

## Article

# Media Violence and Young Audience (NGO Russian Association for Film and Media Education Survey)

Alexander Fedorov

President of Russian Association for Film and Media Education. E-mail: [fedor@pbox.ttn.ru](mailto:fedor@pbox.ttn.ru).

Accepted 9 March, 2007

From an analysis of the test *Russian Teenagers and On-Screen Violence* one may conclude that the influence of on-screen violence upon Russian teenagers is rather significant. About half the teenagers were positive about its demonstration: they enjoyed films, television shows, and computer games containing on-screen violence and they admired the characters - including "bad guys". A third of the teenagers were not sure about their opinion of on-screen violence, although they claimed to not be attracted by it. Just 18% of teenagers discuss and share their opinions with their parents. The influence of Russian schools upon the teenage relationship with on-screen violence is minimal. All this can't but evoke alarm, because since the 1980s on-screen violence has begun to penetrate into Russian society more and more. It can be safely said that in Russia the *Convention of Child's Rights* concerning mass media is not working. There is no effective system of ratings for watching and selling videos or PC-games. In spite of the efforts of some teacher-enthusiasts, the media education at schools, colleges and universities remains relatively poor.

**Key words:** violence, teenagers, children, Russia, young audience, screen, media, television, film.

## INTRODUCTION

Violence is an increasing problem in modern society. "If in the USSR in 1989 639 crimes were committed per 1000 residents, then in 1999 more than 2000 crimes were committed" (Ovsyannikov, 2001). "Murder Rates in Russia (1995) were 3.1 times higher than in United States" (Ovsyannikov, 2001). The increase of violence among Russian youngsters is extremely dangerous (about 32,000 of Russian teenagers commit a violent crime every year). Most Western research concerning violence in the media suggests that there is a connection between presentation of violence in the media and violence in society (Federman, 1997; Cantor, 2000; Potter, 1999; 2003; Slaby, 2002).

The report of the "National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence" noted the "weakness of the network codes, particularly the lack of effective sanctions

and the absence of control over the number of violent programs. Legislative hearing in the Congress and Senate of the United States Government heard repeated demand for the reduction of televised violence" (Gerbner, 1988). American Psychological Association (APA) concluded: "there is absolutely no doubt that those who are heavy viewers of this violence demonstrate increased acceptance of aggressive attitudes and increased aggressive behavior" (Wilson et al., 1998). "There certainly appear to be correlation between the rise of violence depicted in media and the rise of violent acts and crimes committed by juveniles in this country. The United States has the most violent adolescent population out of all 20 developed nations on Earth" (Cantor, 2000). "We uncovered a dramatic correlation between media violence and crime. When asked what their favorite movie was, the

same fifty one percent (51%) of adolescents who committed violent crimes claimed that their favorite movie contained violence" (Cantor, 2000).

It is clear that the problem exists in Russian and American society as well. "Today youth may be regularly exposed to:

- violent programming on broadcast TV, cable TV, and satellite TV;
- violent programming in motion pictures and on video-cassettes, digital video disks, and Internet websites;
- violent audio programming delivered through traditional radios, Walkman radios, compact disk players, and Internet websites;
- violent interactive video games delivered through television monitors, computer monitors, portable devices, Internet web sites, and arcade games;
- violent toys, games, and other devices directly related to violent media programming" (Slaby, 2002).

I agree with J.Goldstein's definition of media violence production: "We regard violent entertainment as descriptions or images of fighting, bloodshed, war, and gunplay produced for the purpose of entertainment, recreation, or leisure. Violent entertainment includes murder and horror stories; comic books, television programs, films, and cartoons depicting war or fighting; video games with martial-arts and military themes; toy weapons and military material; and aggressive spectator sports, like boxing and wrestling" (Goldstein, 1998).

The scientists concluded:

- "-media violence can teach adolescents social scripts (approaches to solving social problems) about violence;
- it can create and maintain attitudes in society that condone violence;
- constant exposure to media violence can lead to emotional desensitization in regard to violence in real life;
- the social, political, and economic roots of violence are rarely explored, giving the impression that violence is mainly an interpersonal issue" (Slaby, 2002).

P.David (Secretary of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights) writes: The theme of the child and media is typically a challenging one as it closely combines three major aspects of children's rights: access to provision, protection and participation. This multidimensional nature of the right to information is generously recognized by the Convention on the Rights of the Child in its article 17, which explicitly refers to many other provisions recognized by this human rights treaty. Therefore, a decade after the adoption of the Convention by the UN General Assembly, the child's right to information remains one of the most complex provisions to be implemented by states (David, 1999)

Article 17 of The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child aspires to encourage the mass media

to disseminate information and material of social and cultural benefit to the child; encourage the development of appropriate guidelines for the protection of the child from information and material injurious to his or her well-being. The convention states the right of children *for* information, but also for protection from information that might threaten their well-being and personal development. In societies that heavily expose children to media, the healthy development of democratic institutions and civil society can be greatly influenced by the impact of media violence on children's behavior and perception of society. An emphasis on this particular aspect of societal regulation of children's media viewing is strongly recommended by UN and UNESCO.

