Television Violence - Its Effect on Society?

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Chapter One - Justification for Research

We live in a society of information explosion. The American people are surrounded by a wealth of printed and visual information through newspapers, magazines, billboards, radio, television and films. It is difficult to assess the attention these media elicit and the effect, if any, media has on American life. If we isolate one media, television, and examine the current statistics, the following trends emerge: (1) there are 100 million television sets in the United States and 95 percent of all homes have at least one television set; (2) by the time a child gets through high school, he has spent 11,000 hours in the classroom and 22,000 hours in front of a television set; (3) 43 percent of adult Americans (18 years and older) select television as the mass medium they use most of the time for entertainment; (4) the average adult spends ten years of his life watching television. All of these items indicate that a significant number of adults and children in America watch television for a significant amount of time. Since television is such an important medium, investigation of its impact upon those viewing it would seem to be a significant undertaking. The statistics previously cited generate some penetrating questions: What effect does 22,000 hours of viewing have on a growing teenager? Does the violent content of programs affect teenagers and adults? Is television viewing healthy for a person in a complex modern
Is it possible that the violence viewed on television can be linked to the increase in violent crimes committed or the increased use of violent forms of protest? We need to find the answer to questions such as this. In an effort to study the problem of violence in general, the National Commission on The Causes and Prevention of Violence was created by President Johnson in an Executive Order dated June 10, 1968. The murders of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy had a direct affect on the establishment of the commission. The commission's responsibility was to study the prevalence and effects of violence in America. In a December 10, 1969, report, the commission recommended that "the nation should double its investment in the prevention of crime and the administration of justice. . . . Further, we recommend the adoption of a national firearms policy that will limit the general availability of handguns." Robert K. Baker and mr. Sandra Ball prepared a staff report for the commission in 1969, entitled Violence and The Media. One conclusion reached in the report was: "Thus far it has been shown that (1) television programming is and has been saturated with violence; (2) the norms implicit in the television world of violence support the use of violence as a means of conflict resolution and as a successful and legitimate means to an array of personal ends; (3) many social scientists conclude that audiences exposed to media violence over a period of time can absorb norms and attitudes of violence which are
implicitly or explicitly contained in media entertainment programming; and (4) many social scientists conclude that the media can stimulate aggressive tendencies which, under some conditions, can lead to aggressive behavior."10 This staff report was followed in 1972 by a report conducted and published by the Surgeon General's Office entitled Television and Social Behavior. The report summarized the results of twenty-three research projects on television violence and "became the subject of intense controversy because its conclusions were 'preliminary' and 'attentive.'"11

There are legitimate charges of failure on both sides of the argument. Against the media come charges of insensitivity. The authors of the report Violence and The Media state: "...it is clear that the media - including their educational and professional organizations - have shown an appalling lack of concern about the effects of particular media practices and little interest in research to determine how, under any reasonable standard, they might do better."12 At the same time, the media can honestly say that research has failed to link televised violence with actual incidents of violence in society. The conclusions of research have been indecisive. Since television is an important and significant communication medium, and since the issue of the effects of televised violence has not been resolved, it is worth investigating the available research to determine what we know and to assess the findings.
Chapter Two - Review of Literature and Results of Research

The amount of pertinent articles and research material available on the subject of television violence is overwhelming. Much of what is written in popular magazines and television publications is highly opinionated, rather than reporting of systematic investigation of the topic. Interestingly, though, many professional research teams have studied various aspects of television viewing. This section will deal with the majority of relative research studies that have been conducted in this field. The studies are organized in the following groups: the effects of media violence on social learning; mass media as activators of latent tendencies; value modification by mass media; and the content and context of violence in the mass media.

A. Social Learning

1. General trend: Research on the effects of the mass media on social learning has focused upon young children, ranging in age from nursery age to second grade. In six studies surveyed, similar hypotheses and methodologies were used to assess the effect of mass media. The findings of the studies have not found consistent support for the theory that viewing of mass media can influence the level of aggression exhibited. Albert Bandura and his research staff conducted four of the six studies. The first two studies, conducted in 1963, tested the hypothesis that children learn aggressive behavior from television and that they can imitate the specific act of aggression they have observed in
the behavior of adults on film.\textsuperscript{13} While the researches found that children mimic the aggressive behavior of adults, most of the aggression was not sufficiently close to that exhibited by the adult models to be called imitative.\textsuperscript{14} The results of the other two studies, conducted in 1965 and 1966, were more supportive of their hypotheses. In these studies, Bandura predicted that children could show more imitative aggression when offered an incentive or when asked to verbalize the behavior as they watched it on film. The experimenters concluded that children are capable of more imitative aggression than they had initially shown. Also, the children's power of observation and retention was increased when asked to verbalize the action as they watched.\textsuperscript{15}

