

THE PRO'S AND CON'S OF VIOLENCE ON TELEVISION
AND ITS EFFECTS ON CHILDREN

by

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A THESIS

Approved:



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ABSTRACT

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Purpose

The purpose of this thesis was to determine whether or not the portrayal or depiction of violence on television acts as a go-ahead signal in stimulating aggressive impulses and criminal behavior upon preadolescent and adolescent children, who are often the principal viewers of such programs.

Methods

The methods used in this study were: (1) the collection of available research evidence from the psychological, sociological, and criminological fields of reference; (2) the division of this information into two specific areas of argument; and, (3) the assimilation of the major arguments from these specific areas of arguments toward a conclusion as to whether violence on television influences the behavior of children.

Findings

The experimental studies bearing on the effects of aggressive television entertainment content on children support certain conclusions:

1. Violence depicted on television can immediately or shortly thereafter induce mimicking or copying by children.

2. Under certain circumstances, television violence can instigate or incite an increase in aggressive acts.

3. There is evidence that among young children (ages four to six), those most responsive to television violence are those who are highly aggressive to start with--who are prone to engage in spontaneous aggressive actions against their playmates; and, in the case of boys who display pleasure in viewing violence being inflicted upon others. The very young have difficulty comprehending the contextual setting in which violent acts are depicted and do not grasp the meaning of cues or labels concerning the make-believe character of violence episodes in fictional programs.

4. There is evidence that any sequence by which viewing television violence causes aggressive behavior is most likely applicable only to some children who are predisposed in that direction. In other words, only those children who are already preconditioned to aggressive tendencies or have developed a highly aggressive behavior because of certain socio-oriented and culture-oriented factors, are more predisposed toward aggressive behavior.

5. There are suggestions from the literature that the way children respond to violent film material is affected by the context in which it is presented. Such elements as parental explanations, the favorable or unfavorable outcome

of the violence, and whether it is seen as fantasy or reality may make a difference. Generalizations about all violent content are likely to be misleading.

Although this study indicates various significant arguments from both fields of reference concerning the effects of violence on television on children's behavior, a specific, direct conclusion is impossible due to the lack of evidence predisposed in one specific argument. More research and evidence is needed to find out if children are predisposed in the direction of violent behavior due to the viewing of violence on television.

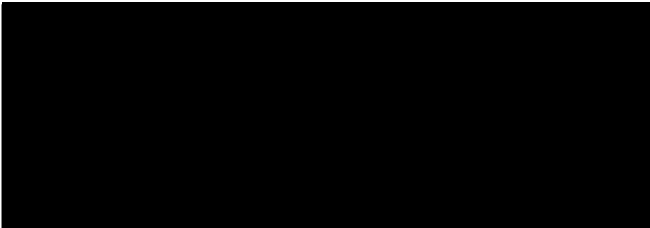


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CHAPTER I

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM AND OVERVIEW OF HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF VIOLENCE ON TELEVISION

Statement of Problem

Television offers a remarkable variety of program content including news, sports, music, drama, politics, education, discussion programs, and worship services; of which some or all might have a special interest to the various age groups in society. Also, it is taken for granted that television programming is on the whole consonant with moral interests and values ("Television and Growing Up: The Impact of Televised Violence," 1972, p. 68). Indeed, if it were not, it could not survive, since it is dependent on voluntary audiences.

However, the fact that young children, who represent a majority of the television audience, extensively view television, raises important questions about the role this medium plays in the child's life. Television can be a major force in teaching the child about the complexities of the world around him. Indeed, some producers of television drama claim that they attempt to depict many aspects of life--its problems, happiness and joy, sadness and violence. Also, television producers have asserted that television increases children's vocabularies and extends their horizons.

At the same time though, while most people recognize

television's potential for providing the child with a broad range of experiences, there is much concern about the possible harmful effects of television entertainment on a child's emotional behavior. This concern focuses on the possibility that particular aspects of television viewing, such as real and fictional portrayals of violence, will overstimulate the child, lead to disturbed sleep and nightmares, or incite the child to aggressive or delinquent behavior.

Because of the potential harmful effects television entertainment may have on a child's emotional behavior, it is the purpose of this study to see if in fact, violence on television influences the behavior of children. Arguments will be presented in the second and third chapters elaborating on the pro's and con's concerning violence on television in an attempt to clarify the two different positions certain individuals or groups have taken. In the following paragraphs a summary of the historical development of criticisms concerning violence on television will be presented.

Historical Development of Criticisms of Violence in the Mass Media

Since the first experimental television program was sent by wire between New York and Washington by the Bell Telephone Laboratories in 1927 ("ABC's of Radio and Television," 1972, p. 9), television in the United States has grown to the extent that 96 per cent of all American households own at least one television set and receive at least two television

channels today ("Television and Growing Up: The Impact of Televised Violence," 1972, p. 69). With the emergence of UHF and of cable systems, television promises further extension of program and channel alternatives.

Following the first television program in 1927, television basically remained in the drawing room. The cinema and radio provided ample entertainment at this time, and were steadily growing in popularity. Television, although it was conceivable as another form of entertainment by its inventors, was not foreseeable in the near future because of the expense involved.

Then, in the mid 1940's to the mid 1950's, television started to gain popularity throughout the United States. The economy was in good condition, and the people were looking for a more leisure type of entertainment. Radio programs, still the major source of entertainment, were losing popularity to television, as well as the cinema. People were able to spend a quiet, relaxing night at home watching their favorite actors and shows on television. Shows like "The Jack Benny Show," "The Milton Berle Show," "The Phil Silvers Show," "I Love Lucy," "The Lone Ranger," and countless others, captivated the viewing audience.

However, in the late 1950's, a concerned and critical public began to level criticisms about violence on television, and how it was effecting their children and themselves. Previously, these same identical accusations had been earlier

leveled against both radio and the cinema, as is prevalent in this quotation:

The charges which have been raised about television closely resemble those which in former times have been raised in turn against each of the other media as it has mounted in popularity with both adults and children [Larsen, 1968, p. 15].

Ironically, it seems as if no aspect of the mass media has been able to escape the numerous criticisms leveled at them at various points in time. For instance, in 1930, just as radio programs and the cinema were gaining popularity, concerned individuals began the first important research work concerning violence on and in these two areas of the mass media. Such radio programs as "Gangbusters," "Captain Midnight," "Jack Armstrong," and "The Lone Ranger," not to mention broadcasts such as Orson Welles' "Invasion from Mars" (Feshbach; Singer, 1971, p. 2), were criticized as portraying too much violence, according to a concerned and critical public and the research of the Payne Fund Studies of 1930. The following statement, derived from the context of the Payne Fund Studies, included the general feeling of a concerned and critical public at that time:

The preoccupation with social reform expressed itself in an interest in such symptoms of social disorganization as mental illness, family conflict, juvenile delinquency, and crime. Scholars concerned with the influence of the mass media on young people tended to fit the problem into this context: the cinema and the radio were considered like slums, to be a bursting-ground of social disturbance [Glucksmann, 1971, p. 14].

Then, in the late 1950's and early 1960's, the concerned public leveled criticism at television programming. Besides

the usual violent westerns, new shows such as "Sunset Strip," "Combat," "The Untouchables," "Perry Mason," "The Green Hornet," "Batman," "Alfred Hitchcock Hour," and others ("Television, Violence and the Broadcaster," 1972, p. 2), were presented by the three major television networks. In most cases these shows were at first accepted by the concerned public, but it did not take long before efforts began to ban these shows because they offered too much violence.

Oftentimes, because of the value clusters present in American society, a critic was not able to automatically muster support for his complaints about the portrayal of violence in the mass media. One of these value clusters was the traditional aversion that Americans hold toward censorship and restriction of free expression. Another is a deep cultural commitment to violence extending back to frontier days (Larsen, 1968, p. 148).

Throughout our history a great deal of violent behavior has been positively sanctioned. Many occupations allow for and even require the use of violence. Beyond that, there are indications of an abiding public fascination with violence all around us, as witnessed in the popularity of certain sports, the booming Christmas sales of toy weapons ranging from gun-shaped teething rings to simulated atom bombs, and the continued attraction of both real and fictional accounts of war and crime (Larsen, 1968, p. 148). While the mass media may enhance the appetite for such materials, any

would be critic must ultimately come to recognize that such an appetite is rooted much deeper in American experience, if not in human nature. At the same time it may be acknowledged that the presence of other value clusters, for instance, concern for the welfare of children, provides a counterbalancing context receptive to criticism directed toward mass media violence.

Current public concern about violence on television has broadened. On any typical night during prime time, it is not uncommon for the general public to view four or five hour-long violent oriented programs. Besides regular scheduled programs, the various networks also offer recent motion pictures of which many have a violent content. In October, 1973, the movie entitled "Fuzz" starring Burt Reynolds, acted as a catalyst to the concerned public to keep violent movies and programs off of the air. In a certain segment of this film, an individual was doused with gasoline and set afire all to the laughter of the individual's attackers ("Hearings Before the Subcommittee on Communications of the Committee on Commerce, United States Senate," 1974, p. 26). Only one day following the televising of this movie, separate instances occurred both in New York City and Boston where a lady and man were attacked, doused with gasoline, and set afire by groups of young individuals. Unfortunately these victims died. These incidents were then attributed to this movie and a public clamor arose demanding the ban of all violent

television programming.

Besides violent movies, such violent programs as "Police Story," "Adam-12," "Police Woman," and "Columbo," which are shown on NBC; "Kojak," "Mannix," "Gunsmoke," "Hawaii Five-O," "Manhunter," "Planet of the Apes," and "Cannon," which are shown on CBS; and "The Rookies," "Get Christi Love," "The Night Stalker," "Kung Fu," and "The Streets of San Francisco," which are shown on ABC (list of shows taken from Houston Chronicle TV Chronolog, for week November 10, 1974 to November 16, 1974); are all offered as prime time viewing. These shows are often explicit in details of death by various weapons, and are in effect, offering the knowledge to children of how to commit murder or various delinquent acts. Besides the violence in these programs, often the plot of the program offers various ideas as to how to commit a perfect crime. Police stations across the nation have verified various criminal offenses such as robbery, burglary, and breaking and entering, as following certain scripts that had been previously shown on television (article from Houston Chronicle, September 18, 1974, p. 18).

Due to this increase in violence on television, various groups of concerned citizens, such as N.O.W., the National Organization for Women, VIOLENT, Admen Against TV Violence, and others, have waged an almost all-out war against the major television networks in their effort to end violent programs on television. Because of this great importance, the

government has also begun hearings to question the legitimacy of the concerned public's pleas. Senator John O. Pastore of Rhode Island, was appointed chairman of the Subcommittee on Communications of the Committee on Commerce in 1970, to see if, in fact, violence on television does or does not influence the behavior of children. Excerpts of these hearings will be included in the remaining chapters of this study, as the hearings offer both contrary and supportive arguments concerning violence on television.

Criticism of television is inevitable. However, what is actually meant by violence and what type of violence are these critics criticizing? The world does not appear to children as it does to adults; consequently, adults do not perceive the same thing in a television program as children do. The adult watching fairy stories will not take the fictional characters seriously; the young child probably will, because he believes that he is seeing real people. Children do not respond uniformly; some children may be frightened, others amused, and others totally unimpressed by the same stimulus. Moreover, what frightens and disturbs an adult may not produce the same reaction from a child. For example, death on the screen will elicit quite different reactions from the adult and the child and, similarly, aggressive action is likely to evoke different responses (Larsen, 1968, p. 148).

Some individuals who are opposed to the repeated depiction of violence on television are not concerned chiefly

with the possibility that the viewer will himself go out and shoot a neighbor or that the child who enjoys "Batman" will kick the family dog. Many critics of what they consider excessive programming of violence are well aware of the social constraints which usually keep children and adults alike from injuring each other often or seriously. They are more concerned with the attitudes which television may be inculcating and the emotional responses which it may be engendering (Feshbach; Singer, 1971, p. 18). Specifically, critics point to the fact that most television programs involving violence include a good guy or guys who, in the name of "my" country, "our" side, or law and order, inflict injury or death on the bad guys. Such programs, they feel, inculcate attitudes to the effect that it is alright for "our" sheriffs, "our" policemen, "our" detectives, "our" generals, "our" submarines and spaceships to injure and kill anyone labeled bad or not on "our" side. The messages seem to be that violence is the best method for fighting violence and that aggression is justified if used against people considered to be deserving of punishment. Ironically, the person or group to be demolished is usually designated as the aggressor (Feshbach; Singer, 1971, p. 18).

Definition of Terms

The problem of the dangerous effects of television on both adult and child viewers pre-supposes that one has some criteria of "danger." Thus, what are the criteria that

establishes the definition of violence in real life? For all practical purposes, the definition of violence in real life, which will be used throughout the remainder of this report, is: "the overt expression of physical force against others or self, of the compelling of action against one's will or pain of being hurt or killed" ["Television and Growing Up: The Impact of Televised Violence," 1972, p. 5].

As it is in life, violence on television is complex and one must be careful to distinguish its categories. There is the real violence of the real world, reported in news programs and documentaries. This evidence is clearly different from the fictional varieties. First, there is the violence of real situations realistically depicted as part of substantial dreams and, second, the clearly unreal symbolic violence which is used as part of entertainment and which is called, in Sir Julian Huxley's terms, "ritualized violence," or "fantasy violence." (Television, Violence and the Broadcaster," 1972, p. 6). Whichever term is used, it refers to the symbolic stylized type which is substituted for the real thing.

Summary and Limitations of Study

In conclusion, criticism of violence on television as well as mass media as a whole is diffuse. No one argument has been adopted by all proponents concerning this topic. Oftentimes, one of the immediate results of criticisms about violence on television has been the polarization of concern

about such content. The body of relevant arguments is mainly then, a compendium of lines of protest and defense, claims and counterclaims, and charges and denials. Thus, no attempt will be made to draw a specific conclusion from the material presented in this study. There are still too many questions to be answered; thus, further research is required.

However, it is the purpose of this study to review both arguments for and against the conception that violence on television influences the behavior of children. The following two chapters will involve a detailed summary of the more recent literature and ideas concerning this topic, with the last chapter giving a detailed, conclusive summary of the best supported and stated arguments. It is of the utmost importance then, that some conclusions about the effects of violence on television on the behavior of children are formulated. In the following excerpt of a letter dated March 5, 1969, to Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare Robert Finch, from Senator John O. Pastore of Rhode Island, the concern about violence on television and its effects on children can be evidenced greatly as he states:

I am exceedingly troubled by the lack of any definitive information which would help resolve the question of whether there is a causal connection between televised crime and violence and antisocial behavior by individuals, especially children. ...I am respectfully requesting that you direct the Surgeon General to appoint a committee comprised of distinguished men and women from whatever professions and disciplines deemed appropriate to devise techniques and to conduct a study under his supervision using those techniques which will establish scientifically insofar as possible what harmful effects, if any, these programs have on children ["Television and Growing Up: The Impact of Televised Violence," 1972, p. 1].

CHAPTER II

ARGUMENTS STATING THAT VIOLENCE ON TELEVISION DOES INFLUENCE THE BEHAVIOR OF CHILDREN

Introduction

The fact that young children extensively view television raises important questions about the role this medium plays in the child's life. Television can be a major force in teaching the child about the complexities of the world around him. Indeed, some producers of television drama claim that they attempt to depict many aspects of life--its problems, happiness and joy, sadness and violence. However, while most people recognize television's potential for providing the child with a broad range of experiences, there is much concern about the possible harmful effects of television entertainment ("Television and Growing Up: The Impact of Televised Violence," 1972, p. 99). This concern by both scientifically oriented individuals and by public interest groups, centers around the possible general effects television may have on the child's intellectual and emotional life and also television's more specific impact on the child's aggressive behavior. Thus, in order to evaluate the existing literature concerning the premise that violence on television does influence the behavior of children, both empirical evidence from the scientific research field and evidence from various public interest groups, will be reviewed. The first

section of this paper will summarize the relevant empirical literature that has been identified with the concept known as imitation. The second section will deal with the concept known as instigation. Finally, the third section of this chapter will summarize the basic criticisms of television violence, which have been leveled by various public interest groups.

Imitation of Media Violence

A child may acquire a new item of behavior through attentive observation. Rehearsal or practice of this skill increases his competence. If the initial attempts are rewarded or encouraged, the child is likely to continue to perform the newly acquired behavior. Observation, imitation, then practice, is a common sequence through which new behaviors enter the child's repertoire (Larsen, 1968, p. 41).

Throughout human history, very young children have been able to learn from imitating the behavior of others in their presence. These others might be members of the household, specifically a mother or father; friends of the family, particularly older children of a specific family; neighbors, playmates, teachers, priests, and so on. With the advent of the modern pictorial media of communication, children can now also see the behavior of individuals who are not personally present but whose images are conveyed via television. The use of the term "models" for individuals whose behavior

children can observe and thus imitate will be used, whether these individuals are personally in the child's presence or are observed by him on television.

Besides public clamor for the banning of violent programs on television, psychologists and sociologists alike have been also concerned with the amount of aggression and violence available to children in the mass media, oftentimes, before there was any movements by the concerned public to limit violent episodes on television. Because of the possibility that youngsters will imitate this aggression in their own behavior, many experiments have studied children's copying of aggressive behavior. Typically in these experiments, one film shows distinctive and novel aggressive behaviors, while another film does not feature aggressive behavior. The different children who watch the two films are then compared for their aggressive behaviors in sessions conducted after the showing of films. Careful records are then made of the acts which do or do not mimic the distinctive aggressive behaviors just displayed in one of the films but not the other.

One of the early pioneers in studies of this sort was Albert Bandura. In order to evaluate the impact of televised aggression on preschool children, Bandura and his colleagues designed a series of experiments to test the extent to which children would copy aggressive patterns of behavior, when these patterns were shown by adult models in three different situations: in real life, on films and as cartoon characters

on film (Larsen, 1968, p. 124).

The first group of subjects observed real life adults. An experimenter brought the children, one by one, into a test room. In one corner, the child found a set of play materials, in another corner, he saw an adult sitting quietly with a set of tinker toys, a large inflated Bobo doll and a mallet. Soon after the child started to play with the toys, the adult model began attacking the Bobo doll in ways that children rarely would. The second group of subjects saw a movie of the adult model beating up the Bobo doll. The third group of subjects watched a movie--projected through a television console--in which the adult attacking the doll was costumed as a cartoon cat. The final group of subjects witnessed no aggressive models, serving only as a control group in the experiment. This group gave Bandura a basis of standard behavior to compare with the actions of the groups who were exposed to the aggressive models (Larsen, 1968, p. 125).

At the end of ten minutes, the experimenter took each child to an observation room, where the child's immediate behavior was recorded by Bandura's staff. Before entering the room though, each child was mildly annoyed by a member of the staff. Within the observation room, a variety of toys, which could either be used to express aggression or nonaggression, were found by the child (Larsen, 1968, p. 125).

From this experiment, Bandura was then able to draw three highly significant conclusions concerning the ability of

a child to imitate another, especially if the other is portrayed as an aggressive model. First of all, Bandura and his staff found that the experience tends to reduce the child's inhibitions against acting in a violent, aggressive manner. Secondly, the experience helps to shape the form of the child's aggressive behavior. In Bandura's observations, most of the children acted similarly to the adult models who had attacked the Bobo doll. Oftentimes they even repeated what the adult model had said during his aggressive attack on the doll. The final conclusion, that Bandura and his staff proposed, was that a person displaying violence on film is as influential as one displaying it in real life (Larsen, 1968, p. 126). The children were not too inclined to give precise imitations of the cartoon characters, but many of them behaved like carbon copies of both real-life and film models. Thus, from these findings, Bandura and his associates concluded that televised models are important sources of social behavior and can no longer be ignored as influences on personality development. In other words, the results of Bandura's experiment leaves little doubt that exposure to violence heightens aggressive tendencies in children.

Although Bandura found that television viewing of aggressive action does influence the behavior of children to the point where they imitate the violent action, he cautions the research field by stating that a child who watches violence on television is not necessarily going to attack the first

person he sees. But if the child is provoked enough on some future occasion, he may very well copy aggressive patterns of behavior that he has learned from television or any other pictorial medium (Larsen, 1968, p. 126).

Criticism though, of Bandura's experiment by other social scientists has been rather critical of the way the experiment was designed and also of the value of its conclusions. Even Dr. Frederick Wertham, a vehement proponent of the view that television violence is harmful to children, states the following concerning Bandura's experimental design and conclusions:

...Even if they want to, children cannot tell you whether or how much they have been influenced. Artificially set-up experiments to measure aggression are not adequate either, because children are not rats. Moreover the immediate effects after seeing a show are relatively insignificant compared with the important long-range consequences ["Television, Violence and the Broadcaster," 1972, p. 11].

Another experimental psychologist, Leonard Berkowitz of the University of Wisconsin, points to the shortcomings in Bandura's approach to his study:

If we were to extrapolate freely from some of these studies such as the experiment by Bandura, we might expect to find definite delinquent trends among ardent television and movie-viewing children... . Survey research, in contrast to anecdotal case histories, however, has failed to uncover any evidence that television and films cause persistent aggressive lawlessness ["Television, Violence and the Broadcaster," 1972, p. 11].

Thus, although Bandura's experimental design, methodology, and conclusions have been questioned by other social scientists, he still has brought forth a major point

in regards to the premise that violence on television does influence children's behavior. This major point then, is that children will and oftentimes imitate the behavior of another individual who they have known or would aspire to be like, or have identified themselves with by witnessing the individual on either television or in real life.

Besides Bandura's 1961 experiment, many psychologists in the United States and abroad have conducted similar experiments, of which there are now more than twenty different published experiments, concerned with children's imitation of filmed aggression shown on both cinema or television screens (See Appendix A for relevant experiments in this area). All of these studies demonstrate that young children can, and under some circumstances do, imitate what they observe on television or in films.

A recent example depicting these findings involved the hanging death of a fourteen-year-old Colgary, Alberta youth. According to the youth's parents, the boy had been watching a rock concert on television, where rock music star Alice Cooper performed a mock hanging of himself during one of his songs. The youth had told his sister that the hanging was just a trick and he could do it himself. His body was found later, hanging by a cloth belt in his bedroom closet. A pathologist, Dr. John Butt, ruled out the possibility of suicide and said the boy apparently was indulging in a fad (Houston Chronicle article released by Associated Press, October

15, 1974, Section 1, p. 18). However, whether children actually do imitate depends on many factors, including inhibition, social pressures, and socially approved role models.

Many other experiments show children's imitation of other kinds of behavior. Some of these show copying of film-mediated behavior, while others show mimicking of a live person. These experiments support the findings of many studies directly concerned with aggression. Psychologists generally consider quite convincingly the evidence that children can readily learn many kinds of behavior, including aggressive actions, by attentively watching those behaviors being modeled by persons in their presence, on film, or on television. In this vein, after reviewing the literature, Weiss pointed out that "...there is little doubt that, by displaying forms of aggression or modes of criminal and violent behavior, the media are 'teaching' and people are 'learning'" ["Television and Growing Up: The Impact of Televised Violence," 1972, p. 103].

Media Instigation of Aggressive Behavior

Previously, the concept of imitation was discussed as one pattern whereby children portray various acts on television or in real life. However, the concept of instigation, which has been put forth by current research, has become crucial as researchers search for a precise understanding of the

influence television may exert on the behavior of children. In this section then, the findings of recent research which bear on the issue of television's role in stimulating and instigating antisocial aggressive behavior in children, will be reviewed.

During the past decade, a large number of studies have examined television's role in facilitating or encouraging aggressive behavior. Many of these studies dealt with aggression in children; while another sizable group focused on the aggressive behavior of older youth and adults. The results of almost thirty previously published experiments have been widely interpreted as supporting the hypotheses, of both researchers and the concerned public, that children or adults who view violence in either films or television programs are more likely to behave in an aggressive or violent manner than those who do not view such fare (Baker and Ball, 1969).

Five such reports in this research program focus on television's role in the instigation of aggressive behavior: Stein and Friedrich (1971); Feshbach (1971); Liebert and Baron (1971); Ekman, et al. (1971), and Leifer and Roberts (1971) (See Appendix B for brief descriptions of these reports). The ten separate studies reported by these authors differ in terms of the subjects and specific research procedures. However, the general research paradigm is similar in each study. The typical procedure is to show one group of children violent oriented films or television programs, while a control group

views relatively nonviolent material. Each child is then placed in a setting where his behavior is observed. The specific types of aggressive behavior differed from one study to another, and were not restricted to the mimicking or copying of what had just been observed. The child's aggressive behavior after watching the television program can be quite different in quality and character from the aggressive or violent behavior displayed in the television program (Television and Growing Up: The Impact of Televised Violence," 1972, p. 106). Thus, the results of the majority of these studies, share the conclusion that viewing violence increases the likelihood that some viewers will behave aggressively immediately or shortly thereafter.

In one of the aforementioned studies by Liebert and Baron (1971), the above stated conclusion is well demonstrated. In this particular study, Liebert and Baron presented children with an opportunity to either help or hurt another child after they had viewed either an aggressive or a nonaggressive segment of television programming. The experiment was carried out with sixty-eight boys and sixty-eight girls at two age levels--five and six year olds and eight and nine year olds. Each child individually viewed a six and one-half minute "program." The "aggressive" program included three and one-half minutes of "The Untouchables," preceded and followed by commercials; the "control" program consisted of a three and one-half minute track race film with the same commercials.

Then, so that aggressive behavior could be measured, each viewer was told that a child was playing a game in another room and that he could either help the other child or hurt him and prevent him from winning the game. The hurtful act consisted of pressing a button which the subject was told would make the handle of a game that the "other" child was playing become very hot and hard to turn. The helpful act consisted of pressing another button which he was told would make the handle very easy to turn and allow the other child to win more prizes. The experimenter emphasized that the longer the child pushed on the "help" button, the more the other child was helped, and that the longer the child pushed the "hurt" button, the more he hurt the other child. This procedure then, provided several measures of interpersonal aggression in terms of duration, frequency, and latency of hurting responses. An additional postviewing behavior, used by Liebert and Baron, was the amount of aggression observed in a free play situation--specifically, play with nonaggressive or aggressive toys (Liebert and Baron, 1971).

The results of this study indicated that, in both age groups, children who viewed the televised aggressive episode demonstrated a greater willingness to engage in interpersonal aggression against an ostensible child victim. The five and six year old children who viewed the "Untouchables" episode aggressed sooner and for a longer time than those who viewed the track race episode. For the eight and nine year old

children, the results also showed a significantly longer duration of aggressive responses than the equivalent control group. However, this age group did not instigate aggressive behavior any sooner than the younger age group. Thus, the results can again be noted that the children who viewed the televised violence episode subsequently showed more aggressive play than those children in the control situation. In these instances, younger boys were the most likely to behave aggressively (Liebert and Baron, 1971).

Additional analysis of Liebert and Baron's 1971 study by Ekman, et al., in an analysis of the behavior of these same children, suggested that subsequent behavior is related to the child's reaction during viewing. Boys aged five and six whose facial expressions were judged to display such positive emotions as pleasure, happiness, interest, or involvement while viewing televised violence were more likely to engage in more intense interpersonal aggression and less likely to make helping responses than boys whose facial expressions indicated displeasure or disinterest in such fare. In addition, reactions judged to display happiness while viewing violence were positively related to aggressive play. However, this relationship between emotional reactions while viewing and subsequent aggressive behavior was not found for girls at ages five and six ("Television and Growing Up: The Impact of Televised Violence," 1972, p. 114).

In another study, Feshbach (1971) provided evidence

that an effective moderating influence may arise from the way televised violence is labeled. His findings support the hypothesis that being told about the reality or fantasy character of acts depicted on television will influence the subsequent behavior of the viewers. Forty boys and girls, between nine and eleven years of age, viewed a six-minute film of a campus riot; the film was composed of both newsreel clips and segments of a Hollywood movie. On a random basis, half the children were told that the film was an NBC newsreel; the other children were informed that this was a film made in a Hollywood studio. After viewing this film, each child was required to play a guessing game with an adult, responding to the adult's errors by pressing buttons which allegedly caused noises of various degrees of loudness in the earphones the adult was wearing ("Television and Growing Up: The Impact of Televised Violence," 1972, p. 116).

The results of this study indicated that, among the children who saw the riot film, those who were told that the violence was real subsequently produced louder noises in the laboratory game than those who were told that the violence was make-believe. On the other hand, the response level of children who viewed the fantasy aggressive program was actually lower than that of children who did not view an aggressive program ("Television and Growing Up: The Impact of Televised Violence," 1972, p. 117).

If positive findings are confirmed in subsequent

studies, one would expect that when a program is clearly labeled as fiction, young viewers will react to it in a different way than if they are led to believe that the program is showing real events. However, it should be noted that Feshbach's results pertain to the behavior of children at an age when the labeling of a program, as either fiction or reality, can be clearly understood. It is not clear that the young child consistently perceives television entertainment programs to be fantasy.

Another proponent of the premise that violence on television does influence the behavior of children, is Dr. George Gerbner, Professor and Dean of the Annenberg School of Communications, at the University of Pennsylvania. Dr. Gerbner, in reporting before the Subcommittee on Communications concerning Violence on Television, showed the development of the Violence Profile which is an objective, reliable, and multidimensional indicator of violence in network television drama and of some correlates between television viewing and audience conceptions of reality ("Hearings Before the Subcommittee on Communications of the Committee on Commerce, United States Senate," 1974, p. 42). The Violence Profile, according to Dr. Gerbner, consists of a coded and computerized workup of 618 programs, 1,580 leading and 4,210 minor characters and 2,022 violent episodes on which to base a continuing and cumulative analysis of television trends and effects ("Hearings Before the Subcommittee on Communications of the Committee on

Commerce, United States Senate," 1974, p. 57). In explaining what the Violence Profile actually does, Dr. Gerbner states that the Profile consists of four components. First of all, there is the set of indicators of trends in program types and themes that provide a context for a violence index. Secondly, there is a set of indicators of the social relationships involved in violence, namely, who tend to be the violentists and who tend to be the victims. Thirdly, there is a measure of basic social relationships involved in violence which he calls Risk Ratios. Dr. Gerbner, by naming the kinds of violence as well as the level of violence as risk ratios, believes that basically these risk ratios come to different assumptions about the risks of life for different people, different ages, children, adults, and in fact men, women, and other groups in our population. The final component is called the cultivation differential. It is a measure of the effects of violence in terms of the differences between heavy viewers and light viewers, conceptions of relevant material ("Hearings Before the Subcommittee on Communications of the Committee on Commerce, United States Senate," 1974, pp. 42-43).

Dr. Gerbner, in his past seven years of study of television programming with the Violence Profile, states that as far as all programs are concerned, a decline in violent characterizations and in killings has taken place since 1967, but not in the percent of programs containing violence or in the rates of violent episodes. He further states that a

continuity of violent programs on television shown one right after another, may cause various effects on the viewer. One predominant effect is an increase in the aggressive behavior of the viewer. Another effect of violent programming concerns no effect on the behavior of the viewer. A final effect, which has been derived from Gerbner's idea of a risk ratio, is not only that the repetitive pattern of television programs have a cultivating effect, but also that the high frequency and repetitive pattern is more likely to present stereotyped views and stereotyped kinds of violence in which certain kinds of people are more likely to be victims than other kinds of people ("Hearings Before the Subcommittee on Communications of the Committee on Commerce, United States Senate," 1974, pp. 51-55).

Evidence from Public Interest Groups

Most people are not particularly critical of mass media content. The ongoing routines of daily life do not ordinarily include concerted efforts to evaluate and criticize how the mass media brings the world of reality and fantasy to the household. In fact, exposure to the mass media gets to be a deeply ingrained habit, the selective features of which tend to reinforce satisfaction more than they stir complaint.

However, displeasure with media performance, particularly television, nonetheless does arise. When it does, the complaints and criticisms about violence on television are

varied and are based upon aesthetic, moral, pedagogic, and political arguments. Oftentimes, one of the immediate results of criticisms about violence on television has been the polarization of concern about such content. The body of relevant arguments is mainly a compendium of lines of protest and defense, claims and counterclaims, and charges and denials. Most criticisms, however, at least those of the concerned and critical public seem to converge in one basic argument: "...simply that there is too much violence on television: [Glucksmann, 1971, p. 15].

The purpose then, of this final section is to identify some of the stronger arguments that have been labeled by various public interest groups against television violence. Of the arguments that have been leveled against television violence, four main arguments have evolved and will be discussed in this section. Also, a brief scenario of various public interest group's efforts as well as various individual's efforts will be reviewed according to their arguments.

The first major argument leveled by these anti-television violence interest groups states that because of a steady diet of violence on television, children are becoming more violently inclined and overtly aggressive. Various individuals and public interest groups point out that children are becoming more delinquent, and their actions criminal. The presumption is that children learn techniques or methods of violence which would otherwise not come to their attention.

For example a child may learn how to use a knife in a fight, how to pull a trigger on a gun or how to hang someone by seeing it on television.

Coinciding with this same argument, critics have also claimed that many programs have a general arousing effect which makes violence more probable. One possibility of this claim involves scenes of violence which are simply exciting; they raise tension levels and attendant rates of activity. Thus, an active child is more likely to hurt someone than is a quiet one. Among the many behavioral tendencies aroused in this process, some are certain to be aggressive (Bandura and Walters, 1963).

Dr. Frederick Wertham, who is a vehement proponent of the anti-television violence interest group, states that a comparison can be made between the number of murders committed by children under fourteen and the hours spent viewing television today, and the number of murders committed by children fifteen years ago, and the amount of television watched. Dr. Wertham states that the murder rate has definitely increased in the past fifteen years along with the time spent viewing television. In addition, many of the murders committed by children under fourteen now show more brutality and cruelty as compared to those fifteen years ago (Larsen, 1968, p. 36). Whether violence on television influences the behavior of children or not, Wertham states that continuous exposure of children's minds to scenes of

crime and brutality has had a deeper effect on them than is generally realized. Television in the life of the young is either educational or miseducational, but never in the long run is it neutral. For children, the television screen has become a second reality (Larsen, 1968, p. 38).

Thus, in his effort to explain the effects of television violence on children, Dr. Wertham, along with other public interest groups feels that a definite reduction in television violence is necessary. Whether crime and violence programs arouse a lust for violence, reinforce it when it is present, show a way to carry it out, teach the best method to get away with it, or merely blunt the child's awareness of its wrongness, television has become a school for violence.

Another public interest group which has also expressed the argument that children are becoming more violently inclined and overtly aggressive, are the Admen Against TV Violence ("Television, Violence and the Broadcaster," 1972, p. 2). In an effort to reduce violence on television programming, this group, which is composed of various established advertising agency organizations, has declined to sponsor any violent oriented programs. Their action then, threatens the likelihood of a television network's attempt to air a program. Without advertising, a network is unable to bring various programs to the television audience. Thus, by declining to sponsor any violent-oriented programs, the Admen Against TV Violence, hope to reduce the level of violence and amount of violent programs

offered on television.

Thus, the idea that children are becoming more violently inclined because of a steady diet of television definitely merits attention. The level of violence and criminal actions committed by juveniles and children has definitely increased. At the same time, the level of violence on television and the number of violent-oriented programs has also increased. Although various other factors, such as environmental conditions, family relationships, and mental capabilities, have been distinguished by criminologists as possible factors in leading an individual to delinquent or criminal habits; television violence also offers another possible factor in leading an individual to criminality as is stated by these public interest groups.

A second major argument, brought forth by various public interest groups, concerns the effects of television viewing on children's other activities (Klapper, 1973, p. 48). For instance, a report to the Federal Communication Commission states that children between the ages of five and fourteen spend more time watching television than any other activity outside of sleep and school (Larsen, 1968, p. 41). Coinciding with the findings of this report, numerous parents have noticed both a decline in outdoor playtime activities and homework assignments, particularly in reading, among children who view television extensively. Many teachers have also noticed this decline towards homework assignments and a decrease

in the response level during class because the child stayed up late watching television. Thus, many instructors fear that a diet of television will preclude, or will at least fail to stimulate the development of artistic and intellectual interests among the child audience.

This argument not only includes violent-oriented programs but all television programs. If children are not becoming actively delinquent, they are becoming passively jaded (Larsen, 1968, p. 45). In other words, because of the extensive television viewing by the child, it is feared that a so-called passive orientation to life may be produced in child viewers. The child, in effect, will be no more than a living vegetable dependent on television.

One individual, who has written extensively on the subject of violence on television, is the columnist, Eve Merriam. In an effort to stimulate and inform her followers and audience about violence on television, Eve Merriam has attacked the problem by stating that the people of the United States are teaching their children that violence is fun. She has written numerous articles in various popular home magazines and journals, such as The Ladies Home Journal, in an effort to show the public what television is really offering all children, and what the effects are on children (Larsen, 1968, p. 40). In order to reduce violence on television and the amount of television viewed each year by children, Merriam has suggested that parents carefully select their child's television

programs and also that parents initiate more playtime activities and a greater emphasis and concern for school-work.

Another argument, which is widely critical of violence on television, concerns the various psychological reactions among children following an indiscriminative and prolonged television viewing period. The consensus, by various public interest groups, is that reactions among children, after viewing television extensively, vary from mild anxiety to nightmares; from pulling the covers over their heads to bed-wetting and to insisting on getting into bed with parents for protection (Larsen, 1968, p. 44). In other words, various interest groups state that an overdose of television can, in some instances, be psychologically damaging to a child's mind and actions.

In order to cope with the problem then, such individuals as Frederick Wertham and Thomas J. Dodd, who was the head of the 1964 Senate Subcommittee Hearings on Juvenile Delinquency, and Mary Ann Guitar, another columnist of both women's home journals and world news magazines, have called for a clean-up of all violent television programs and a greater emphasis on parents to restrict and put limits on their children's television viewing (Larsen, 1968, p. 49). Since networks have not cleaned up many of their violent programs, the responsibility must lie with the parents.

The final argument, which has been brought forth by

various public interest groups, particularly parental groups, concerns a child's development of unrealistic and undesirable concepts of what adult life is really like, because of a continual exposure to media material that depicts adults in conflict situations (Klapper, 1973, p. 48). In other words, these interest groups are concerned that a child's perceptions of adult life will become so distorted that a child will not be able to cope with or function properly in a real-life adult situation when he reaches adulthood. Thus, the individual will regress to child-like actions and fantasies that he has ingrained in himself from various television programs.

This problem is a perplexing issue and can only be dealt with mainly by parents themselves. Public interest groups such as all Parent-Teacher Association groups and the National Organization of Women, have initiated activities for children in order to replace this extensive television viewing habit. Undoubtedly, television viewing can not be completely restricted to the child, but at least the type of programs and length of time spent viewing television can be limited, especially by the parents.

In conclusion, the four arguments discussed in this section of Chapter II, were presented so as to provide the reader with an idea of the various arguments from both the empirical and non-empirical fields of reference, that were developed in this chapter. The public interest group arguments represent various authors' opinions, rather than results from

researched experiments. Generally, the opinions of these various individuals and public interest groups coincide with the results of previously stated empirical experiments. The general consensus then, of these authors is that violence on television definitely does influence the behavior and actions of children. Besides a general reduction in the amount of violence presented on television, a reduction or restriction of all television shows by parents for their children is necessary. It is stated by both groups that outside activities are necessary in order for the child to develop normally.

Conclusions

The available experimental evidence bearing on the effects of aggressive television entertainment on children supports certain conclusions. First of all, violence depicted on television can immediately or shortly thereafter induce mimicking or copying by children. Secondly, under certain circumstances television violence can instigate an increase in aggressive acts. The evidence from these studies also indicates that televised violence may lead to increased behavior in certain subgroups of children, who might constitute a small portion or a substantial portion of the total population of young television viewers. The research studies reviewed in this chapter also tell something about the characteristics of those children who are most likely to display an increase in aggressive behavior after exposure to televised violence. There is evidence that among young children, approximately four

to six year olds, those most responsive to television violence are those who are highly aggressive to start with--who are prone to engage in spontaneous aggressive actions against their playmates and, in the case of boys, who display displeasure in viewing violence being inflicted upon others.

The accumulated evidence of these studies, however, does not warrant the conclusion that televised violence has a uniformly adverse effect nor the conclusion that it has an adverse effect on the majority of children. It cannot even be said that the majority of the children in the various studies reviewed showed an increase in aggressive behavior in response to the violent fare to which they were exposed. Although criticism of violence on television is strong, and that numerous "real" life occurrences have occurred after the televising of some violent programs, and also that a considerable amount of experimental evidence has been brought forth concerning violence on television and its effects on children, a review of the relevant literature and experimental studies, which state that violence on television does not influence the behavior of children, must be undertaken before any conclusions can be made concerning the effect of violence on television on children's behavior. Thus, the next chapter of this report will review the experimental evidence and literature concerning the premise that violence on television does not influence the behavior of children.

CHAPTER III

SUMMARY OF ARGUMENTS STATING THAT VIOLENCE ON TELEVISION DOES NOT INFLUENCE THE BEHAVIOR OF CHILDREN

Introduction

Although the premise that violence on television does influence the behavior of children is considered valid by many, the question still remains as to how much or to what degree the behavior of a child is altered due to excessive television viewing. In essence, are the general effects of televised violence to be regarded as an inhibiting factor in forming and prolonging a child's aggressive behavior or not. Some researchers have expressed different views regarding the often held concept that, in general, televised violence does influence the behavior of children. Thus, the purpose of this chapter is to summarize and interpret the available experimental evidence concerning the premise that violence on television does not influence the behavior of children. The first section of the chapter will summarize the relevant psychological and sociological research experiments. The final section will review the three major network's policies concerning violence on television, as was reported before the Subcommittee on Communications on Violence on Television.

Catharsis

The weight of the experimental evidence from the previous series of studies suggests that viewing filmed

violence on television had a negative effect on some children. However, many of the findings of these studies failed to show any statistically significant effects in either direction, according to some researchers and reviewers who have expressed different views regarding the general effects of televised violence. In order to show that not all televised violence influences a child's behavior to aggressive tendencies, these researchers have, in fact, suggested that viewing televised violence provides an opportunity for the discharge or catharsis of aggressive feelings and thus, reduces the likelihood that the television viewer will engage in aggressive or violent behavior ("Television and Growing Up: The Impact of Televised Violence," 1972, p. 107). In other words, the theory underlying the catharsis hypothesis stipulates that the child who views violence on television vicariously experiences the violence and thereby harmlessly discharges his pent-up anger, hostility, and frustration.

In a 1971 study by Seymour Fechbach and Robert Singer, these authors provided the most comprehensive test of the "catharsis" hypothesis that has been published to date. In this study, the primary objective was to determine the effects of sustained exposure to predominantly aggressive or non-aggressive television content on aggressive values and behaviors. In trying to determine whether sustained exposure to violent episodes on television influenced behavior or not, the authors formulated three hypotheses concerning the possible outcome of

their research. The first hypothesis was that children high in both overt aggression and covert hostility would show a cathartic effect and would show significantly less direct aggression and less fantasy hostility and related effects after long term exposure to aggressive television content rather than after similar exposure to nonaggressive television content. A second hypothesis was that children low in both overt aggression and covert hostility would experience disinhibiting and arousing effects and would show a rise in covert hostile fantasy and related variables, and possibly, a rise in some aspects of overt aggression after exposure to nonaggressive television content. The third hypothesis was that children high in covert hostility and low in overt aggression would show a significant decrement in fantasy aggression and a significant increment in direct aggression after exposure to aggressive television content as compared with similar exposure to nonaggressive television content (Feshbach and Singer, 1971, pp. 46-47).

Given the need for obtaining certain kinds of data and, most importantly, exercising adequate control over their major independent variable--type of television program observed--the authors chose to carry out the study in institutional settings. The experimental sample was limited to boys from, both residential schools and institutions, of which five schools in Southern California and two in New York participated in the project. The California group consisted

of three private schools--the Cate School, the Ojai Valley School, and the Army and Navy Academy--and two boys' homes--the McKinley Home for Boys and the Pacific Lodge Boys' Home. The New York institutions were both Catholic homes for boys--St. Vincent's Home and St. John's Home.

The boys were required to watch a minimum of six hours of television a week for six weeks from a list of programs that had been categorized as aggressive or nonaggressive by three raters from Feshbach and Singer's staff. Differences between raters concerning the television programs occurred infrequently, with the percentage of agreement between pairs of raters varying from 90 to 96 per cent. Programs which depicted fighting, shooting, and other forms of physical violence were considered aggressive. These included cowboy, spy, detective, police and war themes (Feshbach and Singer, 1971, p. 56).

Besides viewing the various television programs, the boys were rated on a Behavior Rating Scale which consisted of twenty-six items, nineteen of which related to aggressive acts. Rating and recording their aggressive acts was the responsibility of the house parent, supervisors, teachers, or proctors most familiar with the daily activities of the boy to be rated. A rating sheet was completed for each boy five days a week for the duration of the experiment. Each aggressive act was rated as provoked or unprovoked and mild or moderate-strong. If the behavior was provoked and mild, it

was given a weight of one; if provoked and moderate, a weight of two; if unprovoked and mild, a weight of three; and, if unprovoked and moderate or strong, a weight of four. The total score on the nineteen aggressive items could range from zero to seventy-six. The sum of the weighted scores for the daily rating schedule constituted the child's aggressive behavior score for each date (Feshbach and Singer, 1971, p. 56).

