

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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Title: Parental Evaluative Mediation Used to Lessen
Violent Television-Induced Aggressive Behavior

Abstract Approved: Lisa Reby

Violent television increases the likelihood of ensuing aggressive behavior in the viewer, and young children are especially susceptible to this effect due to their underdeveloped cognitive abilities. Parental evaluative mediation was utilized in an attempt to reduce this effect following the viewing of a violent video. Three groups of preschoolers viewed violent scenes from a movie, then were videotaped playing in a group for 10 minutes. The three groups were those children who viewed the video alone, those who viewed with a parent and discussed the video, and those who viewed with a parent but did not discuss the video. The Aggressive Behavior Checklist was used to measure the children's aggression using the videotapes of free play. No significant differences among groups were found. Several possible reasons are discussed as to why the expected outcome was not found.

PARENTAL EVALUATIVE MEDIATION USED TO
LESSEN VIOLENT TELEVISION-INDUCED
AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR

A Thesis

Presented to

the Division of Psychology and Special Education

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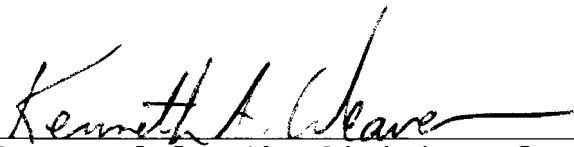
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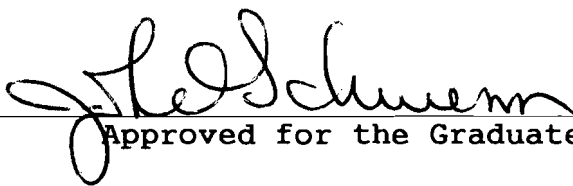
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Television (TV) is a medium that can be found in almost every household in America (Singer & Singer, 1977). In the United States, TV has been used as a diversion where one can escape or gain an emotional release. TV has also been used for companionship and value reinforcement (Lull, 1980).

Many have concerns with the role TV plays in children's lives. TV keeps children from more productive activities, like physical exercise, homework, and creative play (Berger, 1988). Another important concern is TV's role as a socializing agent. With TV, the public learns what to think and believe and how to act (Gerbner, Gross, Jackson-Beeck, Jeffries-Fox, & Signorielli, 1978). As Rubenstein (1983) stated

Television can no longer be considered as a casual part of daily life, as an electronic toy. Research findings have long since destroyed the illusion that television is merely innocuous entertainment. While the learning it provides is mainly incidental rather than direct and formal, it is a significant part of the total acculturation process (p. 820).

Furthermore, the content of the programming shown on TV has been a concern for decades; many suggest that TV is too violent (Dillin, 1968; Kolbert, 1994).

The concern about violence on TV stems from the

research supporting a link between viewing violent TV and subsequent aggressive behavior by the viewer (Bandura, Ross, & Ross, 1961, 1963; Doob & Climie, 1972; Dunand, Berkowitz, & Leyens, 1984; Geen, 1975; Hapkiewicz & Stone, 1974; Noble, 1973; Rothenberg, 1975; Singer, 1986; Steur, Applefield, & Smith, 1971; Thomas, 1982). In addition, different circumstances surrounding the viewing of violent TV have been found to moderate the effects. For example, realistic programming is more likely to prompt aggressive behavior than unrealistic programming (Atkin, 1983; Berkowitz & Alioto, 1973). Also, justification of the acts of the aggressor on TV increases the likelihood of aggression (Berkowitz & Geen, 1966; Hoyt, 1970).

What can be done to buffer the effects of violent TV viewing in children? Many child psychologists maintain one of the most powerful influences on children is the family environment (Eron, 1986). One aspect of the family environment that can be measured is parent-child discourse. This project investigated the effect of parent-child discourse about violent programming on the child's behavior.

Role of TV

Many hypotheses have been posited to explain the enormous influence TV has on its viewers. For example, social learning theory suggests TV characters serve as models for behaviors viewers learn by watching (Berger, 1988). Another supposition is the cultivation hypothesis

(Gerbner et al., 1978) whereby experiences presented on TV are encoded by the viewers as social reality. In other words, TV programming is believed to be a picture of how things are in the real world. Indeed, "media-cultivated facts and values become standards by which we judge even personal experiences and family and community behavior" (Gerbner et al., p. 193). Other psychologists support the cultivation hypothesis (Berkowitz & Alioto, 1973), and many more support the basic premise of TV as a socializing agent.

Given the widespread socializing power of TV, the implications of how much TV U.S. citizens watch is sobering. Over 97% of homes have TV sets. Singer and Benton (1989) reported that preschoolers watch 3.5 to 4 hours of TV daily. Moreover, younger viewers (ages 3-7) watch TV the most (Roberts, 1981). Thus, young children view a great amount of TV.

