

Television Violence and Our Kids

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Over four thousand studies have been done showing the relationship of screen violence to individual's aggression. In 1972 the Surgeon General said, "The controversy is over; watching violence makes children more aggressive." Many huge studies have since reaffirmed these facts. Not surprisingly, the mainstream media rarely tells us about them. Here is a report of one study.

National Television Violence Study Summary

The National Television Violence Study was a three year effort to assess violence on television. The \$3.3 million project began in June 1994. It involved the participation of media scholars at four major universities and was funded by the National Cable Television Association.

The study's findings did not exaggerate the importance of televised violence among the many contributors to violence in society. It recognized that the causes of violence include biological and psychological factors, as well as broader social and cultural ones. Among these, however, television violence has been recognized as a significant factor contributing to violent and aggressive antisocial behavior by an overwhelming majority of the scientific community. Organizations such as the American Psychological Association, The American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Medical Association, the Surgeon General's Advisory Committee on Television and Behavior and the National Institute of Mental Health have all concluded that violence on television cause real violence in our communities.

The study surveyed 2,500 hours of television. Some of its findings were:

- 57% of television industry-wide showed some kind of violence
- 85% of premium cable programs showed some kind of violence
- 44% of network TV showed some kind of violence

There are 3 primary antisocial effects of TV violence:

- learning aggressive attitudes and behaviors
- desensitization to the victims or the harms that are suffered by violence
- fear of violence that comes with heavy doses of violence on TV.

Children's programming, including cartoons, is among the worst because it shows "clean, sanitized" violence. The violence that permeates children's programming:

- rarely depicts the long term negative consequences of violence
- shows little shame, stigmatization, or costs to the perpetrator
- rarely shows pain or harm to victims
- often shows violence in a humorous context.

Dale Kunkel of the University of California at Santa Barbara was the study's head researcher. He wrote: "There is no question about the correlation between violent behavior and the violence of TV."

If one 30-second television commercial can sell a bar of soap, what do you think the 14,000 murders that occur during prime time in one television season are selling?

