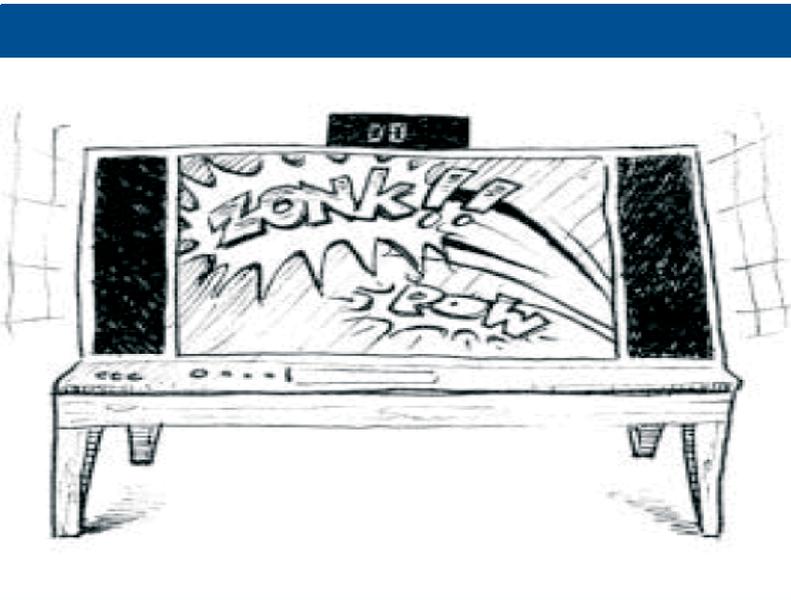




Literature Review on Media Violence, Children and Small Arms



SEESAC

South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse
for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons



The **South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons** (SEESAC) has a mandate from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe (SCSP) to further support all international and national stakeholders by strengthening national and regional capacity to control and reduce the proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons, and thus contribute to enhanced stability, security and development in South Eastern and Eastern Europe.

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Literature Review on Media Violence, Children and Small Arms, SEESAC, 2006

Acknowledgements

This document was compiled by Marianne Wiseman, SEESAC Education Consultant for the Education section of the SEESAC website. Photographs are courtesy of the Americans for Gun Safety Foundation, ACT- Adults and Children Together - Against Violence, and Andrea Millwood Hargrave. Graphic design and layout was conducted by Ivan Benusi.

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ISBN: 86-7728-048-0

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Acronyms

| | |
|--------|--|
| ACT | Adults and Children Together Against Violence |
| APA | American Psychological Association |
| CSO | Civil Society Organisation |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organisation |
| RMDS/G | Regional Micro-Disarmament Standards and Guidelines |
| SALW | Small Arms and Light Weapons |
| SEE | South Eastern Europe |
| SEESAC | South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of SALW |
| TRUCE | Teachers Resisting Unhealthy Children's Entertainment |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| USA | United States of America |



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1 Introduction

One of the key issues in examining the impact of small arms¹ on children is the role of the media. The following is a resource guide to some materials that are relevant to considering the need for education programmes on media violence and small arms.

Research has now confirmed the link between media violence and aggressive behaviour.² If young people also have ready access to guns, then the likelihood of violent behaviour, against themselves and others, increases.

Most of the resources are from the USA, with the exception of the UNESCO study; however, US media, films, TV, video and computer games are increasingly available to children all over the world, so the US research data is relevant.

Any programme designed to respond to the problem of small arms, be it education for children and youth, awareness raising for adults or advocacy, needs to take into account the role of the media in creating acceptance of the use of weapons to resolve conflicts and in supporting certain masculine roles.

¹ SEESAC uses the term SALW (Small Arms and Light Weapons) which is defined as 'all lethal conventional munitions that can be carried by an individual combatant or a light vehicle, that also do not require a substantial logistic and maintenance capability' (see SEESAC's Regional Micro-Disarmament Standards and Guidelines (RMDS/G Glossary 4th Edition at [http://www.seesac.org/resources/RMDS%202.10%20Glossary%20and%20Definitions%20\(Edition%204\).pdf](http://www.seesac.org/resources/RMDS%202.10%20Glossary%20and%20Definitions%20(Edition%204).pdf)), accessed on 04 October 2006. For the general reader, perhaps an educator or NGO staff involved in policy development on children's issues, the term SALW (Small Arms and Light Weapons) is unnecessarily technical and confusing. Light weapons are not relevant to the issues of children and youth, except in relation to armed conflict and its impact. Many sources referring to children use the term 'small arms, or 'guns', 'weapons', and 'firearms' interchangeably (Note to the IRIN/OCHA news publication, "Guns out of Control: the continuing threat of small arms", May 2006. <http://www.irinnews.org/webspecials/small-arms/default.asp>, accessed on 04 October 2006). So for the purposes of this paper however the term 'small arms' will be used to refer to 'weapons designed for individual use. They include, inter alia, revolvers and self-loading pistols, rifles and carbines, sub-machine guns, assault rifles and light machine guns' which is the definition used by the United Nations (see <http://www.un.org/events/smallarms2006/faq.html>, accessed on 04 October 2006). In the Education section of the SEESAC web site, the term 'small arms' is used in preference to SALW (see <http://www.seesac.org/index.php?content=55§ion=2>, accessed on 04 October 2006).

