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ABSTRACT

Three antecedent variables were examined to determine their effects on children's attitudes toward aggression--the child's exposure to television violence, his perceptions of his family's attitudes toward violence, and the family's socioeconomic status. Questionnaires which were completed by 434 fourth through sixth grade boys elicited responses about the above three variables and also about their attitudes toward aggression: approval of violence, willingness to use violence, perceived effectiveness of violence, and suggested solutions to conflict situations. Results of a three-way analysis of variance on each of the aggression indexes suggested that perceived effectiveness of violence is directly affected by television exposure for both middle and lower class boys (with more exposure comes more approval of violence), while the other three indexes of aggressive attitudes were affected by exposure to television for middle class boys only. For all four measures, both family attitudes toward aggression as known to the child and the social environment of the family have a persistent impact. (SH)

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Project VIM

Violence in the Media

ATTITUDES TOWARD VIOLENCE: The Interaction of TV Exposure, Family Attitudes and Social Class

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ATTITUDES TOWARD VIOLENCE:

The Interaction of TV Exposure, Family Attitudes and Social Class

By

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November, 1970

Department of Communication

Michigan State University

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This project examines the interplay of exposure to TV violence on a child's attitudes toward violence. This is done within the context of family attitudes toward violence and the child's social environment. Several researchers have specified that the media, particularly television, are likely to be most influential when the child:

> ...is exposed to a set of ideas or behaviors which recur from program to program;
>
> ...is a heavy user of the medium; and
>
> ...is likely to have limited contact or information from other socialization agencies and consequently has less firm values against which to compare the media themes. (Schramm, Lyle and Parker, 1961; Himmelweit, Oppenheim and Vince, 1958; Maccoby, 1964).

Our basic rationale posits that a child whose family has not actively pointed out that violence is noxious, and who is a heavy viewer of TV violence, will be more positive toward aggression as a mode of conduct. To test this, we first must specify what television presents to the child about violence. Then we must identify the likely role of his family and environment in shaping the ideas he brings to this area of socialization.

Content analyses indicate that the TV world is a violent one. Although their definitions of violent content vary greatly, several studies are consistent in that conclusion. In a survey by the Christian Science Monitor six weeks after Robert Kennedy's assassination, there were 84 killings in 85 1/2 hours of primetime and

Saturday programming. The most violent evening hours were 7:30 - 9 p.m. when approximately 27 million children, ages 2-17, were watching. In that time slot, one violent incident occurred every 16 minutes and a murder or killing every half-hour.

Gerbner (1969) substantiated those findings in a more sophisticated analysis. Acts of violence occurred in eight of every ten programs. Dramatic shows averaged seven violent episodes while cartoon shows had three times that number. For an entire week, 400 people were killed. Gerbner (1969b) also analyzed certain personality attributes of violent characters. Violent performers were judged to be more logical and efficient than non-violent characters.

More germane are studies which examined the role of violence in problem-solving. Stempel (1969) identified the means used to solve problems in one week of network TV. Of 202 problems, nearly 60% were solved by violent tactics, one-third were solved non-violently and the remainder went unresolved.

Larsen, Gray, and Fortis (1968) identified "program goals" and the means by which these goals were achieved. Violent means were the most prevalent. They also found that childrens' shows were even more likely than adult shows to use violence to achieve goals.

These studies support these generalizations:

(1) A child who watches an average amount of TV is likely to see a substantial amount of violent content.

(2) Violence typically is presented as a highly successful means of goal-achievement.

(3) As recently as 1968-69, violence was the predominant means of conflict resolution found in TV drama.

What the child brings to television violence will be the result of his prior socialization experiences. Research indicates that the family is the key source in

the development of most children's attitudes toward violence. Most likely a family member becomes the child's first target for violence. As the child grows older, most conflicts are with siblings. It is primarily the parent who rewards or punishes these aggressive behaviors (Sears, Maccoby, and Levin, 1957). Not only does the family administer positive and negative reinforcements for aggression, it also may provide models of problem-solving which are essentially non-violent alternatives, e.g., decision-making, arbitration, and compromise. Families vary in their use of these methods. An early study (Sewell, Mussen, and Harris, 1955) isolated one major family pattern along a democracy-autocracy continuum. More frequent parent-child conversations and formalized techniques for solving family conflicts were used in the more democratic homes.

