

BRAINSOILING: THE UGLY EFFECTS OF VIOLENCE IN MEDIA; WHAT WE KNOW AND WHEN WE KNEW IT.

A BRIEF REMINDER OF SIXTY YEARS OF SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH, MEDIA ABUSE, POLITICAL POSTURING, AND PUBLIC APATHY

The science is settled, reason and experience agree: the pervasive depictions of violence in our ‘entertainment’ media are wreaking havoc on our society, and especially on our children – and yet America passively accepts the bloody torment.

So, you’ve heard that bit about the “science is settled” before, and maybe you are a little skeptical. Ok, don’t take my word for it, let’s review what we know on the subject, and when we knew it. For that project, I’m going to cut and paste-in a few summaries and references without going deeply into the research data for there is so awfully much of it; you can check that out for yourselves if you doubt these authorities.

Let’s start with this good summary from America’s family doctors:

Violence in the Media and Entertainment (Position Paper)

American Academy of Family Physicians

<https://www.aafp.org/about/policies/all/violence-media.html>

Violence occurs at an alarming rate in the United States. Among Americans aged 15 to 34 years, two of the top three causes of death are homicide and suicide.² In a given year, more U.S. children will die from gunfire than will die from cancer, pneumonia, influenza, asthma, and HIV/AIDS combined.³

Studies demonstrating an association between exposure to violence in the media and real-life aggression and violence began appearing in the 1950s. Since then, various government agencies and organizations have examined the relationship. These include a 1972 Surgeon General’s report,⁸ a 1982 National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) review,⁹ and a 2000 Congressional summit which issued a joint statement on the impact of entertainment violence on children.¹⁰ **In 2000, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) released a report noting that media violence is a risk factor in shootings in school.**¹¹ A 2003 NIMH report noted media violence to be a significant causal factor in aggression and violence.¹² The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) issued a 2007 report on violent programming on television, and noted that there is “strong evidence” that exposure to violence through the media can increase aggressive behavior in children.¹³

These reports and others are based on a body of literature that includes more than 2,000 scientific papers, studies, and reviews demonstrating the various effects that exposure to media violence can have on children and adolescents. These include increases in aggressive behavior, desensitization to violence, bullying, fear, depression, nightmares and sleep disturbances.^{14,15,16}

Some studies found the strength of association to be nearly as strong as the association between cigarette smoking and lung cancer, and stronger than the well-established associations between calcium intake and bone mass, lead ingestion and IQ, and failure to use condoms and acquisition of HIV.¹⁷ Violence is ubiquitous in mass media in the U.S., whether consumed through television, video games, music, movies, or the Internet.

The family physicians had a lot more to say on the subject, which you can read by pasting-in the above address, but let's look, now, at a few things the shrinks have to say:

American Psychological Association, November 2013

<http://www.apa.org/action/resources/research-in-action/protect.aspx>

Virtually since the dawn of television, parents, teachers, legislators and mental health professionals have wanted to understand the impact of television programs, particularly on children. Of special concern has been the portrayal of violence, particularly given psychologist Albert Bandura's work in the 1970s on social learning and the tendency of children to imitate what they see.

As a result of 15 years of "consistently disturbing" findings about the violent content of children's programs, the Surgeon General's Scientific Advisory Committee on Television and Social Behavior was formed in 1969 to assess the impact of violence on the attitudes, values and behavior of viewers. The resulting report and a follow-up report in 1982 by the National Institute of Mental Health identified these major effects of seeing violence on television:

Children may become less sensitive to the pain and suffering of others.

Children may be more fearful of the world around them.

Children may be more likely to behave in aggressive or harmful ways toward others.

Research substantiating those three points is continuing, and cited in the APA article. More recently, another violence promoting plague has descended upon the world – violent video games. The APA has quite a bit to say about that new threat. A few of the WHEREAS's from their 2015 Resolution displays their concern:

American Psychological Association. (2015). *Resolution on Violent Video Games*.

Retrieved from: <http://www.apa.org/about/policy/violent-video-games.aspx>

Resolution

Consistent with the American Psychological Association's mission to advance the development, communication and application of psychological knowledge to benefit society and improve people's lives, this Resolution on Violent Video Games finds:

WHEREAS scientific research has demonstrated an association between violent video game use and both increases in aggressive behavior, aggressive affect, aggressive cognitions and decreases in prosocial behavior, empathy, and moral engagement;

WHEREAS all existing quantitative reviews of the violent video game literature have found a direct association between violent video game use and aggressive outcomes;

WHEREAS research suggests that the relation between violent video game use and increased aggressive outcomes remains after considering other known risk factors associated with aggressive outcomes;

Politicians from Sen. Estes Kefauver in the 1950's, to Pres. Bill Clinton in the 90's, have confirmed the negative relationship between media violence and real life violence in their posturing as champions of an abused public. Shortly after signing the v-chip mandate President Clinton laid out the problem in a government/industry summit.

Bill Clinton – Remarks Following a Meeting With Entertainment and Media Executives, February 29, 1996:

...we also know that young people are exposed regularly to numbing and pervasive violence and other destructive behavior when they park in front of the family television.

Even the mouthpiece for the 'entertainment' industry, Jack Valenti, in his remarks following Clinton, agreed on the dangers of televised violence, and assured the people of America that the industry was committed to resolving the problem. But the the blather at this publicity stunt touting the 'v-chip', which was supposed to be "handing the TV remote control back to America's parents so that they can pass on their values and protect their children" as Clinton put it, came to nothing in the end. Violent media content has burgeoned since then, and there has been little more heard from the politicians. Let's examine some of the reasons why.

