Twitter Thread by Dr. Rachel Kowert

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Early this week I ranted about a @nytimes editorial misrepresenting the scientific literature around video game uses and effects.

It's one thing for an editorial piece to mishandle scientific information, but it is another when an "educational" organization does it.

A thread.

A new training from @childrenscreens was announced called BLOOD, SWEAT, and FEARS: Understanding the Psychological Effects of Graphic and Violent Media on Children and Teens.

https://t.co/2FAOUT8FdO

What a title. One that is clearly meant to instill fear, shock, awe, pearl clutching… moral panic.

For a primer on the history of the moral panic see here: https://t.co/mj6aedCQBJ

There are many points to discuss in their advertising, but for the sake of time I'll focus on a few. Starting with this gem of an anonymous quote.

Ready Player Two

Rather than simply condemning video games as a dangerous source of media violence, Villanova University Professor of Psychological and Brain Sciences Patrick Markey recommends that parents try playing their kids' favorite games with them. "Today, video games (even violent ones) provide an opportunity for children to create real memories with their parents in a virtual playground," Markey says. "Playing with our kids not only gives parents that chance to judge the violent content of games for themselves, but it also helps foster a connection between kids and parents." Other scholars disagree, stating that using violent games to bond with children is a bad idea for any parent. They point out that parents wouldn't smoke cigarettes or participate in other harmful activities with their kids just because the kids like it.

First, games are not addicting in the way as cigarettes or any other chemical addiction

See: https://t.co/IzvAQn1ASo

Side note: Video game "addiction" in and of itself is even a hotly debated and contentious and contentious issue within the scientific community.

For an overview on the current state of the research, see here: https://t.co/zbV2r8klrK

Second, playing together with your kids is actually an incredibly powerful way to connect with children, especially during the COVID pandemic.

Exhibit A: https://t.co/GuU2yrBS1B

Exhibit B: https://t.co/R8zMWe1QSf

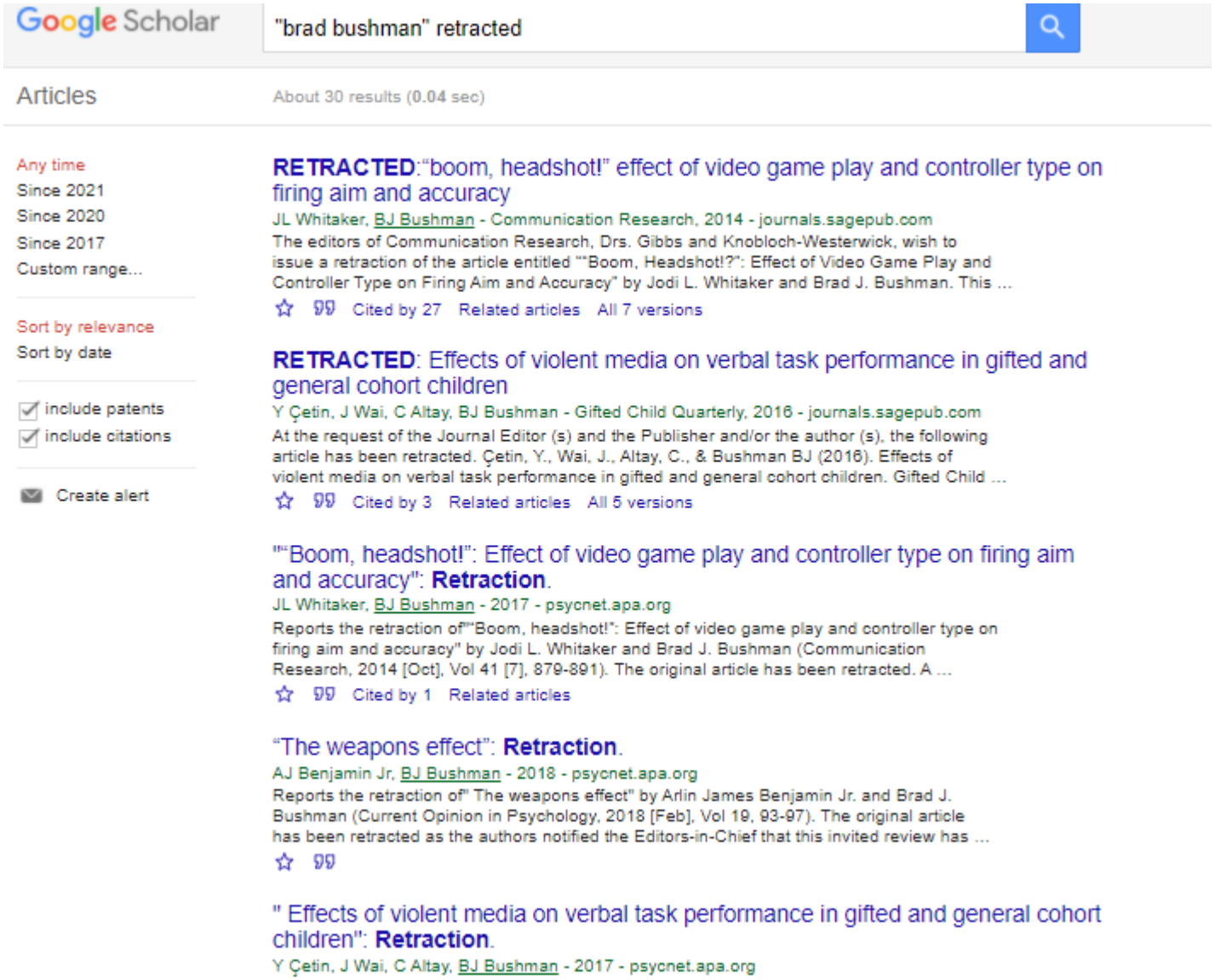
Exhibit C: https://t.co/ZjX8rZXlyM

I legitimately could go on all day.

The points I raise here alone are notable. This one-sided, exaggerated information does an INCREDIBLE disservice to parents and caretakers everywhere.

Then let’s talk about their experts.

For this seminar they chose Dr. Brad Bushman who has dedicated his career to studying violent video game effects. Notably, several of his publications have been redacted due to falsified data.



If they wanted to focus on violent video game effects, why not go with @patmarkey and @CJFerguson1111 who literally published the book on the topic and have zero redacted papers between them?

SPOILER: Because they don't push the moral panic agenda

https://t.co/3BVSZDreWU

I could go into more nuanced discussions of their advertisement, but honestly isn't this enough?

This kind of "educational" content is reprehensible. It is why the moral panic around games remains today and parents remain fearful despite the wealth of contrary research.

For example, did you know that the scientific consensus is that games to dot desensitize players to violence?

https://t.co/L4gPRFYXje

...or that violent video games do not make players more violent?

https://t.co/jPCOOKqZGa

You probably would also not realize that games are a great way for families to spend time together.

https://t.co/4eY8PfWU8K

No video games are not perfect, but they are not this.

They are NOT this.

(reposted because I mistakenly used an image in the original post that was not directly assoicated with the seminar advertising material)