The results of this study by Feshbach and Singer were mostly consistent with their original hypotheses; but, the experimental results, particularly those on the acting out of aggression, were striking. Generally, Feshbach and Singer found that exposure to aggressive content in television over a six-week period does not produce an increment in aggressive behavior. The only measure on which the controls decreased relative to the aggressive television group was fantasy aggression. However, the results did, in fact, indicate that witnessing aggressive television programs reduces rather than stimulates the acting out of aggressive tendencies in certain types of boys. This generalization by Feshbach and Singer, requires qualification though, particularly in regard to the population to which it applies. This effect is generally pronounced in children with certain personality and social characteristics and is weak in other personality constellations. Feshbach and Singer found that their overall generalization showed that: boys exposed to aggressive television content manifested significantly less behavioral aggression toward

peers and authority than boys exposed to nonaggressive television content; applied only for residents of the boys' homes. Among the boys' home residents, the aggressive television group manifested less physical and verbal aggression towards peers than did the controls. There were also highly reliable differences between the controls and the aggressive television groups in physical and verbal aggression toward authority. However, the boys that participated in the experiment from the private schools showed little difference in aggression toward peers and toward authority between control and aggressive television groups (Feshbach and Singer, 1971, pp. 140-141).

Thus, within the restrictions of sample characteristics, range of stimuli utilized, and duration of the experiment, two major conclusions were finally indicated by the author's experimental findings: First, exposure to aggressive content in television does not lead to an increase in aggressive behavior. Second, exposure to aggressive content in television seems to reduce or control the expression of aggression in aggressive boys from relatively low socioeconomic backgrounds (Feshbach and Singer, 1971, p. 145).

In an earlier experiment in 1955, the author J. Feshbach showed that people who had been sharply frustrated, when invited to take part in projection tests (Thematic Apperception Tests) emerged from the tests calmer than people who had been similarly frustrated but who had not been able

to project their anger into the tests (Glucksmann, 1971, p. 47).

M. A. Croce, in 1964, replaced these tests with films and discovered: (a) that if a very dynamic film is shown to subjects who have previously been frustrated, these subjects are much calmer than the control group who did not see the film; and that the people who participated most vividly in the emotional experience of the film are the least aggressive; and (b) that the less dynamic and violent a film is, the greater the subjects' aggression afterwards (Glucksmann, 1971, p. 47).

Thus, this experiment supports the catharsis theory, according to which the intensity of the action in a dramatic film is capable of relieving quite a high degree of hostility and aggression. Croce discovered that the effect does not emerge unless the type of aggression measured by the test corresponds to the type of energy evolved by the film.

Other studies have also pointed to the concept of catharsis as an explanation for reduction of aggressiveness in children following the viewing of violent television programming. Tannenbaum, Feshbach and others have all contributed significant research findings to support the catharsis hypothesis. Tannenbaum, although his work dealt primarily with college students found that, even though violent or aggressive material may instigate aggressiveness, aggressive content may instigate behavior which is nonaggressive, and in fact prosocial ("Television and Growing Up: The

Impact of Televised Violence," 1972, p. 119).

In another study by Seymour Feshbach in 1971, which has already been explained in detail in Chapter II of this report, Feshbach stated in one of his conclusions that the response level of the children who viewed the fantasy aggressive program, which was the NBC campus riot film, were actually lower than that of children who did not view an aggressive program. Although Feshbach stated that the children who saw the riot film and were told it was real produced subsequently louder noises in the laboratory game, found that his experimental findings, concerning the response level of children who viewed the fantasy aggressive program as being lower than that of the children who did not view an aggressive program, supported the catharsis hypothesis ("Television and Growing Up: The Impact of Televised Violence," 1972, p. 117).

In conclusion, the catharsis hypothesis which suggests that viewing televised violence provides an opportunity for the discharge of aggressive feelings and thus reduces the likelihood that the viewer will engage in aggressive or violent behavior, is a valid argument by the researchers whose research evolves around the premise that violence on television does not influence the behavior of children. The next section of this chapter will deal with other authors' relevant research that has evolved around the above premise.

Psychological and Sociological Research Experiments

A great deal has been written and said about the harmful psychological effects of television upon the viewer. Some of it is based on clinical studies of the viewers, while much of it is rhetoric aimed at promoting various personal prejudices of the speaker or writer. However, what is being called for in the study of children's behaviors following viewing of televised violence is not the notation of quantitative facts, but the comprehension of qualitative mechanisms which bring about the translation of the content of the mass media into the conduct of the audience. The question then, is no longer to describe what the young person sees, but how he sees and 'assimilates' it.

A number of observers have noted that the mass media content has a greater impact on children if they believe that 'it really happened.' In early childhood there is a shadowy border at best between the story world and the real world. The events of the picture tube, the screen and the bedtime story often seem terribly real to them...young children as we know, give themselves wholly to television [Glucksmann, 1971, p. 38].

However, various authors do not share in this opinion and draw contradictory conclusions from it. A. Gemelli states that films on television should rarely have an effect on children from ages six to ten, or even as old as twelve. The film belongs to the realm of fantasy and the child understands the action as a game; if the film is too "serious", that is to say, too closely related to reality, the child is not interested in it (Glucksmann, 1971, p. 39).

Additional evidence bearing on age differences comes from a 1971 study by Leifer and Roberts. These investigators compared children of three different age groups, ranging from four to sixteen year olds, on their understanding of the ostensibly subtle motivations and consequences that surround violent acts on television ("Television and Growing Up: The Impact of Televised Violence," 1972, p. 114). The authors asked each child about his own aggressive tendencies on a questionnaire given immediately after the child viewed televised violence. Aggressive reactions were measured in terms of the child's answers to a series of questions about conflict situations. Such questions as the following example were asked by the interviewer: "You are walking down the street. Some kid is mad at you and comes up and hits you. What do you do?" Possible answers were: "Hit them;" "Call them 'stupid';" "Leave them;" or, "Tell a grownup." One form of the questionnaire was developed for ten to sixteen year olds ("Television and Growing Up: The Impact of Televised Violence," 1972, p. 114).

In one experiment, 271 children, which included forty kindergarteners, fifty-four third graders, fifty-six sixth graders, fifty-one ninth graders, and seventy twelfth graders, were presented with a standard commercial television program that contained numerous episodes of violence. A panel of adult judges had initially rated two programs, "Rocket Robin Hood" and "Batman," as comprehensible by children from four

to five years old; two westerns, "Have Gun, Will Travel" and "Rifleman," as comprehensible for children from ten to twelve years old; and two crime shows, "Felony Squad" and "Adam-12," as appropriate for teenagers. Each child was then randomly assigned to view one of the appropriate programs. Immediately after the viewing, each child was questioned about his understanding of the motivations for and the immediate and final consequences of each of the violent episodes in the program. In addition, each child indicated the likelihood that he would behave aggressively by his choice of behavioral options in the hypothetical conflict situations described in the questionnaire ("Television and Growing Up: The Impact of Televised Violence," 1972, p. 115).

The results showed that, as expected by the authors, there were consistent increases in understanding across the age range: kindergarteners could answer accurately only about one-third of the questions about either motivations or consequences; third graders could only answer about one-half; and twelfth graders could answer about 95 per cent. Since the majority of the kindergarteners did not understand very much about the settings of televised violence, Liefer and Roberts suggest then, that for most young children, a violent act depicted on television is a singular event devoid of its context. In other words, adolescents comprehend the depicted motivations for and consequences of aggression better than young children, who in most cases are unaware and unable to

comprehend the violence on television ("Television and Growing Up: The Impact of Televised Violence," 1972, pp. 115-116).

Other psychological research evidence has been promulgated by various authors concerning both normal and emotionally disturbed children and the possible effects of televised violence on both groups. Although violence on television has been shown to effect the behaviors of children toward possible aggressive tendencies, various authors state that the level of increased aggressive behavior in normal children is minimal while the level of increased aggressive behavior in emotionally disturbed children is quite evident. Himmelweit's conclusions, from his study Television and the Child, supports this point of view as he states:

We did not find that the viewers were any more aggressive or maladjusted than the controls: television is unlikely to cause aggressive behavior, although it can precipitate it among the few children who are emotionally disturbed [Glucksmann, 1971, p. 43].

However, the extent to which an emotionally disturbed child will react to a violent program in a violent manner, depends on other etiological factors. According to Ner Littner, a psychiatrist, the more emotionally disturbed the viewer is, the more likely it is that he will have difficulty in managing stirred-up violent feelings (Littner, 1969, p. 15). The reaction of a child then, to various violent episodes on television in a possibly aggressive manner will depend on numerous

etiological factors such as family relationships, the maturity of the viewer, the extent to which the child is emotionally disturbed, and even the traumatic effect of the television program.

Littner, in describing a hypothetical situation in which an individual viewed a violent rape scene on television and then immediately went out and committed the same act on the first girl he met, concluded two possible effects that would possibly explain this behavior by an emotionally disturbed individual. Littner believed that the first reason for this aggressive act was that it triggered a previously existing emotional disorder. The second effect would be to provide the disturbed adolescent with a blueprint for discharging his violent tensions. Littner then concluded that violence on television does not make children aggressive; rather, the aggressive child turns to violent television. Also, television does not make a child passive; rather, it is the passive child who chooses television (Littner, 1969, p. 16).

Other psychological researchers' hypotheses are concerned more particularly with the effect of the content of the image on the personality of the viewer and especially his emotional relationship to the characters on the screen. It has been reasoned that the screen arts set up a "habit," which would "make corruption easier." Frequently quoted in support of the thesis of "emotional participation" by the viewer is

an inquiry conducted with twenty-four juvenile delinquents at the Macanan centre by Parrot in 1965 (Glucksmann, 1971, p. 41). Out of the seventeen who expressed a preference for heroes of adventure films, thirteen opted for Eddie Constantine. The major reasons for this preference were: "he fights," "he knows how to talk to women," and "he always wins." Parrot and his colleagues at that time then concluded that the violence of this figure could serve as a dangerous model for young viewers (Glucksmann, 1971, p. 41).

This phenomenon however, is not confined only to juvenile delinquents. The phenomenon known as the cult of the Star is very widespread (Glucksmann, 1971, p. 41). For instance, movie stars such as James Dean, Paul Newman, Marlon Brando and others, have been idolized by numerous viewers and fans who have stated that the stars personify their inner ideals and that they model the more superficial aspects of their behavior on that of the stars.

Statistics, however, say nothing about the relations of the star-cult to aggressive behavior although it has been used as an explanation for an increase in delinquent behavior. The psychological interpretation of this concept can be complex. Thus, Edgar Morin explains "emotional participation" by twin mechanisms: identification--leading the viewer to imitate certain aspects of his hero's behavior in real life; and, projection--which allows him to live certain emotions vicariously which he would have difficulty expressing in real

life (Glucksmann, 1971, p. 41).

Admiration for the hero does not seem to imply, *is po facto*, imitation in real life; that is, confined to children who are already predisposed to it for other reasons.