Alberta E. Seigel conducted a study somewhat different from the Bandura investigations, in 1958. Seigel hypothesized that children's reality conceptions are influenced by fictional presentations. The subjects were second grade children and they were asked to complete a story about a taxi driver after having heard several dramas concerning a fictional taxi driver. Seigel found that more subjects who heard a drama with high aggression levels finished their own story aggressively. The investigation warns us that the distinction between reality and fantasy may be blurred for normal young children.\textsuperscript{16}

2. \textbf{Isolated Findings}: In all of the Bandura studies there was a trend to support the hypothesis indicating an impact of the mass media on social learning. In the Bandura
study testing the ability of children to learn aggressive behavior from television, it was found that children who had observed adult aggression prior to play were more aggressive in their subsequent play than those who had not observed any adult aggression. Another Bandura study found that children who witnessed aggressive behavior rewarded on films consistently exhibited more aggressive acts during play than did children who witnessed the aggressive behavior punished. However, when an incentive was provided to commit the aggressive acts all children aggressed more frequently.

The Seigal study found that children who had heard violent endings to the taxi driver story finished their own story with more aggression than did children who had heard constructive endings. These findings seem to indicate that children learn, remember, and may imitate behavior they witness on television.

3. Significant Differences: The research in the area of social learning portray remarkable similarities. All of the studies used young children for subjects. The method of evaluating and measuring the child's aggressive behavior was the same. In every study, the child was observed during a play period by trained observers.

The Bandura studies provide two variables that seem to influence the aggressive acts committed by children. When the subjects were offered an incentive of candy and soft drinks, each subject aggressed more often. The other variable was verbalization. The group of subjects that verbalized during
the filmed aggression was able to reproduce seventeen sequences of behavior while the control group was able to reproduce only fourteen sequences. Alberta Seigal's hypothesis that children's reality conceptions are influenced by fictional characters is quite different from Bandura's basic studies on imitation. Seigal sought to establish a means of evaluating the effects of cartoons on children's behavior. Despite the variables in the Bandura studies and the Seigal's novel hypothesis, a variety of research methods and hypotheses does not exist for this subject area.

4. Critical Evaluation: There are several major problems with the research conducted concerning the effect of the mass media on social learning. None of the six studies reviewed attempted to measure the normal aggressive nature of the child before exposure to the aggressive acts of adults on film. The child should have been closely observed during free play to determine his natural tendencies toward aggression. The findings could be biased toward aggression because some of the subjects were naturally more aggressive. The limited age group of the subjects makes it difficult to generalize the findings to society. If all age levels had been used, and in each age group it was found that televised aggression increased subsequent aggressive acts, the findings would be more impressive. In the Bandura studies, the subjects witnessed aggressive behavior only to inanimate objects, such as a Bobo doll. However, television aggression
is not limited to such a narrow scope. An attempt needs to be made to measure a child's reaction to aggression against another human being. Although Alberta E. Seigel tried to prove that the distinction between reality and fantasy may be blurred for normal young children, the study needs to be duplicated using media other than radio before any generalization could be made about mass media other than radio. The method of measuring and analyzing the subjects' responses can not be ignored. Because of the age of the subjects, the experimenters had to rely on the observation of trained personnel. But, at best, this is second-hand information. We have no method of evaluating what the child is actually experiencing and feeling during the period of time he is being observed. These problems of normal aggression level, limited age group studied, aggression toward inanimate objects only, and the method of evaluating and analyzing the aggressive responses of the subjects minimize the findings of research in the area of social learning.
B. Latent Tendencies

1. General Trend: Research has also been conducted in the area of mass media as activators of latent tendencies. The major work in this field has been conducted by Eleanor E. Maccoby, W. C. Wilson, Albert Bandura, Joan E. Grusec, and Frances L. Menlove. Once again, the studies have produced inconclusive results; some findings support the thesis, others do not. The basic hypothesis in all studies was that viewers identify with certain movie characters and that observational learning depends on the viewer's perception of this common identity. The two studies conducted by Maccoby and Wilson concluded that generally upper class boys tend to identify with upper class characters and lower class boys tend to identify with lower class characters. They also found that girls generally remember more movie content.19