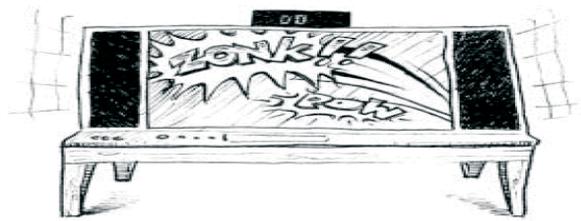
² American Academy of Pediatrics, 'Committee on Public Education: Media Violence', *Pediatrics* Vol. 108 No. 5 November 2001, p. 3.



2 Policy and Professional Resolutions

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| Title: | UNESCO Global Study on Media Violence |
| Publisher: | A joint project of UNESCO, the World Organization of the Scout Movement, and Utrecht University |
| Author (s): | Jo Groebel, Utrecht University, The Netherlands, 1998 |
| Summary of Content: | |
| <p>This report was presented to the Director General of UNESCO.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “What role does the media, and in particular TV play in the lives of children on a global level? ▪ Why are children fascinated by media violence? ▪ What is the relationship between media violence and aggressive behaviour among children? ▪ Are there cultural as well as gender differences in the media impact on aggression? ▪ How do violent environments (war/crime) on the one hand and the state of technological development on the other influence the coping with aggressive media content?” <p>Conclusions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “Media violence is universal. It is primarily presented in a rewarding context. ▪ Depending on the personality characteristics of the children, and depending on their everyday-life experiences, media violence satisfies different needs: It ‘compensates’ one’s own frustrations and deficits in problem areas. It offers ‘thrills’ for children in less problematic environments. For boys it creates a frame-of-reference for ‘attractive role models’. ▪ There are many cultural differences, and yet, the basic patterns of the media violence implications are similar around the world. ▪ Individual movies are not the problem. However, the extent and omnipresence of media violence (with an average of 5 to 10 aggressive acts per TV-program hour in many countries) contribute to the development of a global aggressive culture. ▪ The ‘normality’ and the ‘reward characteristics’ of aggression are more systematically promoted than non-aggressive ways of coping with one’s life. Therefore, the risk of media violence prevails on a global level.” | |
| Location: | http://www.znak.com.pl/eurodialog/ed/przemoc/raport.html.en |
| Accessed: | 27 July 2006 |

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| Title: | American Psychological Association Resolution on Violence in Video Games and Interactive Media |
| Publisher: | |
| Author (s): | |
| Summary of Content: | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Decades of social science research reveals the strong influence of televised violence on the aggressive behaviour of children and youth. ▪ Psychological research reveals that the electronic media play an important role in the development of attitude, emotion, social behaviour and intellectual functioning of children and youth. ▪ Perpetrators go unpunished in 73% of all violent scenes, and therefore teach that violence is an effective means of resolving conflict. Only 16% of all programmes portrayed negative psychological or financial effects, yet such visual depictions of pain and suffering can actually inhibit aggressive behaviour in viewers. ▪ Comprehensive analysis of violent interactive video game research suggests such exposure: a) increases aggressive behaviour; b) increases aggressive thoughts; c) increases angry feelings; d) decreases helpful behaviour; and e) increases physiological arousal. ▪ Studies further suggest that sexualized violence in the media has been linked to increases in violence towards women, rape myth acceptance and anti-women attitudes. | |