Unfortunately, The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child has not succeeded in modern Russian society with regard to the media-screen (television, cinema, video, PC-games) because scenes of hard violence persist on all Russian cinema and television screens. The infringement of the Rights of the Child on the Russian screen is a very important problem and Russian pedagogues should not only attract societal and governmental attention to it, but should also provide training and education about children and violence on the screen.

Western scientists have researched the theme "Children and Violence on the Screen" but this theme is new and original to the modern Russian sociocultural situation. Consequently, Russian science currently conducts little research on this theme. For example, we do have sociological research results from Dr. K.Tarasov (Moscow) who tested Russian pupils on the subject of "Violence on the Screen". He writes that: "a questionnaire survey, conducted by the Research Institute of Cinema Art among 510 students from 9<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> grades (14-17 years old) of 30 Moscow schools (52 classes) in late 1995, showed that with respect to violent films the young viewers formed three groups. The first (55%) comprises "hyperactive" consumers of violent fare. Half or more of the films they had seen in theatres or on television and video during four weeks prior to the survey contained violence. The second group (11%) includes "active" adherents to aggressive films. Violence is included in one-third of their chosen film repertoire. The third group (24%) constitutes young people with "moderate" attachment to movie mayhem" (Tarasov, 2000).

The Russian situation is different from that of the West because throughout Russian media history scenes of violence on the screen have existed without strict censorship. My content analysis of all feature films produced in Russia during the 1990s (1,041 films) shows that 43% contain violent scenes. Completed content analysis of violence on Russian television during one week indicates that serious and graphic violence in news and so-called reality-programs (about murder, crime, and accidents) is aired around the clock. The analysis also shows that fiction series and films with serious and graphic violence

are most often broadcast after 10 p.m., but also relatively frequently during prime time when children are watching.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

I created the test "Russian Teenagers and Violence on the Screen" and have surveyed 430 Russian students (age from 16 to 17). The information I obtained helped me:

- take into consideration the real preferences of teenagers;
- pay attention to concrete films, television programs, genres, and themes that are popular and thus have maximum moral and psychological influence;
- quantify the students who are attracted and repulsed by scenes of violence on the screen;
- reveal main factors attracting teenagers to scenes of violence on the screen (entertaining function, function of identification, compensatory function, function of recreation, professional directorship, outstanding acting, outstanding special effects, etc.). The results are necessary for comparison with written papers and discussions in order to state the self-evaluation of the audience's preferences and real motives as revealed in the course of the full research;
- reveal main reasons to dislike scenes of violence on the screen;
- learn about teenage enthusiasm for acting in a violent scene in the media. The results confirmed the students' answers concerning their positive or negative attitudes towards violence on the screen; and determine the opinion of teenagers concerning reasons for violence and aggression in society, the influence of violence on the screen upon the increase of crime, and the prohibition of violent scenes from the screen (with reference to their future children).

To sum up the analysis of this test one may conclude that the influence of violence on the screen on Russian teenagers is rather perceptible. About a half of the teenagers are positive about its demonstration. They like films, television shows, and computer games containing scenes of violence, and they like violent characters (including "bad guys"). One-third of the teenagers claimed that they are not attracted by the violence on the screen. Only 18% of teenagers discuss and share their opinions with their parents. Teenagers practically never include teachers as interlocutors for their screen preferences. Therefore the influence of Russian schools upon the relationship between teenagers and violence on the screen is, unfortunately, zero.

This cannot help but evoke alarm, since violence on the screen penetrates into Russian society more and more since 1990. It can be safely said that in Russia the Convention of Child's Rights concerning mass media is not working. There is no effective system of age ratings for watching and selling cinema, video, or PC-game productions. In spite of the efforts of some teacher-enthusiasts, the media education at schools, colleges, and universities remains relatively poor. Russian students have developed very little understanding of the impact of violence upon themselves.

Of course, "there will still be violence in the media, as in life, because there is evil in the world and human nature has its shadow side" (Thoman, 1995). But I hope the dissemination of my research's results to broad groups (state policymakers, TV/filmmakers, teachers, students and parents, press readers, members of associations for media education/literacy, etc.) will spark an interest in this topic and contribute new sources of information and fresh approaches. I believe that the comparison of the Russian and American experience regarding media violence, standards for rating Russian media programs, and a course of study on media violence for students will have a significant impact upon Russian society, will raise Russian societal and governmental attention to the infringement of the Rights of the Child on the Russian screen, will help to

mobilize Russian society against unnecessary violence in the media, will raise the level of responsibility expected of those who disseminate violence on the television, cinema, video, PC-games, etc., and will decrease the atmosphere of Russian social indifference to this problem.

