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ABSTRACT

This overview of studies from 1970 to 1975 sponsored by the American Broadcasting Company summarizes the research efforts of five years. In relatively concise but more than outline form, the studies, the findings to date, and directions pursued, and their implications for the broadcasting industry are presented. The 11 studies described dealt with violence or aggression effects from television viewing on children, adolescents, and young adults who were emotionally troubled or otherwise potentially vulnerable to televised messages. Implications for the broadcasting industry in light of the findings of the studies are presented. (HB)

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OVERVIEW

FIVE YEAR REVIEW OF RESEARCH SPONSORED BY
THE AMERICAN BROADCASTING COMPANY

SEPTEMBER 1970 THROUGH AUGUST 1975

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
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OVERVIEW

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OVERVIEW

FIVE YEAR REVIEW OF RESEARCH SPONSORED BY
THE AMERICAN BROADCASTING COMPANY

INTRODUCTION

This special overview of studies from 1970 to 1975 summarizes our research efforts of five years. This overview presents in relatively concise, but more than outline form, where we have been, our findings to date, the directions we pursued, and their implications for the broadcasting industry. Previous annual reports have been submitted to the American Broadcasting Company.^{1,2.}

In reviewing these studies this overview additionally allows us to look to the future with reference to other studies in forthcoming years, and to indicate possible further areas of specific focus and inquiry which might remain for study thereafter.

¹ Heller, M.S. and Polsky, S., Studies in Violence and Television, American Broadcasting Company, N.Y., 1972, Progress Report.

² Heller, M.S. and Polsky, S., Interim Report, American Broadcasting Company, N.Y., July 31, 1973, and July 31, 1974, and Oct. 1, 1975.

WHO ARE "VULNERABLE" VIEWERS?

It has been asserted that the viewing of violent television materials results in increased violence in certain viewers. If this is so, then one must inquire who these certain viewers might be. Would they include all children, since they are supposed to be more impressionable than adults? Are some children more vulnerable, emotionally labile and susceptible than others? If this is so then it is obvious that one ought to look carefully among child populations with known emotional impairment, and those youngsters who are institutionalized early in life because of broken or unstable families. The reason for this is that our previous studies of large numbers of violent offenders have revealed a high incidence of emotional impairment and family instability, often resulting in foster care of institutionalization in early, formative years.

COMPARISONS, CONTROLS AND THE QUESTION
OF NORMALCY

To find, examine and settle upon a group of matched children whom we could warrant as "normal" was reluctantly recognized as a tempting illusion of scientific design. Even in dealing with adult personalities and behavior, where the clinician may review, study and evaluate an established "track record" of twenty or more years of functioning, the diagnosis of "normal" behavior, character and personality remains elusive.

While the quest for a "normal" child control group would seem a desirable characteristic of experimental design, the delineation, identification and demonstration of a group of "normal" children (carefully followed for ten to twenty years in order to make sure that the diagnosis was correct) would be a study of enormous magnitude in and of itself.

In the evaluation of any children, it is apparent that what can be diagnosed are greater, or lesser degrees of emotional disturbance, rather than the distinct categories of disturbed vs. normal.

YOUNG PERSONS KNOWN TO BE VIOLENT

Also, if the viewing of televised violence is indeed associated with heightened violent response, then it would obviously be desirable to investigate populations of known violent offenders young enough to be raised from earliest childhood on with television sets.

By studying youthful and young adult murderers, or persons convicted of aggravated assault or assault with intent to kill, one quickly gets to the center of things with reference to known, real violence. With such youthful and young adult offenders one is not talking about laboratory conditions or aggressivity as revealed on psychological tests. One is talking very specifically about actual violence in the streets. Here, our studies have specifically investigated the potential role of television as a stimulus of real-life violence, in contrast to violent play or fantasy.

Overview, INTRODUCTION

Having explained the rationale of these studies, the following is a brief review of each of the individual projects pursued in the overall study to date. They have been previously reported.^{1,2.}

PROJECT I: RESPONSES OF EMOTIONALLY VULNERABLE CHILDREN
TO TELEVISED VIOLENCE

THE VULNERABLE CHILD SAMPLE

Initiated in 1970, this study has provided valuable longitudinal and in-depth data on a group of thirty emotionally impaired children attending a private, non-profit day school for emotionally troubled and learning-disordered youngsters. None of these children were mentally retarded. They ranged in age from ten to fifteen. There were twenty-five boys and five girls in the sample. Seventeen of the children were white and thirteen were black.