There are also younger viewers with hysterical and dissociative tendencies whose proclivity is for easy and usually transitory identification with their dramatic idols, and a histrionic assumption of their habits and fantisied adventures. We may look to television for their models, but for the psycho-neurotic predisposition we ought probably look to their families (Glucksmann, 1971, p. 41).

Thus, conclusions about the "star-cult" seems to have their ambivalent effects: (a) Direct imitation of the screen hero is a sign of an unbalanced mental state, the cause of which is not in the cinema but in the viewer's life, (b) It has not been proven that all the hero's activities tend to be "carried out" by the young viewer. It is possible that imitative identification with the star remains limited to secondary aspects of behavior related to fashion (clothing, superficial relations between the sexes), while projection gives the viewer a way of giving free rein in his imagination to drives which he is forbidden to live out in real life; projection is vicarious experience, (c) If the range of influence of the star-cult is limited to these specific areas, there is no reason to claim that cinema and television alone are responsible for it (Glucksmann, 1971, pp. 41-42).

The idea of a correlation between delinquency and the influence of cinema and television is one of the most frequently recurring arguments put forward in the debate about screen and television violence. Although the correlation between delinquency and the influence of cinema and television is difficult to establish, three types of consideration come into play, according to the results of earlier studies conducted in this area. The three types of consideration, which will be discussed in this report are: (a) the degree of cinema-attendance by juvenile delinquents; (b) the statistical correlation between the two phenomenon; and (c) the experience of the juvenile courts.

The first inquiries concerning frequency of cinema attendance by juvenile delinquents that were conducted under the auspices of the Payne Fund, showed that 22 per cent of delinquents went to the cinema three times or more a week, as against only 14 per cent of non-delinquents. It was concluded that these individuals were influenced by attractive personalities and romantic activities of gangsters who were presented as heroes on the screen (Glucksmann, 1971, p. 32). However, further research into this phenomenon by P. Le Moal and H. de Lalonde, states that the difference is only perceptible at the level of very frequent cinema attendance. In their report to the International Congress of Filmology in Paris, France in 1955, they found that only 27 per cent of juvenile delinquents, as opposed to 17 per cent of the general

public of young people, go to the cinema more than twice a week (Glucksmann, 1971, p. 32).

Most of the authors think the juvenile delinquent, tending not to have a settled home life, goes to the cinema or watches television more than other young people because it is one of the few entertainments the streets or the home have to offer. However, A. Sicker remarks that the excuses made by delinquents to the effect that the cinema was the cause of their downfall are to be taken with a pinch of salt; he concludes that a high degree of cinema attendance is a phenomenon which sometimes accompanies juvenile delinquency, but which does not cause it (Glucksmann, 1971, p. 33).

Joseph Klapper, writing on the same topic, found that although there is some evidence that heavy users of television are more likely to have problems relative to their delinquent behavior and with their families and peers, these differences appear to have existed before the children developed their media habits, or at least while they were developing those habits. The child's characteristics do not seem to be the result of exposure to the media, but rather the cause of their using the media for such purposes as escape, withdrawal, or to feed an already existing appetite for violence. In other words, the media seems to provide the child with a way of exercising his existing interests and behavioral tendencies, whether they are socially desirable or undesirable. That exercise may, of course, reinforce and strengthen those orientations, but it

does not seem to be their source (Klapper, 1969, p. 48f-48g).

The statistical correlation between juvenile delinquency and the cinema and television has also been a concern of various research studies. Similarly, statistics from countries all over the world have shown a general rise in the number of juvenile offenders in the courts as well as a general rise in the production and distribution of mass media, specifically violent oriented media, as the controls and standards of the censorship boards throughout the world have become more lax due to the public desire for programs of this sort. Andre' Glucksmann, in his report entitled Violence on the Screen, uses France as an example to show this general rise in juvenile delinquency. According to Glucksmann, the rate of juvenile offenders in courts almost tripled in France between the years 1937 and 1961. Although Glucksmann attributed this rise in juvenile delinquency as coinciding with the increase in production and distribution of the mass media, criminologists are more cautious in their use of these studies (Glucksmann, 1971, p. 33). J. W. McDavid points out that the records of the courts give an imperfect picture of the juvenile delinquency situation. Other factors such as social and environmental background, educational background, peer group relationship, and so on, can also be used as explanations for deviant behavior. Basing television or the cinema as the lone factor in precipitating an individual's delinquent behavior does not provide the necessary information for formulating

delinquent types of behavior (Glucksmann, 1971, p. 33).

Also, the clinical studies of the correlation between juvenile delinquency and cinema or television viewing show the rarity of true cases of imitation. Some authors, such as Wilburn Schramm and G. Clostermann point out that since the content of films and television programs have simply shifted from the other mass media, it is clear that the juvenile offender can obtain the same technical information from other sources, such as books and newspapers. Dr. William Schramm, Director of Stanford's Institute for Communication Research, points out that television is only one influence on children. He said:

The roots of criminal behavior lie far deeper than television; they reach into the personality, the family experience, the relationships with others in the same age group as the delinquents or criminal individual. At most, television can be merely a contributory cause, and is likely to affect only the child who is already maladjusted and delinquency prone ["Television, Violence and the Broadcaster," 1972, p. 9].

Thus, the conclusions concerning whether violence on television and in the cinema have a direct effect on the real behavior of the young viewer, show that it generally does not have any effect on the behavior of an individual as various other socio-oriented and culture-oriented factors have a deeper effect on an individual's behavior. Wilburn Schramm states that only a small number of children learn techniques of crime and violence through the mass media, which they may attempt to make use of in reality (Glucksmann, 1971, p. 35).

In conclusion, the various psychological research

studies and the studies on juvenile delinquency and its relationship to violence in the mass media, further support the premise that violence on television or on the cinema does not influence the behavior of children to aggressive or delinquent acts. Violence in the mass media is seen as a factor only after the child has been already preconditioned or has already developed an aggressive behavior, and violence in the mass media is not the source of an individual's aggressive behavior. The last section of this chapter will review the three major television networks' policies concerning violence on television, as was reported before the Subcommittee on Communications on Violence on Television.

The Major Television Networks' Reports
to the Subcommittee on Communications

The review of the relevant literature of the three major television networks will be taken from the various statements made to the Subcommittee on Communications on the fourth and fifth of April of this year, and also from the circumstantial research evidence conducted by these various networks. The first network to be reviewed will be CBS, followed by ABC, and finally NBC.

Columbia Broadcasting System

Speaking before Chairman John O. Pastore of the Subcommittee on Communications of the Senate Commerce Committee, Mr. John A. Schneider, President of CBS, presented evidence concerning the fact that the difference between past and present

rates of violence over a two year period from 1972 to 1974 in CBS television network programming, definitely showed a decrease in the amount of televised violence on their programs and a general rise in non-violent programming. He also brought to the attention of the Subcommittee a new list of programs depicting no violence which would be offered as prime time viewing for children as well as adults ("Hearings Before the Subcommittee on Communications of the Committee on Commerce, United States Senate," 1974, p. 119).

In this study conducted by the CBS television network, four weeks of prime time entertainment programs between September of 1972 and February of 1974, which were considered to be shown during the hours between 4:00 P.M. and 9:00 P.M., were monitored for violent episodes. The sample weeks which included the week of September 1, 1972, the week of February 12, 1973, the week of October 21, 1973, and the week of February 11, 1974, were chosen to reflect, as closely as possible, the normal prime time schedule ("Hearings Before the Subcommittee on Communications of the Committee on Commerce," p. 127). Weeks containing no or few specials were favored over weeks containing several specials. Monitoring during the sample week covered all regular series programming and such entertainment specials as were scheduled, as well as theatrical features and made-for-television films. News and sports were excluded.

Violence was defined for monitoring purposes as

follows: "The use of physical force against persons or animals, as the articulated, explicit threat of physical force to compel particular behavior on the part of a person." Violence was counted in terms of incidents. An incident was not absolutely synonymous with an "act." One "incident" might include brief breaks in the action, as in a protected chase scene, interrupted by pauses for regrouping and reloading, or acts of violence by more than one person, as, for example, in a fight scene involving several people. Unintentional injuries were not considered violent, nor were threats that were not backed up by a show of force ("Hearings Before the Subcommittee...", p. 125).

The programming was then monitored by a group of coders from CBS Television Network Research, all of whom had previously attended at least four training and testing sessions. In the actual monitoring of the programs during these four weeks, each program was independently monitored by two coders, whose reports were then compared for inconsistencies. If agreement could not be reached, a supervisor reviewed the incident under question. Statistical tests were also performed to determine the extent of agreement between coders. "Coder reliability," in other words the technical terms for the degree of agreement, was quite high with intra-class correlations of .88 or above on all analysis after the initial survey in September, 1972 ("Hearings Before the Subcommittee...", p. 126).

The conclusions of this study definitely showed a downward trend in the overall rate of violence from the first

sample week in September, 1972, to and through February, 1974, as is evident in Table I and Table II ("Hearings Before the Subcommittee...", p. 127). The "overall rate of violence" was a statistic obtained by dividing the number of violent incidents by the number of hours monitored in the sample week. The main reason for this decrease, according to John Schneider, was that regularly scheduled CBS prime-time "action" programs had become gradually, less violent. Television series that were rated in the action-adventure category, such as "Gunsmoke," "Cannon," "Mannix," "Barnaby Jones," and "Kojak," in many instances did not depict the violent acts on the screen. The violent acts were referred to and the crimes were solved, but the act itself was not seen by the audience. Also, various other non-violent programs were included during prime-time viewing. Such programs as "The Mary Tyler Moore Show," "The Bob Newhart Show," "Good Times," "Medical Center," and others, were offered by CBS. However, the level of violence on CBS made-for-television and feature films had not shown a similar consistent decline ("Hearings Before the Subcommittee...", p. 126).

Thus, this study conducted by the CBS research division has shown that there has been a definite decrease in violence depicted on television. The results, however, do not prove whether violence on television influences the behavior of children to aggressive tendencies or not. This report, however, does at least show that CBS in particular, has tried to decrease

TABLE I

Extent of Dramatic Violence in Sample Weeks on
CBS Television Network Prime-Time Entertainment

| Sample Weeks | Total Incidents of Dramatic Violence | Number of Hours | Rate Per Hour of Dramatic Violence |
|--|---|--------------------|---------------------------------------|
| September 1972 (week of September 18) | | | |
| Regularly scheduled "action" series | 28 | 5.0 | 5.6 |
| Other regularly scheduled series ^a | 0 | 10.5 | 0 |
| Made-for-Television and feature films | 24 | 5.5 | 4.4 |
| Total Programs | 52 | 21.0 | 2.5 |
| February 1973 (week of February 12) | | | |
| Regularly scheduled "action" series ^b | 28 | 6.0 | 4.7 |
| Other regularly scheduled series ^a | 0 | 8.5 | 0 |
| Made-for-Television and feature films | 16 | 5.5 | 2.9 |
| Total Programs | 44 | 20.0 ^c | 2.2 |
| October 1973 (week of October 12) | | | |
| Regularly scheduled "action" series ^b | 36 | 8.5 | 4.2 |
| Other regularly scheduled series ^a | 1 | 8.5 | .1 |
| Made-for-Television and feature films | 8 | 4.0 | 2.0 |
| Total Programs | 45 | 21.0 | 2.1 |
| February 1974 (week of February 11) | | | |
| Regularly scheduled "action" series ^b | 19 | 6.0 | 3.2 |
| Other regularly scheduled series | 0 | 9.5 | 0 |
| Made-for-Television and feature films | 17 | 5.5 | 3.1 |
| Total Programs | 36 | 21.0 | 1.7 |

^aGeneral Drama, situation comedy, variety series and entertainment specials

^bAdventure, police, mystery-suspense or western series. Also included are those made-for-TV movies that are continuing series; e.g. "Hawkins."

