

Residue on the Mind

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While exposure to media violence is not always deliberate, it can have a negative impact for children. Any type of media violence, be it from a Disney animated movie, to Child's play (a movie about a disgusting doll on a killing rampage), is not healthy or beneficial for any child; research has shown that media violence creates an increase in aggression and fear in children who are exposed to media violence. Some parents and Professionals believe that media violence is healthy for children. An example of this is a statement made by a professor of communication Jib Fowles who says "I think Violence is helpful to children --- it helps them maintain emotional balance" (Quart, 2001, p. 53).

There are many examples and studies showing an increase in aggression from children who had viewed types of media violence. The credibility of some studies conducted causes concern; therefore the focus should be directed to those articles that are credible and written by authorities who are peer reviewed. Two articles that discuss this sensitive topic used a specific study where children and teens played two types of video games. This study was printed originally in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* a peer reviewed journal. During the study youth played one game called Wolfenstein 3D where players go on a killing spree in a World War II environment, ultimately trying to kill Hitler himself. the second game, called Myst, is constructed of non-violent fantasy and puzzle solving activities. After playing the games, the players were paired up against each other in a third game where the winner would sound a noise in the loser's ear. The Wolfenstein 3D players would sound the noise for much longer, making the Myst player unnecessarily miserable (Quart, 2001, p. 52; Wilson, 2008, p.101-102).

Another study conducted by a Stanford professor was done by using two groups of children. One group was exposed to "film clips of adults and cartoons" beating a Bobo the clown doll while the second group of children had no viewing of the violence. Both groups were then placed in a room with a Bobo the clown doll and the children who had viewed the attacking of the clown showed increased hostility during their play time in the room (Quart, 2001, p 52).

Understanding that every child will not fit into this mold of increased aggression it would be wise for every person who interacts with a child to take these studies seriously and to make the child's best interests a priority.

Along with an increase in aggression, children experience an increase in fear or develop new fears from exposure to a wide variety of media violence. Wilson (2008) gives many examples of children developing fear describing that after 9-11, The Oklahoma city bombing and Incredible Hulk film caused some serious anxiety in many children. In some cases, children were so affected by what they saw that several shows such as Sesame Street and Mr. Rogers did special episodes just to calm the children's fears caused from the different events (p. 93). Continuing to address the fears children developed after viewing media violence, Wilson (2008) discusses a study conducted by 2 professors of communication, featured in Media Psychology, of college students who watched violence as children. In the study, "90 percent of the students were able to describe in detail a movie or television program that had frightened them in a lasting way... 26 percent reported still experiencing 'residual anxiety' as an adult... 36 percent said they avoided real-life situations similar to the events depicted in the media"(Wilson, 2008, p. 93-94). These examples show us that that children exposed to the media violence in any form can develop lasting fears that can have the possibility of carrying into their adult lives leaving a residue on the their minds.

In conclusion, parents need to give this issue their attention. They should not sit by and allow their children to view grotesque images that can have a lasting impact of their lives causing an increase in aggression and to feed or develop new fears. There are many things parents could do to reduce these types of affects, some methods are extreme, and others are mild, but something needs to be done. Parents can start by carefully monitoring what their children view and being acutely aware of what they are exposed to thereby eliminating a majority of the violent images that go through their children's still developing minds. Parents or society are not going to be able to change the media and take out all the violence children are

exposed to every day, but they can make little changes in their own lives to protect the minds of their children.

References

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