The entertainment media's commitment to reining-in violence seems illusory, to put it politely. But they do seem to have a true commitment to promoting radical and violent anti-social behavior that goes beyond 'bottom line' issues, and may even be antithetical to their financial interest. We'll consider that obsession later, but we need also to recognize their political power – it is enormous. The old political wisdom warning pols not to pick a fight with those who buy ink by the barrel holds equally true in the electronic media age.

The Communications Act of 1934, Section 326, states that "[n]othing in this chapter shall be understood or construed to give the [Federal Communications] Commission the power of censorship over the radio communications or signals transmitted by any radio [or television]

station, and no regulation or condition shall be promulgated or fixed by the Commission which shall interfere with the right of free speech by means of radio communication.” The Second Amendment to the US Constitution may not be, but that part of the Communications Act seems sacrosanct to both industry and government, and various means have been found to protect it.

Even the US Supreme Court, in *Brown v. Entertainment Merchants Association*, found (in the name of ‘free speech’) that the protection of our children was subservient to video game merchants right to sell first person shooter games to nascent psychopathic killers. Perhaps we could consider school shootings as exercises in free speech.

In ploys remarkably like the tobacco industry’s, the violent entertainment industry initially tried to convince credulous politicians that violent entertainment was actually a good thing – the so-called ‘catharsis theory’. That was also the pornography industry’s second line of defense, after free ‘speech’; a line that also has held firm. Then there’s the hyperbolic distraction that ‘everyone who watches televised violence doesn’t go off the deep end, there are other, more important, factors at work’, a favorite of the ACLU. The first of those arguments has been debunked as we read in this section of another summary:

Future research also debunked a belief originally advanced during the 1952 hearings when the "catharsis theory," which stated that television violence served as a release for aggressive children and was therefore not harmful, was found to be lacking as a suitable explanation of the relationship between television violence and young viewers.⁸⁶

The second is far more complex. Everyone recognizes that it is the kids at the outer edge of the bell curve of mental stability that garner the bloody headlines, however much the population as a whole is adversely affected. And that common sense understanding has also been underscored by research:

During his 1955 testimony, Dr. Ralph Banay asserted that emotionally disturbed children would be affected by television violence more than stable children. Almost twenty years later the Surgeon General's Report substantiated his belief with empirical research.⁸⁵

Both the above quotes are from: <https://www.scripps.ohiou.edu/wjmcr/vol02/2-3a-B.htm>

We must now ask ourselves what are those factors that brought on this epidemic of mental instability, and this relatively new phenomenon of cultural violence. Do they include the also relatively new phenomena of family breakdown, alienation, social isolation, and bad outcomes in psychotropic drug therapy?

Yes, those seem to be factors present in many, if not most, high profile shootings, and certainly in the run-of-the-mill daily violence. Those factors, added on top of minds habituated to violence by constant media exposure spells danger.

But let's also remember the role of the media in creating the emotional disturbances in the first place. The American Academy of Family Physicians summary concluded that the effects of media violence "include increases in aggressive behavior, desensitization to violence, bullying, fear, depression, nightmares and sleep disturbances." That is the very definition of adversely affecting mental and emotional stability. And overt violence is not the only form in which media brainsoiling occurs.

The Creator's guidebook for mental health recommends:

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

Philippians 4:8 King James Version (KJV)

Yet, what does our 'entertainment media' give us: whatsoever things are lies, whatsoever things are fantastic, bizarre, vile, grotesque, shocking, horrifying, destructive, think on these things – and we do! That we all know from our own mental experience. The remarkable thing is not the high level of mental disturbance in this country, but the relative sanity of the majority.

What a telling situation we find ourselves in today; mobs in the streets demanding the disarmament of law abiding citizens because 'guns' are killing our people at such an alarming rate, and yet hardly a peep anymore about the deranged minds behind the unthinking, inanimate objects called 'guns'. One would think it common sense to tackle those factors creating such dangerous mental instability, but no, that's not the case. In a revealing display of their totalitarian tendencies, the cry in some quarters is 'gun control', 'gun control', gun control'. Gun violence is useful to their ends, so neither the examination of causes nor responsible gun control are seriously pursued. Total disarmament of the civilian population is their goal, and faked outrage over gun violence is their vehicle for achieving that end. Knowing that, the other side of the gun debate adamantly opposes any effort at gun control as the first step down the slippery slope to forced disarmament of the law abiding citizenry – and dictatorship.

The power of the pharmaceutical industry comes into play in obscuring the relationship of mass murder with that acknowledged few percent of disastrous failures of psychotropic drug therapy. And the powerful dystopian counter-culture is bent on celebrating the destruction of the family, and society. That is the situation our country finds itself in.

If our children and our society are to be protected from violent predators in the media, it is up to families. More specifically it is up to Christian families, for there is spiritual warfare at work here. Those who don't recognize that fact, or don't know how to deal with it spiritually, aren't going to successfully deal with it. The majority of the 'entertainment' and 'mainstream news media', as well as much of industry, and virtually of all 'popular culture' leadership

seem bent on destruction, and we know why. In the Creator's guidebook we read the words of Godly Wisdom speaking:

For whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the LORD.

But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: **all they that hate me love death.**

Proverbs 8:38 (KJV)

We can have no doubt about that hatred, and that puts those who hate Godly Wisdom under the power of the Enemy of mankind – and their own deadly enemy. It should come as no surprise then, that we find ourselves living in a “culture of death”. To say that we “love death” may seem extreme, but look at us, a large part of us anyway: our entertainment is largely war, murder, vampires, zombies, dystopian fantasies, and sterile, perverse sexuality; and our reality is war, murder, abortion, suicide, euthanasia, drug abuse ‘zombies’, overdoses, drunken mayhem on the roadways, sterile, perverse sexuality, and an increasing atmosphere of nihilism, anger and hatred building to an inevitably deadly storm. Surely we do, many of us anyway, “love death”.

Bill Kitchens