## Russian Teenagers and Violence on the Screen: Description of the Test

This is one of the first studies of violence on media screen in modern

Russia. A public debate about Youth and Violence on the Screen exists because Russian television channels frequently show violent films and television programs. I compiled survey data from 430 sixteen and seventeen year old students of Taganrog's high schools and of the first course of Taganrog State Pedagogical Institute.

I used a multiple choice ("closed") form of survey because most teens, as a rule, are not able to state their points of view concerning media preferences precisely or quickly. Also, a "closed" form test is easier and takes less time to complete. The test was conditionally divided into 3 parts:

1. Violence on the Screen: Teenage Orientations and Preferences;
2. Teenage Attitude toward Violence on the Screen: Reasons and Results; and
3. Teenagers and Violence on the Screen: Situational Tests.

### Part 1. Violence on the Screen: Teenage Orientations and Preferences:

1. Teenagers were given a list of forty Russian and foreign films, about half of them popular comedies and melodramas containing no violence. In the other half (thrillers, horror films, criminal and war epics), violence often played a major role. Since these films are often shown on television and are available on video, we can suggest that teenagers who are attracted to violence will prefer this latter, more violent half;
2. By analogy to this, I compiled a list of popular computer games among youth. I assumed that a teenager who favored games filled with fights and shooting (*Doom*) would not mind seeing violence on the screen;
3. After an indirect clarification of teenage attitude towards violence on the screen, I proceeded to the direct questions 3, 4, and 5. Through these questions it was possible to learn which films, television shows, and computer games of which countries, genres, and themes contained the most violence. From a sample of forty countries, many African, Asian, and South American countries were absent because their film or television industries did not reach the Russian market.
4. Having learned the audience's knowledge of which genre-theme components most often accompany scenes of violence, I continued with questions 6, 7, and 8 concerning the most popular movie characters among teenagers. For that purpose, the film list was solely violent productions. Were a teenager to prefer American thrillers and horror films, then among his favorite characters would be such heroes as the Terminator or Rambo;
5. By knowing a teenager's favorite characters, we supposed that among the most likable character traits were strength, courage, and self-confidence (n 7). A number of students who made such a choice would like to resemble their hero in behavior and world outlook (n 8).

**Part 2. Teenage Attitude toward Violence on the Screen: Reasons and Results**

1. Through direct questioning we quantified the students who were attracted and not attracted to scenes of violence on the screen. If in the first part of the test teenagers preferred violent films, violent computer/video games, and violent protagonists (such as the Terminator or Rambo), then the test-taker's answer to this question would be positive.
2. With reference to the preceding query's answer, teenagers chose factors that attracted or repelled them to the scenes of violence. One may presume that the entertainment value of a show or recreation would attract, and that fear of blood, violence, and crime would repel.
3. Proceeding from numerous observations in cinema theaters, we assumed that teenagers attracted to violence on the screen would frequent cinemas together with friends (three or more).
4. We then asked questions concerning motives for watching violence on the screen and concerning the psychological state afterwards. Given the psychology of teenagers (aspiration to self-affirmation, appearing mature, etc.) one could not expect a majority of the teenage audience to confess that they become sad or bitter upon witnessing violence on the screen. More often, teenagers emphasized that it does not influence them.
5. It is natural that teenagers claim to not remember scenes of violence nor to discuss them, but if they do discuss them they prefer to do so among friends. The psychology of a teenager does not allow him to consider his parents as interlocutors.

**Part 3. Teenagers and Violence on the Screen: Situational Tests**

In this part of the test, teenagers faced hypothetical game situations. Some of the questions may seem trivial - for instance, a question about naming pets. Yet these were purposefully included so as to relax the teenagers between more serious questions.

1. The first question asked which videotape a teenager would take with him to a desert island. This question to some extent duplicated the question n 1, Part 1. A teenager who has, even only in his imagination, just one film at his disposal for a long period of time may somehow change his preferences. That is, a person who prefers watching violent films would not necessarily choose to keep *Rambo* on a desert island.
2. The second question concerned a comic situation with choosing names for pets. This question provided an opportunity to indirectly explore the degree of popularity of movie characters among teenagers.
3. The third question directly asked teenagers' reactions to scenes of violence on the screen. This question intentionally repeated a question in Part 2 because it was presumed that teenagers who liked scenes of violence on the screen would not switch off the television when violence was shown.
4. Such is the case with the fourth question, in which a teenager was asked about his interest in acting in scenes of violence on the screen. It was presumed that a teenager who disapproved of violence on the screen would not act in a violent film production.
5. The fifth question generated a discussion of reasons for and influence of aggression and violence in society, as well as and the prohibition of violence on the screen. This question was also aimed to affirm the answers to previous parts of the test: a person who enjoyed watching scenes of violence on the screen, probably would not point at such violence as the

reason for increasing crime in real-life, nor would he pay attention to its influence nor wouldn't demand censorship).