A second sample of emotionally vulnerable children in Project I consisted of twenty youngsters living in an institution for dependent and neglected homeless boys. Although showing psychological scars associated with disruption of their early family lives, they were not a psychiatric population in the sense that the thirty emotionally impaired children were. This group was matched in age (ten to fifteen), had average intellectual endowment, and included sixteen whites, one black and three Puerto Rican boys.

IN-DEPTH STUDIES

In-depth individual assessment was available on each child in this study. The clinical data included such major areas as:

Overview, PROJECT I

1. The child's family, including family cohesiveness, atmosphere, age at disruption, socio-economic level, interpersonal relationships and other pertinent background information.
2. Developmental History - comprising a detailed view of the child's life including physical, social, emotional and educational aspects of development.
3. Special Problems - including parent-child interactions, peer reactions, use of language, impulsivity, and the child's reaction to interpersonal situations with special reference to anxieties, fears and aggressivity.

In addition to the intensive studies of the child's classroom, schoolyard or evening institutional behavior, psychological tests were given before and after exposure to three types of television programs containing minimal (The Flying Nun), moderate, and maximal violence (FBI, Combat and Felony Squad).

DIRECT OBSERVATIONS AND TESTS

In addition to direct observations of any changes in aggressive behavior including attempts to hurt other children, threats, the use of force or destruction of objects, etc., careful observations of the children's use of language, type of free play in the schoolyard, drawings, story-telling were noted before and after exposure to the television stimuli. In addition, a number of specific psychological tests and measurements were utilized to

determine the presence or absence of underlying changes in aggressive feeling or fantasy.

Following each television show the children were further led in group discussions focusing on specific parts of each program in order to determine their reaction to violent materials.

FINDINGS

Although there were a number of changes in attitudes, fantasy and preoccupation with aggressive materials in response to exposure to violent television programming.

3

1. Exposure to aggressive television content did not lead to heightened assaultive behavior.
2. There was no demonstrable relationship between the intensity of television aggression and the intensity of aggressive behavior in children following their viewing of the television programs.
3. Television programs with more aggressive content produced more aggressive fantasies; television programs with less aggressive content resulted in decreased aggressive fantasies.

3

Aggression is used in the sense we have previously used it, as have other investigators, generically broad enough to include violence. But in the ongoing studies we intend to distinguish violence from other forms of aggression more particularly.

Overview, PROJECT I

4. Susceptible children (emotionally impaired or institutionalized) tended to use aggressive television materials to "bind" their own aggressive drives. The programs provided form, or a channel of expression ("a cognitive support") in contrast to their more chaotic and disorganized violent impulses.

5. The only discernible changes in emotionally susceptible children following exposure to violent television programs were encountered in certain inner states, emotions and attitudes (negativism, resentment, suspicion and projected aggression) but not in actual classroom or school-yard behavior.

PROJECT II: A COMPARISON OF CARTOON AND HUMAN PORTRAYED TELEVISION VIOLENCE IN EMOTIONALLY VULNERABLE CHILDREN

We determined in Project I that children's reactions to television-portrayed violence are complex phenomena in which the child's cognitive equipment (intellectual perception, discrimination, judgment, reflection and analysis) plays a crucial role, and that their responses to violent television programs were primarily thinking responses, fantasied responses and evaluative phenomena, rather than changes in actual or real behavior. Thus, the most vulnerable or susceptible children available in these studies used television programs as a vehicle to weigh reality, rather than a stimulus to let down their barriers and behave violently.

In pursuing the question of what the child learns from television, it was determined that much more is needed with reference to how he learns from television. The in-depth approach with small numbers of emotionally susceptible children was pursued using similar methodology to that described in the previous project. This dealt with a comparison of human-acted vs. cartoon violence in order to elucidate the difference between the greater fantasy of cartoon portrayals and the greater reality of human acted dramas.

The cognitive studies reported thus far focused upon how a child learns.