The implications of viewing so much TV are many. Of most concern are possible detrimental effects. According to Singer and Singer (1985b), heavy viewing of mainstream commercial TV exposes children to extensive violent content. In one day, 2,605 violent scenes can be viewed on TV (Kolbert, 1994).

Exposure to Violence

The Data. Many studies have demonstrated a link between violent TV viewing and subsequent aggressive behavior. Results are usually arranged in two categories: those

studies that provide correlational data and those that point to causation. The large majority of studies provide a significant positive correlation between TV violence viewing and subsequent aggressive behavior (Eron, Huesmann, Lefkowitz, & Walder, 1972; Huesmann, Lagerspetz, & Eron, 1984; Singer & Singer, 1980; Singer, Singer, & Rapaczynski, 1984; Walker & Morley, 1991; Wiegman & Ruttschreuter, 1992). Some psychologists criticize the correlational data by saying that aggressive children prefer violent TV; this is called the preferential-viewing hypothesis. However, in a study conducted by Singer and Singer (1983), "heavy viewing especially of aggressive action adventure or cartoon shows was linked to overt aggression and...the preferential-viewing hypothesis...could (not) explain away such results" (p. 828). Indeed, several studies partialled out the effects of important factors such as class, IQ, ethnicity, violence preference, and total viewing to eliminate various causal factors. When these variables were factored out, violent TV viewing was still found to be a significant predictor variable for aggression (Eron et al.; Singer, 1986; Singer & Singer; Steur et al., 1971).

Moreover, these results have endured over time. Several longitudinal studies have shown that viewing violent programming significantly predicts later aggressive behavior, and many have used the same statistical controls (e.g. factoring out the effects of class, IQ, and ethnicity)

as the correlational studies (Eron et al., 1972; Huesmann et al., 1984; Singer & Singer, 1980).

Experimental studies have found that watching violent programming causes aggressive behavior (Bandura et al. 1961, 1963; Doob & Climie, 1972; Dunand et al., 1984; Hapkiewicz & Stone, 1974; Noble, 1973; Rothenberg, 1975; Singer, 1986; Steur et al., 1971; Thomas, 1982). For example, Hapkiewicz and Stone (1974) tested two groups of lower elementary school children on their interpersonal aggressive behavior in reaction to either an aggressive or a nonaggressive film. Those children who viewed the aggressive film were significantly more aggressive. Steuer et al. found similar results. After exposure to either an aggressive or a nonaggressive film, preschool children's interpersonal aggressive behavior was compared to a baseline measure. Again, exposure to the aggressive film increased aggressive behavior. In these causal studies, several dependent variables were used to measure aggression. Many researchers used operationally defined interpersonal behavior (Bandura et al., 1961, 1963; Hapkiewicz & Stone, 1974; Noble, 1973; Singer, 1986; Steur et al.; Thomas, 1982). Other researchers used punishment or withdrawal of reward in pseudo-learning situations. When confederates answered incorrectly in bogus learning tasks, they were "punished" or a reward was withheld as directed by participants in the studies (Doob & Climie, 1972; Dunand et al.).

Finally, meta-analytic studies provide further support for the harmful effects of viewing violence. For example, Rubenstein (1983) at the National Institute of Mental Health reviewed 2,500 studies and concluded that violence on TV leads to aggressive behavior in children. Moreover, Anderson (1977) reviewed 67 studies to find a significant positive relationship between viewing violence and ensuing aggressive behavior. Thus, evidence from three different types of research appear to support the premise that viewing violent programming leads to aggressive behavior.

More recently, a summary of research which concluded a definite link between TV violence and aggressive behavior sparked nationwide action (Landler, 1996; Marin, 1996; Zoglin, 1996). The TV industry agreed to regulate itself by rating programming shown in a manner similar to what is now used for movies. Parents will be able to block out shows with a particular rating using the V-chip. The V-chip is a device which will soon be standard on new TV sets (or can be installed for about \$1). The V-chip receives encoded information from stations to allow parents to block out certain shows.

Children's Processing of Violent TV. Social learning research indicates children absorb aggressive scripts from TV (Huesmann, 1986; Singer & Singer, 1986). Scripts are guides for behavior and social problem-solving; they are a possible strategy of behavior. If children view an

aggressive script on TV, they assume aggression to be a mode of behavior available to them. For example, Roberts (1981) found that those children who viewed more violence were inclined to believe hitting someone when they are angry at that person is acceptable.

