

**“Young are trained to kill; violence in the media”. To what extent is it possible to talk about the effects of violence in the media. Examine why violent acts are on the increase and impact of the media on the youth today.**

In today's society we are constantly suggesting what effects the media has on the young. With cases such as Jamie Bulger how can we truly identify the consequences which violence in mediums such as TV can cause.

Watching television is such a high frequency event for children and violence is portrayed on television as occurring much more frequently than it is encountered in everyday life. I therefore believe that television is the most relevant medium to discuss.

Research has given us some important information on how children of different ages respond to television and what they are capable of learning from this medium. Television viewing time rises from about 2 1/2 hours per day at the age of five to about four hours a day at age twelve. Television is used frequently by parents as a babysitter or distraction device. I think that children are more likely to imitate aggression when the perpetrator of the violence is rewarded or at least not punished and when the violence is presented as justified. I strongly believe that television viewing is related to aggression.

A study involving this group of investigators explored the extent to which viewing of violent content had an effect in countries in which both societal attitudes towards aggression and the content of and access to television programming varied widely. The countries included in the study were Australia, Finland, Poland, and the United States. These countries differ widely in homicide rates (with the U.S. having the highest rates and Poland the lowest), rates of television ownership, and number of hours per day when programming is available (with the U.S. having the highest rates and Israel and Finland having the lowest rates, respectively). Measures were obtained of aggressiveness, preference for violent programming, frequency of viewing, perceived realism of programming, identification with television characters, preference for sex-typed activities, involvement in fantasies of aggressive or heroic acts, and intelligence of the child, and nurturance, rejection, punitiveness, achievement orientation, aggressiveness, viewing habits, fantasy involvement, and socioeconomic status of parents. It found that the amount of violent television watched significantly predicted aggression two years later for both boys and girls in the U.S. and boys in Finland. For boys in both countries, later aggression was much higher in those who not only watched a great deal of violent TV but also identified highly with the characters they watched.

As in many other studies, parental factors were also found to be associated with children's aggressiveness. Children who were more aggressive generally had more

aggressive parents who were more dissatisfied with them and punished them more severely.

Another study however found that in both children who were high on aggression and children who were low on aggression before the introduction of television became more aggressive after television was introduced.

I think also that televised violence can change the attitudes that individuals hold about the world, resulting in perceptions that violence is more common or more acceptable than it actually is. I think that children who watch a violent film tolerate more extreme aggressive behaviour in other children before calling in an adult for help with the situation than children who had seen an exciting but nonviolent film or no film at all. More accepting attitudes towards aggressive behaviour may subsequently prevent the child from inhibiting his or her own aggression. Thus, to the extent that viewing violence on television creates an unrealistic world view and value system for the child in terms of what constitutes acceptable behaviour, the child may behave in a manner which is inappropriate in real life settings.

Watching television may lead to the development of attitudes that portray the world as a more dangerous place than it actually is because violence is more salient and frequent on television than it is in most real life experiences. In fact, it seems that paradoxically television may both desensitize individuals to violence and sensitize them to it.

I think that parents can provide the most enduring influence of all adults on children. Whereas individual teachers and other models disappear with time, parents endure. They determine what kind of environment children live in, what sort of toys they play with, and how much and what type of television their children watch. They also interpret for children what is happening on the screen. Parents can serve as models, gatekeepers, and interpreters for television and other important aspects of the child's life.

It is probably the whole fabric of parent-child interaction that affects the ways in which children are affected by television. Parents model their values repeatedly in a myriad of situations. In some sense, the way that parents respond to television is just a special case of this broader pattern of reactions. A study, for example, found that less parental control, both globally and as measured only in regard to television, was related to higher levels of fearfulness in adolescents, especially when combined with lower levels of family cohesion. It therefore seems quite possible that some of the effects attributed to children's exposure to violence on television may be due indirectly to more general characteristics of their parents. One of the most frequently replicated predictors of aggression in children is lack of monitoring and lack of effective disciplining in parents. I think it is likely that parents who do not check on or effectively control their children's activities will both have children who have more opportunities to watch more violent television and children who can engage in and experience few negative consequences for aggressive behaviour. Therefore parental monitoring and ineffective discipline may be critically important variables in determining the link between viewing of violent content and aggression in children, while exposure to violence on television may constitute only one of several pathways through which the influence of parental characteristics affects aggression in children.

In conclusion for some children, under some conditions, some television is harmful. For some children under the same conditions, or for the same children under other conditions, it may be beneficial. For most children, under most conditions, most television is probably neither particularly harmful nor particularly beneficial.

It does appear that exposure to televised violence does bear an important and consistent relationship to aggression. Its significance may lie partially in the fact that it identifies a discrete focus for some rather straightforward intervention approaches that are perhaps less sensitive than interventions that identify a more general focus such as global parental characteristics.