Recently, McLeod and Chaffee (1966-1967) have suggested that communication patterns within families can affect the child's socialization. Among four family types they identified, one was labelled "pluralistic." In such a family, a child is exposed more often to both sides of an issue and discussion of controversial matters is encouraged. This family style appears to expose the child more readily to alternatives to violence for problem-solving.

Parents also may influence what a child thinks about violence in a more direct way. Adult comments about TV content can serve as important learning cues for children (Hicks, 1968). If a parent says that violence is inappropriate while watching a violent scene with his offspring, more negative attitudes toward violence may develop. Or a child who repeatedly sees his parents watch violence while calmly eating dinner or drinking a beer may come to accept violence as more normative. Parents have the opportunity to either counteract or legitimize TV aggression while watching with their children (Sakuma, 1968).

These studies promote such propositions as these:

(1) The family is the first agency to deal with a child's aggressive behaviors.

(2) Families can influence a child's attitudes toward violence by (a) giving positive or negative feedback when the child himself is aggressive; (b) using various methods of problem-solving within the family; and, (c) commenting on scenes of violence.

(3) Families vary in their use of these techniques.

For several reasons, socio-economic background may also influence the pattern of effects that stem from exposure to TV violence. A child from a low-income family is a far heavier TV viewer than a middle-class child (Schramm, Lyle and Parker, 1961; Greenberg and Dominick, 1969; 1970). The former is thereby exposed to more violent episodes than his middle-class counterpart. Social status also affects what the child brings to the television situation. Allinsmith (1960) found that low-SES children were more likely to respond to potentially frustrating situations with the most direct forms of aggression. Moreover, lower-income youngsters habitually expressed more aggressive behavior than their middle-class peers. Further, the environment of the poor contains more frequent acts of physical violence (U.S. National Commission on Civil Disorders, 1968). Fighting with peers, violent incidents among neighbors, and disputes with police better characterize that environment.

The lower-class family may also do less to inhibit aggressive behaviors. Among low-income families, parent-child interactions are erratic and inconsistent. Parents and children see each other on a less systematic, more disorganized basis (Minuchin et. al., 1967). With fewer fathers available, mothers are forced to work. This further fragments the interaction between parent and child. For these reasons, then, social class should influence the effect of TV violence on the child's attitudes toward aggression:

(1) Low-income youngsters are more apt to see more violent TV content.

(2) Low-income youngsters are more likely to be exposed to real-life aggression.

(3) Low-income families are less likely to provide alternatives to violent behavior.

To this point, we have attempted to pinpoint the interactive roles of exposure to TV violence, the family, and social class in contributing to the child's attitudes about aggression and violence. In essence, the question becomes to what extent the norms of TV violence (it is frequent, effective and approved), the presence or absence of perceived family sanctions, and social class environment affect the following attitudinal components:

Approval of violence: To what extent does the child perceive that violence is an acceptable mode of behavior?

Willingness to use violence: When presented with hypothetical real-life problems, to what extent will the child choose violent solutions?

Effectiveness of violence: How effective does the child perceive violence to be as a means of problem-solving?

Solutions to conflict situations: Given an opportunity to propose a solution to a problem, does the child suggest a violent one?

Hypotheses

Three main antecedent variables have been discussed and each should exert a separate influence on the child's attitudes toward violence. Our rationale yields these hypotheses:

H1: Youngsters with more exposure to TV violence will indicate greater approval of violent acts, be more willing to use violence, perceive violence to be a more effective way of solving problems, and more readily suggest a violent means of problem resolution.

H2: Youngsters who perceive that their family is strongly opposed to the use of aggression will: indicate less approval of violence, be less willing to use violence, perceive violence to be a less effective means of solving problems, and less readily suggest violent means of problem-solving.