^cNumber of hours is 1 less than other weeks due to the exclusion of 1 hour documentary which replaced "The Waltons."

TABLE II

Summary Comparison of Four Sample Weeks--Rate Per Hour
of Dramatic Violence on CBS Television Network
Prime-Time Entertainment

| | September 1972 | February 1973 | October 1973 | February 1974 |
|--|-------------------|------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Regularly scheduled "action" programs | 5.6 | 4.7 | 4.2 | 3.2 |
| Made-for-Television and feature films | 4.4 | 2.9 | 2.0 | 3.1 |
| Total Programs | 2.5 | 2.2 | 2.1 | 3.1 |

the amount of violence in their programming that might possibly influence the behavior of children. Research conducted by the other two television networks, although showing the same results as this study, have conducted experiments concerning the relationship of violence on television to children. The next television network that will be reviewed in this report is ABC.

American Broadcasting Company

In his prepared statement before the Subcommittee of Communications on April 5, 1974, Mr. Alfred R. Schneider, Vice-President of ABC, discussed the findings of his network's research on violence in television and its effects on children. He also discussed ABC's policies, standards, and controls relative to the acceptability of program and commercial material scheduled for broadcast on this network. However, only the study will be reviewed in this report.

A three year study conducted by Drs. Seymour Lieberman, Samuel Polsky and Melvin Heller for ABC was undertaken in 1972, to measure the inclination of children toward aggression after viewing violent oriented programs on television. In the first year of the Lieberman research, efforts were directed to developing an instrument for measuring inclination toward aggression among children--the Electronic Pounding Platform (EPP). The second year of research concentrated on testing the EPP using "high violence" programs from series no longer on the air. During the third year of investigation, the research focused on measuring the impact of current action-adventure and children's cartoon

programs ("Hearings Before the Subcommittee...", p. 145).

The first year research study was conducted with approximately 2,300 boys, half of whom were between the ages of seven and ten, and half who were between the ages of eleven and fourteen. Their socio-economic backgrounds ranged from lower class to upper middle class. The boys were primarily white and lived in the tri-state metropolitan area including New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut. They were contacted through a variety of types of schools, including public and parochial schools ("Hearings Before the Subcommittee...", p. 145).

Following the completion of the first year of study, the measuring instrument, known as the Electronic Pounding Platform, was developed to test the inclination toward aggression among children which could then be applied to measuring the impact of violence in television programs. The instrument was found to be a valid and practical measure of aggression among children by these researchers as it: (1) differentiated between more aggressive children and less aggressive children; (2) registered pre-post increases in response to aggression induction and to frustration induction situations; and (3) showed more aggressive boys showing larger pre-post increases than less aggressive boys ("Hearings Before the Subcommittee...", p. 147).

Two episodes of programs no longer on the air, containing violence were selected for the study--one from "The

Untouchables" and the other from "Target--The Corruptors."

Both of these programs produced pre-post gains in aggression among children, as was measured by the EPP. Findings from the second year research concerning individual violent scenes on television found (1) a violent sequence of shorter duration; (2) a physically violent act producing more aggression than a verbal violent act; (3) a violent act that is shown producing more aggression than one where the action is only implied; and, (4) in an excerpt of a massacre scene from a news event, the showing of gore appearing to lead to an increase in aggression, not a decrease ("Hearings Before the Subcommittee...", p. 148).

With the results of these two years of study, Lieberman and his colleagues entered the final stage of their research. This phase of the research dealt with identifying the variables which determined what information a child takes from a television program, and the way he interprets it or relates it to his own behavior. The intent of this phase of study was to study the relationship between what the child brings to the television set and what he takes away from it. The pertinent variables include the particular interests and abilities of the child, and the way he assimilates, responds to, and coordinates the content of the learned material ("Hearings Before the Subcommittee...", p. 155). In other words, this study was to assess the effects of television violence on children.

The groups of children under study in this third year research study included: (1) thirty emotionally impaired children

with normal intelligence who attend a special day school; (2) sixty psychiatrically normal children from broken homes who live at a boarding house; and, (3) "normal" school children from middle and upper-middle class neighborhoods ("Hearings Before the Subcommittee...", p. 155).

The stimulus materials included two categories of television films: programs with high violent content which were all series no longer on the air, and programs that included a mixture of aggressive elements and pro-social factors. The measurements of the children were taken on a pre-post exposure basis, with a variety of tests administered to measure aggressive tendencies in the children, and their general attitude towards television. The posttests were administered to measure the pro-social aspects they may have learned from the pro-social films ("Hearings Before the Subcommittee...", p. 155).

Lieberman and his colleagues, after assessing the results of the pre-post written and oral psychological tests which were subjected to statistical analysis, and from direct observations, concluded five basic assumptions concerning violence on television and its effects on children's behaviors. Although the authors state that these are only tentative findings and that there is a great need for further research into this topic, their conclusions seem to coincide and assist other research findings that state that violence on television, in most cases, does not influence the behavior of children toward aggressive tendencies. Lieberman, et al., found that exposure of children to aggressive

content on television does not seem to lead to heightened aggressive behavior. Moreover, they found that there was no relationship between the intensity or quantity of televised aggression and heightened aggressive behavior. Also, after exposure to aggressive television programs, the expression of instinctual aggression in emotionally impaired children seemed to become more socially structured or formed and less chaotic or disruptive. Moreover, the findings tended to suggest an actual decrease in aggressive behavior or real acts of children under study--the normal and emotionally disturbed ("Hearings Before the Subcommittee...", pp. 155-56).

Besides giving a review of these findings to the Subcommittee on Communications, Mr. Schneider also discussed and reviewed ABC's policies and standards concerning the type of programs they show and edit for television. When a particular program is expected to include portrayal of violence, Mr. Schneider states that extensive discussions are held to ascertain the manner in which the producer intends to relate conflict to plot development and to insure that the producer fully understands ABC's policies and standards in this regard. Namely, that violence may be depicted only when reasonably related to the legitimate development of plot and then only in conformity with ABC's guidelines and the general proscription against the portrayal of useless or gratuitous force ("Hearings Before the Subcommittee...", p. 138).

In conclusion, Mr. Schneider, in his statement before the Subcommittee on Communication of the Senate Commerce Committee

concerning the relevant research of Lieberman et al., and ABC's policies and standards, has definitely defended ABC's views and research concerning the possible harmful effects of violence on television on children's behavior. The research from Lieberman et al., has generally coincided with the previous arguments in the preceding two sections, especially in the first section which described the catharsis hypothesis.

National Broadcasting Company

Julian Goodman, chairman of the board and chief executive officer of the National Broadcasting Company, in his statement before the Subcommittee, has also provided evidence concerning his network's concern over the possible influences of television programming on the behavior of young viewers. At the time of his presentation though, NBC had just begun a study concerning the effects of violence on television and its possible influence on the behavior of children; thus, NBC was unable to provide any research evidence on this concern. However, Mr. Goodman was able to list various network standards and policies concerning the depiction of violence in regular weekly programs and screen movies edited for television, and the format in which they are to be shown. Mr. Goodman states:

It seems generally accepted that excitement, confrontation and conflict are basic elements of drama in all media. As such, they are appropriate to story telling on television, but we differentiate between violence that might be harmful to viewers and violence that is unlikely to lead to antisocial behavior. ...It places on us the task of judgment--the responsibility

to assure that any violence in entertainment programs is in a context that does not condone it or does not present it as a desirable solution to human problems. It is to judge each act that might be classified by statisticians as violent and to decide, within the best abilities of our qualified and dedicated staff, whether it is an acceptable part of the dramatic action that is not likely to be a model for violence, or whether it is a gratuitous act that makes violence attractive and has been inserted because the writer can't think of any other way to keep the attention of the viewer ["Hearings Before the Subcommittee...", p. 161 and 163].

Besides reviewing and evaluating violent episodes for possible content editing, Mr. Goodman states that NBC has also developed new programs that young people will find both interesting and informative. Both the Saturday morning lineup of children's programs and other programs offered during the evening hours have been developed in which the plot, themes and character development are not likely to involve physical conflict. Such programs as "Born Free," "The Little Red House on the Prairie," "Remember When," and "Go," have been selected as part of NBC's regular weekly television schedule ("Hearings Before the Subcommittee...", p. 164).

Thus, the National Broadcasting Company has reduced the amount of violence and types of violence offered on its television network. However, just because a various network begins to curb the amount of violence in the programming because of a concerned public, more research is needed to determine if violence on television does influence the behavior of children.

Conclusions

The available experimental evidence from these

various fields of reference, concerning the arguments stating that violence on television does not influence the behavior of children, supports certain conclusions. First of all, the viewing of televised violence provides an opportunity for the discharge of catharsis of aggressive feelings and thus reduces the likelihood that the viewers will engage in aggressive or violent behavior. In other words, the theory underlying the catharsis hypothesis stipulates that the child who views violence on television vicariously experiences the violence and thereby harmlessly discharges his pent-up anger, hostility, and frustration on the program he is viewing.

A second conclusion from the psychological field of evidence, purports that for most young children a violent act depicted on television is a singular event devoid of its context. In other words, young children before the age of adolescence, are unaware and unable to comprehend the violence on television. A third conclusion from this same field generally finds normal children to be less susceptible to having their behavior changed toward aggressive tendencies after viewing violence on television, although violent acts shown on television can precipitate aggressive actions among some children who are emotionally disturbed. However, the extent to which an emotionally disturbed child will react to a violent program in an aggressive manner depends on various etiological factors and existing emotional disorders. Such factors as family relationships, the maturity of the viewer, the environmental situation,

and the extent to which the child is emotionally disturbed are only some of the possible factors which might prompt a child to react in an aggressive manner. According to Littner, violence on television does not make children aggressive; rather, the aggressive child turns to violent television programming to either prompt or discharge his violent tensions (Littner, 1969, p. 15).

The contention by various authors that a correlation exists between delinquency and the influence of cinema and television on delinquent acts, has led to a fourth conclusion concerning the premise that violence on television does not influence the behavior of children. In the case of juvenile delinquents, violence in the mass media is seen as a factor only after the child has already preconditioned or has already developed an aggressive behavior, and it is not seen as the source of an individual's aggressive behavior. The preconditioned or pre-developed behavior has been influenced by other factors, either socio-oriented factors or culture-oriented factors. These factors include the family, peers, teachers, environment, cultural and societal values, the ways and means of obtaining a middle class or societal goal, and so on. For instance, Merton's theory of anomie and normlessness is a far better explanation for individuals turning to delinquent behaviors than is the contention that violence on television influences the child to aggressive and delinquent acts.