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| Title: | American Psychological Association Resolution on Violence in Video Games and Interactive Media |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The data dealing with media literacy curricula demonstrate that when children are taught how to view television critically, there is a reduction of TV viewing in general, and a clearer understanding of the messages conveyed by the medium. Studies on media literacy demonstrate when children are taught how to view television critically, children can feel less frightened and sad after discussions about the medium, can learn to differentiate between fantasy and reality, and can identify less with aggressive characters on TV, and better understand commercial messages. <p>Therefore the APA resolves to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocate for the reduction of all violence in videogames and interactive media marketed to children and youth; and Engage those responsible for developing violent video games and interactive media in addressing the issue that playing violent video games may increase aggressive thoughts and aggressive behaviours in children, youth, and young adults and that these effects may be greater than the well documented effects of exposure to violent television and movies. |
| Location: | http://www.apa.org/releases/resolutiononvideoviolence.pdf |
| Accessed: | 25 July 2006 |

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| Title: | American Academy of Pediatrics, Committee on Public Education Media Violence |
| Publisher: | American Academy of Pediatrics |
| Author (s): | |
| Summary of Content: | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “The American Academy of Pediatrics recognizes exposure to violence in media, including television, movies, music, and video games, as a significant risk to the health of children and adolescents. Extensive research evidence indicates that media violence can contribute to aggressive behavior, desensitization to violence, nightmares, and fear of being harmed. Pediatricians should assess their patients’ level of media exposure and intervene on media-related health risks. Pediatricians and other child health care providers can advocate for a safer media environment for children by encouraging media literacy, more thoughtful and proactive use of media by children and their parents, more responsible portrayal of violence by media producers, and more useful and effective media ratings. Television, movies, and music videos normalize carrying and using weapons and glamorize them as a source of personal power.” Guns are a leading cause of death and injury among young people. |
| Location: | http://aappolicy.aappublications.org/cgi/content/full/pediatrics;104/2/341 |
| Accessed: | 07 March 2006 |

3 Research Reports and Fact Sheets

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| Title: | Childhood exposure to media violence predicts young adult aggressive behavior, according to a new 15-year study |
| Publisher: | |
| Author (s): | American Psychological Association Press Release, 09 March 2003 |
| Summary of Content: | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reports on a study that found that children's viewing of violent TV shows, their identification with aggressive same-sex TV characters, and their perceptions that TV violence is realistic are all linked to later aggression as young adults, for both males and females. The research reported a longitudinal study (15 years). ▪ These findings hold true for any child from any family, regardless of the child's initial aggression levels, their intellectual capabilities, their social status as measured by their parents' education or occupation, their parents' aggressiveness, or the mother's and father's parenting style. ▪ Violent films and programmes that probably have the most deleterious effects on children are not always the ones that adults and critics believe are the most violent, the authors point out. According to the researchers, "violent scenes that children are most likely to model their behavior after are ones in which they identify with the perpetrator of the violence, the perpetrator is rewarded for the violence and in which children perceive the scene as telling about life like it really is." | |
| Location: | http://www.apa.org/releases/media_violence.html |
| Accessed: | 25 July 2006 |

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| Title: | Playing with firearms: what parents need to know about guns in video games |
| Publisher: | Americans for Gun Safety Foundation |
| Author (s): | |
| Summary of Content: | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Highlights the access that children and young people in the US have to guns, and the need for safe storage and knowledge about safe use of firearms. ▪ "But there is a chilling and potentially dangerous counterpart to the access that many children have to guns in the home: an array of easily available video games that provide appalling portrayals of guns being used in an irresponsible manner and without any consequence. Even diligent parents and responsible gun owners may be unaware of the damaging lessons that these video games are teaching their children about guns. Simply put, while most parents teach their kids the "do's" of gun safety; these games teach them the "don'ts". In households across the country, children are playing games with startlingly realistic, computer-generated versions of the very guns that may be available in their own homes. Armed with these virtual weapons, children embark on remarkably life-like simulations of horrifying acts of gun violence in video games played on computers, the Internet or home gaming systems. While many of these games are intended to represent a fantasy world, game makers strive to replicate real-life settings, adding detail to the weapons and to the carnage they reap, thus blurring the line between fantasy and reality." ▪ Although the focus is the USA, this is an important document, as many videos and computer games are now available globally, particularly in South Eastern Europe, and children as young as five, and young people more generally, spend considerable amounts of time playing them in Internet cafes (or 'Counterstrike cafes', a name coined by the present author while working in Kosovo). | |
| Location: | http://www.agsfoundation.com/media/games_report.pdf |
| Accessed: | 12 April 2006 |



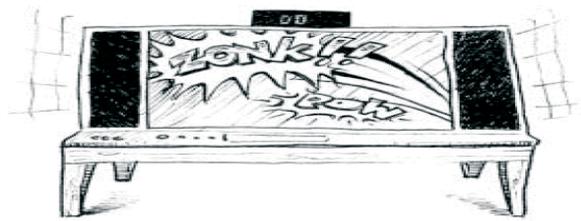
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| Title: | Video Games and Aggressive Thoughts, Feelings, and Behavior in the Laboratory and in Life |
| Publisher: | Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 2000, Vol. 78, No. 4, 772-790 |
| Author (s): | Craig A. Anderson & Karen E. Dill |
| Summary of Content: | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ "Two studies examined violent video game effects on aggression-related variables. Study 1 found that real-life violent video game play was positively related to aggressive behavior and delinquency. The relation was stronger for individuals who are characteristically aggressive and for men. Academic achievement was negatively related to overall amount of time spent playing video games. In Study 2, laboratory exposure to a graphically violent video game increased aggressive thoughts and behavior. In both studies, men had a more hostile view of the world than did women. The results from both studies are consistent with the General Affective Aggression Model, which predicts that exposure to violent video games will increase aggressive behavior in both the short term (e.g. laboratory aggression) and the long term (e.g. delinquency)." ▪ The study also reports on the finding that merely seeing a weapon can increase the likelihood of having aggressive thoughts. ▪ "Violent video games provide a forum for learning and practicing aggressive solutions to conflict situations. The effect of violent video games appears to be cognitive in nature. In the short term, playing a violent video game appears to affect aggression by priming aggressive thoughts. Longer-term effects are likely to be longer lasting as well, as the player learns and practices new aggression-related scripts that become more and more accessible for use when real-life conflict situations arise" (p.17). | |
| Location: | www.apa.org/journals/features/psp784772.pdf |
| Accessed: | 06 March 2006 |

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| Title: | Understanding the Impact of Media on Children and Teens |
| Publisher: | American Academy of Pediatrics |
| Author (s): | |
| Summary of Content: | |
| Highlights the risks and benefits to the health of children and young people from the media. | |
| Location: | http://www.aap.org/family/mediainpact.htm |
| Accessed: | 15 March 2006 |

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|---|---|
| Title: | Media Violence Bibliography |
| Publisher: | Center for Successful Parenting |
| Author (s): | Joanna Cantor |
| Summary of Content: | |
| Extensive bibliography of empirical studies of media violence, compiled by Professor Joanna Cantor. | |
| Location: | http://www.sosparents.org/aboutBiblio.cfm |
| Accessed: | 17 March 2006 |

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|---|---|
| Title: | ACT- Adults and Children Together - Against Violence |
| Publisher: | |
| Author (s): | |
| Summary of Content: | |
| <p>“ACT - Adults and Children Together - Against Violence is a violence prevention project that focuses on adults who raise, care for, and teach young children ages 0 to 8 years. It is designed to prevent violence by helping these adults to be positive role models and learn the skills to teach young children non-violent ways to resolve conflicts, deal with frustration, and handle anger. Includes major focus on media violence. Teachers can talk with children, even preschoolers, about violence in the media. They can be helped to understand that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Violence in the media is make-believe, not real. ▪ Real-life violence hurts people. ▪ Guns, bullets, knives, and other weapons on TV are fakes; real weapons hurt or kill people. ▪ If a show is scary or confusing, talk to an adult about it. ▪ Violent toys may seem exciting in ‘pretend’ games, but real-life violence is not fun. <p>Teachers can also encourage and model ways to play and pretend that do not involve violence.”</p> <p>Fact sheets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Facts related to Media Violence. ▪ Young Children View TV Differently. ▪ Strategies to Reduce the Impact of Media Violence in Young Children’s Lives. ▪ Classroom Media Violence Reduction Goals. | |
| Location: | http://www.actagainstviolence.org/mediaviolence/atschool.html |
| Accessed: | 17 March 2006 |

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|---|---|
| Title: | Children and Media Coverage of Tragedy |
| Publisher: | Dart Center for Journalism |
| Author (s): | |
| Summary of Content: | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Oriented towards journalists, but useful for a broader audience. ▪ The issues raised are particularly important in South Eastern Europe, where reporting of gun violence is often sensational. ▪ It is also important to be aware that many children and young people are exposed to reporting about violence from around the world, not just their own communities. ▪ “The relationship between news consumption and psychological distress among children is a vital public health concern ... although researchers have delineated the psychological consequences of trauma on child victims, including post-traumatic stress disorder, less is known about the short-and long-term impact of media coverage of tragedy on child victims and bystanders. The purpose of this fact sheet is to synthesize the existing research on this topic so that journalists, editors, publishers, and caregivers of children can form evidence-based decisions.” | |
| Location: | http://www.dartcenter.org/research/fact_sheets/fact_sheet3.html |
| Accessed: | 27 March 2006 |