6. The last question asked the age at which children should be allowed to watch scenes of violence on the screen. Teenagers who enjoy violence on the screen chose the lowest age possible or were against any prohibitions whatever.

**The Main Aims of the Test**

**Part 1. "Violence on the Screen: Teenage Orientations and Preferences"**

1. To determine the degree of popularity of violent screen productions (films, television shows, and computer games). The obtained information helped me to take into consideration the real preferences of teenagers and to pay attention to the films, genres, and themes that are popular and thus have a maximum moral and psychological influence.
2. To determine to what extent teenagers associate productions of different genres, countries, and themes with violence on the screen. The results I obtained explained the teenage approach to mass media culture and the ability to distinguish between different genres and themes.
3. To reveal the primary traits of popular movie characters - including those whom they would like to resemble. I was careful to take into consideration new fashions and trends and to pay attention to popular films and heroes.

**(Part 2. Teenage Attitude toward Violence on the Screen: Reasons and Results)**

4. To quantify the students who are attracted to scenes of violence on the screen. This number should coincide with the number of students who prefer heroes of bloody thrillers and horror films.
5. To reveal the main factors attracting teenagers to scenes of violence on the screen, such as entertaining function, function of identification, compensatory function, function of recreation, professional directorship, outstanding acting, and outstanding special effects. The results are necessary to compare with written papers and discussions in order to know the audience's self-evaluation of its preferences and real motives.
6. To establish the motives for disliking of scenes of violence on the screen. (This is also important for the special student course.)
7. To find out with whom teenagers prefer to watch scenes of violence on the screen, and to ascertain the communicative results and consequences of such shows. This is important for a comparison of the audience's self-evaluation with the results of the test on the whole.

**(Part 3. Teenagers and Violence on the Screen: Situational Tests)**

8. To find out to how stable students' current media preferences regarding violence are.
9. To find out the type of teenage reaction to scenes of violence on the screen. The results confirmed students' answers to the main question of Part 2 of the test concerning their attitudes towards on-screen violence.
10. To learn about the imaginary readiness of teenagers to act in a violent scene in a film. The results confirmed students' answers

concerning their attitudes towards on-screen violence.

11. To determine teenage opinion of the reasons for violence and aggression in society, of the influence of violence on the screen upon the increase of crimes, and of prohibition of scenes of violence on the screen (including with regard to their future children). The analysis of the results will also confirmed tendencies revealed in the first two parts of the test.

## RESULTS OF THE TEST "Russian Teenagers and Violence on the Screen"

(430 people were questioned, aged 16 to 17 years)

### Part 1. Violence on the screen: teenage orientations and preferences

Made clear by the data in Table 1, just 4 of 10 popular films contained violence (*From Dusk Till Dawn*, *Speed*, *Basic Instinct*, *Twin Peaks*), while the top three most watched were melodramas (*Pretty Woman*) and comedies (*Diamond Hand*, *Gentlemen of Good Luck*). The proportion of teenagers who were fans of Robert Rodriguez' film *From Dusk Till Dawn* – a parody of tough gangster dramas and horror films – did not exceed 17%, while *Pretty Woman* was favored by 26% of teenagers. Therefore we may conclude that on-screen violence is not so popular (for students) as screen comedies. But the way, the Russian comedies *Diamond Hand* and *Gentlemen of Good Luck* were included in the hit-film list, and placed third (76.7 million) and twelfth (65 million) in number of tickets sold...

The same situation took place concerning teenage attitude toward violent computer games (Table 2). *Tetris* took first place (44.65% picked it) and didn't contain any violent scenes. *Doom*, on the other hand, was based on violence and enjoyed half *Tetris*' popularity (25.11%). (We must point out that in Russia not every family has a computer, so teenage access to computer games is still rather limited).

An analysis of Table 4 suggested that teenagers know which countries produce the most violent screen productions. The United State and Hong Kong were the primary production centers. Teenagers pointed out that violence on the screen in the 1990's also became common in Russian media. It is notable that no European country (except Italy, which placed 5th with 11.39% of the votes) was identified by teenagers as a leader in on-screen violence. This may be explained not only by the "peaceful" character of European screen production, but also by the absence of Russian contact with productions from European countries (except Italy and France).

Tables 4 and 5 suggest that Russian teenagers distinguish well the genres and themes of screen violence: action, drama, horror, criminal, war, science-fiction, psychological, etc. An analysis of Table 6 produces even more interesting results: Russian teenagers liked "good" characters in such films as *Twin Peaks* and *The Silence*

of the Lambs, as well as "evil" characters of films containing violent scenes – *The God-father* (31.86%), *From Dusk Till Dawn* (26.27%), *The Terminator* (24.41%), *Natural Born Killers* (11.39%). Among the character traits teenagers admired were "firmness" (41.62%), "intellect" (40.23%), "power" (36.27%), and "cruelty" (19.53%). "Kindness" only gathered 10.46% of teenagers' votes. To my mind, this supports the idea of a negative influence of on-screen violence upon the young audience.