The discussion of the effects of social class differences yields parallel hypotheses, but the separate impact of this variable is of secondary interest here. Youngsters from more disadvantaged homes are expected to indicate greater approval of violence, believe it to be more effective, etc. Of more interest is the predicted interaction of social class with the other antecedent variables.

The impact of exposure to media violence should interact with both a child's social class and family attitudes. Low-income children watch more television and are more likely to have pre-existing favorable attitudes toward violence than middle-class youngsters. Therefore, in terms of first-order interactions:

H3: More exposure to television violence in conjunction with low socio-economic status results in greater approval of violence, more willingness to use violence, higher perceived effectiveness of violence, and greater readiness to suggest violence in problem-solving.

In addition, as emphasized by Schramm, Lyle and Parker (1961), television's potential effects should be the reciprocal of the influence of more personal sources. Given families wherein the child is provided little or ambiguous information about the appropriateness of violence, and where he is heavily exposed to TV violence, a fourth set of hypotheses directly parallels those made for the interaction of exposure and social class.

H4: More exposure to television violence among children whose families have not stipulated anti-violence attitudes is related to greater

approval of violence, more willingness to use violence, higher perceived effectiveness of violence, and greater readiness to suggest it in problem-solving.

Finally, the intersect of all three of these antecedent conditions is expected to maximize tolerance for aggression. The lower-class youngster who is a heavy viewer of violence and receives little countering information from his family should be most accepting of the norms in the world of TV violence. Thus:

H5: The interaction of more exposure to TV violence with low exposure to counter-information and low socio-economic status manifests itself in more approval of violence, more willingness to use violence, higher perceived effectiveness of violence, and higher salience for violent solutions.

Methods

Questionnaires were completed by 434 fourth, fifth, and sixth grade boys in six Michigan schools during class sessions in May, 1970. The schools were chosen on the basis of social and economic variation. About nine percent of the sample was black.

Antecedent variables

Three antecedent variables were examined--the child's exposure to television violence, his perceptions of his family's attitudes toward violence, and the family's socio-economic status.

Exposure to TV violence. Each youngster received a list of 28 locally-available TV programs. Twenty of these shows had been judged by a sample of newspaper and magazine critics to contain violent content. (Greenberg and Gordon, 1970). The number of shows from this sub-set of 20 which respondents reported watching each week were summed. Obtained scores ranged from 0 to 20 and were normally distributed with a standard deviation of 3.7.

Family attitudes toward violence. The children were asked seven questions about how they thought their parents felt about various forms of violence, e.g.,

> "Suppose you and your parents were watching a TV show together and one of the people on TV shot another person. What do you think your parents would say?"
>
> "Suppose one of your friends hit you. What do you think your parents would want you to do?"

Each item had 2-4 response categories. All seven items correlated significantly with each other. Correlations ranged from .38 to .70. The seven item scores were summed into an index ranging from 7 (low approval of violence) to 17 (high approval).

Social class. Each child wrote down the job(s) of his parents. The principal job was then coded on a 13 position scale of occupational prestige (Troldahl, 1967).

These three antecedent variables were found to be intercorrelated from-.09 to .10.

Dependent variables

Four dependent variables were used.

Approval of violence. Eight modified items from the Sears' (1961) Antisocial Aggression scale were used. These were declarative sentences, e.g., "I see nothing wrong in a fight between two teen-age boys." "It's all right if a man slaps his wife," with three response categories (agree; not sure; disagree). Scores were summed for the eight items into an index ranging from 8 (low approval) through 24 (high approval).

Willingness to use violence. This index measured the child's willingness to use violence in real life. Five scale items were adopted from the Buss-Durkee Hostility Inventory (Buss, 1957), with agree or disagree as the available responses. Declarative sentences dealt with whether or not the individual would use some sort of physical violence in certain situations, e.g., "Anybody who says bad things about me is looking for a fight." "People who keep on bothering me are looking for a punch in the nose." Item scores were summed into an index with scores of 5 indicating low willingness to resort to violence and 10 high willingness.

