



VIOLENCE IN MASS MEDIA

AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

On the recommendation of the Board of Directors and the Board for the 1
Advancement of Psychology in the Public Interest, Council voted to adopt the
following resolution, as amended, as APA policy, replacing the 1985 resolu-
tion on television violence:

Whereas the consequences of aggressive and violent behavior have 2
brought human suffering, lost lives, and economic hardship to our society as
well as an atmosphere of anxiety, fear, and mistrust;

Whereas in recent years the level of violence in American society and 3
the level of violence portrayed in television, film, and video have escalated
markedly;

Whereas the great majority of research studies have found a relation between viewing mass media violence and behaving aggressively;

Whereas the conclusion drawn on the basis of over 30 years of research and a sizeable number of experimental and field investigations (Huston, et al., 1992; NIMH, 1982; Surgeon General, 1972) is that viewing mass media violence leads to increases in aggressive attitudes, values, and behavior, particularly in children, and has a long-lasting effect on behavior and personality, including criminal behavior;

Whereas viewing violence desensitizes the viewer to violence, resulting in calloused attitudes regarding violence toward others and a decreased likelihood to take action on behalf of a victim when violence occurs;

Whereas viewing violence increases viewers' tendencies for becoming involved with or exposing themselves to violence;

Whereas viewing violence increases fear of becoming a victim of violence, with a resultant increase in self-protective behaviors and mistrust of others;

Whereas many children's television programs and films contain some form of violence, and children's access to adult-oriented media violence is increasing as a result of new technological advances;

Therefore be it resolved that the American Psychological Association:

1. urges psychologists to inform the television and film industry personnel who are responsible for violent programming, their commercial advertisers, legislators, and the general public that viewing violence in the media produces aggressive and violent behavior in children who are susceptible to such effects;
2. encourages parents and other child care providers to monitor and supervise television, video, and film viewing by children;
3. supports the inclusion of clear and easy-to-use warning labels for violent material in television, video, and film programs to enable viewers to make informed choices;
4. supports the development of technologies that empower viewers to prevent the broadcast of violent material in their homes;
5. supports the development, implementation, and evaluation of school-based programs to educate children and youth regarding means for critically viewing, processing, and evaluating video and film portrayals of both aggressive and prosocial behaviors;
6. requests the television and film industry to reduce direct violence in "real life" fictional children's programming or violent incidents in cartoons and other television or film productions, and to provide more programming designed to mitigate possible effects of television and film violence, consistent with the guarantees of the First Amendment;
7. urges the television and film industry to foster programming that models prosocial behaviors and seeks to resolve the problem of violence in society;

8. offers to the television and film industry assistance in developing programs that illustrate psychological methods to control aggressive and violent behavior, and alternative strategies for dealing with conflict and anger;
9. supports revision of the Film Rating System to take into account violence content that is harmful to children and youth;
10. urges industry, government, and private foundations to develop and implement programs to enhance the critical viewing skills of teachers, parents, and children regarding media violence and how to prevent its negative effects;
11. recommends that the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) review, as a condition for license renewal, the programming and outreach efforts and accomplishments of television stations in helping to solve the problem of youth violence;
12. urges industry, government, and private foundations to support research activities aimed at the amelioration of the effects of high levels of mass media violence on children's attitudes and behavior (DeLeon, 1995).