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|---|---|
| Title: | Games Children Play |
| Publisher: | |
| Author (s): | Mimi Wellisch |
| Summary of Content: | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Resource for parents and educators written by an Australian early childhood educator. ▪ “There are many new games on the market for children that are inspired by violent media programs. Aside from the generally unhealthy direction this heralds, children who observe TV, video, and computer game violence can suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms. ▪ This book presents some disturbing facts, but also makes useful suggestions about how to deal with the effects of media violence.” | |
| Location: | http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/shop/Details.cfm?ProdID=14 |
| Accessed: | 16 March 2006 |

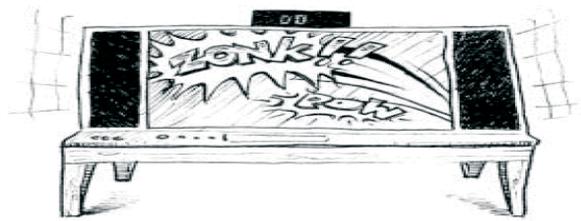
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|---|---|
| Title: | How Children Interpret Screen Violence |
| Publisher: | Joint Research Programme Broadcasting Standards Commission and Independent Television Commission, 2003, UK |
| Author (s): | Andrea Millwood Hargrave |
| Summary of Content: | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This UK study focused on children aged 9 - 13, as this was the age group where parents were least confident about appropriate TV consumption. ▪ Responses showed that children have a consistent world view which is different from that of adults, and violent images are seen within this perspective. ▪ These children, aged 9 - 13, were able to distinguish between fictional and ‘real’ violence. ▪ “They see a variety of violent images either through film or television, and build a ‘library’ of such images over time. Their reactions to such images are influenced by their age, gender, maturity and personal circumstances.” ▪ Children saw some images as ‘scary’, and this word had a range of meanings for them. One such meaning was related to the news, if children felt that the event could happen to them. ▪ “Scariness is a concept closely linked with violence and is a feature that is distinct from the way in which adults consider violent images.” ▪ Children responded most to violent images where there were negative physical and emotional consequences. ▪ The older children had a clearer understanding of the potential consequences of violence. ▪ “Boys in this sample are far more likely than girls to have sought out, and seen, images of violence. They admit to peer pressure and to the excitement that such viewing can bring.” ▪ Children differed from adults in their expectation of a level of security and protection, and they looked to adults for this protection. <div style="background-color: #e1f5fe; padding: 10px; margin: 10px 0;"> <p style="text-align: center;">What makes images on TV violent?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “When someone gets shot rapidly with a rifle and how they move when they get shot. ▪ The movements and seeing the effects of the violence.” <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Source: (Boys, aged 10-11, Wolverhampton, UK, media research)</i></p> </div> | |
| Location: | http://www.bbc.co.uk/guidelines/editorialguidelines/assets/research/howchildreninterpretscreenviolence.pdf |
| Accessed: | 06 March 2006 |

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|---|---|
| Title: | Does Playing Violent Video Games Cause Aggressive Behavior? |
| Publisher: | Cultural Policy Center, University of Chicago, 2001 |
| Author (s): | Jeffrey Goldstein |
| Summary of Content: | |
| Reviews research on playing video games and associations with aggressive behaviour. The author points to the need for a socio-psychological approach, rather than a view of young people as isolated individuals. | |
| Location: | http://culturalpolicy.uchicago.edu/conf2001/papers/goldstein.html |
| Accessed: | 17 March 2003 |

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|---|---|
| Title: | Violence in Entertainment |
| Publisher: | Hamilton Fish Institute |
| Author (s): | |
| Summary of Content: | |
| A series of links to information on media and violence. | |
| Location: | http://hamfish.org/cms/view/170 |
| Accessed: | 15 March 2006 |

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|---|--|
| Title: | Helping Children Cope with Our Disturbing Media Environment |
| Publisher: | |
| Author (s): | Joanne Cantor |
| Summary of Content: | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Information for parents and educators, with a developmental focus from an international expert on children and media. ▪ Other articles of interest on the web site, see in particular Senate Testimony on Media Violence Research (2003) and The Psychological Effects of Media Violence on Children and Adolescents (2002). | |
| Location: | www.joannecantor.com/naeychandout.htm |
| Accessed: | 21 March 2006 |