A comparative analysis of Tables 1 and 6 showed that there was some difference between teenagers' favorite films and their protagonists. 16.97% of students liked *From Dusk Till Dawn* while its main characters – murderers – were popular with 26.27% of the audience. The same situation was true with the television series *Twin Peaks*: 37.67% like the hero, and 12.32% liked only the movie itself. Teenagers would like to emulate the movie characters mentioned above in world outlook (19.76%), behavior (12.32%), attire (9.69%), job (8.60%), and attitude (7.99%). A low percentage of teenagers chose to answer this question because many teenagers considered this question to be childish and "just for kids". On the margins of some tests was written, "I'm too old to imitate anyone".

### Part 2. Teenage attitude to on-screen violence: reasons and results

The data listed in Table 9 show that 48.14% of the teenagers were attracted to violence on the screen, 28.84% had a negative attitude toward the violence, and 23.02% were not sure. A comparative analysis of Tables 1, 2, 6, and 9 proves that the self-evaluation of teenagers corresponds to their real screen preferences. None of the violent films or computer games couldn't overcome the limit of 40% popularity, that is screen production of such kind was chosen by 48% of teenagers who are supporters of screen violence according to the statistics of the table 9.

The test I made in Table 10 revealed factors that influence teenage perception and estimation of on-screen violence. Among the factors that attracted teenagers were: entertaining function, acting, direction, recreation, informative function, special effects, and action dynamics. We must also bear in mind that a high rating of the actor's and director's skill does not demonstrate that all teenagers who made such a choice are good judges of a film's artistic value. Quite often a teenager who were entertained by a film also claimed that the performance and directors' work was good.

Table 10 also shows that the majority of those teenagers (28,84%) who were "not attracted" by on-screen violence in Table 9, actually make quite another choice. In Table 10 just 5.34% of teenagers asserted that nothing in on-screen violence appeals to them, and the rest said some factors (e.g. acting or special effects) draw them to the television set. Their reasons for disliking on-screen

violence are shown in Table 11. First among the most common reasons was the influence on the increase of crimes. The second was disgust towards bloody details of violence, hatred, fear of violence, and unwillingness to experience unpleasant emotions. The percent data of Table 11 on the whole corresponds to the figures of Table 9 (the number of students who not attracted by the violence is about 30% only), so the correctness of the test's results is confirmed.

Tables 12 and 17 confirm a known truth: teenagers prefer to watch television and discuss together with their friends. According to Table 16 – 22.79% of the audience discuss it regularly. Such is the case with on-screen violence. Parents acted as interlocutors in both cases with 17% of the teenagers. Among the reasons for watching on-screen violence (Table 13) teenagers rated “nothing else to do” as an “ok” (62.32%), “good” (26.27%) and “bad” (11.39%) mood. Table 14 reflects the main types of psychological states in which teenagers find themselves after they watched on-screen violence. The majority of them claimed that their psychological states did not change, and only a small number of the students (4%-5%) confessed that they became aggressive or bitter. The majority of the audience (65%) while assuring that their psychological states remained the same, were not inclined to remember the on-screen violence (Table 15), and just 6.27% of teenagers pointed out that screen violence stayed in their memories for a long time.

### Part 3. Teenagers and violence on the screen. the results of the situations' tests.

Table 18 suggests that despite liking on-screen violence, not all of the 48.14% teenagers would to go to a desert island with only a videotape of *Basic Instinct* or *The Silence of the Lambs*. As in Table 1, first place in screen preferences was taken again by the American comedy *Pretty Woman* (it was particularly favored by girls) and the Russian comedies *Diamond Hand* and *Gentlemen of Good Luck*. As for the violent films, the highest number of votes was received by *From Dusk Till Dawn* (3.95%), which was four times less than *Pretty Woman's* rating. In Table 19 the data of a comic situation are given. This comic situation was included to relax students. The results of Table 20 are important because they checked the data of Tables 9 and 11. The number of teenagers who continue to watch a film despite on-screen violence should correspond to the number of students who answered "yes" to the question of attraction to violence in Table 9. Likewise, the number of teenagers who avoid on-screen violence should correspond to the number of teenagers who answered "no" to the questions of Tables 9 and 20. This is precisely what occurred. As in Tables 9, 11, and 20, the amount of teenagers who dislike on-screen violence is 30%.

Table 21 shows the data reflecting teenage attitude toward acting in on-screen violence. The data shows that more than half the students (59.53%) would disregard their aversions to on-screen violence were they to be generously compensated. Only 7.67% (out of 28.84% from Table 9) of the students remained negative about on-screen violence and absolutely would not act in violent scenes. It is my opinion that to a large degree the economic situation in Russia explains these results.

