

*To suggest you can extract that aspect of our character is madness. . . It's better to deal with it in our view, in terms of the imagination, than in doing it.*⁴⁸

Another witness, Rose Dyson, Chair of Canadians Concerned About Violence in Entertainment, stated:

*I wouldn't for a moment suggest nor do I think any of the researchers I am familiar with suggest that media violence, whether it's television, film, video, computer games, is the only cause of violence in society. All responsible researchers recognize that there are many causal factors, many variables in how people are affected. Some people are more vulnerable than others, particularly children. And some children are more vulnerable than others, depending on their age, their demographics, their social, emotional and psychological stability, the family background, all of those things.*⁴⁹

The experts who briefed the Committee referred to the hundreds of studies that have been carried out to determine what effects, if any, television violence may have upon individuals or social groups. The experts mentioned the contradictory results of these studies. Professor Vincent Sacco, a criminologist who gave evidence to the Committee, spoke of the difficult task of making sense of all these studies. A person attempting to do so, he said:

. . . usually finds him or herself much in the position of a juror in a criminal trial who is asked to determine guilt or innocence based on what frequently appears to be inconsistent and fragmentary evidence.

*The studies differ in terms of how they define violence. They differ in terms of the kind of effects that they look for and when you take all of those differences together it sometimes appears that the accumulated body of evidence can support a diverse set of views about how media violence affects people if it affects them at all.*⁵⁰

Professor Sacco also raised a number of questions not yet explored by the researchers, such as what the "net effect" of violent media on violent crime might be. He posed the problem thus:

*If media affects offenders, does it also affect victims by teaching them for instance risk-reducing skills or does it affect witnesses by encouraging them to report crimes which they witness?*⁵¹

On the basis of his own review of the research literature, Professor Sacco concluded:

*. . . the weight of the evidence supports the conclusions that media violence contributes to crime levels but in a relative sense the effect may not be large and it may not be independent of other causal agents. Moreover, it's probably somewhat simplistic to speak of a media effect, as though only one type of effect is likely or possible. The effects which do exist in the real world, I think, are subtle and complicated and not at all gross or obvious.*⁵²

Professor Eileen Saunders, School of Journalism and Communications, Carleton University, who briefed Committee members on the major problems in our knowledge of television violence, also referred to the limitations of the scientific evidence: