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Violent Media Is Good For Gerard Jones  

Gerard Jones is a man who has lived a life closely tied to violent media, with a successful career in writing comic books and action movies (200). His claims about the effects violent media on children, while fitting for a man with his background, may still come as a surprise to concerned parents. Jones’ article “Violent Media Is Good For Kids” is a successfully thought-provoking piece; however, his argument is only marginally effective due to Jones’ failure to properly support his claims with compelling evidence, to clearly define the intentions of his argument, or to fully market himself as a trustworthy voice on the subject.

“Violent Media Is Good For Kids” is an exploration into the idea that children need creative violent expression, through entertainment media, for their mental health and wellness (199-203). Jones’ theory was realized through personal experiences; and he uses these personal experiences as evidence of his claim (199-203). He tells of himself as a child, his own son, and also of case studies of other children who, Jones claims, have seen improvement in many different areas through exposure to violent media (199-203). Jones argues that violent media is not only a healthy outlet for an inner rage natural to many children, but also is a means to build confidence and inner strength through fantasy play (199-203).

One of the first shortcomings in Jones’ essay is his lack of a specific definition for the violent media which he claims is good for children. Is he suggesting that parents allow their toddlers to watch the horror-gore movies from the Saw franchise, in lieu of their usual
educational cartoons? Or does “violent media” still fall within the age specific television and movie-rating guidelines? A suggestion to introduce children to PG-level violence would likely be much more readily accepted by an unsure parent, but that may not be exactly what Jones meant within his argument. Without specifically defined parameters of what Jones is suggesting, his argument starts out on rocky ground.

Another setback in Jones’ argument is that he is a man who stands to gain something through convincing his audience of his beliefs, which could be a big hurdle when convincing parents to trust his advice. Jones is a former writer of comic books and action movies (200), of which one would imagine he still receives royalties. If sales go up, the amount of royalties received will follow. Would a concerned parent see him as a credible source when he has the potential to gain personally from these parents allowing violent media in their home? Some may feel skeptical. Does he give enough support in his argument to overcome possible distrust?

This brings us to the largest issue within Jones’ argument: his lack of unbiased evidence to support his claims. Despite any other issue with this article, Jones could have still formed a successful argument if only he had given his audience some real, substantial evidence. His primary evidence is the story of his own childhood: an unsure young boy, “alone and afraid,” gaining inner strength and courage through comic books featuring the Hulk (199). This is a story which one could not necessarily argue against, as it is a first person account of his theory in action. This story does not, however, prove to us that violent media can bring positive change to all or even most of the children who are allowed such entertainment sources. It is the story of just one boy.

Jones continues to assert the positives of violent media for children in the same manner throughout the article, but the same problem remains; the evidence provided to us is anecdotal.
When Jones tells us the story of his own son, and of the case studies of other children, he successfully explains to us how his idea works, and he possibly even inspires a positive emotional response within his readers, but he continues to fail to provide proof of this being a successful approach for the majority (200-203). What worked for some may not work for many others. How can one know without a larger pool of test subjects?

Despite these issues, Jones does take some steps in the right direction during his argument. His introduction of psychologist Melanie Moore, Ph. D., as an expert who shares his opinion concerning children and violent media, increases the trustworthiness of his claim (201). Jones explains that “for the past three years” he and Moore “have been studying the ways in which children use violent stories to meet their emotional and developmental needs” (201). He continues to explain their viewpoints based on these studies, which do seem sound, but once again lack supporting evidence to back up their claims. Without the proper evidence to support these claims, Jones’ argument remains weak.

In the end, Jones’ logic does seem sound, and his argument thought provoking, but would his argument convince a skeptical parent? I would say no. I personally believe that, within the reasonable lines of age appropriateness, violent media is fine, and yes, could even be good for children. I agree with plenty of the points made within Jones’ article. But, if I had not approached this article already open to the idea which it proposes, if I was someone who harbored negative and distrustful feelings toward violent media, the above stated issues in Jones’ writing would have acted as fuel for my skepticism. And if Jones is not writing here to convince the skeptics, then who is he writing for?

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Works Cited