As for the reasons behind violence and aggression in society, teenagers claimed in Table 22 that violence is in the nature of all humans and also mentioned psychological diseases. On-screen violence was mentioned as a cause of real-life violence only by 3.25% of teenagers. The data in Table 23 confirm this orientation of the audience: 33.58% believed that only psychologically sick people can possibly be influenced by on-screen violence. 33.02% considered this influence unimportant, and 14.18% of teenagers think that showing on-screen violence leads to an increase in real-life violence. Such a scattered spectrum of view points can be explained perhaps by the fact that the attitude of teenagers toward on-screen violence is not yet final, and that this is why some of them sometimes answer differently to similar questions.

The data of Table 24 are also comparable with the results of Tables 9, 11, 20, 21 and 23. Teenagers who, according to Table 9, were attracted to on-screen violence no doubt wanted zero restrictions concerning on-screen violence: 48.14% (Table 9), 56.97% (Table 20) and 48.60% (Table 24). 12.79% of teenagers wanted violence to be proscribed from the screen and 20.23% thought that only the most cruel films and television shows should be banned. According to the data in Table 24, 33.02% of teenagers wanted some kind of restriction for on-screen violence. This number corresponds to the data in Table 9 (28.84%), Table 11 (30.46%) and Table 20 (28.83%). Just 3.02% of teenagers desired more on-screen violence in Russia. A comparison between Tables 24 and 25 showed that there was a great disparity of opinion concerning age restrictions for watching on-screen violence generally (Table 9) and age restrictions for future children (Table 25).

Assuming the role of a censor, teenagers considered it possible to ban on-screen violence for all children (11.16%), to not let children under 10 watch it (5.11%), and to not let children under 15 watch on-screen violence (3.95%). Acting as parents they became much stricter: 38.37% did not want their children to watch violence until they were 10, and 25.34% did not want their children to watch violence until they were 15. 35.58% of teenagers were ready to let their children watch on-screen violence at any age. The latter figures correspond to the results of Tables 9, 10, 20 and 23.

From an analysis of the test *Russian Teenagers and On-Screen Violence* one may conclude that the influence of on-screen violence upon Russian teenagers is rather

significant. About half the teenagers were positive about its demonstration: they enjoyed films, television shows, and computer games containing on-screen violence and they admired the characters - including "bad guys". A third of the teenagers were not sure about their opinion of on-screen violence, although they claimed to not be attracted by it. Just 18% of teenagers discuss and share their opinions with their parents. The influence of Russian schools upon the teenage relationship with on-screen violence is minimal. All this can't but evoke alarm, because since the 1980s on-screen violence has begun to penetrate into Russian society more and more. It can be safely said that in Russia the *Convention of Child's Rights* concerning mass media is not working. There is no effective system of ratings for watching and selling videos or PC-games. In spite of the efforts of some teacher-enthusiasts, the media education at schools, colleges and universities remains relatively poor.

**Results of the Test "Russian Teenagers and On-Screen" (A survey of 430 16 and 17 year-old students)**

**PART 1. On-screen violence: teenage orientations and preferences**

**TABLE 1. Cinema preferences of Russian teenagers**

1. *Pretty Woman* (USA, 1990). 26.04%
2. *Diamond Hand* (Russia, 1969). 23.02%
3. *Gentlemen of Good Luck* (Russia, 1974). 22.09%
4. *Back to the Future* (USA, 1985). 18.13%
5. *From Dusk Till Dawn* (USA, 1995). 16.97%
6. *Speed* (USA, 1994). 16.27%
7. *Irony of the Fortune* (Russia, 1975). 14.88%
8. *Basic Instinct* (USA, 1992). 13.25%
9. *Twin Peaks* (USA, 1989). 12.32%
10. *White Sun of the Desert* (Russia, 1970). 11.86%

**TABLE 2. Favorite PC-games of Russian teenagers**

1. *Tetris*. 44.65%
2. *Doom*. 25.11%
3. *Sport Games*. 15.81%
4. *Aladdin*. 7.20%
5. *Mortal Combat*. 3.02%
6. No opportunity to play PC-games. 25.11%

**TABLE 3. Russian teenage estimation of countries that produce the most films, television shows, and PC-games containing on-screen violence**

1. USA. 90.93%
2. China (Hong Kong). 52.79%
3. Japan. 30.69%
4. Russia. 28.83%

5. Italy. 11.39%

**TABLE 4. Films, television shows, and PC-game genres that, according to Russian teenagers, most frequently accompany on-screen violence**

1. Action. 90.23%
2. Thriller. 76.27%
3. Horror. 43.72%
4. Fantasy. 23.72%
5. Detective. 22.09%

**TABLE 5. Films, television shows, and PC-game themes that, according to Russian teenagers, most frequently accompany on-screen violence**