How a child interprets the information on TV is just as important as what the child views (Huesmann, Eron, Klein, Brice, & Fischer, 1983). The problem is especially profound because "young children do not have sufficiently developed cognitive skills to comprehend fully what they are seeing and hearing...or to make appropriate inferences about them" (Eron, 1986, p. 163). Several studies have shown young children have difficulty understanding the motives or attitudes of the actors or the consequences of the behavior shown on TV (Collins, 1973; Collins, Berndt, & Hess, 1974; Collins, Wellman, Keniston, & Westby, 1978). Collins et al. (1978) found that children were less likely to deduce relationships between televised acts and the consequences of those acts. This lack of situational comprehension can be troublesome since the meaning of a televised event has been shown to determine the amount of aggressive behavior in the viewer (Berkowitz & Alioto, 1973). For example, participants who observed a televised boxing match and interpreted it as hostile aggression, acted more aggressively than participants who interpreted the same boxing match as performing for money (Berkowitz & Alioto, 1973). Hence, when

children

do not understand the plots of programs or the implied consequences of portrayed acts....[they cannot] critically appreciate TV programming. Thus it may be argued that in order for children to be in any sense critical TV viewers, they need adult assistance (Corder-Boltz, 1980, p. 106).

Impact of Coviewers on Children's Responses

Several factors appear to be important to viewers' responses when they are watching TV. The personality of the coviewers and the coviewers' comments can influence a child's tendency to exhibit aggressive behavior (Dunand et al., 1984; Leyens, Herman, & Dunand, 1982). Leyens et al. demonstrated that when paired with dominant peers, children were more likely to exhibit aggressive behavior, but when viewing the same scene with submissive peers, they subdued their aggressive tendencies. The comments made by peers also influences subsequent behavior. When coviewing peers made approving remarks about violent programming, the participants reacted aggressively (Dunand et al.).

Similarly, adult coviewing also seems to affect children's cognition and behavior. In a study conducted by Collins, Sobol, and Westby (1981), when adults interpreted the social cues in a film verbally, the children's understanding about the film increased. Also, evaluative comments made by coviewers about the behavior of TV

characters influence the child's understanding and behavior. When positive comments by adults were made about an aggressive film, subsequent aggressive behavior by covieving children increased (Eisenberg, 1980; Hicks, 1968). However, in regards to negative comments by adults, aggressive behavior decreased only when there was continued presence by the adult (Eisenberg, 1980; Grusec, 1973).

Critical Viewing Skills

Teaching critical viewing skills directly to children has also been attempted to change a child's cognitions and behavior in response to viewing TV. The curricula taught to these children differ with the research project. In one project, lessening of approval of violent actions, lessening of readiness to see violence, and increased comprehension about programming was attempted (Voojis & VanderVoort, 1993). In another study, attitudinal change and a lessening of aggressive tendencies were the goals (Huesmann et al., 1983). Yet another project taught the children an understanding of the types of programs, the roles of actors, props, producers, and camera effects, and the differences between real depictions and fantasy on TV. This study also attempted to help the children fathom the realities for victims of violence and the consequences for perpetrators (Singer, Zuckerman, & Singer, 1980). These various programs were successful. The children learned to understand and criticize various TV programs and commercials. Also, the

critical viewing training helped to change the children's attitudes about aggressive shows (Feshbach, Feshbach, & Cohen, 1982; Huesmann et al.; Voojis & VanderVoort). Most importantly, the training lessened aggressive tendencies and aggressive behavior (Huesmann et al.; Singer, 1986).

Impact of Parental Mediation

Parents immensely influence their children. As Eron (1986) expresses:

The most obvious place to intervene in order to diminish the effect of TV violence would be at the programming level. However, the TV networks have never conceded that there is a relation between violence displayed on the screen and the viewer's subsequent aggressive behavior, and they have steadfastly refused to lower the level of violence and mayhem with which they have been filling the airwaves....Thus...it is up to parents...to counteract the harmful effects of TV violence (p. 156).

Correlational evidence suggests parental attitudes toward aggression may have more of an impact than TV on their children (Dominick & Greenberg, 1972). This may be due to the parents' role in socializing their children. "Parents socialize their children in many different ways. They are models, managers, teachers, conveyors of social norms, and providers of emotional milieux" (Clarke-Stewart, 1988, p.

54). Thus, many reach the conclusion that parents are the most influential authority in the development of children.

Since TV can have possible detrimental effects on children, and since parents are more influential than the TV set, parental mediation of the children's TV experience is critical. First, mediation requires parent-child coviewing. Children view the most TV from after school through prime time (Field, 1987; Singer & Singer, 1976). Also, TV watching is the most frequently shared activity among most family members (Field); studies find the majority of adult programs children view are watched with parents (Field; St. Peters, Fitch, Huston, Wright, & Eakins, 1991).