The same observational methods, psychological testing and careful individual assessment of each child's day-to-day development, described in Project I was continued in Project II.

The cartoon stimuli included complete programs of such animated fare as Bullwinkle, Smokey the Bear, George of the Jungle, Johnny Quest, Spiderman, Motor Mouse, Lancelot Link the Secret Chimp, Hot Wheels and Roadrunner.

Tests and measures similar to those in Project I were added to the direct observations of the research team, special educational teachers, house-parents, clinical psychologists and others who participated in the individual rating of each child.

FINDINGS

The findings in this project were as follows:

1. Again, there were no meaningful changes in assaultive or violent behavior in response to either cartoon or human-acted portrayed violence in television programs.
2. The emotionally impaired children, in fact, seemed clinically less aggressive post-viewing, consistent with the finding previously reported by Feshbach and Singer. Rather than being supportive of a "catharsis" theory, however (in which exposure to aggression presumably drains off aggressivity in the viewer), our clinical findings were more

consistent with a theory of cognitive support in which inner violent impulses become attached or "bound" to outer aggressive materials (such as television portrayed violence), and are thereby neutralized.

3. The findings in Project II confirm the conclusion that feelings, affect, emotions, and fantasies can be significantly stimulated by cartoons without observable, demonstrable change in actual aggressive behavior.

4. It is obvious that children in these studies are able to identify with cartoon characters, as well as with characters portrayed by human actors in action-adventure television dramas. In each case, however, human-acted and cartoon portrayed dramas, the "susceptible" children differentiated the violent problem-solving antics of cartoon materials, or human-acted violent programs, from the practical repertoire of the behaviors available to them in seeking solutions to real or actual conflicts in their own lives.

5. In day to day observation, the children were no more violent following exposure to either type of television violence (cartoon or human-acted) than they had been prior to repeated exposure to such programs. Although reasonably behaved and controllable, these children were hardly mild-mannered or withdrawn. The sample included a number of highly aggressive youngsters whose behavior problems were taxing to both parents and teachers.

Overview, PROJECT II

These studies indicated that the aggressive youngsters remained aggressive following exposure to aggressive television materials, and that less or non-aggressive youngsters remained unaggressive after viewing aggressive television. Clinically the viewing of violent television materials increased violent fantasies, feelings, affects and preoccupations, but resulted in no meaningful changes in assaultive behavior as observed in the classroom, the play-yard or the institutional dormitories.

PROJECT IPI: TELEVISION STUDIES WITH YOUTHFUL AND YOUNG
ADULT OFFENDERS (PILOT)

Since Projects I and II dealt with emotionally vulnerable children, a number of whom were behavior-disordered and aggressive to begin with, it was obvious that other projects should address themselves to young persons whose patterns of violence could be clearly demonstrated. A logical choice was the exploration of a prison population of youthful and young adult offenders who were exposed to television fare throughout the formative years of their childhood. With such a violent group, including murderers and others convicted of assault with intent to kill, one need make no inferences or speculations about their aggressive or violent propensities.

As an alternative to a ten or fifteen year follow-up of young children, some of whom might become murderers, or otherwise violent, a retrospective study of known violent youth and young adult offenders was both a more immediate and more practical undertaking. As in Projects I and II, Project III utilized in-depth psychological, psychiatric and clinical evaluations of the personality structures and life situations of known violent persons. It reconstructed their past history and childhood development with special focus on television viewing habits through data obtained by the use of special interviewing procedures developed in this project by clinicians experienced in the assessment of offenders.

Project III utilized the services of university-based psychiatrists and psychologists with special training in forensic behavioral sciences. Much care was paid to the need for confidentiality and the preservation of each inmate's anonymity and privacy in participating in this project.

PILOT SAMPLE AND FINDINGS

In the initial phase of Project III a pilot sample of thirty-five sixteen to eighteen year-old violent offenders was utilized in order to develop uniform diagnostic materials with reference to developmental history, antisocial background, record of violent behavior and their television-viewing patterns and experiences. After much trial and error, conferences, editing and consultation, eighteen sets of items were standardized and agreed upon for coverage in the clinical-research interviews. Included were such obvious variables as sex, age, marital status, religion, past records, genetic, family, socio-economic, neighborhood, vocational and educational backgrounds, drug use, and history of injuries, as well as a variety of measures of impulsiveness. These eventually were formalized as part of an "Interviewing and Data Collection Guide."

