

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Compulsion Loop: “A *habitual, designed chain of activities that will be repeated to gain a neurochemical reward: a feeling of pleasure and/or a relief from pain*”. ^[1]_[SEP]In games, the compulsion loop usually relies on a mix of anticipation, action, and reward. The compulsion loop is what keeps gamers playing – the seeking of the dopamine chemical hit is a physiological element that drives our actions and is the medical issue underlying the claim that video games are ‘addictive’.

A big part of the game’s **revenue** is generated through the **in-app purchases**. Such games are known as *Games as a Service* model.

Inside the game world, players may buy items designed to enhance their gaming experience – gamers can pay for weapon, costume and game upgrades rather than ‘working through’ the gameplay itself to score them. The game largely relies on this for generating income.

In the game players can use V bucks earned through their success in the game or they can simply exchange real world currency to buy the V bucks to spend in the game itself.

Unlike many such games, in Fortnite the add-ons are mainly cosmetic, rarely does the game offer elements to improve the gameplayers chance of survival such as super weaponry.

The fact that these ‘skins’ are changed on a regular basis, often only available to acquire for short period as of time, encourages gamers to spend real world money to buy these rather than wait to earn them and risk missing out (FoMo).

To give some idea of how such things work, in 2017 a **YouGov survey** estimated that one in five players of *Pokémon Go* spent money on in-app purchases with most users (equating to tens of millions of players) spending between 80p and £14.99 in the first month of its release.

Lesson 4

Marketing

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- The convergence offered by *Fortnite* makes it a product by which to study technological advances and the ways in which the games industry has evolved to exploit these.
- A key element to discuss is the way that the game has harnessed the ability for audiences to access the game from a variety of devices. These may not only be traditional gamers on consoles or PCs but also the modern variant – the casual gamer interested in a period of divergence on technology they already own: their tablets and phones. They require a gaming experience that does not require an investment of time in learning complex controller strategies or techniques.
- *Fortnite* takes this one step further as the engine of the game means that players can jump into the game across all their digital devices.

The games operating system is Unreal Engine, a system the developers have made available to gamers to develop their own games as well as enabling larger commercial software houses to create games such as *Batman: Arkham City*.

The game takes advantage of the growing demand of audiences wanting to watch others play the game. *Fortnite* is the most viewed game on YouTube and the Amazon game streaming channel *Twitch* which broadcasts live competitions such as the 2019 E-Sports World Cup where professional gamers featured playing *Fortnite*. Such is the demand, professional e-sport players such as Ninja can acquire millions of followers and earn millions of dollars a year.

In addition, the commercial tie-ins with Lego and films such as the Marvel franchise generate huge in-game income for purchasing new 'skins' whilst being commercially attractive to sponsors seeking to put their products in front of the gaming demographic. The game engine and game play is adaptable to creating a huge range of 'skins' with the ability of promoting many different brands to millions of players. The game has itself become an advertising platform, offering both a naturalized presence to brands as well as access to a highly profitable demographic. The game serves as a covert influencer.

The release of the original game was supported by a media campaign created by Fearless Media, a digital marketing and advertising agency who targeting existing gamers.

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The campaign reached 150 million users across different gaming sites

The game was an immediate success, gaining 10 million players in the first two weeks of the launch. In May 2020 Twitter announced *Fortnite* had over 350 million registered players.

A significant element in the success is the integration of characters from other successful media franchises, such as those from *Star Wars* and the Marvel films. In May 2018, *Fortnite* released a version called the '*Infinity Gauntlet Limited Time Mash-up*', a crossover with the hugely successful film *Avengers Infinity War*, a collaboration generating over 1.2 million hits across social media platforms.

The benefits of such tie-ins are that each product – the game and the film – create mutual awareness among die-hard fans. For *Fortnite* most importantly is the awareness among non-gamers who may then be attracted to the platform.

Lesson 5

Audiences

Cultural Industries: products are targeted at different needs to those essential needs for food or housing etc. They address the human need for entertainment, our desire to learn about each other and our role in the world (**Blumler & Katz**). In consuming them, we may discover new ideas or evolve a better understanding of our own identity.

These producers follow the same industrial production practices of all other industries in that they **make, supply, market** and **provide products:**

1. **Production** - Making (*the game is completed by the studio/production company*)
2. **Distribution**- Availability (*games are released by specialist distribution companies- Apple; Google*)
3. **Marketing**- Promoting the game (*trailers and posters and reviews in magazines and social media*)
4. **Exhibition**- The point the audience receives the product (*the game is played*)

Uses and Gratifications theory Model audiences take an active role in choosing and using media, seeking out products that best fulfil their needs.

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Entertainment/escapism/diversion – audiences consume media products for enjoyment

Personal Identity - products whose conduct and values are like their own ideas.

Consuming such products forms, reshapes or evolves some of their own

characteristics and ideas and values. **Integration and social interaction** – products produce topics of conversation where *ideas are hardened, challenged and either reformed or evolved.*

Surveillance (Information and Education) – audiences acquire information, knowledge and understanding by consuming products or engaging with social media feeds of friends or celebrity influencers.