Bandura discovered that verbalizing what was seen increased ability to reproduce the acts later; however, he could not support the prediction that learning depends on the perception of a common identity.20

Leonard Berkowitz and Russell Geen studied the effect of a name-mediated cue as an activator for aggressive acts. The evidence gathered by this research team indicated that observed aggression by itself need not lead to overt aggression by the audience. 21
2. **Isolated Findings**: Bandura and his associates used thirty-six children of varying ages. He subdivided the children into six groups of six children each. Each group was shown a movie in which an adult did various simple acts with various objects. Three of the groups were informed beforehand that they would be tested on their ability to imitate the acts. The other three groups were not told anything. One person from each group verbalized the acts while watching the movie. One person from each group was asked to count while watching. Then all of the children were tested. It was found that verbalizing what was seen increased the ability to reproduce the acts later, while counting served as a distraction that reduced the ability to reproduce the acts. The advance warning had little effect on the subjects' ability to reproduce the aggressive acts and in statistical analysis only served to reduce the spread between the verbalizing versus counting.²²

Maccoby and Wilson conducted two studies, one focusing on socio-economic levels as a basis for identification and the other study focusing on sex as a basis. Both studies were conducted with seventh grade classes of the Greater Boston area, utilizing students from various socio-economic levels. The hypotheses for the two studies were similar and included these points in common: (1) lower class children tend to identify with the lower class character and the middle class
children tend to identify with the middle class character, (2) viewers who identify with a character remember more of that character's words and actions than viewers who do not identify with that character, and (3) since both leading characters are boys, the predictions about identification apply more to male viewers than to female viewers. The findings tended to support the hypotheses. Seventy-five percent of the upper class boys chose the upper class character. Fifty-six percent of the lower class boys chose the corresponding lower class character. Differences in sex affected content retention. Boys recalled the aggressive content better, and girls recalled the non-aggressive content. The interesting finding that was not included in the hypotheses was that, regardless of the social class level of the boy's family, if he aspires to a relatively high occupation level, he tends to identify with the upper class character.23

Berkowitz and Geen found, in their study of name-mediated cue properties, that subjects giving the greatest number of aggressive responses were those who watched the aggressive film after being aroused aggressively by the experimenter's accomplice before each film and who were given the opportunity of punishing the accomplice whose name associated him with the victim of the witnessed violence.24 The method of punishment in this study was a series of electric shocks administered by the subjects to the frustrator after viewing
the film. Berkowitz and Geen concluded from this study that "evidence was presented which indicated that observed aggression, by itself, need not lead to overt aggression by the audience. The persons who are most likely to be attacked by someone who has recently witnessed violence are those people having appropriate aggression-eliciting cue properties. These cue properties seem to be derived from association with the victim, rather than the administrator, of the violence."25

3. **Significant Differences:** Unlike the studies concerning social learning, the studies in the area of latent tendencies represent a greater variety of hypotheses and methodologies. First of all, the ages of the subjects are quite varied. Maccoby and Wilson used ten classes of seventh grade students from public schools; nursery age children were surveyed by both the Bandura team and Walters and Parke; Berkowitz and Geen used male undergraduates at the University of Wisconsin. Secondly, the methods of measuring responses were different. The Bandura study employed the use of trained observers to evaluate the aggressive responses of the children. Maccoby and Wilson administered a questionnaire that sought to measure: (a) how well the subjects liked the movie, (b) identification with characters, and (c) recall of content.26 In the Berkowitz and Geen study, the measure of aggression was the score for the average duration of each electric shock given by the subject to his frustrator.

Finally, the focus of the studies dealing with latent
tendencies was varied more than in the social learning studies. All of the previous studies focused on observational learning; however, in this section identification, name-mediated cue properties, the absence of punishment consequences were all focused upon, in addition to observational learning.

4. Critical Evaluation: The studies reported in this section are so different that it is difficult to evaluate them as a group. Therefore, each study should be considered individually. The Walters and Parke study predicted the subjects could be induced to deviate by the absence of punishment. The methodology and tests used in this study are excellent. However, the study dealt with kindergarten age children. These children were left in a room for fifteen minutes, with the instructions not to play with the toys. With that age child and the time limit involved, the deviation could have been caused by the inability of the youngsters to refrain from activity rather than the promise of a reward or punishment. Duplicate studies should be conducted using older children as subjects to determine if the same results will be found.

The Bandura study was interesting because it is difficult to see a relationship between the methodology and the hypothesis being tested. The researchers wanted to prove that observational learning depends on perception of the model in terms of common identity. However, the variables of verbalizing during film, counting, and the foreknowledge of the requirement to imitate acts do not establish or attempt to measure a common identity. Instead, the study was measuring recall, rather than identity.

The Maccoby and Wilson studies were well constructed.
The studies involved 269 subjects, both male and female. At the conclusion of the first study, the researchers could not tell whether the identification with characters contributed to the results. They felt that the results could have resulted from selective perception rather than identification. Therefore, the second study was conducted. The results of the second study verified and supported the findings of the first study. Many of the previous studies failed to report the statistical significance of their findings. However, Naccoby and Wilson reported their identification with a character significant at the .01 level.

The Berkowitz and Jeen study is somewhat different than any of the other studies reviewed. First of all, the subjects were older and the method of evaluation was different than in studies using children as subjects. Because of the older age of the subjects, pre-tests should have been administered to determine the aggressive nature of each subject. It is possible that factors other than the filmed aggression caused the subjects to react aggressively toward the accomplice. The subjects should have been surveyed to make sure no pre-existing grudges or ill-feelings existed between the subjects and the accomplices. The researchers did employ statistical analysis to their findings and found that name mediated cues were significant at the .05 level.
C. Value Modification

1. General trend: Research in the area of value modification, on the surface, resembles some of the studies concerning social learning and the majority of it supports the concept that mass media does influence values. Most of the research has involved young children; however, one study did use ninety male university undergraduate students. The major contribution to research is from O. Ivar Lovass, who has conducted three experiments on the effect of exposure to symbolic aggression on aggressive behavior.\(^{29}\) Lovass' studies provide evidence that an increase in responding to aggressive reinforcing stimuli (i.e., Bobo doll) is related to exposure to symbolic aggression.\(^{30}\)

Albert Bandura conducted a different type of study than previously reported. All of the prior studies have used aggression as a factor in the experimental conditions. However, in this study by Albert Bandura and Frances L. Menlove (1968), the experimental conditions involved films of a five-year-old male model and a cocker spaniel. Bandura and Menlove hypothesized that a child's attitude and behavior can be changed through visual broadcasting.\(^{31}\) The results were supportive of the hypothesis. The values (as expressed in overt behavior) had been shifted in a positive direction. The children not only learned to approach a dog previously thought fearsome, but their learning was generalized to include other dogs.

Two other research teams have explored the concept of value modification. Paul Mussen and Alred Fotherford examined the exposure to violent or aggressive models on the behavior of first grade children of middle class origin.\(^{32}\) They concluded that
children who viewed aggressive cartoons manifested an increased preference for the prospect of bursting a balloon over the prospect of merely playing with it.\textsuperscript{33} Leonard Berkowitz and Russell G. Geen limited the scope of their study on value modification by stating in their hypothesis that the subject will act aggressively to the extent that the target is associated with aggressive behavior generally.\textsuperscript{34} The researchers found a definite trend for the subjects to feel sadder rather than angry or anxiety after experiencing the aggressive film.

2. **Isolated Findings:** O. Ivas Lovass conducted three experiments primarily because the first two experiments failed to provide findings significant enough to calculate. Lovass hypothesized that the viewing of an aggressive film (AF) would increase the use of the aggressive stimuli. In the third experiment, he finally obtained partially significant findings. The methodology used was very precise. Two rooms were prepared, a play room and an observation room. Each child was led into the room by an assistant who demonstrated the stimuli, a doll-action toy which hit one doll by a club held by another doll. The child was allowed to play with the apparatus for two minutes to determine his operant level of aggressiveness. Then two different films were shown to the two groups. One film used aggression inflicted by one human-like cartoon figure upon another. The non-aggressive film (NAF) depicted three bear cubs and a mother bear engaging in pleasant human-like play. The child was responsible
to continue the film by the depression of a lever that kept the film going. This was used to maintain attention. After viewing the film, the child was asked to play with the doll apparatus again for two minutes while the number of times used was recorded. The findings of the third experiment were that when subjects could choose between toys, the subjects who had been exposed to the aggressive film engaged in more play behavior with the hitting dolls than did subjects who had been exposed to the NAF. The AF group responded almost twice as much as the NAF group. The level of significance was reported at the .06 level, which is usually considered too low to be statistically significant. The implication of the study is that the value children place on types of toys can be changed by exposure to symbolic aggression on television.