Hence, the opportunity is available for parental mediation of children's TV viewing. The importance of such mediation to a child's development is apparent. Singer and Singer (1985b) summarize it this way: "with the TV set so prominently featured in the American home...it would follow that parental mediation...of TV-viewing may be an important feature of the child's cognitive and affective growth" (p. 76). Since children have trouble interpreting TV and parents watch TV with their children, the obvious conclusion is that parents help the children interpret TV. This will ensure that the parents' values and beliefs will be taught to the children rather than the values and beliefs portrayed on TV. "Explicit parental commentary on the truth value of TV programming may be one basis on which children's perceptions

of the validity and generalizability of TV programming are formed" (Messaris & Sarett, 1981, p. 236).

Mediation is defined as "some form of active effort by parents and others to translate the complexities of the physical and social environment, as well as the TV medium, into terms capable of comprehension by children at various levels of cognitive development" (Desmond, Singer, Singer, Calam, & Colimore, 1985, p. 463). Furthermore, different kinds of mediation have been identified (Weaver & Barbour, 1992). Restrictive mediation is setting televiewing rules; parents may limit viewing time or kinds of programs. Unfocused mediation is indirect; parents make casual remarks about the TV content. The final type of mediation, evaluative, seems to be the most useful. Evaluative mediation is discussing and interpreting programming with the child. When parents watch TV with the purpose of discussing the content with their child, they are using evaluative mediation (Weaver & Barbour).

Despite the importance of parental mediation, 85% of parents do not guide or control what their children watch (Singer & Benton, 1989). They tend not to restrict the amount or kind of TV viewed (National Institute of Mental Health, 1982). In general, the practice of parental mediation is neither deliberate nor explicit (Bryce & Leichter, 1983). The verbalizations parents provide are usually in the context of the programming and are only

comments, not interactive discussion. Hence, evaluative mediation in the home is rare.

Evaluative parental mediation affects children's cognitions about TV. First, parents who discuss the contents of a program can increase what the child learns (Atkin & Gontz, 1974; Ball & Bogatz, 1970). Evaluative mediation also affects children's interpretations of media content (Austin, Roberts, & Nass, 1990; Corder-Boltz, 1980). For example, mothers are influential in how their children perceive TV characters (Messaris & Kerr, 1984). Furthermore, evaluative mediation increases skepticism in children, indicating critical viewing skills (Austin, 1993). One point to consider, however, is that mere covieing may not influence the children's interpretations of TV (Austin et al.).

The behavior of children is also affected by evaluative parental mediation (Messaris & Sarett, 1981). According to Singer and Singer (1985b), "the degree to which parents discuss and interpret the world for children are important influences on the development of self-control and avoidance of unwarranted expression of negative affect or anger" (p. 75). Indeed, a longitudinal study evaluating mothers' mediation of their children's TV environment found those children who discussed TV content with their mothers showed less aggression one year later than those without evaluative mediation (Singer & Singer, 1985a).

Conclusion

Studies have linked viewing violence on TV and subsequent aggressive behavior. Additionally, the family has been proven to be a strong influence on children. Thus, a logical question to ask is: To what degree, if any, does parental mediation lessen TV-induced aggression?

Specifically, this study investigated whether parents discussing with their children critical TV viewing would lessen the subsequent aggressive behavior of children after they view a violent film. Also, this study attempted to determine whether the presence of the parent during viewing would reduce the child's subsequent aggressive behavior.

CHAPTER 2

METHOD

Participants

The sample for this study consisted of 38 preschool children (21 boys and 17 girls) ages four and five. One of each child's parents also participated in the study. Both parents and children were volunteers from six different preschools in a midwestern city with a population of approximately 26,000.

Design

The study used a between-subjects design to explore the effect of viewing conditions on children's aggressive behavior. The viewing conditions, or independent variable, included viewing alone, viewing with a parent, and viewing with a parent and discussing. Subjects were matched on gender, then randomly assigned to one of the three treatment conditions. The dependent variable was measured aggression.

Apparatus

Informed Consent. The informed consent form (see Appendix A) described the intent of the study. This form was signed by the parents of the children who participated.

Demographic and Television Questionnaire. The Demographic and Television Questionnaire (see Appendix B) asked the child's age and gender as well as the parent's education level and gender. In addition, it requested information about the child's viewing habits, how frequently

and what kinds of programs the child watches, and how often viewing occurs with a parent.

Scene from the movie City Heat. A scene from the 1984 movie City Heat was selected for viewing. The two to three minute scene portrays a fistfight between four men engaging in punching and shoving activities.

