



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on July 26, 2022

Blame Hollywood, Not Firearms Manufacturers, for Gun Violence

Question: If we're going to assign indirect blame, who is more responsible for a kid who kills somebody drag racing? The company that made the car?

Or a person who legitimized and glamorized street drag racing in the kid's eyes?

While many leftists want firearms manufacturers sued into oblivion, a similar question to the above is increasingly being asked regarding youths committing violence with guns, as was the case in Uvalde, Texas. Last month, liberal comedian-cum-commentator Bill Maher editorialized against, as he [put it](#), Hollywood's "unbridled romanticization of gun violence." Now Tim Winter, president of the Parents Television and Media Council (PTC), has [weighed in](#), noting that Hollywood "has been allowed to depict gun violence for too long, glamorizing it for countless viewers, particularly teenagers and children."



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Writing at Washington Examiner, Winter cites PTC research demonstrating that not only has wanton violence in kid-oriented entertainment increased markedly in recent years, but that it has a definite negative effect. As he writes, his organization found that

comic book-themed TV shows with particular appeal to children showed over 6,000 incidents of violence and over 500 deaths. This same study found that the CW's *Arrow* was the most violent program, with 1,241 acts, including 280 instances of gun violence.

And a different PTC study from 2019 found that there was substantially more violence in youth-rated shows than in the previous 10 years, but that increase had not changed the age-based content ratings the networks apply. Programs rated TV-PG contained, on average, 28% more violence in 2017-18 than in 2007-08. Violence on PG-rated shows included the use of guns and bladed weapons, depictions of fighting, blood, and death, and scenes of decapitation or dismemberment.

The heart of the matter is that the overwhelming weight of scientific, psychological, and medical research has found that exposure to graphic violence can be harmful to children. Research published in *Psychology Today* suggests that "exposure to violence in the media can increase children's dangerous behavior around real firearms."

And we should focus on violence, period, and not just "gun violence." Not only can the latter be a



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propaganda term making it sound as if firearms have human agency, but the problem is portrayed violence *generally* — and the morality underlying it — not just the depiction of violence with a *particular tool*.

One stumbling block when trying to get people to take this issue seriously is that if there's one thing conservatives, liberals, and libertarians join in scoffing at, it's the idea that entertainment violence plays a role in actual violence. "I've watched these movies and shows my whole life," we'll hear, "and it never affected me."

Now, putting aside the deeper issue that exposure to moral corruption affects us in subtle ways that generally escape man's detection, the first point to be made with such people is:

Not everything is about *you*.

Conceptualize the matter thus: Imagine there are, for argument's sake, five factors (poor parental guidance, lack of love, etc.) that must be present for a kid to experience persistent violent ideation and act upon it. When four converge and the fifth one — exposure to über-violent entertainment — is added, disaster can result.

Yet there's another point. While those scoffing are generally sincere when doing so, few actually believe the underlying principle they're espousing.

The proof?

They readily sing the opposite tune when their own sacred cows are slaughtered on screen.

Just consider, for instance, that when James Cameron's film *Avatar* was released (2009), there was much talk in the conservative blogosphere about its containing environmentalist, anti-corporate, and anti-American propaganda. At the spectrum's other end, liberals wanted the old show *Amos 'n' Andy* taken off the air because it contained what they considered harmful stereotypes.

There are many other examples, of course, but the point is that when our own ox is being gored, few of us will say, "Well, yeah, the work attacks my cause, but I don't care because it's the values taught at home that really matter." And, hey, advertisers don't spend billions on TV marketing because video presentations are incapable of changing behavior.

In reality, what reason tells us (the above) has long been vindicated by investigators. Well before the PTC research, a definitive 1990s study published by the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (now known as *JAMA*) found that in *every* society in which TV was introduced, there was an explosion in violent crime and murder within 15 years. For example, television had been banned in South Africa for internal security reasons until 1975, at which point the nation had a lower murder rate than other lands with similar demographics. The country's legalization of TV prompted psychiatrist Dr. Brandon Centerwall to predict "that white South African homicide rates would double within 10 to 15 years after the introduction of television."

By 1987 they'd more than doubled.

By the way, one possible exception to the above rule is tiny Bhutan. In 1999, it became the world's last nation to embrace TV — and suffered a crime wave just *four* years later, [reported](#) *The Guardian* in 2003.

Illuminating the matter further, I've often mentioned that when people are indoctrinated with moral relativism/nihilism and hence don't believe in Truth (absolute and universal by definition), they won't have the latter to reference when making "moral" decisions. They'll then use the most compelling



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behavior guide they have left: emotion.

And, sure enough, data bear this out: A Barna Group [study](#) found years ago that only six percent of teens “said moral truth is absolute” — and that a majority (54 percent) “base their moral choices on *feelings* and beneficial outcomes.” (Emphasis added.)

Alright, closing question: Take these morally confused, emotion-led youth and shape their emotions with, in part, violent entertainment — and the result may be *what*?

Minds open to everything, including evil, and emotions stoked with alluring violence can a deadly combination make.



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