Thus, the results from the review of the relevant

research evidence, concerning the premise that violence on television does not influence the behavior of children, shows that violent oriented programs and films have relatively no direct effect on the real behavior of the young viewer. The final chapter of this report will compare the findings that have been presented in this and the preceding chapter. A decision as to whether violence on television influences aggressive behavior or not will not be given though as much more research is definitely needed in this topic area. Besides a review of these past arguments, recommendations for further research in this topic area will be given.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

In this chapter the relevant research will be drawn together to form some indications concerning whether or not violence on television influences the behavior of children. However, a specific conclusion in the form of "yes, it does" or "no, it does not" will not be drawn. Because of extraneous factors such as detailed variations of the basic opinions, biased views of various authors, and just that the topic has not been fully researched in order for all researchers to draw a specific conclusion, a conclusion of the type mentioned above is impossible. There are still too many questions to be answered; thus, further research is required. Following these concluding remarks, this report will focus on future questions to be answered and the future studies that might possibly evolve around these questions.

Indications from the Data

While the data that have been reviewed in this report are by no means wholly consistent or conclusive, there is evidence that a modest relationship does exist between the viewing of violence and aggressive behavior. The correlation from field studies is amendable to either of two interpretations: that the viewing and the aggression are joint products of some other common source, such as pattern of communication within the family, or other environmental influences.

The experimental studies reported in Chapter II, conducted by Bandura, Liebert and Baron, Ekman et al., Feshbach, and Gerbner provide some evidence which indicates that, under certain limited conditions, television viewing may lead to an aggressive behavior. This has been clearly demonstrated in highly controlled laboratory studies, such as Bandura's study. These authors point to two mechanisms by which children might be led from watching television to aggressive behavior: the mechanism of imitation, which is well established as part of the behavioral repertoire of children in general; and the mechanism of incitement, which may apply only to those children who are predisposed to be susceptible to this influence. There is also some evidence that incitement may follow nonviolent as well as violent materials, and that this incitement may lead to either asocial or aggressive behavior as determined by the opportunities in the experiment. Thus, it is the opinion of these authors that violence on television generally does lead to heightened aggressive tendencies in children.

On the other hand, the experimental studies reported in Chapter III by Seymour Feshbach and Robert Singer, Liefer and Roberts, Joseph Klapper, Littner, Lieberman et al., and the others support the premise that violence on television does not influence the behavior of children. Evidence concerning the catharsis hypothesis states that real aggression is worked off by participation in imaginary aggression which is offered on television. Even one of the conclusions listed above by the

authors supporting the premise that violence on television does influence the behavior of children, supports the catharsis hypothesis. The conclusion that viewing of violent or non-violent materials may possibly incite prosocial behavior is definitely one of the effects of catharsis. Research evidence by these authors has also shown that any sequence by which viewing television violence causes aggressive behavior is most likely applicable only to some children who are pre-disposed in that direction. In this finding, violence on television is not the precipitating factor in influencing the aggressive behavior by the child, but rather some already developed or pre-conditioned factor within the child. In other words, the child is already highly aggressive. Any number of factors, including violence on television, will cause an individual to behave violently and aggressively. Likewise, other studies found correlations between viewing of violent material and acting in aggressive ways generally do depend on the behavior of a small proportion of their subjects who identified in some studies as previously high in aggression. Another conclusion of certain authors of the total group found only some emotionally disturbed children to be affected by violence on television and not "normal" children at all. Finally, these authors have suggested that how children respond to violent film material is affected by the context in which it is presented. Such elements as parental explanations, the favorable or unfavorable outcome of the violence, and whether it is seen as fantasy or reality may

make a difference.

The results of the studies of these authors who either state violence on television does influence the behavior of children or it does not, are all valid within the context they have been applied. However, it is impossible to come out directly and say that violence on television has no direct effect on children's behaviors, or that violence on television does have a direct effect on the behavior of children. Possibly the best statement which could be made about violence on television and its effects on the behavior of children at this time, would be that violence on television does influence the behavior of children towards aggressive tendencies; but, only those children who are already preconditioned to aggressive tendencies or have developed a highly aggressive behavior because of certain socio-oriented and culture-oriented factors, will become more aggressive because of viewing violence on television. However, more research and evidence is needed to find out if children are predisposed in the direction of violent behavior due to the viewing of violence on television. The final section of this report will then focus on needed future research.

Focus on the Future

The research reviewed in this report has uniformly been sharply focused on exposure to televised violence on the one hand, and on aggressive tendencies on the other. Because of this narrowness of consideration in these studies, the interpretation of the results have been severely hampered. Thus,

research is drastically needed in this area to increase the understanding of the complex psychological and social influences leading to antisocial tendencies. The following six topics have been recommended as further research areas:

1. Television in the context of other mass media.

It is reasonable to expect that there is a positive relationship between an individual's use of television and his use of other mass media. As indicated earlier, when a stimulus exists in a constellation of highly related stimuli, any member of the constellation can, if studied in isolation, receive credit for the responses evoked by the entire constellation. So far, the attempts to isolate exposure to television have resulted in possible confounding of attribution.

2. Mass media in the context of the total environment, particularly the home environment. First, identify the predispositional characteristics of those subgroups of children who display an increase in aggressive behavior in response to televised violence. Second, ascertain at what ages different reactions occur. Third, check on the moderating influence of labeling, contextual cues, and other factors under the control of television producers which may reduce the likelihood that predisposed children will react adversely to televised violence. Fourth, further investigate the possibility that content other than violent content may increase the likelihood of subsequent aggressiveness, the possibility that violent content may instigate other behavior besides aggressiveness, and the applicability

of such findings to preschool children, youngsters, and adolescents. Finally, the use of more longitudinal research studies on the effects of television programs on children must be implemented.

3. Functional and dysfunctional aggressive behavior. The lines which separate violence, hostility, aggression, and vigorous competition tend to become blurred in studies of the kind that have been reviewed. Certainly, our society does not assign negative value to all these concepts; although traditional sex roles may be breaking down, there are few boys who are not taught to "stand up for your rights and defend yourself" ("Television and Growing Up: The Impact of Televised Violence," 1972, p. 188). There are those who argue that the realities of life require a certain set or readiness for aggressive behavior. The study of values, mores, and the realities of adaption in this area would provide an important backdrop for our interest in media effects.

4. Modeling and imitation of prosocial behavior.

5. Societal values are shaped by a great variety of environmental forces and institutions; television programs may contribute a great deal or only a small amount to the process. It is conceivable that prolonged exposure of large populations to television violence may have very little immediate effect on the crime rate, but that such exposure may interact with other influences in the society to produce increased casualness about violence which permits citizens to regard with increased

indifference actual suffering in their own or other societies, and to reflect that indifference in major political and economic decisions. Research may indicate that such fears are unfounded, but the research needs to be done.

6. Symbolic functions of violent conflict in fiction. There is considerable body of literature on the symbolic meanings of primitive (and not-so-primitive) myths and legends, which often are extremely violent. Anthropological literature supports the contention that, whatever else it may do, such folk literature communicates conventional social values and moral standards, and also provides folk interpretations of the pervasive conflicts and problems of life in a given society at a particular point in its history. It would be desirable to look upon television drama and cartoon programs--crude as they may be--as folk literature in this sense. It would be important, in order to more fully understand the role of television in American life, to investigate the latent symbolic "messages" that even violent television plays and cartoons may convey over and above the content of individual scenes.

Thus, these are only but a few examples of the kinds of research that have been discussed by various individuals as possible future research areas. The findings of this report are not conclusive; much research is needed to find a conclusion to this problem area.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

EXPERIMENTS ON CHILDREN'S IMITATION OF AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR

Appendix A

Experiments on Children's Imitation of Aggressive Behavior

- Bandura, A.: "Influence of Models' Reinforcement Contingencies on the Acquisition of Imitative Responses." Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 1(6): 589-595, 1965.
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APPENDIX B

TELEVISION AND SOCIAL BEHAVIOR PROGRAM REPORTS AND PAPERS

Appendix B

Television and Social Behavior Program Reports and Papers

| <u>Author and Title</u> | <u>Subjects</u> | <u>Description</u> |
|---|---|---|
| Ekman, Liebert, Friesen, Harrison, Zlatchil, Malstrom and Baron "Facial Expressions of Emotion While Watching Televised Violence as Predictors of Subsequent Aggression" | 65, 5-6 yr. children (30 boys and 35 girls) | Children's facial expressions while viewing televised violence were used as an index of the child's emotional reaction to such fare. This index was then used to assess the relationship between the child's emotional response to observing violent acts and his subsequent willingness to engage in interpersonal aggression. |
| Feshbach "Reality and Fantasy in Filmed Violence" | | |
| Experiment I | 129, 9-11 year old children | Children viewed either real (i.e., newsreel), fantasy (i.e., Hollywood movie), or control (e.g., circus movie) films and were then allowed to play a game in which they could engage in aggressive acts against an ostensible victim. |
| Experiment II | 40, 9-11 year old children | In this study, each child was informed that the movie he was about to view was either real ("NBC newsreel") or fantasy (Hollywood movie). Measures of the child's subsequent aggressive behavior were identical to the first study |

Appendix B--Continued

| <u>Author and Title</u> | <u>Subjects</u> | <u>Description</u> |
|---|--|--|
| Feshbach (continued) | | |
| Experiment III | 30, 9-11 year old children | This study was similar to the second experiment except that each child was informed that his aggressive behavior in the "guessing game" was only make-believe. Results of this study were compared with the results of the previous experiment |
| Leifer and Roberts "Children's Responses to Television Violence | | |
| Experiment I | 271 children (40 kindergarten, 54 third graders, 56 sixth graders, 51 ninth graders, 70 twelfth graders) | Subsequent to viewing a television program which contained a number of violent acts, each child was asked to evaluate the motivations and consequences surrounding each depicted act of violence. The child's understanding of these characteristics of violent acts was then assessed in terms of the child's willingness to engage in aggressive behavior. |

Appendix B--Continued

| <u>Author and Title</u> | <u>Subjects</u> | <u>Description</u> |
|--------------------------------|---|---|
| Leifer and Roberts (continued) | | |
| Experiment II | 132 children (62 preschool, 40 fifth graders, 30 twelfth graders) | Each child viewed a television program which was edited to provide one of four combinations of motivations/consequences for the portrayed violent acts: good-good, good-bad, bad-good, and bad-bad. Post-viewing measures were similar to the prior study. |
| Experiment III | 160 children (51 fourth graders, 56 seventh graders and 53 tenth graders) | Children viewed one of two versions of a movie in which the justifications for aggression had been edited to provide for an "aggression-less justified" version. Post-viewing measures of aggressive behavior were similar to those employed in the first experiment. |
| Experiment IV | 349 children (99 third graders, 138 sixth graders and 112 tenth graders) | The temporal separation of the motivations for an aggressive act and consequences accruing to the aggressor on the child's post-viewing aggressive behavior, was explored in this present study. Measures of aggressive behavior were similar to previous studies. |

Appendix B--Continued

| <u>Author and Title</u> | <u>Subjects</u> | <u>Description</u> |
|---|--|---|
| Liebert and Baron "Short-Term Effects of Televised Aggression on Children's Aggres- sive Behavior" | 136 children (68 boys and 68 girls) (65, 5- 6 years old; 71, 8-9 years old) | In this study, the child-viewer's willingness to engage in inter- personal aggression was assessed subsequent to viewing either aggressive or neutral television programming. |
| Stein and Friedrich "Television Content and Young Children's Behavior" | 97, 3½ to 5½ years old (52 boys and 45 girls) | Preschool children were exposed to either an aggressive, neutral, or prosocial television diet and then observed during the course of their daily interaction with other children in their class- room. The observations were conducted over a nine-week period including three-week baseline, four-week controlled viewing, and two-week follow-up periods. Changes (over baseline) in either aggressive or prosocial behaviors were used to provide a measure of the impact of television programming. |

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