

Media violence vs. societal violence

[Sociology](#), [Violence](#)



Media Violence vs. Societal Violence By age 18 an American child will have seen 16, 000 simulated murders and 200, 000 acts of violence (United States 2). Over the last thirty years more than a thousand studies, by major medical and public health groups, have concluded that media violence does have an impact on children (Steyer 72). An increase in today's media violence comes from movies and television, music, and video games. Violence in the media can result in school shootings, having an aggressive attitude, and no consequences for violent actions. It has been proven that violent media can cause some kids to act violently and aggressively toward others, which causes an increased amount of violence in our society. More than 1, 000 studies on the effects of television and film violence have been done over the past 40 years and the majority of these studies have the same conclusion: television and film violence leads to real-world violence (United States 2). The average 7th grader watches about 4 hours of television per day, and 60% of those shows contain some violence (United States 4). A prime source of these violent images is TV news, which happens to be America's number one source of news and information (Steyer 73). Most local television newscasts are dominated by killings, assaults, kidnappings, terrorist attacks, and other stories designed to provoke a strong emotional reaction from viewers (Steyer 73). In the recent years, Hollywood's growing taste for grotesque, graphic fare has upped the stakes, from Friday the 13th to Creepshow and Scream (Steyer 73). Even though these movies are not meant for small kids, it is a fact that young children are often regularly exposed to them in the company of unthinking parents, baby-sitters, and older siblings (Steyer 73). In Greenfield, Massachusetts, an eighteen-year-old

girl was stabbed to death by a nineteen-year-old boy whose room was filled with nearly a hundred violent horror films, a machete, and a goalie mask like the one worn by Jason, the teen murderer in the Friday the 13th movies (Steyer 80). In Plato's Republic, Socrates said that "musical training is a more potent instrument than any other, because rhythm and harmony find their way into the inward places of the soul, on which they mightily fasten" (United States 6). Music affects our moods, attitudes, emotions, and our behavior. Studies show that modern music lyrics have become increasingly explicit (United States 6). For example, Mitchell Johnson, who killed four classmates and a teacher, loved gangsta rap, especially a song called "Crept and We Came" by Bone Thugs-N-Harmony, that graphically describes a mass killing (Steyer 70). Another example is that the rock band Nine Inch Nails released a song called "Big Man with a Gun" which describes a sexual assault at gun point (United States 6). Elyse Pahler was "sacrificed" by three teenage followers of the death-metal band Slayer, whose music celebrates "Carnage, Satanism, and torture" (Steyer 84). In their song "Alter of Scarifice," for example, Slayer's lyrics describe "... High priest awaiting, dagger in hand. Spilling the pure virgin blood. Satan's slaughter, ceremonial death". This was more than just a song to Joseph Fiorella and his buddies Jacob Delashmutt and Royce Caset; it was a summons (Steyer 84). As Fiorella stated in a court report, "It gets inside your head. The music started to influence the way I looked at things." He told his friends that he'd "be down for sacrificing... a virgin." Two months later, after selecting Elyse for sacrifice, they choked her, stabber her multiple times with an antler-handled knife, stomped on her neck, and let her bleed to death (Steyer 84). This

music should be taken seriously, because its words and images affect how adolescents are socialized (Steyer 85). Violent video games have a similar effect on children to that of violent television and film. As one expert concludes, " We're not just teaching kids to kill. We're teaching them to like it" (United States 2). Parents are concerned that the fantasy violence in video games could lead their children to real-world violence. The more often children practice fantasy acts of violence, the more likely they are to carry out real-world violent acts (United States 7). The prolonged exposure of children to violent video games increases the likelihood of aggression (United States 7). The direct link between video games and aggression was reinforced in a 2001 study by a team of Stanford University researchers. When children at one elementary school spent less time playing video games, they were 50 percent less likely to be physically aggressive with each other, and the most aggressive children showed the most improvement (Steyer 77). America leads the world in rates of murder, violent crime, juvenile crime, and imprisonment. Our children are killing and harming each other. Some kids, because of their collection of risk factors and their inability to move safely between fantasy and reality, are in more danger than others from violent media (Steyer 82). Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, the Columbine high school shooters, from Littleton, Colorado, filmed their own " back story" videos, explaining their aims and motives. Harris said it was going to be like " Doom" referring to his favorite shoot-em-up video game (Steyer 70). Michael Carneal, who murdered three girls in a high school hallway, learned his murderous technique from the movie *The Basketball Diaries* (Steyer 70). Barry Loukaitis, an honor student who shot and killed

two students and a teacher, was impressed by the film *Natural Born Killers* (Steyer 71). Many of the shooters saw the massacres as a way not just to get even but to be the center of the media's attention. In a terrible twist on life-imitates-art, the school killers sought stardom, which in turn, was modeled on the movies, music and gory videos that they played over and over (Steyer 72). Violent media and access to guns are both responsible for the school shootings. There is no single answer, no single cause. Some kids look to violence for guidance about how to deal with the world. These children are literally being placed in harm's way by media companies. Study after study has shown that children who watch violence on the screen act more aggressively and violently toward others (Steyer 76). The "mean world" syndrome creates an almost paralyzing sense of fear that the world is a violent place where physical aggression is normal (Steyer 72). George Gerbner of the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg School for Communication, associates this syndrome with frequent television viewing (Steyer 72). Just as every cigarette increases the chance that someday you will get lung cancer, every exposure to violence increases the chances that someday a child will behave more violently than they otherwise would (United States 5). Children's exposure to violent media has been a social concern for decades (Media Violence). Today, on TV and in the movies, there are rarely any consequences for acting violently. No one is left grieving, and no one is being punished (American). The hero is often the one who turns to violence to solve a problem. The overwhelming message is that "violence is fun, exciting, and doesn't hurt, and people can use violence to solve problems with others" (Violence 35). The "violence is fun" theme was

heavily marketed through the merchandising of TV related action figures and other tie-in toys for kids (Violence 36). Professor Levin says, " It's like a double whammy because children's play becomes the place where they try out and learn to use the violence they saw on the screen" (American). Young kids do not understand the link between actions and consequences, a disconnect that is worsened by media that rarely shows realistic results of violent acts (Steyer 81). Over the years many studies have concluded that media violence does have an effect on children in several different ways. It can desensitize them toward the use of violence from violence in movies and television, music, and video games. This can lead to school shootings, acting violently and aggressively toward others, and can teach violence is acceptable by showing no consequences for violent acts. It has been shown that media violence is a contributing factor to the increases in societal violence. Works Cited Media Violence and Social Neurosciences. 2007. Association for Psychological Science. Abstract. 15 Jan. 2008. . Steyer, James. The Other Parent. New York: Atria, 2002. United States. Senate Committee on the Judiciary. Children, Violence, and the Media. 14 Sept. 1999. 15 Jan. 2008. . Violence in the Media. 19 Feb. 2004. American Psychological Association. 15 Jan. 2008.