It was concluded in the pilot phase of Project III that the methodology was useful, that the seriousness of violent charges did not necessarily correlate with an extensive history of juvenile delinquency, that ghetto, gang and environmental factors required careful focus, and that all of the young adolescents and young adults in this Pilot Phase had a television set at home throughout their lives. Less than half rated high (2 - 4 hours per

day) in television viewing time. A number of offenders were able to talk frankly about "techniques" they had learned from television. Thus, twelve of the thirty-five youthful offenders indicated that they had been consciously aware of acting out the techniques of a crime which they had previously seen "demonstrated" on television. None, however, gave indication that television viewing had played any causal role in the development of their antisocial or criminal motivation. This was in contrast to the instructional role that television played in how, or how not to, perform certain criminal acts.

Having determined that youthful violent offenders who had been exposed to television during their lifetimes were indeed a proper sample in which to study the possible relationship between television-viewed violence and actual violent behavior, we proceeded to invest our energies in a much larger effort, which comprised:

Project IV: "Television Viewing, Anti-Social Development and Violent Behavior - An Examination of One Hundred Young Male Offenders."

⁵ In the pilot phase, twelve of the thirty-five offenders acted out techniques they had seen demonstrated. In Project IV, the study of an additional one hundred young offenders confirmed this finding of imitation of technique, rather than causation.

⁶ Heller, M.S. and Polsky, S., Studies in Violence and Television, 1972. op. cit.

PROJECT IV

This project involved one hundred youthful and young adult violent offenders selected at random from the youngest groups in the prison population, since it had been determined that these subjects would have had a lifelong exposure to television viewing.

Extensive data were collected with reference to their backgrounds, their arrest records, conviction records, types of offense, history of incarceration, family background, neighborhood gang membership, education, employment history, marital and parenting history, sexual development, religious background, history of injuries received or inflicted, and drug and narcotic use.

In addition to multiple factors relating to the development of patterns of violent and anti-social behavior, extensive television viewing data included the years and degree of exposure, preferences for different television programs, favorite television shows, favorite types of motion picture shows, attitudes toward television, imitation of characters seen on television, impressions gained from television viewing, imitation of criminal techniques first seen on television shows, as well as comparative data with respect to the influence of other media.

FINDINGS

1. Among the many findings of Project IV, it was determined that these youthful offenders indeed had been enormously involved in acts of violence. For example, as juveniles 30% had sought to injure someone by striking him with a blunt instrument, 28% had stabbed an individual, and 23% had shot someone. It is also noteworthy that 23% had themselves received a serious blow with a blunt instrument, 44% had been stabbed, and 15% had been shot as juveniles.

2. Their level of hostility and rage was clearly determined by a variety of developmental sources, frustrations, socio-economic deprivation, familial disruption, and was not found to have a causal connection with television viewing.

3. Patterns of television viewing in violent criminals indicated that all one hundred had working television sets in their homes throughout their lives, and that the majority watched five to six hours of television per day during their childhood with minimal parental censorship or commentary with respect to programs. A decrease in television viewing occurred in adolescence and adulthood, but over 25% of adult offenders watched television more than five to six hours per day.

The favorite programs of these viewers included gangster, police, live dancing, music shows and westerns.

4. Violent offenders reported an increase in realization of the disparity between what they saw on television and what they saw in their own lives. More verbal, intellectual and political-action oriented inmates condemned television as irrelevant for the times, superficial or demonstrably racist. Over 50%, however, felt that television had been beneficial in changing their thoughts or beliefs and that it had been educational in increasing their familiarity with the world and broadening their outlook. They cited a number of pro-social lessons in obvious areas as news, documentaries, but also in the use of language, vocabulary and diction.

~~It appeared that television~~ aroused a variety of feelings including anger, disappointment, but also positive feelings of empathy, sympathy and interest.

5. Notably, 22% confessed to having imitated or tried out criminal techniques they had first seen demonstrated on television. But this was in contrast to any causal or motivational relationship to aggression.