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|---|---|
| Title: | TRUCE Media Violence and Children Action Guide 2004 - 2005 |
| Publisher: | |
| Author (s): | |
| Summary of Content: | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ "TRUCE is a national group of educators deeply concerned about how children's entertainment and toys are affecting the play and behavior of children in our classrooms." ▪ The Media Guide targets parents and teachers. ▪ The website includes materials in Spanish. | |
| Location: | http://www.truceteachers.org/TRUCE_Media_Guide_04-05.pdf |
| Accessed: | 09 March 2006 |

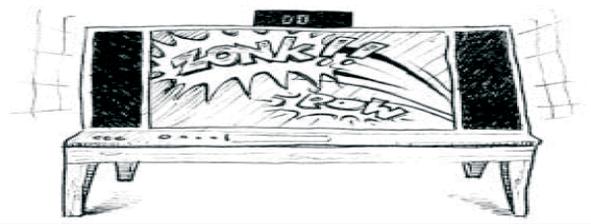


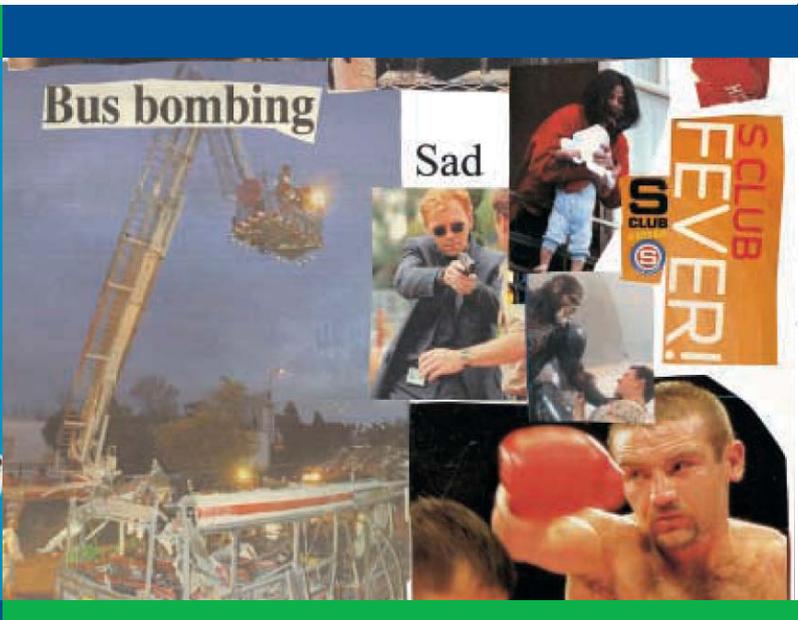
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|---|---|
| Title: | Strategies to Reduce the Impact of Media Violence in Young Children's Lives |
| Publisher: | |
| Author (s): | ACT Against Violence Training Program |
| Summary of Content: | |
| Information leaflet for parents on dealing with media violence. | |
| Location: | http://www.actagainstviolence.org/materials/handouts/FamilyMV3.pdf |
| Accessed: | 17 March 2006 |

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|---|---|
| Title: | Young Children View TV Differently |
| Publisher: | ACT Against Violence Training Program |
| Author (s): | |
| Summary of Content: | |
| Explanatory leaflet for parents explaining child development and the impact of watching TV on babies, toddlers (18 - 36 months), pre-schoolers (3 - 5 years) and elementary school pupils (6 - 11 years). | |
| Location: | http://www.actagainstviolence.org/materials/handouts/FamilyMV2.pdf |
| Accessed: | 17 March 2006 |

4 Using Media with Youth for Education

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|---|---|
| Title: | Resource Guide on Youth Media |
| Publisher: | Search for Common Ground |
| Author (s): | |
| Summary of Content: | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This document consists of four parts: I. Background Information, II. Trends and Programme Profiles, III. How-To Guides, and IV. Useful Web Sites. ▪ Part I provides background on the current issues facing producers of media by and for children. It also includes documents with general advice for those looking to create new media programmes. ▪ Part II profiles current and past youth media programmes from around the world. It presents lessons from the past and explores recent trends. ▪ Part III provides training manuals and how-to guides for developing and implementing media programmes, which an emphasis on radio. ▪ Part IV offers a number of additional Internet resources for conducting further research. | |
| Location: | http://www.sfcg.org/programmes/ilr/youthmed.pdf |
| Accessed: | 10 March 2006 |





ISBN 86-7728-048-0



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