1. Criminal. 54.88%
2. Military. 49.53%
3. Science-fiction. 29.76%
4. Psychological. 25.34%
5. Erotic. 22.79%

**TABLE 6. Violent films whose protagonists are admired by Russian teenagers**

1. *Twin Peaks* (1989). 37.67%
2. *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991). 32.79%
3. *The Godfather* (1972). 31.86%
4. *From Dusk Till Dawn* (1995). 26.27%
5. *The Terminator* (1984). 24.41%
6. *Basic Instinct* (1992). 19.53%
7. *Nikita* (1990). 18.83%
8. *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (1992). 17.90%
9. *Rambo* (1981). 17.44%
10. *Nightmare on Elm Street* (1984). 12.09%
11. *Natural Born Killers* (1993). 11.39%
12. *The Professional* (1995). 10.23%
13. *Pulp Fiction* (1994). 9.06%
14. *Once Upon a Time in America* (1984). 6.04%
15. *Friday the 13th* (1980). 4.41%

**TABLE 7. Character traits that Russian teenagers admire in heroes of violent films**

1. Firmness. 41.62%
2. Intellect. 40.23%
3. Beauty. 36.51%
4. Power. 36.27%
5. Courage. 27.44%
6. Fascination. 22.55%
7. Cruelty. 19.53%
8. Resourcefulness. 16.51%
9. Purpose. 15.34%

- 10. Cunning. 13.48%
- 11. Optimism. 12.09%
- 12. Kindness. 10.46%

**TABLE 8. Ways in which Russian teenagers would most like to resemble the heroes of violent films**

- 1. World Outlook. 19.76%
- 2. Behavior. 12.32%
- 3. Attire. 9.69%
- 4. Job. 8.60%
- 5. Attitude toward people. 7.44%

**PART 2. Teenage attitude toward on-screen violence: reasons and results**

**TABLE 9. Russian teenage attitude toward on-screen violence**

- 1. Attracted by the violence. 48.14%
- 2. Not attracted by the violence. 28.84%
- 3. No definite opinion about the problem. 23.02%

**TABLE 10. Factors attracting Russian teenagers to on-screen violence**

- 1. Entertaining function. 33.02%
- 2. Outstanding acting. 28.37%
- 3. Professional directing. 22.09%
- 4. Function of recreation. 15.81%
- 5. Information function. 11.86%
- 6. Outstanding special effects. 8.37%
- 7. Dynamics / speed of action. 7.90%
- 8. Function of identification. 6.74%
- 9. No attractive factors. 5.34%
- 10. Compensatory function. 3.95%

**TABLE 11. Motivations for not liking on-screen violence**

- 1. Violence on the screen increases violence in real life. 30.46%
- 2. Disgust towards seeing blood and crippled people. 14.65%
- 3. Hatred toward violence of any kind. 8.60%
- 4. Fear of violence of any kind. 8.13%
- 5. Not wanting to experience negative emotions. 3.95%

**TABLE 12. The type of company with whom Russian teenagers prefer to watch on-screen violence**

- 1. Friends. 54.88%

- 2. Girlfriend, boyfriend. 22.79%
- 3. Alone. 21.16%
- 4. Parents. 17.44%
- 5. Anyone. 14.88%

**TABLE 13. Motivations for watching on-screen violence**

- 1. Nothing else to do. 62.32%
- 2. Good mood. 26.27%
- 3. Low spirits. 11.39%
- 4. Disagreement with parents. 5.81%

**TABLE 14. Psychological states in which Russian teenagers find themselves after watching on-screen violence.**

- 1. Psychological state doesn't change. 65.81%
- 2. Excitement. 29.76%
- 3. Disorder. 13.72%
- 4. Depression. 6.27%
- 5. Aggression. 5.58%
- 6. Bitterness. 4.88%
- 7. Reticence. 2.32%
- 8. Agitation. 2.09%
- 9. Joy. 1.62%
- 10. Indifference 1.16%

**TABLE 15. How long Russian teenagers remember on-screen violence**

- 1. On-screen violence are remembered for a short time only. 65.58%
- 2. On-screen violence are forgotten immediately. 33.95%
- 3. On-screen violence are remembered for a long time. 6.27%

**TABLE 16. Russian teenage attitude towards discussing on-screen violence**

- 1. On-screen violence is discussed sometimes. 63.48%
- 2. On-screen violence is discussed regularly. 22.79%
- 3. On-screen violence is never discussed. 13.73%

**TABLE 17. The type of company with whom Russian teenagers prefer to discuss on-screen violence**

- 1. Friends. 64.18%
- 2. Parents. 17.90%
- 3. Anyone. 12.09%
- 4. Boyfriend/Girlfriend. 5.81%