Consider how the website promotion carries ideas of the pleasures offered.

Audiences would be aware of the franchise and of the pleasures these have promised and fulfilled.

The game can be seen to offer new pleasures to a non-typical gaming audience, the casual gamer using smart phones and tablets. Such an audience has been built via the previous success with such a demographic of Angry Birds and Candy Crush. The pleasures are entertainment and identity. The sense of being part of something and of FoMo,

Lesson 6

Funding Models

Fortnite is a multi-platform video game, so it can be played on computers, mobile phones, or consoles, including Sony's PS4, Microsoft's Xbox One, and Nintendo's Switch device.

The game is played, watched, and talked about obsessively by teenagers, celebrities, and athletes alike, influencer marketing enabling Fortnite to make money, despite being free to play.

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The *Fortnite* franchise targets a wide audience.

As a mobile online app, it has an appeal to casual gamers as much as to the more dedicated traditional console gaming demographic.

The audience is global; thus, the gameplay controls and the gaming objective are easy to understand. The intention is to hook the casual gamer from the start.

The unrealistic violence and cartoon style graphics, along with the emphasis on construction as much as the objective being achieved by widespread killing, make it appealing to a younger audience and to their parents.

As we have seen, the game moved to what is known as GAAS Games As A Service model. The game is provided for download for free, making nits money from in-app purchases.

Clearly the game structure is designed to push players to such purchases – this is done through making it interactive and encouraging gamers to want to be accepted as part of the group; encouraging more frequent play and longer periods in the game; gamers want to be ‘seen’ as immersed in the game through purchases of limited-edition skins etc.; gamers can be more successful if they are able to upgrade.

Additional funding then comes through the tie-ins to other products and brands – the skins designed for these; real world links – e.g. Lego; Nike etc.

The success of the game also promotes the share value of the parent company Epic. Fortnite audience are fans, they have a greater commitment to the game than simply seeing it as something to be played.

March 14, 2018, a game of Fortnite attracted 630,000 concurrent viewers on Twitch TV, Amazon’s streaming online service for watching competitive video game streams. The figure smashed the previous record of 388,000.

During an October 2019 event hosted by Fortnite, there were more than 7 million concurrent viewers across *Twitch, Twitter, and YouTube*

A major legal battle raged between Apple and Epic Games when in 2020 Epic released a version of Fortnite on the Apple App Store that allowed users to make in-game purchases without giving Apple the 30% Apple normally takes from micro-transactions.

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Apple pulled Fortnite from the App Store and Epic Games sued Apple stating that Apple's payment system violated antitrust laws.

Google pulled Fortnite from the Google Play Store and Epic responded with a similar lawsuit.

Fortnite was still available on Android devices, but not via the Google Play Store.

Consider how the game exploits the audience of gamers by attempting to construct them as fans.

Each offer – the skins; the Battle Pass – is carefully designed to pull players deeper into the world and pleasures of the game. Rather than a one-off fee to buy a game, players become compelled to pay month after month fees that quickly eclipse the one-off lump sum.

FoMo and tribalism are vital in the commercial success as is the use of celebrity influencers to endorse the game.

Lesson 7

Context

All media products are the result of the forces at work that shape the era: social; political; cultural; economic.

Industries must respond to these elements, or they will fail – misunderstanding the social/cultural climate will result in products that fail to meet audience expectations and needs. The social influence is felt in attitudes and values that must be catered to. Failing to match such factors will see industries left behind.

The **social climate of an era** is also of importance – attitudes towards identity and values must be represented in successful media products. The issue of the violence of many games and the amount of time young people spend immersed in them is an important factor.

The **economic/industrial** element impacts on the scale of investment and the quality of products. The effect of mass production has made sophisticated technology available to the majority opening new platforms for cultural industries products.

- The increasingly varied range of available game genres has created a far wider and more varied demographic for gamers.

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- The variety of platforms - home consoles, tablets and smartphones – that advances in the technology means can now all now offer high quality platforms that can highlight the complexity and visual complexity of new games has also led to the growth of the industry.

In Fortnite, the game is deigned to be one that encourages gamers to be interactive and collaborative. The game demonstrates that to attain success players have a better chance if they work together.

Fortnite fulfils many of the perceived uses and gratifications of its audience.

A prime gratification offered is that of social interaction. Ever since the home console explosion of the late 1980's, the playing of videogames has slowly moved from the communal world of Gaming Arcades and Mall to the home and has become what is today often a solitary pursuit.

The old static location of large machines in arcades and malls meant enforced social contact, often with gamers competing head-to-head. Today, modern multi-player gaming is conducted over online networks with minimal 'real' contact.

Other gratifications include increased sense of social identity as players may gain online status (through their success) and surveillance as gamers obtain new experiences and ideas.

There is also the tribe associations – being part of a trending interest.