Aggressive Behavior Checklist. The Aggressive Behavior Checklist (see Appendix C) was constructed to measure aggression. It was developed as a modified version of the Child Behavior Checklist-Direct Observation Form (Revised Edition) with changes in the format of administration and the exclusion of items that do not rate aggressive behavior (Achenbach, 1986; Reed & Edelbrock, 1983). The reason for modification was a need for a quicker and simpler form focusing solely on the measurement of aggressive behavior. In addition, other sources were used to ensure a comprehensive checklist (Berger, 1988; Chaplin, 1968). The Aggressive Behavior Checklist (see Appendix C) lists 14 specific behaviors. Raters make a tally mark next to one of 10 physical or 4 verbal behaviors for each act of aggression viewed during a 10-minute span, and then raters add the tally marks to obtain a raw score value for each section.

Validation of the Aggression Behavior Checklist was ensured by a panel of three developmental psychology instructors, one special education instructor, and one early childhood education instructor at Emporia State University.

These instructors validated the checklist using the procedure in Appendix D.

Six independent observers were trained by the author of the checklist in a one-hour session using videotaped free play of preschoolers and a prepared training form (see Appendix E). After training, the observers rated two videotapes using the Aggressive Behavior Checklist: one for initial dependent variable measures and another for inter-rater reliability. Reliability was .88 on the total scores. The physical scores yielded .90 inter-rater reliability, and the verbal scores yielded .85.

Procedure

Parents and their children were recruited by sending letters via the preschool that each child attends (see Appendix F). Responding parents were given an appointment date and time for both previewing the videotape (which was optional) and for the experiment itself.

Initially, the experimenter explained informed consent to the parents, and the parents read and signed the form. Next, the parents were instructed according to the experimental level to which they were assigned. The following are instructions given to the parents:

Group #1: Viewing Alone. "Please go into the viewing room with your children and tell them they will be watching some TV. Do not elaborate on the kind of program they will see. Tell them they will be watching it alone for several

minutes, and then instruct them to wait in the room until someone comes to get them. After instructing your children, leave the viewing room."

Group #2: Viewing with Parent. "Please go into the viewing room with your children and tell them that both of you will be watching some TV. Do not elaborate on the kind of program you will see. Also, please do not discuss the program with the children. If the children ask questions, tell them 'Shh! Let's watch the show.' If that doesn't satisfy the children, please tell them, 'Let's talk about it when we get home.' When the video is over, please wait in the room until someone comes to get you and your children. Here is a card which gives you your cues if your children asks you questions. Remember, do not discuss the program with your children."

The card the parent is given has two statements. "Shh! Let's watch the show." and "Let's talk about it when we get home" are typed on the card.

Group #3: Viewing and Discussing. "Please go into the viewing room with your children and tell them that you will be watching some TV. After the video, please take this script (see Appendix G) and use it to discuss the content of the video with your children. The script has specific words, but you are welcome to change the words to make it more natural. Also, your children may respond in such a way that you may need to wander from the script. This is fine, as

long as the basic points in the script are discussed as presented."

After the parents were instructed, the children watched a scene from the movie City Heat. After viewing, the parents were taken to a separate room and asked to complete the demographic and TV questionnaire (see Appendix B). The children were separated into groups of three (one subject from each treatment condition) and taken to a room with a research assistant who sat in the corner reading a magazine. The children were told: "Your parents are in the other room. I want you to take these toys and build your favorite thing. I want all of you to work together. Make something together."

The children were videotaped for 10+ minutes while they were playing. Six trained independent raters measured aggression with the Aggressive Behavior Checklist using the videotaped interactions.

Finally, the parents were debriefed as to the hypothesis of the study. They were told that results would be given to them on through their respective preschool.

CHAPTER 3

RESULTS

The dependent variable, aggressive behavior, was operationally defined as raw scores on the Aggressive Behavior Checklist. A one way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to analyze all data, and alpha level was held at .05.

Demographic and TV History

Several demographic and TV-viewing behavior measures were obtained (see Appendix B). These factors included elements such as age and gender of the child and how much TV is watched by the child in one day. These measures were analyzed with an analysis of variance (ANOVA) to ensure that any differences between the three treatment levels were not caused by these factors. None of the differences between the groups when comparing these variables from the TV and Demographic Questionnaire, were significant at the .05 alpha level.

Physical Aggression

Physical aggression was measured with the Aggressive Behavior Checklist. Physical aggression included items such as "hits," "kicks," "throws things," and "destroys." Physical aggression was compared using a one-way ANOVA on the three treatment levels of viewing alone, viewing with parent, and viewing and discussing. None of the physical aggression means on the Aggressive Behavior Checklist were

statistically significantly different, $F(2, 38) = .80, p > .05$.

Verbal Aggression

Verbal aggression was also measured with the Aggressive Behavior Checklist. Items such as "threatens," "uses hateful language," and "ridicules or belittles" were included in this portion. Verbal aggression was compared between the three treatment levels with a one-way ANOVA. The differences among the verbal aggression means were not significant, $F(2, 38) = .07, p > .05$.