Perceived effectiveness of violence. Five constructed items measured how effective violence was as a means of problem-solving, e.g., "Sometimes a fight is the easiest way to get what you want." "A fight is the best way to settle an argument once and for all." Three agree-disagree response categories were used. Item scores were summed, 5 representing low perceived effectiveness and 15 high perceived effectiveness.

Suggested solutions to conflict situations. In four open-ended questions, a potentially frustrating situation was described. The child wrote down the one thing he would most likely do in that situation. For example, "Pretend somebody you know takes something from you and breaks it on purpose. What would you do?"

or "Pretend somebody you know tells lies about you. What would you do?"

Responses judged to be non-violent were scored 1 and those judged violent scored 2. Violence was defined as behavior which would produce physical pain to another. An index score of 4 indicated all non-violent responses and 8 represented all violent responses.

Correlations among these four dependent measures ranged from .22 to .43.

Analytic procedures

The respondents were divided into eight sub-groups. A median split was made on the occupational prestige of the child's family. Those in the three lowest categories of the 13-step prestige scale were classified in the low-income category (n = 218); children with a rating of four and above were placed in the middle-income group (n = 216).

A second median split for each sub-group was made for the number of violent shows each child watched each week. The median was eight shows per week.

Finally, each sub-group was divided on the index of his family's attitudes toward violence. The distribution was skewed toward the low-approval end of the scale. Scores of 7-10 were placed in the low-approval group (n = 216). More than 90% of the remaining children's scores indicated that they were unsure or didn't know how their parents felt about violence. Less than 10% reported that their families gave strong approval to violence. Scores of 11 or higher were categorized as "undefined" (n = 218). Thus the "low-approval" group were children who perceived their families to be definitely anti-violence. To the "undefined" group, their parents had not demonstrated disapproval of violence--ambiguous norms existed.

Results

Results are presented for four dependent behaviors: the boys' approval of

aggression; their willingness to use violence; the extent to which they perceive violence to be effective; and their readiness to suggest violent solutions to problems.

For each, hypotheses were made step-wise through main effects and interactions. The results will be discussed in that fashion, although the interactions, where found, qualify interpretations of the main effects.

Given the lack of correlation among the antecedent variables, a three-way analysis of variance with unequal cells (Snedecor, 1956) was performed on each of the dependent measures.

Approval of Aggression.

Table 1 presents the results of the three-way analysis for this measure as well as the individual cell means.

Significant differences were obtained in terms of perceived family attitudes toward aggression and the social class of the youngster, whereas there was no main effect difference between those more and less exposed to TV violence.

Cell comparisons indicate that in the four possible comparisons between youngsters whose families gave low approval to violence and those whose attitudes were ill-defined, the mean differences were consistent and large. Three of four social class cell comparisons yielded similar results.

The two first-order interactions -- of exposure to TV violence with either family attitudes or social class -- were also as predicted. High exposure to TV violence coupled with less certainty about family attitudes maximized the approval of aggression. Low exposure to TV violence in conjunction with a middle-class background minimized the approval of aggression. Thus, although TV exposure by itself was insufficient to yield differences in aggression approval, its interaction with each of the other antecedent variables was not trivial.

Table 1 also indicates a significant three-way interaction which is difficult

TABLE 1

Approval of Aggression

Cell means

(The higher the score, the more approval of aggression)

Exposure to TV violence:	Middle Class Family attitudes toward aggression		Lower Class Family attitudes toward aggression	
	Low approval	Undefined	Low approval	Undefined
Low	14.13 (n=47)	15.03 (n=60)	15.29 (n=62)	16.65 (n=40)
High	14.14 (n=57)	16.52 (n=52)	14.68 (n=50)	16.17 (n=66)

Analysis of variance table

Source of variation	MS	df	F	p
Exposure to TV violence	4.0	1	0.59	n.s.
Family attitudes	223.0	1	33.14	.0005
Social class	54.0	1	7.86	.025
TV Violence X Family attitudes	28.0	1	4.15	.05
TV Violence X Social class	24.0	1	3.56	.10
Social class X Family attitudes	1.0	1	0.01	n.s.
Violence X Family X Class	30.0	1	4.46	.05
Error	6.74	426		
Total		433		

to interpret, particularly because the pattern of means within the lower class is inconsistent with the predictions.