Fortnite is produced by EPIC. The distribution for the game was carried out by Apple and Google stores who see the game with its in-app purchases as a highly desirable commercial product attracting subscribers to the Apple/Google brand.

The game uses the platforms as they offer a familiar route for subscribers to acquire the game.

The ability to hook the casual gamer requires a different form of advertising and a different platform to more traditional games console marketing through magazines or review sites.

The use of social media platforms such as Tiktok has become essential for games seeking the mainstream mass audience.

Lesson 8

Regulation

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Social Learning Theory suggests that observation and modelling play a primary role in how and why people learn. Bandura's theory goes beyond the perception of learning being the result of direct experience with the environment.

The theory examines how behaviour is imitated by others, especially children. The importance of Social Learning Theory is in the idea that children copy behaviour and learn through identification. In applying it to media products it sustains the idea that children (and vulnerable adults) learn behaviour through TV and media consumption as much as through direct real-life experiences. It is part of the argument for censoring access to certain media products.

The idea of the negative influence of mass media products such as comics, films, TV and video gaming on younger vulnerable audiences stretches back to the middle of the twentieth century.

Whilst the general issues have been the same, the immersive nature of the video game has added concerns. In gaming audiences are not simply watching but doing. *Critics argue that a person who plays violent video games might be more likely to commit violent acts or become desensitised to violence.*

*The **effects debate theory**, argues that audiences are passive and as such might be influenced by the media products they consume.*

Some concerns raised about Fortnite include the possible dangers of the open chat function and the potentially 'addictive' nature of the game, where people might play for long periods of time immersed in the game to the exclusion of other interests.

This is seen as having potential harm to behaviour and mental health.

The counter argument is that gaming has positive benefits:

- developing creativity
- spatial awareness skills
- perseverance.

Multiplayer games require enhanced communication skills and teamwork.

Gaming can be seen as connecting people through a shared passion and objective. That it generates a shared experience that unites young people rather than divides them.

*This is explained in the **active audience theories** that audiences interact with media products for a particular purpose. The Unreal Engine website, for example, includes*

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lessons for teachers to use with students, exploring scientific concepts using Fortnite Creative.

Fortnite, unlike *Grand Theft Auto* or *Call Of Duty* contains very little explicit or realistic violence. The use of the *Unreal Engine* enabled a switch to the cartoon-like graphics seen as making the game suitable for younger players.

It does not have as part of its narrative or representations the at times racist or misogyny some games are accused of. Some feel that this may be perhaps because free players are randomly assigned race and gender 'skins' at the start of each round.

The game play has a collaborative gameplay that encourages players to work together and to protect each other in the early rounds.

The main concern seems surrounding the franchise is that of its addictive nature. The game is accused of distracting younger players from schoolwork due to their involvement and immersion in the world of the game and gamers.

Traditional regulation is ineffective with the rise of globalised media industries, the rise of digital media, and media convergence.

Here we can see the issue of censorship and restriction. The early games were seen as 'family' entertainment.

The darker shift of games to re-enactments of graphic violence saw the demand for greater control and regulation. When games had to be purchased in a store it was easier for adults to regulate access. Now parents may be unaware of what their children play as smart devices can be played more privately.

Moral panic a 'condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests'

In the first stage claims are exaggerated and distorted; in the second a terrible outcome is predicted if action is not taken (e.g., *legislating around video 'nasties' in the 1980s*); in the third stage problems are symbolised as in associating the term 'rocker' or 'video nasties' with the threat.

Later, Cohen defined five stages of moral panic:

1. Something or someone is defined as a threat to values or interests
2. This threat is depicted in an easily recognisable form by the media
3. There is a rapid build-up of public concern

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4. There is a response from authorities or opinion makers

5. The panic recedes or results in social changes

Age ratings are systems used to ensure that entertainment content, such as computer games, are clearly labelled by age according to the content they contain. Age ratings provide guidance to consumers (particularly parents) to help them decide whether or not to buy a particular product.

The rating on a game confirms that it is suitable for players over a certain age.

In 2012 the PEGI system was incorporated into UK law and The Video Standards Council was appointed as the statutory body responsible for the age rating of video games in the UK using the PEGI system. In USA the system is the ESRB

(Entertainment Software Rating Board) who rate Everyone; 10+; Teen; Mature 17+

- *Fortnite* was awarded a PEGI 12+ rating in the UK : *Violence is cartoonish, but some characters and scenes might disturb younger players*

In psychology, the most often cited need for regulation is **General Aggression**

Model (GAM). This model suggests playing violent video games may create *cognitive scripts of aggression* which will be activated in real life social situations.

In this model, playing violent video games becomes an opportunity to rehearse acts of aggression, which then become more common in real life.

The *general aggression model* suggests the simulated violence when playing video games may influence a player's thoughts, feelings and actions, affecting their interpretation of other people's behaviour and increasing their own aggressive behaviour.

Hirsch has also suggested the acquisition of *hostile attribution bias* among regular gamers which encourages a negative view of the world in the manner of *Gerbner's Mean World Syndrome*

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