Bandura and Menlove investigated the hypothesis that a child's attitude and behavior can be changed through visual broadcasting. They divided the subjects into two groups. Group A saw a series of films which used the same model and same dog. Group B saw the film involving bears. The researchers found that both groups showed lasting reduction in their fear of live dogs at the .04 significance level in comparison with a control group of equally apprehensive children who were shown neutral films.

The study conducted by Paul Mussen and Eldred Rutherford was not as dramatic as the Bandura and Menlove experiment. Mussen and Rutherford concluded that aggressive cartoons manifested an increased preference for the prospect of bursting a balloon over the prospect of merely playing with it.
A study somewhat different than the others dealing with value modification is one conducted by Berkowitz and Geen using university undergraduate subjects. The experiment was similar to the earlier study by Berkowitz and Geen dealing with name mediated cues. Like the earlier Berkowitz and Geen study, the present study used the name of the frustrator as a variable in the experimental conditions. In this study, however, the findings revealed that the aggressive film made the men feel sadder, rather than increasing their anger or anxiety. But the men who had witnessed the aggressive model subsequently gave somewhat more shocks to their frustrator than did the men seeing the non-aggressive film, even though the former were sadder, rather than angrier.38

3. **Significant Differences:** The studies reviewed in this section utilized more of a variety of methodologies than those reviewed for social learning or latent tendencies. For example, the use of the doll action toy by Lovass was new. In the Lovass study, the toy itself was the aggressive agent. If the subject used the toy, it was considered an aggressive response, while in previous studies, all of the child's play behavior was watched and no standard was established pertinent to what acts of behavior were considered aggressive by the observers. In the area of value modification, researchers were able to provide findings where the behavior of subjects ranging from nursery school age to university undergraduates was significantly altered. The values measured range from trivial balloon popping, to the positive relationship between children and dogs, and the willingness of an adult male to shock another adult when aroused by aggressive films. Also, in the
Berkowitz and Geen study, the researchers attempted to relate feelings to aggression by administering mood questionnaires after the subjects shocked the accomplices.

4. **Critical evaluation:** One major flaw with the Lovass studies is the number of subjects. In the first study, only twelve children were used. In the next two studies, the number was increased to twenty; however, the same group of children was used in both experiments two and three. A larger number and greater variety of subjects would have increased the impact of the findings. By the third experiment, the researchers added another toy to the playroom. Along with the aggressive doll-action toy, another toy with a similar level was in the playroom. However, the second toy was not aggressive; it simply activated a ball which went through a maze and returned to its original position. With the addition of the second toy, the subjects could now choose which toy to play with and the subjects' aggressive tendencies could be recorded more accurately.

Pre-testing and foreknowledge of the subjects' normal behavior is imperative in these studies. The Bandura study established first that all the subjects were afraid of dogs. This foreknowledge enabled the research team to evaluate the subject's subsequent change in behavior. However, Mussen and Rutherford failed to pre-test their subjects to measure their willingness to burst the balloons before experiencing the cartoons.

The implications of these studies on value modification seem to be clearer than in the previous two sections. The authors of the government report, *Violence and The Media*, have several comments concerning these studies. In reviewing the Bandura and Menlove
study they state: "television programs frequently portray actions which most viewers would have some inhibition about performing - from switching cigarette brands or using a hair color rinse for the first time, to killing an adversary. The viewing of these events could be expected to reduce inhibitions in some degree, in much the same manner as dog-approaching inhibitions of the children." The implication is clear that if films can modify children's values and actions toward dogs, they probably can modify adult's values toward the taking of another's life. To make such a generalization based upon only one study is dangerous, but the thought is a significant one.
D. Content and Context of Violence in the Mass Media