Total Aggression

Additionally, a total aggression score was obtained by adding the physical and verbal portions of the Aggressive Behavior Checklist. Statistically, the differences between these means were not significant, $F(2, 38) = .80, p = .05$. Means and standard deviations of the dependent measures for the three treatment levels are presented in Table 1. Each observed act of aggression adds one point to the score.

Table 1

Comparison of Means and Standard Deviations of Aggression
Scores by Viewing Conditions

Condition	<u>n</u>	Scores		
		Physical	Verbal	Total
Viewing Alone	13			
<u>M</u>		0.46	0.39	0.84
<u>SD</u>		0.97	0.97	1.57
Viewing with Parent	13			
<u>M</u>		1.07	0.36	1.43
<u>SD</u>		2.95	1.08	3.01
Viewing and Discussing	12			
<u>M</u>		0.17	0.25	0.42
<u>SD</u>		0.39	0.62	0.90

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

The current study examined whether a link between viewing violence on television (TV) and subsequent aggressive behavior existed. Decades of correlational (Eron et al., 1972; Huesmann et al., 1984; Singer & Singer, 1980; Singer, Singer, & Rapaczynski, 1984; Walker & Morley, 1991; Wiegman & Ruttschreuter, 1992) and causal (Bandura et al., 1961, 1963; Doob & Climie, 1972; Dunand et al., 1984; Hapkiewicz & Stone, 1974; Noble, 1973; Rothenberg, 1975; Singer, 1986; Steur et al., 1971; Thomas, 1982) data support this connection. While the most obvious remedy for TV-induced aggressive behavior would be to eliminate violent programming from TV, attempts have failed for various reasons (Eron, 1986). Thus, another method is needed to reduce the likelihood of aggressive behavior in those who view violent TV. Since an especially vulnerable population is preschool children (Collins, 1973; Collins et al., 1974; Collins et al., 1978; Eron) and since parents are an enormous influence on their children (Dominick & Greenberg, 1972; Eron), parental mediation seemed appropriate to buffer the effects of viewing violent TV in preschool children for this study. The most useful kind of mediation, evaluative, was employed because it involves discussing the programming viewed interactively with the child (Weaver & Barbour, 1992). Thus, this study investigated whether parents

discussing with their children critical TV viewing would lessen the subsequent aggressive behavior of children after they view a violent film. Also, this study attempted to determine whether the presence of the parent during viewing would reduce the child's subsequent aggressive behavior.

Hypotheses

After analysis, no significant differences were found between the treatment levels, and neither hypothesis was supported. Thus, whether parents viewing and/or discussing aggressive TV material with their children had an effect on the children's aggressive behavior is unclear because the manipulation did not produce aggressive behavior.

The short, three minute video did not stimulate the children enough to induce aggressive behavior. Perhaps more display time or more aggressive behavior from the TV characters was needed to influence the children to be aggressive. Indeed, a random review of the literature found many studies to have a stimulation time of 6 to 21 minutes (with an average time of 11 minutes) (Bandura et al., 1961, 1963; Eisenberg, 1980; Hapkiewicz & Stone, 1974; Thomas, 1982). Thus, the three minute video shown in this study probably was inadequate to produce the expected aggressive response. If this is true, then another study with a longer video might produce different results.

Several other explanations could be rendered regarding these results. For example, the supervisor in the room could

have inhibited aggression in the children. Also, the children were asked to play on the table (so they would be in view of the video camera). This request could have limited movement, exploration, and hence, aggression. Additionally, the Aggressive Behavior Checklist may not measure aggression comprehensively. Thus, if the checklist was not sensitive enough to measure all kinds of aggression, then accuracy would be sacrificed and lower, incorrect scores would be obtained.

Finally, the setting might be influential in the obtained results. This study was conducted in a university building, a setting foreign to the children. The unfamiliar setting may have inhibited the children from behaving as they would have in a more familiar place (more aggressively). If this postulate is true, then conducting a similar study in the children's preschools or homes would be beneficial.

Further Research

No conclusive evidence is found with this study; indeed, no aggression was produced by the manipulation. However, this research is important because it highlights the serious problem of the effects of violent TV on children and attempts to find a solution. Further research could eliminate possible confounds by (1) lengthening the stimulation video to ensure an expected response, (2) using a video camera behind a one-way mirror to record aggression,

thus eliminating the inhibitory researcher's presence and the limited movement request, (3) validating the Aggressive Behavior Checklist further to eliminate the possibility of restricted quantification, and (4) measuring aggression in a more familiar setting, like the preschool, to lessen the likelihood of inhibited response patterns.

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APPENDIX A

Consent Form

Consent Form

Please read the following statement and if you are in agreement with all of the criteria, sign your name at the bottom of the paragraph where indicated.

I agree to participate and allow my child, _____, to participate in a study to be conducted by Jodi Hilton at Emporia State University. The purpose of this study is to assess the effects of television on preschool children's behavior. I have had an opportunity to view the television scene which my child will be viewing. I discern that all information is anonymous and confidential. I realize that my child or I may withdraw from this study at any time.

Having fully read and understood the above statement, and understanding that I am free to ask any additional questions, I hereby consent and agree to participate in this experiment.

Signature

Witness

Date

APPENDIX B

Demographic and Television Questionnaire

Subject # _____

Demographic and Television Questionnaire

Please complete the following:

1. Your gender: _____ female _____ male

2. Your highest education level:

- _____ 8th grade education
 _____ high school diploma
 _____ some college
 _____ associate's or trade degree
 _____ bachelor's degree
 _____ some graduate school
 _____ graduate degree

3. Your child's age: _____

4. Your child's gender: _____ female _____ male

5. Preschool your child attends: _____

6. Approximately how much television does your child watch each day?

- _____ less than an hour _____ 3 hours
 _____ 1-2 hours _____ 4 or more hours
 _____ 2 hours

7. How much of this viewing is with you (the parent)? _____ hrs

8. What kinds of programs does your child watch (include shows the child watches with the rest of the family)?

a. Cartoons: (examples: Ninja Turtles, Bugs Bunny)
 ___ a lot ___ some ___ little ___ none

b. Educational shows: (examples: Sesame Street, Mister Rogers)
 ___ a lot ___ some ___ little ___ none

c. Comedy/sitcoms: (examples: Roseanne, Home Improvement)
 ___ a lot ___ some ___ little ___ none

d. Mystery/drama: (examples: Murder She Wrote, All My Children)
 ___ a lot ___ some ___ little ___ none

e. Action/adventure: (examples: Renegade, movies like Home Alone, Terminator)
 ___ a lot ___ some ___ little ___ none

f. Game shows/other: (examples: Jeopardy, sports, etc.)
 ___ a lot ___ some ___ little ___ none

APPENDIX C

Aggressive Behavior Checklist

Aggressive Behavior Checklist

Subject # _____

When a person INTENDS TO HARM ANOTHER by:

T
O
T
A
L
S

		1 min.	2 min.	3 min.	4 min.	5 min.	6 min.	7 min.	8 min.	9 min.	10 min.
PHYSICAL	HITS:										
	KICKS:										
	BITES:										
	SCRATCHES:										
	PINCHES:										
	PUSHES OR PULLS:										
	TRIPS:										
	SPITS:										
	THROWS THINGS:										
	DESTROYS										
VERBAL	THREATENS:										
	USES HATEFUL										
	RIDICULES/BELITTLE										
	SCREAMS:										

PHYSICAL SCORE: _____

VERBAL SCORE: _____

TOTAL SCORE: _____

APPENDIX D

Letter to Jury Panel Members

Dear Jury Panel Member:

Thank you for participating in the validation of the Aggressive Behavior Checklist. As you are aware, there is a great need for reliable, valid direct observation checklists measuring specific behaviors. Aggression is one trait that lacks in direct observation forms, especially as it applies to preschoolers.

Included you will find the measure itself and then a form for training observers to use it. The training form basically operationally defines the different behaviors. Please look at the behaviors listed on the checklist and mark out any you feel would not represent aggression. If there is an omission of necessary behaviors to identify aggression, please list them below. When you have finished, please place in the enclosed envelope and deposit in campus mail [or in my box in the bullpen (VH310)].

If you have any questions regarding validating this instrument, please contact me at my office (316) 341-5803 or home (316) 342-1599. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely, .

Jodi Hilton
Graduate Student, Psychology
Emporia State University

APPENDIX E

Aggressive Behavior Checklist Training Form

Aggressive Behavior Checklist Training Form

Ten minute intervals: Each time you observe a behavior on the checklist, mark the box corresponding to the minute you are evaluating. This is a tally sheet to measure how many behaviors (9 physical & 4 verbal) listed occurs per minute during a ten-minute interval.