To clarify this anomaly, one additional analysis was done. This was a two-way Anova within each of the social class groupings. It was repeated for all dependent measures. The pattern found here was to be a consistent one. Among the middle-class younsters, exposure to TV violence made some difference ($p<.10$), as well as family attitudes ($p<.01$) and the interaction of the two ($p<.05$). Among the lower-class boys, only family attitudes were an important discriminant ($p<.01$).

Willingness to use violence.

Table 2 contains the results of the three-way analysis of variance for this attitudinal variable.

Main effects predictions were supported for all three antecedent variables. Maximum willingness to resort to violence in conflict situations came from more exposure to violent TV content, from families with less defined attitudes toward aggression, and from the lower income groupings. Here, as for all attitude segments, the family variable was the most discriminating.

Exposure to violence and family attitudes interacted in the same manner as the approval of aggression index. High exposure and undefined attitudes in the home maximized the willingness to use violence. The predicted interaction between exposure and social class was not supported.

The three-way interaction was weaker in this analysis, but more consistent with predictions. Willingness to use violence was increasingly present in the lower-class conditions, save that in which it should have been maximal, where no mean difference was evident.

Again, the two-way analysis aided interpretation. Only among the middle-class youngsters was there a difference attributable to extent of exposure to TV

TABLE 2

Willingness to Use Violence

Cell means

(The higher the score, the more willingness to use violence)

Exposure to TV violence:	Middle Class Family attitudes toward aggression		Lower Class Family attitudes toward aggression	
	Low approval	Undefined	Low approval	Undefined
Low	7.27 (n=47)	7.70 (n=60)	7.77 (n=62)	8.42 (n=40)
High	7.28 (n=57)	8.60 (n=52)	7.64 (n=50)	8.53 (n=66)

An analysis of variance table

Source of variation	MS	df	F	p
Exposure to TV violence	6.9	1	4.06	.05
Family attitudes	68.5	1	40.34	.0005
Social Class	16.0	1	9.41	.005
TV violence X Family attitudes	12.2	1	7.18	.025
TV violence X Social class	1.2	1	0.70	n.s.
Social class X Family attitudes	0.1	1	0.10	n.s.
Violence X Family X Class	5.2	1	3.06	.10
Error	1.71	426		
Total		433		

violence ($p<.05$). It washed out among the lower-class boys. For both groups, family attitudes were critical ($p<.01$). But only for the middle-class youngsters did family attitudes interact significantly ($p<.05$) with TV exposure. These latter results exactly parallel those found for the approval of aggression index.

Use of Violence in Conflict Situations.

This measure was a second approach to the one just described. The principal difference was that the youngsters were freely suggesting violent or non-violent solutions, rather than evaluating proposed ones. Results of the analysis are in Table 3.

Main effects were found for family attitudes and for social class. TV exposure made no difference in their free responses. Neither predicted first-order interaction was significant. The second-order interaction was significant, but the same inconsistencies are present in the data for the lower-class youngsters.

In the analyses done for each of the social class groupings, family attitudes toward violence were again crucial. For the middle-class younsters, the predicted interaction between TV violence and family attitudes was again significant ($p<.01$), but not so for the lower-class boys. For neither group was TV exposure alone critical.

Perceived Effectiveness of Violence.

Table 4 contains the results of the three-way analysis of variance for this dependent variable. Each of the main effects was significant and large. Violence was considered to be more effective in all four high TV exposure conditions, the four undefined family attitude conditions, and the four lower-class cells.

None of the predicted two- or three-way interactions approached significance.