1. **General Trend**: Up to this point, the research studies in three areas of effects of mass media on social learning, mass media as activators of latent tendencies, and value modification by the mass media have all dealt with empirical laboratory conditions. None of the studies used actual television programs in the experiments. Proof in the laboratory that children can learn aggressive acts through filmed aggression and that their values and willingness to perform aggressive acts are influenced by filmed aggression does not prove that present televised programs produce such effects in the home. There have been several studies focusing on the content and context of violence in the mass media. In general, they have found a high degree of violence on television and have found that those who watch such programs exhibit aggressive behavior, though the causes of the behavior have not been established. All of the studies rely on some type of content analysis to categorize programs into types. Content analysis usually involves counting the number of violent episodes per program and assigning programs to categories according to this number. Dr. George Gerbner, Dean of the Annenber School of Communication at the University of Pennsylvania, organized and conducted a study on the relationship of mass media entertainment programming and violence during the seasonal year of October, 1967 to October, 1968. Dr. Gerbner reported that the average rate of acts of violence was eleven per program or fifteen per hour. The researchers could find no
evidence of overall decline in the prevalence of violence from 1967 to 1968.\textsuperscript{41}

Otto Larsen, Louis Rey, and J. Fortas prepared and executed a study which surveyed eighteen programs for six weeks. However, the programs were not categorized according to violent episodes, but rather to percentage of child or teenage audience. The study yielded the tendency for television programs to project content in which socially approved goals were achieved by methods not socially approved.\textsuperscript{42}

Some studies have tried to determine the long term effects of continual television watching. L. D. Eron studied children at the age of eight or nine years and then tested the same children ten years later to determine if there was a correlation between the aggressiveness of the individual and the television programs he enjoyed.\textsuperscript{43} After reviewing the results of the ten year survey, Eron concluded that whatever was causing the association of aggressiveness with liking violent programming for boys was societal and not the result of the mass media.\textsuperscript{44} Seymour Feshbach and Robert F. Singer conducted an experimental field study in five California schools and two New York homes for boys that supports Eron's findings. The researchers recorded the viewing habits of 395 boys for a six week period and discovered that the control group on a non-aggressive television diet, consistently scored higher on aggressive tests than did the experimental group on a high aggressive television diet.\textsuperscript{45}
2. Isolated Findings: The findings of the studies in this section will be important in any discussion on the possible effect of televised violence. Dr. Gerbner’s study on the program content of the 1967-1968 viewing season provides evidence of the prevalence of violence. The research staff presented the following major findings: (1) Violence is pervasive, occurring in 81 per cent of all 1967 programs analyzed and 82 per cent in 1968; (2) The extent of violence varies by type of program, but a majority of all types of programs contain violence. Programs with a crime-western-action adventure style have the highest proportion containing violence, with cartoons a close second, and comedies third; (3) Networks vary in the proportion of their schedule allocated to given types of programs. No network had less than 27 per cent of all its programming (prime time) containing violence in 1968; (4) The majority of adult Americans not only think there is too much violence on television, but disapprove of the kind of violence portrayed.

Larsen, Grey, and Fortas used content analysis not only to determine the prevalence of violence, but also to explore the dimensions of program presentation that could serve as models for viewer’s behavior. The degree to which approved goals are portrayed as being successfully achieved by either approved or disapproved methods was also studied. Two definitions used by the research team need to be clarified in order to understand the findings of the research. A goal was defined as any verbal act or behavior by any character indicating a desire or wish for an identifiable situation such as property, self-preservation,
affection, or power. A method of goal achievement was defined as a verbal or non-verbal act by a character which is identifiably connected with a specific goal and is presumably being employed by the character to increase goal achievement.\textsuperscript{47} Of the eighteen programs reviewed, researchers found that there were 21.6 goals per adult program, 22.2 per kidult, and 17.7 per children program. The major finding of the research was that methods that are not socially approved seem to be portrayed in television content as having a better chance of achieving the desired goal than those methods which are socially approved.\textsuperscript{48} The researchers defined socially approved methods as legal, non-violent ways of negotiation and compromise. Socially disapproved methods were defined as violent methods of escape and avoidance of responsibility.\textsuperscript{49}

