

Violent Movies Give Offender a “Taste for Blood”

36-year-old Luke Woods appeared in Downing Centre District [Courthouse in Sydney](#) this week charged with attempted murder after allegedly attacking a 71-year-old taxi driver, stabbing him 13 times.

The driver, Neal Kent, sustained wounds to his head, shoulders and hands and is fortunate to have survived the attack. He now needs a walking frame to move around. Woods quickly admitted responsibility for the crime, saying that he drank 12 beers and watched six horror movies before getting into the taxi.

[He told police](#) that the violent movies “give me the taste for blood”, and that films like Texas Chain Massacre make him feel like murdering someone.

The court was shown a video of his police interview on Monday, with [Woods stating](#) that “I had the taste for killing, more killing.”

Woods is pleading guilty to “wounding with intent to cause grievous bodily harm” but he also faces charges of attempted murder.

Although Woods’ trial is still ongoing, it raises the question of whether violent movies and video games lead to the commission of violent crimes.

The purported link

There have been several violent crimes over the years which have been reportedly influenced, at least in part, by events contained in movies, games and books. In the US, violent media has been linked to the Sandy Hook massacre, and more recently, to the tragic Charleston Church shooting.

One proponent of this view is an American preacher, Rev. Franklin Graham, who has repeatedly spoken out against the “[constant stream of violence](#)” that appears in Hollywood movies, believing that they are directly linked to violent attacks.

But is there any evidence to back up such claims?

In-depth studies which have examined the purported link have actually found that despite a large and popular market for violent games and movies, violent crime has gone down.

And just last year, [one long-term US study](#) suggested that there is no link at all. It criticised the methodology of previous studies which had suggested a link between violent video games and real-life crimes. The study looked at the correlation of violent films and crimes from 1920 up to 2005. It found that the expansion of the market for violent games and movies coincided with a drop in the levels of societal violence.

Violent crime in NSW has been similarly decreasing over the past several years, despite the fact that a significant portion of adolescents play graphic video games.

Another [US study](#) found that when popular films are released, violence decreased around the evening and weekend hours of the film’s release, suggesting that those who may otherwise have perpetrated crime are instead watching it on screen at the movies.

More to the story

In the case of Woods, it appears that there was much more at play than watching violent films. He suffers from an intellectual disability, and had set out to commit an offence on the night in question because he wanted help. Woods told police that he was drunk and angry with the world well before he attacked Neal Kent, and was now “sorry for poor Mr Kent”.

He had struggled with mental illness, homelessness and self-harm before deciding to break the law in order to be put in a mental facility, believing it will be “better for everyone, including myself”.

Despite this, the case of Woods will undoubtedly be used by some to further bolster the argument that violence on the computer or TV fuels real life attacks.