When a person, unprovoked, intends to harm another or tries to gain control by:

- a. *Intention to harm* meaning:
 - no play face (smiling, laughing)
- b. *Another* meaning:
 - aimed at someone, not just in general

PhysicalHits:

- hitting another with an open or closed hand
- OR -hitting at another with an open or closed hand
- OR -elbowing

Kicks:

- kicking another with knee or foot
- OR -kicking at another with knee or foot

Bites:

- bites another or bites at another

Scratches:

- scratching another
- OR -scratching at another by threatening with claw-like hand

Pinches:

- pinches another
- OR -pinches at another with forefinger & thumb in pinching motion

Pushes or pulls:

- pushes another with the hands
- OR -pushes another with the shoulders (body check)
- OR -pulls at another's body part (arm, hair, hand, leg)

Tripping:

- putting a foot out and making another fall or stumble

Spitting:

- spitting on or at someone

Throws things at another:

- uses hands to throw toys, furniture, personal belongings
- AND -only throwing things at another person

Destroys property:

- hits with hand or object, stomps on, or kicks something
- AND -can be another's property or own

VerbalThreatens:

- says to another that they will do the physical descriptions above
- AND -can threaten person talking to or referring to another person

Uses hateful language:

- expresses to another their dislike for another
- AND -can use hateful language toward person or talking about another person

Ridicules/Belittles:

- making fun of another person, calling another names, insults, put-downs
- AND -the object of ridicule can be person talking to or another

Screaming:

- Raises voice noticeably

APPENDIX F

Letter to Parent

Dear Parent:

My name is Jodi Hilton, and I am a graduate student in the Psychology Division at Emporia State University. My colleagues and I are conducting a study to learn more about the effects of television on young children's behavior, and you and your child have the opportunity to participate in this important research project.

I'm sure you're as concerned as the psychological community is about the effects of television on children. The information gained from this study will be helpful in identifying television's influences on children. Your participation is completely confidential: any published or shared material resulting from this study will not disclose the identity of individual participants.

Participation in this study will take approximately 45 minutes during one session in the month of November. Please fill out the bottom portion of this letter and send it back to the preschool with your child. Completing the bottom portion does not commit you or your child. It only allows the researcher to call you to answer your questions and make an appointment.

If you have any questions, you may call me at Emporia State University (316) 341-5803 or at my home (316) 342-1599. Also, my advisor, Dr. Lisa Reboy will be available at (316) 341-5814. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jodi Hilton
Graduate Student
Division of Psychology
and Special Education

Lisa Reboy, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
Division of Psychology
and Special Education

Child's name: _____ Parent's name: _____

Gender of child: _____ female _____ male

Phone: (DAY): () _____
(EVENING): () _____

Best time to reach you
to make appointment:

When available to participate in study:
-(Mark all that available, even though will only
participate in one session for roughly 45 minutes)

- _____ Thursday, November 17th, evening
- _____ Friday, November 18th, evening
- _____ Saturday, November 19th, morning

APPENDIX G

Script for Group 3 Parents

PARENTS: You can modify this to make it more natural, but you need to keep the messages the same.

Parent: What did you think about what you just saw on television?

Child:-----

Parent: You know, the men on TV are what's called actors. They're just pretend fighting. That's what actors do, they pretend. Did you know that what's on television isn't always real?

Child:-----

Parent: Most of what you see on television is made up. Just a bunch of people pretending. The way they make the movie makes it look real. Do you understand?

Child:-----

Parent: (Explain further if necessary) Did you know that when people hurt other people bad things can happen?

Child:-----

Parent: Yes, when people get hurt, they need to heal. Like when you scrape your knee, it needs to get better before you feel better. And they don't show people getting better on television very often, do they? That's because it's make-believe, and in the real world, people get hurt and have to get better. Did you also know that when people hurt other people, they get punished?

Child:-----

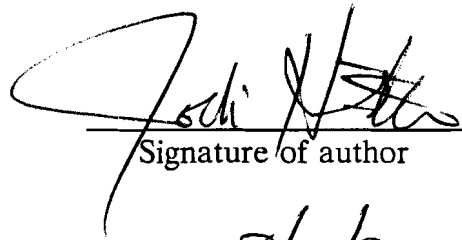
Parent: Sometimes, people can be sent to jail for a long time or have to do extra work to make up for hurting someone else. Do you know how I expect you to act?

Child:-----

Parent: All of that punching and shoving that they showed on TV is make-believe, and when it happens in real life, people get hurt. I don't want you to act that way because I don't want you or anybody else to get hurt, OK?

Permission to Copy Statement

I, Jodi Hilton, hereby submit this thesis to Emporia State University as partial fulfillment of the requirements for an advanced degree. I agree that the Library of the University may make it available for use in accordance with its regulations governing materials of this type. I further agree that quoting, photocopying, or other reproduction of this document is allowed for private study, scholarship (including teaching, and research purposes of a nonprofit nature. No copying which involves potential financial gain will be allowed without written permission of the author.



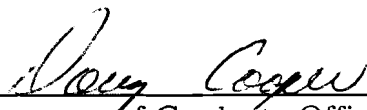
Signature of author

8/30/96

Date

Parental Evaluative Mediation
used to Lessen Violent Television-
Induced Aggressive Behavior
In Preschool Children

Title of Thesis Project



Signature of Graduate Office Staff

August 30, 1996

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