The results of the flashback and Singer study are worthy of review because it was the only field study professionally conducted in this area. The researchers sought to determine the effects of sustained exposure to predominately aggressive or nonaggressive television content on aggressive values and behaviors. They divided their 395 male subjects into two groups - aggressive or control (nonaggressive) television diets. The subjects were required to watch a minimum of six hours of television for six weeks. A number of personality and attitude scales were administered at the beginning and end of the six week experimental period. Teachers and house parents kept daily behavior records for each subject recording his aggressive tendencies. The findings were that the average aggression exhibited toward peers
by the control group was 2.81 compared with a score of 1.64 for the aggressive television diet group. This score is significant at the .01 level. The greater aggressiveness of the control group was reflected in a variety of aggressive behaviors, i.e. fistfighting, pushing, cursing, criticizing, and refusing tasks. The researchers concluded that exposure to aggressive or nonaggressive television had no significant effect on the general peer aggression scores.50

3. Significant Differences: There seems to be a major contradiction in the research concerning televised violence. In the empirical studies on social learning, activation of latent tendencies, and value modification, a trend was noted in each case of the effect of the mass media to promote aggressive behavior. In the content analysis studies of Dr. Gerbner, the prevalence of violence on actual television programs was noted. However, the field study conducted by Teshbach and Singer could find no significant effect of televised violence on their subjects. Larsen, Grey, and Fortas found that television programs tend to project content utilizing socially disapproved methods of goal achievement. These socially disapproved methods were basically violent. This astounding difference in results indicates that further research needs to be conducted.

4. Critical Evaluation: It is difficult to evaluate the studies reported in this section. Dr. Gerbner's report on the programming in 1967 and 1968 and Larsen, Grey, and Fortas' report on goal achievement were different types of studies.
There were no subjects or experimental conditions involved. The content analyses are relevant as surveys of the current trend in television programming. Similar surveys should be conducted each year to determine whether the amount of violent content increases or decreases. The Berbner experiment reported that adult Americans think there is too much violence on television. This result needs to be verified by a representative sample of viewers. If television is to be useful as a mass medium, it needs to respond to the attitudes and values of the majority of people. However, no research has been conducted to reveal audience preferences.

The Kashbach and Singer study, because of its controversial findings, needs to be duplicated with other subjects to determine if the same results would be obtained. If possible the field study should be removed from the institutional setting. The male subjects were old enough to hypothesize for themselves the purpose of the experiment and the results could reflect a deliberate attempt by the subjects to reverse the findings. The other difficulty with the Kashbach and Singer study is the cause of the reported aggressive behavior. Since the study was conducted over a six week period without controlled laboratory conditions, other conditions such as environmental factors, mental well-being of subject, and extraneous forces could have caused the aggressive behavior. Without controlled conditions, it is difficult to automatically assign the cause of the behavior to television viewing.

The Larsen, Grej, and Fortas study defined goals and analysis of methods in the operation of their study, and they established a unit of analysis for the goals and methods portrayed in the
television programs. However, they did not establish a method of measurement to determine when a goal is achieved, nor did they establish consistent criteria to evaluate the chance that a goal would be achieved.

In the four areas of social learning, activation of latent tendencies, value modification, and the content and context of media violence, major discrepancies in research findings are evident. The studies concerning social learning reveal a definite trend for young children to imitate the aggressive acts of adults as viewed on film. Researchers found that children identify with certain characters and that this identification increases the probability that the child will retain the program content and imitate the behavior of the character. Such identification could cause the activation of latent tendencies. In the area of value modification, Bandura and Menlove were able to change the attitude of children toward dogs through filmed experiences with other children and dogs. In the content and context section, the prevalence of violence on television was established. A definite correlation between this prevalence of violence and aggressive behavior by subjects was not established.
Chapter Three - Evaluation and Conclusions

In the opening chapter of this paper, several questions were asked concerning television viewing and its effect on society. One question was: What effect does 22,000 hours of viewing have on a growing teenager? From the evidence of research studies, the answer would involve several parts: (1) the viewer would be able to imitate the behavior of characters on television; this is called observational learning; (2) the viewer would probably identify with certain characters; and (3) name-mediated cues could trigger latent tendencies toward aggression. All of these possibilities and more exist for the teenager indulging in constant diets of television viewing. However, the Feshbach and Singer field study failed to find a correlation in aggressive television program viewing and increased aggressive acts. Therefore, a complete answer to the question would include the statement that research in this area is ambiguous.