Parallel two-way analyses of variance were made for each of the social class groups. For both the middle-class and lower-class boys, TV exposure and

TABLE 3

Use of Violence in Conflict Situations

Cell means

(The higher the score, the more often the child uses violence to solve conflicts)

Exposure to TV Violence:	Middle Class Family attitudes toward aggression		Lower Class Family attitudes toward aggression	
	Low approval	Undefined	Low approval	Undefined
Low	4.57 (n=47)	4.65 (n=60)	4.85 (n=62)	5.25 (n=40)
High	4.49 (n=57)	5.26 (n=51)	4.78 (n=50)	5.10 (n=66)

An analysis of variance table

Source of variation	MS	df	F	p
Exposure to TV violence	2.0	1	2.08	n.s.
Family attitudes	14.0	1	14.58	.005
Social class	7.0	1	7.29	.025
TV violence X Family attitudes	2.8	1	2.96	n.s.
TV violence X Social class	2.2	1	2.29	n.s.
Social class X Family attitudes	0.5	1	0.19	n.s.
Violence X Family X Class	4.5	1	4.68	.05
Error	0.96	425		
Total		432		

TABLE 4

Perceived Effectiveness of Violence

Cell means

(The higher the score, the more violence is seen as being effective)

Exposure to TV violence:	Middle Class Family attitudes toward aggression		Lower Class Family attitudes toward aggression	
	Low approval	Undefined	Low approval	Undefined
Low	7.83 (n=47)	9.22 (n=60)	8.68 (n=62)	10.90 (n=40)
High	8.67 (n=57)	11.08 (n=52)	9.54 (n=50)	11.50 (n=66)

An analysis of variance table

Source of variation	MS	df	F	p
Exposure to TV violence	135.0	1	15.79	.005
Family attitudes	416.0	1	49.81	.0005
Social class	93.0	1	10.93	.005
TV violence X Family attitudes	12.0	1	1.44	n.s.
TV violence X Social class	0.5	1	0.01	n.s.
Social class X Family attitudes	5.5	1	0.64	n.s.
Violence X Family X Class	12.0	1	1.44	n.s.
Error	8.55	426		
Total		433		

family attitudes were significant antecedent conditions. No interaction existed. Violence was judged to be maximally effective when TV exposure was high or family attitudes were least clear.

Summary of analyses.

Given four dependent measures, with moderate intercorrelations, for three antecedent conditions, the degree of consistency across measures can be examined. Table 5 provides an overall summary of the analyses.

For two of four measures -- the individual's willingness to use violence and its perceived effectiveness when used -- TV exposure makes a direct contribution. With higher exposure comes more approval of violence.

For all four measures, both family attitudes toward aggression, as known to the child, and the social environment of the family have a persistent impact. Family attitudes account for the largest portion of variance followed by the social class differences.

Where television exposure does interact with either family attitudes or social class, the two variables serve to intensify the acceptance of violent norms, but it does so irregularly, in three of eight possible instances.

The irregularities or inconsistencies are largely clarified in the analyses which partial out the social class differences. Among the middle-class boys, the television exposure variable is more predictive, alone and in interaction with the attitudes of the youngsters' family. Among the lower-class boys, only family attitudes are a useful predictor of attitudes toward aggressive behaviors.

TABLE 5

Summary across Dependent Variables

Antecedent variables	Dependent variable: Approval of Aggression	Willingness to use Violence	Use of violence in conflict situations	Perceived effectiveness of violence
Exposure to TV violence	n.s.	.05	n.s.	.01
Family attitudes	.01	.01	.01	.01
Social class	.05	.01	.05	.01
TV Violence X Family	.05	.05	n.s.	n.s.
TV Violence X Class	.10	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
Family X Class	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
Violence X Family X Class	.05	.10	.05	n.s.
Middle-class				
Exposure	.10	.05	n.s.	.01
Family Attitudes	.01	.01	.01	.01
Exposure by Family Attitudes	.05	.05	.01	n.s.
Lower-class				
Exposure	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	.05
Family Attitudes	.01	.01	.05	.01
Exposure by Family Attitudes	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.

DISCUSSION

In this study, certain factors which were theorized to be critical in the kind of impact that large-scale exposure to TV violence would have on the impressionable minds of young boys were tested empirically. In particular, we examined the notion that the medium of television would play a prominent role among youngsters who are less socialized by family and social environment. The issue studied was the youngsters' beliefs about the appropriateness and effects of using violence. By our approach to this problem, we found substantial support in the data.

At the same time, it is incumbent to identify certain limits to this approach, and to discuss certain implications of them in concert with the findings.

(1) The model used implies causation, but the data-gathering process only permits us to make associative statements. It cannot be stipulated from these data alone that among youngsters with minimum family influence, exposure to violence precedes and leads to the development of attitudes which are more accepting of violence. That, however, seems to be at least as plausible a sequence as one which would argue that some socializing agent, other than the family or the television set, precedes. At the least, there is ample evidence that exposure accompanies the development of pro-violence attitudes. There is no evidence that it countermands such development.

(2) Much variance in attitudes toward violence remains unexplained. TV exposure is a weak, but significant predictor. Family attitudes and social class are stronger determinants. Altogether, however, only 10-15 percent of the variance has been explained by these factors. Studies exploring the contributions of peers, school, and other factors appear needed.

TV exposure is most extensively related, for these youngsters, to the perceived effectiveness of violence. TV violence works, both for the good and bad guys, in getting things done. This may be a quite realistic assessment of the efficacy of that mode of conflict resolution. If the use of violence is also condoned or alternate, effective means are not known or not available where TV is a principal socializing agency, the implications warrant consideration.

(3) The study focuses solely on attitudes toward violence, not on actual uses of violent behavior. To what degree more favorable attitudes toward violence are manifested in more uses of violence, when possible, remains equivocal. Certainly, it would be difficult to argue that anti-violence attitudes lead to more violent behavior, anti-war protests notwithstanding. The focus might be directed to ascertaining those conditions under which the more favorable attitudes are accompanied by reduced inhibitions or reduced anxiety about the usages of aggression. Finally, one could argue that the acceptance of violence as appropriate, effective, and useful is a sufficient behavior for study in its own right. Does the greater acceptance of such beliefs, for example, interfere with or deter the development of other, more socially accepted or productive attitudes and behaviors?

(4) Some caution is due in terms of the present measure of exposure to television violence. Using a program as a unit of measure is gross. Although consistently more violent than other programs, there is substantial variation within a TV series. What in the violent shows is having the observed effect is unknown. Is it the atmosphere of the entire program or series, is it specific incidents, is what the researchers call violent the same items so labeled by the viewers? This lack of specificity is crucial for subsequent research.

(5) The central point of this discussion, however, might well be the combination of findings which indicate the relative impact of TV exposure on young boys from middle-class homes. The literature abounds with arguments that, indeed, if television violence has some kinds of impact, it will be particularly prevalent among the disturbed or the non-normal. Although those arguments typically refer to the instigation of violent acts, rather than attitudes favorable to violent acts, the suggested locus of effect is the same. Yet, the present findings, which clearly separate youngsters from more and less advantaged homes -- the latter a not uncommon operationalization of non-normal -- indicates more TV impact on attitudes among the former. Only among the middle-class youngsters does persistent exposure to TV violence show a clear relationship to attitudes about violence.

The fact that we do not observe this relationship among the lower-class youngsters may stem from other factors. For one, their consistently higher scores on all the dependent measures may have created more of a ceiling effect on the opportunity for exposure to interact with family attitudes. Also, their more likely direct experiences with instances of violence could have superceded TV influence, or made it only reinforcing. Certainly, the expectation that family attitudes would be less influential among the less advantaged was not borne out -- with respect to the one aspect of socialization studied here. But, others have suggested that this may be the case with respect to aggression (Maccoby, et. al., 1954; Sears, et. al., 1957).

Whatever the possible reasons for TV's non-relationship among lower-class boys, for relatively average children from average home environments, continued exposure to violence is positively related to acceptance of aggression as a mode of behavior. When the home environment also tends to ignore the child's development of aggression attitudes, this relationship is even more substantial, and perhaps more critical.

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