

Television and violence 12858

[Technology](#)



Boink! Boom! Crack! The sounds of the fight scene rage on. Many have fallen in

this particularly bloody battle. The good guys have taken their losses but struggle on to what is seemingly a victory. Their aggression is fierce and helps

them. Fires consume the background; men and women lie on the ground in pain.

Even if it weren't for the bombs, missiles, bullets, etc. that are flying around, hand-to-hand combat would have got the better of them. It was a classic

battle scene when looking back at it, a true testament of blood, hell, and gore.

This may sound like a heroic made-for-TV movie shown only on primetime in the

hopes of recruiting a mature audience. But it is not. In fact, it is just

another Saturday-morning special of GI Joe, "The Real American Hero," that I

watched with my brother and cousins. We were religious followers of the show,

tuning in every week to see how Sergeant Slaughter, Duke and the rest of the

gang would handle the likes of King Cobra and his cronies. GI Joe's early morning time slot encouraged kids, like us, to tune in every weekend. While eating our Cheerios™ and Frosted Flakes™ we got a dose of some real fightin'

action, in excess of fifty violent scenes for the morning: there is more than enough to fill the appetite. The truth is, violence on television is on every single day. It takes its toll on society, especially children. The damage done by violence on television is detrimental and confirmed by statistics, case studies, and personal experiences. Fistfights, shootouts, car crashes, rapes...

Take your pick. Violence is everywhere on television, sometimes gory and gruesome, other times clean and remote. It is not just the Saturday morning cartoons; clips from action-adventure series, the nightly news and MTV are interwoven with violence and extremely mature content. Prime-time programs can

average eight hostile acts per hour; children's shows four times as much (Bajpai,

1996, ps. 45-52). To television Programmers, violence is depicted as a normal,

justified response to conflict and threat. They will encourage identification with the aggressor; domination and submission, to them, are often equated with

pleasure and worth. Yet numerous researchers have put much time into discovering

why children are so attached by the television and the action that takes place

within it. They prove that it is definitely a major source of violent behavior in children. Their research proves time and time again that aggression and television viewing do go hand in hand. The truth about television violence and

children has been shown. Many people and critics try to ignore it and hope that

it will go away. Others do not even seem to care and try to attack these ideas.

However, the facts are undeniable and all the results point to one conclusion:

Television violence causes children to be violent and the effects can be

life-long. The effects of the television are first visible even at the most

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basic level of life, children and adolescents. The modern-day extent of viewing

by humans, especially Americans, is astronomical. Children begin to watch television at very early ages, often when they are newborns. At this time they

are obviously not able to follow along or be influenced by it, but they are subjected to it nevertheless. This early start will lead most childhood viewers into a cult-like trance by the time they reach the age of three. In between breakfast and lunch, playtime and naptime, class and dinner, all children find a

way to watch the tube. The typical American household has the television set on

for more than seven hours each day and children ages two to eleven spend an

average of twenty-eight hours per week viewing (Murray, 1996, p. 1). Some research has also estimated that by the time a child or teen of today's generation reaches the age of seventy, he will have spent nearly seven years of

his life watching television. That is nearly ten percent of one's life lives

watching television. That is insane; to say that you and I will spend years upon

years, watching television. There is so much that people, even we, could do in a

seven-year period. Entire wars can be fought in seven years, college educations

can be attained, millions of people will be born and millions will die, many things can happen that have more significance than seven years of television.

That is a very large percentage of time to be doing solely one thing, and the fact that that one thing is watching television, is very, very unfortunate. The television, as said before, is a very influential object. Being worse for children, we see that at the later stages in life (ie: eighteen and over, approximately adulthood) most people will not be swayed too much by the hypnotic

powers of the television. This is not to say that it cannot happen, but studies show that most people are fairly set in their ways, especially mentally, once they reach adulthood and it takes a lot for them to be affected. Children, on the other hand, are prime candidates to the influences of the television. They

are the most avid viewers and the most vulnerable. It is here where most violent

tendencies, if any, are fostered. With the addition of cable television to

broadcast television, a recent survey by the Center for Media and Public Affairs

identified 1, 846 violent scenes broadcast and cablecast between 6 a. m. to midnight on one day in Washington, D. C. The most violent periods were between 6

to 9 a. m. with 497 violent scenes (165. 7 per hour) and between 2 to 5 p. m. with

609 violent scenes (203 per hour) (Murray, 1996, p. 2). This statistic probably

seems quite outrageous, but it is true and there are numbers even higher than

that on given days. Two hundred violent scenes per hour are gaudy numbers, yet

the even more baffling but more concealed truism is the time slots of these major occurrences. The times: 6 to 9 a. m. and 2 to 5 p. m. are the most popular

times for child and adolescent viewers. These are the times in the morning when

young children will watch most avidly and in the afternoon after school when school-aged children are most attentive to it. This just goes to show that the

children, already established as the most vulnerable, are also the ones

subjected to the most violent scenes. This is a bad combination and it

stimulates bad tendencies and violence in the children. Now that the extent to

which the television is being watched has been established, and with some idea

of just how much violence there is on an average day, it is time to look at an even more telling tale. Yes, we said that children may be subjected to more than

six hundred acts of violence in a three-hour time period, but who's to say

that these acts are in any way severe? Well, the truth is that while many acts are subtle in their appearance, they still have an overwhelming effect over

time. This is not to mention the fact that the major acts of violence add up as

well. By the time a child of today's world reaches the age of eighteen he will

have witnessed over 8, 000 simulated murders on the television. That is an

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average of 1.22 murders per day, counted from birth. What you see here is a

repetitive bombardment of violence and violent material upon children.