Commercial television is based on the premise that exposure to commercials will provide incentive for the consumer to buy. Over and over again this hypothesis has proven true. If commercials sell products, it is difficult to believe that programs do not promote attitudes and behavior patterns. In the preamble of the Television Code of The National Association of Broadcasters, communication experts acknowledge the awesome potential of television. Parts of the preamble read:

Television is seen and heard in every American home. These homes include children and adults of all ages, embrace all races and all varieties of
religious faith, and reach those of every educational background. It is the responsibility of television to bear constantly in mind that the audience is primarily a home audience, and consequently that television's relationship to the viewers is that between guest and host.

By law, the television broadcaster is responsible for the programming of his station. He, however, is obligated to bring his positive responsibility for excellence and good taste in programming to bear upon all who have a hand in the production of programs, including networks, sponsors, producers of film and of live programs, advertising agencies, and talent agencies.

Television and all who participate in it are jointly accountable to the American public for respect of the special needs of children, for community responsibility, for the advancement of education and culture, for the acceptability of the program materials chosen, for decency and decorum in production, and for propriety in advertising. This responsibility cannot be discharged by any given group of programs, but can be discharged only through the highest standards of respect for the American home, applied to every moment of every program presented by television.

In order that television programming may best serve the public interest, viewers should be encouraged to make their criticisms and positive suggestions known to the television broadcasters. Parents, in particular, should be urged to see to it that, out of the richness of television fare, the best programs are brought to the attention of their children.

This code sounds very impressive. Unfortunately, not all broadcasters have maintained the position that the television is a guest in the home. Nor have program directors always considered the best interest of young children. On the other hand, the general public has been too passive in their formation of an opinion about programming. Few citizens would actively engage in reform of program content. Most people are content to lean
back and watch television with no thought of the possible effect such viewing is having on them or their children.

The frustrating problem in this dilemma is that research has been unable to pinpoint a definite correlation between televised violence and acts of violence committed by viewers. Research in the areas of social learning, activation of latent tendencies, and value modification clearly showed that in laboratory conditions where the environment is controlled, nursery and grade school age children can learn, imitate, remember, and acquire values from filmed episodes. The difficulty is generalizing this research to the American home. Robert K. Baker and Dr. Sandra J. Ball, who edited the staff report to the Commission on Violence, felt that some of the results of research could be applied to television. They stated: "Television time is sold to sponsors on the conviction that, although the Ajax ad will not guarantee that the viewer will buy the product, it raises the probability that he will. Social scientists should simply make the same claim for filmed or televised violence, whether fictitious or real. Viewing the carnage does not guarantee that the viewer will 'go forth and do likewise,' but it raises the probability that he will." I do not believe anyone would be willing to defend televised violence if it could be established that it is harmful to any section of our society, especially the children. Television violence supporters, who assert that fictional violence will not cause normal children in happy families and stable communities
to behave violently, fail to realize that there are a good many children and adults whose normality is dubious, whose family life is less than happy, and who are living in communities that are far from stable. Even the slightest indication that television programming is causing adverse effects should be investigated and, if necessary, remedial action should be taken. "The potential of television as a positive socializing force has not been realized. It is to that purpose that intensive research and policy efforts should be addressed in the future." 53
Endnotes


8 To Establish Justice, To Insure Domestic Tranquility. p. 10.

9 To Establish Justice, To Insure Domestic Tranquility. p. 25.

10 Robert K. Baker and Dr. Sandra J. Ball, p. 341.
"TV Violence Cited as Bad Influence" (New York Times, December 17, 1975), p. 75.

Robert K. Baker and Sandra J. Ball, preface.

Albert Bandura, "Imitation of Film-Mediated Aggressive Models" in Robert A. Baker and Dr. Sandra J. Ball, Violence and The Media, (November, 1969), Chapter 12.


23. Eleanor E. Maccoby and N. C. Wilson, p. 84.


27. Eleanor E. Maccoby and N. C. Wilson, p. 77.

28. Eleanor E. Maccoby and N. C. Wilson, p. 82.


30. Ivar Lovass, p. 41.


33 Paulussen and Eldred Rutherford, p. 463.


35 G. Ivar Lovass, p. 43.


37 Paulussen and Eldred Rutherford, p. 463.


39 Robert K. Baker and Dr. Sandra J. Ball, p. 268.


50 Seymour Feshbach and Robert D. Singer, p. 63.


52 Robert K. Baker and Dr. Sandra J. Ball, p. 281.

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Clarence M. Kelley, Director FBI. Released September, 1975.


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