



Center on Media and Child Health

Impact of Television Violence on Children – Brain & Behavior

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History of Media Violence Concerns

- Media violence has been an issue of concern since the 1950s—the first Congressional Hearings in 1952.
- The U.S. Surgeon General's study of TV violence and children was published in 1972.
- The CMCH Research Database identifies 7,400 reports on media and children—2,200 on media violence.
- In a new book by Norma Pecora, John Murray and Ellen Wartella, we review 1,945 studies on TV and Children—almost 600 studies on TV violence.

Main Research Questions

- The two main research questions are:

“How do children process media violence?”

“What are the mechanisms by which viewing violence might lead to changes in the attitudes, values and behavior of children?”

Three Main Effects of Media Violence

- **FEAR**: also known as the ‘mean world syndrome’—violence in media leads viewers to believe that the real world is as dangerous as seen in media portrayals.
- **DESENSITIZATION**: viewing violence may lead to a greater willingness to tolerate violence in society.
- **AGGRESSION**: viewers may become more aggressive; may develop favorable attitudes and values about the use of aggression to resolve conflicts.

Pilot Study of Brainmapping Children's Response to Media Violence

- Our pilot study of brainmapping, conducted at the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio was supported by the Mind Science Foundation.
- We used functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI) to map the brains of children while they viewed media violence.

Participants in the Pilot Study

- The Texas pilot study involved 8 children, ages 8 to 12 years (5 boys, 3 girls), 7 white and one Latina.
- The children were good students and none were experiencing difficulties at school or at home

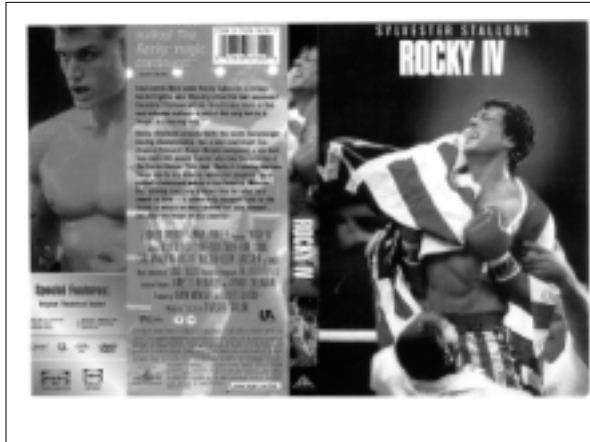


Media Content Viewed by Children

VISUAL CONTROL: white "X" on a blue screen

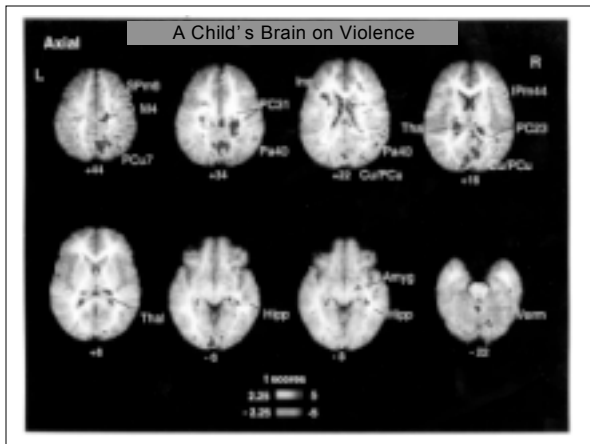
NONVIOLENT: clips from an age appropriate PBS children's program and a National Geographic program on baby animals playing

VIOLENT: boxing scenes from a "PG" film, "Rocky IV" with Sylvester Stallone



The Biological Foundations of the Effects of Media Violence

- Analysis of the brain activations of the 8 children involved combining all eight brains into a “composite brain” and comparing the activation areas of the composite brain in each of the conditions—violence vs control vs nonviolence viewing
- The next slide shows the composite brain activation patterns for violence



The CMCH Study of Media Violence

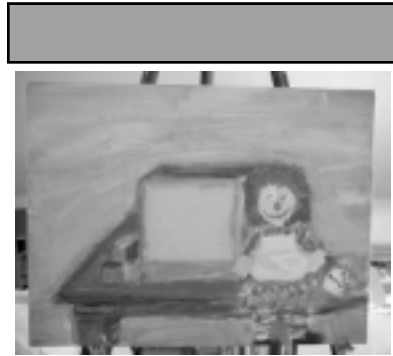
- CMCH Study—Murray, Rich & Rivkin
- We need to study larger numbers of both typically developing children and atypical children—studying children who have had different experiences with violence as victims or aggressors.
- The CMCH study, supported by Senator Sam Brownback (Kansas, of course!) and a \$500,000 grant from the Department of Health and Human Services, will provide a landmark for future research on media violence.
- Additional funding is anticipated to meet the 1.5 million dollar cost to complete the full study.

The Next Year

The new CMCH study will be conducted with 60 children, 30 boys and 30 girls, ages 8 to 12—they will be equally divided in three groups: Aggressive, Abused, and Typically Developing. As in the earlier study, the children will view violent and nonviolent material.

We began data collection in Spring 2005, and we will have a progress report for the Funding Agency in October, 2005.

What can we tell students?



Topics to Think About

- Students will be engaged in this topic because “everyone” has an opinion about TV and violence.
- Focus that interest on the varieties of research that have been applied to TV violence studies
- Discuss the strength of the evidence and conclusions from these diverse studies.