At The Movies: The Impact of Sensory-Friendly Movies

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In 2007 Meaghen Ross, a seven year old girl with Down Syndrome, was asked to leave a movie theater because she clapped her hands and started moving around a good deal when her favorite actor appeared on the screen. Her mother, Marianne Ross, subsequently helped to start sensory-friendly movie showings. The purpose of this study is to gauge the impact of a sensory-friendly movie theater experiences on families who attend. Some movie theaters have started offering G-rated movie showings with accommodations such as lower volume, higher lighting, and the permission for movement or talking. These showings are open to anyone, but especially promoted for those with sensory sensitivity. After a review of the literature, I created an online, Likert scale survey using Goggle Forms for adults to complete regarding their perceptions of their children's enjoyment, as well as their own enjoyment, in the altered showings versus their enjoyment in non-altered showings. After verifying age and giving informed consent, participants clicked a button to progress to the questionnaire. This questionnaire was circulated via Facebook groups for autism spectrum support or sensory-sensitive movie interests. I accepted anonymous responses beginning 10/27/2015 after receiving IRB approval. The data indicated statistically significant differences in enjoyment levels between sensory-sensitive movies and standard movies for children and to an even greater degree, their parents. When analyzing specific reported behaviors of the children, the data indicated a statistically significant difference in peer interaction among children in sensory friendly movies and standard movies.

Awards Won: