

Insight

Today's quote

"Expecting mom and dad to police their children (and what they watch) is a sappy middle-class solution."

Patricia Herdman

Too many victims

Our violent entertainment is creating violent children

By Patricia Herdman

When two-year-old James Bulger was stolen from his mother and brutally killed by two 10-year-old boys.

The first question that comes to many people's minds concerns the reason the boys killed the youngster.

Unfortunately, much of the thinking and talking evolved into superficial speculation that failed to pay proper attention to the growing problem of violence in the entertainment media and in the street and the link between them.

It turns out that at least one of the 10-year-olds probably saw a movie called *Child's Play III*. Very possibly he watched any number of the hundreds of horror and pornographic videos his father brought home.

Although the newspapers are calling *Child's Play III* an "adult" movie (because it was rated for adults only), *Child's Play III* was co-produced by Hanna-Barbera, the producers of *Fred Flintstone* and other children's cartoons.

The story line involves a doll and its

main characters are children. Makers of horror movies bluntly state that "today's successful horror film needs to grasp an audience aged 10 to 24 in order to break into profits."

This is true of any number of horror movies rated for adults but targeted to children. This past Halloween, costumes depicting "Jason," the goalie-masked serial killer from *Friday the 13th*, were sold for children ages 3 and up — complete with meat cleaver.

Friday the 13th was not rated as suitable entertainment for toddlers, yet these children are obviously considered a market for the movie's message of gore and terror.

Child's Play III features a doll (Chucky) which comes to life as a small child. Chucky emanates "evil" and it is clear that he must be destroyed. Teenagers accost Chucky "disguised" as a toddler, toss blue paint on him, beat him and throw him on a railroad track to be sliced in half by a train.

In real-life Liverpool, two 10-year-old boys steal James Bulger, throw blue paint on him, beat him dead and lay his little

body on the railroad track to be sliced in half by the train.

The American Psychological Association, alarmed at the influence of media violence on the lives of youth, reported that 40 years of studies have produced consistent

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findings: "Television and other media contribute to children's and youth's involvement with violence, as aggressors, victims, and bystanders who support violence."

Indeed, of 85 major studies examining whether there was a relationship between television violence and increased aggression in children, 84 of them confirmed the

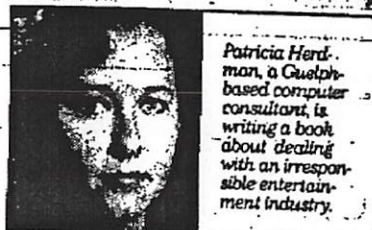
link. The one study which found "no evidence" was funded by NBC.

The sad fact is that children who are most neglected are most affected by the images which the entertainment industry pumps at them.

Pretending that the solution to violent entertainment is that moms and dads should just police what their children watch does nothing to help those children whose moms and dads and brothers and sisters torment them. Exposed to frightening images on television or in a horror movie, these troubled children will find a way to vent their torment.

Expecting mom and dad to police their children is a sappy middle-class solution. This "solution" did nothing to help the 10-year-old boys who acted their trauma on the body of an innocent toddler. It did nothing to protect the two-year-old who was stolen from his mother and who never watched *Child's Play I* or *II* or *III*.

It is not good enough to rely on old laws constructed in a time when movies were only shown in big theatres far away from the family kitchen.



Patricia Herdman, a computer-based consultant, is writing a book about dealing with an irresponsible entertainment industry.

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The VCR and the computer now serve up images glorifying death and torture and mutilation to growing minds. Is this how a civilized society treats its young?

In 1991, there were five Canadian children under 12 who were accused of murder. We just didn't feature them on the front page of our newspapers because naming them would violate Canadian law.

It is time that we recognize the entertainment industry for what it is: an industry. Only this industry depends on the market share of the mind and the most profitable minds are those which have not yet developed adult sensibilities.

It is time regulations were put in place to protect children from the television abuse of an industry concerned only with its right to make a profit. If we turn away from the horrors and cruelty embedded in so many of today's entertainment products, it will be business as usual.

And, as usual, there will be victims.

EDITING ERROR!