Seeing

this every day gives it the same effect as eating, or sleeping; it's nearly

habitual, which is a truly sad state of affairs. Getting into a habit of seeing

murders and violence on television, is an obvious sign that should lead us to

believe that it will influence children in a negative way. Numbers are easily

crunched and manipulated by both sides of the argument. I see that there

are

quite a few numbers involved here in the argument. They are mostly in favor

of

violence being a bad influence, making these facts hard to ignore. Especially

when they are as blatant and obvious as they appear. Statistics, when used

responsibly, are perhaps some of the best insights we have into helping us

discover problems and their solutions. As helpful as they may be, there are

still other kinds of information even as persuasive as statistics. What I have

to show now are case studies. There have been numerous case studies

performed

over the past few decades involving children and television. I can throw out statistics all day at people in the hopes that they will see that violence on television is bad. While it is effective, my argument is much like any claim a scientist would make: it is not truly valid until tested. With this in mind, we see testing the real influence of violence on television shows that it is dangerously harmful. For an example, there is a case of a study done by a group

Stein and Friedrich for the Surgeon General's project in 1972 (Murray, 1996, p. 3). Their study consisted of taking 97 preschool children and exposing one third of them to a television diet consisting of Batman and Superman cartoons.

The middle third were exposed to a diet of Mr. Roger's Neighborhood, while the

final third were exposed to neutral programming (neither antisocial or pro-social). These children watched over twelve half-hour episodes of their respective programs over a four-week period. They were then observed in their

classroom and playroom environments. The psychologists running the study found

that the children who watched the Batman and Superman cartoons were remarkably

aggressive and not very apt to share and interact. While on the other hand, the

children who watched Mr. Roger's Neighborhood were more social, and more likely to share and interact. The middle third remained close to the same as they were before. There are many more studies just like this previous one, and

all of them lead to the same conclusion: violent television does foster more aggressive and violent behavior in children. It feels like just yesterday that I was sitting down to watch my Saturday morning cartoons on my family room television. Every Saturday was like clockwork for me. I would always eat my cereal and toast and then watch my GI Joe and Transformers. I was so in love with GI Joe, I can remember always wanting to re-enact the scenes with my plastic toy soldiers. Explosions, death, and carnage were my rations on Saturday

and I loved every minute of it. In fact, although this is embarrassing, I still remember to this day getting in trouble at pre-school for hitting a classmate who took a toy away from a friend of mine. Why? You might ask. Well, it was <https://assignbuster.com/television-and-violence-12858/>

because I saw on GI Joe that your supposed to stick up for your friends and protect them from the enemy at all costs. So me, being the noble and “informed” friend that I was, carried-out the mission and took the heat for my violent actions. I received timeout for the rest of the day. This may seem a little preposterous, or maybe even dumb. Regardless, the truth is that GI Joe partly formed my identity as a young child and the only reason I was able to later tell the right from wrong was because I had parents to tell me. My parents would often try to sit with me and watch a few shows, not for just their pleasure but rather to tell me what was fake and not to be repeated. Many children go without the parental supervision when watching television, and it leads to a lack of knowledge from determining right from wrong. They eventually forget the real and the fantasy, the violent and the non-violent. Now do not get me wrong, there are measures that prove and a few studies that show that with proper supervision children will not be affected by television violence. Case

studies are out now that show children being unaffected by television violence

as a whole. I previously mentioned a study done for a Surgeon General's

Project, which acknowledged an existence of non-violent cases. When I read this

information, I thought to myself, " that's awesome, if children are not

really affected by the television." Only, I found but one or two instances of

these reports meaning that they were few and very far between. Leading me to

conclude that it was merely wishful thinking to be able to reverse my study and

maybe argue from the other side. The amount of studies showing that violence is

a factor in the lives of children is just too large in number to even compare

the reports that oppose it. To be honest, I have only shared a few statistics

and studies with you. I could have rattled off a thousand; it is just not

necessary though. I believe that you can agree with me when I say that violence

on television is detrimental to the lives of children and that it has a bad

influence upon them. You should agree with me, and if you do not, well I can not

wait to hear about your child in the police blotter.

Bibliography1. Bajpai, S., & Unnikrishnan, N. (1996). The Impact of Television Advertising on Children. London: Sage Publications. 2. Murray, John P. (1996) Impact of Televised Violence [Online]. Available via Kansas State University