

Good essay on effect of movies on youth and stereotypes

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



Children and youth today live in an environment that is filled to saturation with media. Apart from the commercials, television serials and content on the net, they are exposed to a lot of movies too. There has also been an increase in access to these media, where movies can be downloaded and watched in pocket sized devices. Given the increase in viewership and access to movies it is no wonder that movies have a great impact on the youth and adolescents. Movie stars not only have a celebrity status that can be rivalled by only a few, they also become role models with their behavior onscreen imitated by the youth who watch it. In this scenario, it becomes important to question the effects that movies have on the youth.

There is a general complaint against movies that they have a lot of violence and sex scenes that are inappropriate for everyone. Although the movies with extreme violence and sexual content come with a R rating or A rating, there is no measure in place that could prevent kids or youth from watching it. The youth are the major customers for violent movies and movie depicting sex. It is also the target group that is most likely to get influenced by the things shown on screen. When youth are exposed to more sexual content from the movies the earlier they try to indulge in sexual activities. They are more likely to regret their sexual endeavors and also run the risk of unplanned pregnancy. Sexual behavior is not the only worrisome effect of movies on the youth as there is a very strong relationship between their exposure to violence in movies and behaving in a violent manner in their real lives. Together with violence and sex, movie stars are also shown smoking and drinking on screen. There are movies that celebrate such behavior showing it as a rebellious act. This portrayal of movie characters drinking

and smoking on screen also has a detrimental effect on the youth as they are more likely to follow it if their movie idol does it. Some of the movies also show the corruptive effects of power. When the protagonist in the movie is shown to get away with things because he or she has a lot of power, it instills the same sense in the mind of the youth that watch it. Condoning such actions in the movies let them believe that it is okay to do such things in real life too. The youth of today are also exposed to a wide variety of movies from all over the world. The number and genre of movies are mind boggling. The problem with watching too many movies and continuously being exposed to the characters and scenes is that there comes a time when the youth cannot distinguish between what is real and what is reel. The reel life becomes so seductive that the youth try and have a slice of it in their real lives too. Increasing numbers of shooting and instances of sexual abuse and chauvinistic behavior are a result of movies and the image that they cultivate for their lead actors. Although this claim can sound far stretched not many can outright dismiss it either.

The problem with movies and other media is that it is quite invasive and there are no effective mechanisms that parents or other authoritative figures can use to filter content. Parents can monitor television and the computer and have filters installed but there is no stopping the kids from watching the same thing out of the house or in a friends place. The fact that these movies can be downloaded on to their phones also adds to the problems that parents face. Any parent would hate the fact that their children are exposed to sex, violence, alcohol and drugs through movies. The harder they try to keep their kids away from it the more determined the kids are to watch it at

any cost. The youth especially going through their rebellious state watch it and mimic the behavior on screen either to irritate their parents or to look cool. Movies also add to the peer pressure that the youth suffer from. Sometimes it isn't enough just to compete with your peers, but they also need to compete with the movies to look as cool and to look trendy as seen in the movies. Since kids are exposed to movies at a really young age, their initiation into sex also happens at a relatively young age. Again exposure to sex and sexuality happens before they can form an opinion on either sex or gender issues. There are also chances that the youth can get confused about their gender and sexuality based on movies. Watching a gay movie can sow doubts on the mind of the youth and can probably make them wonder if they are really straight, gay or bi-sexual. Being gay is not wrong; however basing one's sexual orientation on a movie is not healthy. Some movies have explicit sexual scenes that do not leave much to the imagination. When the youth watch such explicit scenes they would be tempted to do the same. Another problem that this display of naked bodies' causes is body issues among both boys and girls. Actors in movies are well sculpted and mostly thin. They are toned and primed to look good on the screen and the people who watch them want to have the same bodies. It does not matter or occur to them that not everyone has the same bone structures and this idea of a perfect body is not possible for everyone to achieve. This leads to anorexia when they want to lose weight and become thin or addiction to steroids when they want to have pumped up bodies. With severe body issues egged on by unrealistic portrayal of men and women on the screen the youth fail to appreciate themselves for what they really are. The constant pursuit of

perfection leaves them with little time for appreciation for that what is real and normal. Studies conducted on the effect on media and movie on adolescent and young adult have shown that frequent and constant exposure to sexual genres and sexual scenes leads to greater acceptance of stereotypes and casual attitudes about sex. This exposure also leads to higher anticipation of sexual pleasure outcomes and higher incidences of sexual activity. Not every sexual activity in real life is as exciting and glamorous as shown in the media and this leads to disappointment and eventual cynicism which is not good for that age (Ward 2003). Studies also show that adolescents mention movies as one of the influencing factors in trying out sex at an early age. Movies such as Blue Lagoon that glorified teen sex and other movies that show young adults engaging in sexual activities make the youth feel that it is okay to have sex. While they would eventually have sex the problem begins when they are not mature enough or are ready for the responsibilities of raising a baby. An unplanned pregnancy not only affects the girl but also changes the life of the boy. Researchers have found that media influences demonstrate significant associations with behaviors more than other factors. Movies and television are such powerful mediums that can change the behavior patterns of young adults and youth. Mass media are an important circumstance for adolescents' sexual socialization, and many social scientists parents and government officials opine that media influences should be considered in research and interventions should be made with early adolescents to bring down sexual activity (L'Engle, 2006).

Research has also shown that both girls and boys who were exposed to

violence in television and movies also showed aggressive behavior in their lives. The aggression was not only verbal but it was also physical and mental. It was direct as well as indirect aggression that they showed on their peers as well as people at home and outside. It also happened that the more they were exposed to violent scenes on movies and televisions the more these kids showed aggression as young adults and youth. Physical violence was in the form of punching, strangling, choking, threatening with a knife or a gun and beating up of the other person. The study found the same link when the outcome examined was outright physical violence, such as punching, beating, choking, threatening, or attacking with a knife or gun. Interestingly while the studies have showed that exposure to violence in movies lead to aggressive behavior later on in life, aggressive behavior in childhood does not lead to the preference for violent movies in adulthood (Escobar& Craig, 2008).

The reason why violent scenes in media such as movies, newspapers, magazines and television induces such behavior is that it primes already existing aggressive traits and cognitions in a person. It increases physiological arousal, and triggers an automatic tendency to imitate observed behaviors. Although this is not true of all media or all people, the influence of media on youth behavior cannot be negated. Parental supervision, control of children's use and access to media and movies are some preventive measure that can be taken to bring the level of influence of media and movies on the youth. But unless the youth themselves interpret these scenes right and understand that this is not real, supervisory measures will not have enough effect. Rock videos and their portrayal on magazines also form stereotypes on how a man

and woman should act and behave by themselves and towards each other. These portrayals are usually machoist which later on leads to violence against women. (Hansen & Hansen, 1988).

The effect of movies and other media on youth has been largely been detrimental. Although not everyone is easily influenced, there are increasing studies that show that almost everyone is slightly influenced by the media be it for good or bad. Movie and media in general not only increase sexual activity and violent behavior in the youth but also increase instances of smoking, addiction to shopping, body issues and alcohol abuse. In this digital age, it is also difficult for parents and other authorities to keep a constant track on youth and kids. This makes their supervisory roles quite minimal and the damage bigger. The effect of violence and sex on youth is not something an individual goes through or something that affects certain families. When violence increases as a result of the media or when sexual patterns change as a result of such exposure it leads to a domino effect and affects the society at large. It affects not only the youth who is influenced but also affects the people around the youth.

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