**PART 3. Teenagers and on-screen violence: situational tests**



**TABLE 18. Films that Russian teenagers would take to a desert island**

1. *Pretty Woman* (USA, 1990). 16.04%
2. *Gentlemen of Good Luck* (Russia, 1974). 10.23%
3. *Diamond Hand* (Russia, 1969). 9.06%
4. *Irony of the Fortune* (Russia, 1975). 4.18%
5. *From Dusk Till Dawn* (USA, 1995). 3.95%

**TABLE 19. Favorite names of pets, named after movie characters**

1. Fantomas. 19.59%
2. Batman. 12.79%
3. Dracula. 9.53%
4. Angeliques. 9.06%
5. Superman. 7.67%

**TABLE 20. Russian teenage reaction to on-screen violence**

1. Calmly continuing watching. 36.51%
2. Food in front of the television. 20.46%
3. Turning away from the television. 18.37%
4. Turning down the volume. 16.51%
5. Turning off the television. 10.46%

**TABLE 21. Russian teenage attitude toward acting in violent films**

1. Would participate on the condition of high pay. 59.53%
2. Would participate to show off. 20.23%
3. Would not participate because of a lack of acting talent. 14.41%
4. Would not participate because of a preference for erotic scenes. 9.30%
5. Would not participate because of a disgust for on-screen violence. 7.67%

**TABLE 22. Reasons for violence and aggression in society**

1. Inherent to the human nature. 45.11%
2. Psychological deviants. 38.60%
3. Material inequality. 18.37%
4. On-screen violence. 3.25%

**TABLE 23. Russian teenage opinion on the influence of on-screen violence upon the increase of the crime in society**

1. On-screen violence leads to an increase in

- crime among those with psychotic behavior. 35.58%
2. On-screen violence leads to a small increase in crime. 33.02%
3. On-screen violence does not lead to an increase in crime because crimes existed before the invention of cinema and television. 16.04%
4. On-screen violence undoubtedly leads to an increase in crime. 14.18%
5. On-screen violence does not lead to an increase in crime because it disgusts people. 4.18%

**TABLE 24. Russian teenage attitude towards prohibition of on-screen violence**

1. The current levels of on-screen violence are acceptable. 48.60%
2. Only the most violent scenes should be proscribed. 20.23%
3. On-screen violence should be proscribed because it makes people aggressive. 12.79%
4. Children should not be allowed to watch on-screen violence because it is for adults only. 11.16%
5. Children under the age of 10 should not be allowed to watch on-screen violence. 5.11%
6. Children under the age of 15 should not be allowed to watch on-screen violence. 3.95%
7. Further on-screen violence won't do any harm. 3.02%

**TABLE 25. The age at which Russian teenagers would allow their children to watch on-screen violence**

1. 10 years. 38.37%
2. From birth. 35.58%
3. 15 years. 25.34%

**REFERENCES**

- Cantor J (2000). Mommy, I'm Scared: Protecting Children from Frightening Mass Media. In: Stoughton, C. Media Violence Alert. Zionsvill, IN: Dream Catcher Press, Inc., pp. 69-85.
- David P (1999). Children's Rights and Media: Conciliating Protection and Participation. In: Feilitzen, C. von and Carlsson, U. (eds.) (1999). *Child-ren and Media: Image, Education, Participation*. Goteborg: UNESCO International Clearing House on Children and Violence on the Screen p. 31.
- Federman J (ed.) (1997) National Television Violence Study, Volume 2. Santa Barbara: University of California, Center for Communication and Social Policy. p. 53.
- Gerbner G (1988). Violence and Terror in the Mass Media. Paris: UNESCO, p. 46.
- Goldstein J (ed.) (1998). Why We Watch: The Attractions of Violent Entertainment. N.Y., Oxford University Press, p. 270.
- Ovsyannikov AA (2001). Declaration of Humanitarian Value in Contempo-rary Russian Society. In: Teaching Social-Humanitarian Disciplines in Russian higher Education: Conditions, Problems, and Perspectives. Moscow: Logos. p. 17.
- Potter WJ (1999). On Media Violence. Thousand Oaks, CA – London: Sage Publication, Inc., p. 304.
- Potter WJ (2003). The 11 Myths of Media Violence. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publication, Inc. p. 259 .

- Slaby RG (2002). Media Violence: Effects and Potential Remedies. Katzemann, C.S. (ed.). *Securing Our Children's Future*. Washington D.C.: Brooking Institution Press, pp. 305-337.
- Tarasov K. (2000). Film Violence: Attraction and Repulsion. In: *News from The UNESCO International Clearinghouse on Children and Violence on the Screen*. 2: 5.
- Thoman E (1995). Media Literacy Education Can Effectively Combat Media Violence. In Wekesser, C. (ed.). *Violence in the Media*. San Diego, CA: Greenhaven Press, pp. 127-129.
- Wilson BJ, Smith SL, (1998). Content Analysis of Entertainment Television: The 1994-95 Results. In Hamilton JT (ed.). *Television Violence and Public Policy*. Michigan: The University of Michigan Press, pp.105-147.