6. In no instance was it determined that a criminal career, or act of violence was motivated by excessive viewing of televised violence. Aggression, hostility and antisocial behavior were consistent with a variety of etiologic and background factors. Television did, however, affect the "style" or technique of crimes in a number of cases, providing a format or vehicle for the acting out of a crime in youthful offenders, just as it

acted as a vehicle or "cognitive support" for pre-existing aggression in child viewers (Projects I and II).

This finding was further pursued in Project V.

PROJECT V: MEASUREMENT OF AGGRESSION IN RESPONSES OF ONE HUNDRED AND THIRTY-FIVE ADOLESCENT AND YOUNG ADULT OFFENDERS TO TELEVISION VIOLENCE

In this project involving one hundred thirty-five known violent youthful and young adult offenders, test exposures to actual television programs were pursued utilizing minor modifications of the same methodology developed with respect to the vulnerable children studied in Project I and Project II.

Here the offenders viewed programs of minimal, moderate and maximal violence, as well as a violent composite television newsreel.

FINDINGS

1. Test findings again failed to indicate any direct or implied connection between the viewing of televised violence, and the motivation of actual violent behavior.
2. Exposure to television films containing maximal violence resulted in no significant increase in measurements of aggression on psychological tests.
3. Varying or increasing the intensity of violence in television programs had no statistically significant effect on adolescent and young adult violent behavior.

4. Response to television programs with moderate or maximal amounts of violence did, however, result in an increase in violent fantasies, memories or recall of aggression, in contrast to any behavioral change.

PROJECT VI: PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR, VIOLENCE AND TELEVISION VIEWING HABITS, A COMPARATIVE STUDY

Project VI consisted of a modest pilot-study of promising potential which compared the results and implications of our findings obtained in the youthful offenders studies with one hundred age-matched young men in a small mid-western college. Control factors were specifically limited to age, masculinity and a life-long exposure to television viewing.

The methodology of Project VI was identical to that utilized in Project IV and sought to differentiate symbolic experiences such as the influence of television-portrayed violence and real-life experiences. This comparison addressed itself to the question of whether symbolic experience (a play, a movie or television show) can produce or motivate a person's real-life behavior, in contrast to modeling of imitation of style of behavior.

Both Projects IV and VI used as "real experience" incidents of actual violent behavior, drug use and personal experience as contrasted to television viewing patterns and other media exposure as "symbolic experiences."

The successful, prosocial student population differed from the unsuccessful, homicidal and violent offender population not with respect to age, television exposure or preference for violent programming,

but along a host of more significant, well known and documented determinants or personality of character development. These included marked racial, socio-economic, sub-cultural and family differences. For example, barely half of the violent offenders came from intact families whereas 94% of the students had undisrupted families of more than twice the affluence of the offender families. High crime area and the prevalence of youth gangs were important etiologic background factors in the offender population and were encountered in only two percent of the student population.

This retrospective study of young persons matched in age and growing up in the television era, confirms our previous conclusions that violent crime is the result of multiple factors and cannot, without gross oversimplification, be attributable to watching violent television programs.

Among causal factors associated with violent crime, underlined in the comparative study with college youth, are differences in early environmental influence, problems of self-image and feelings of inadequacy, the relationship between depression and aggression, multi-relations with parental figures, youthful gang participation, unanswered dependency needs, heterosexual inadequacies with respect to tenderness, and a host of precipitating factors relating to the utilization of drugs and alcohol.

PROJECT VII: RESPONSES OF CHILDREN TO ACTION-ADVENTURE
TELEVISION DRAMAS WITH AND WITHOUT PROSOCIAL
CONTENT

This additional phase of our longitudinal, in-depth study of susceptible children carried into the fourth ongoing year a number of intensively studied youngsters.

Although these youngsters had learning difficulties and poor school achievements, they were of average intellectual endowment. Their academic problems were imbedded in a variety of emotional and behavioral symptoms including conflicts with peers and authority figures, hyperactivity, poor control of aggression, pre-delinquent behavior and a general picture of emotional difficulties. The sample had been the subject of ongoing in-depth clinical studies, teacher observations, and evaluation conferences, and were well known with respect to levels of aggressivity.

Over and beyond the day-to-day observations of the children's response to television, their level of aggressivity in the schoolyard and classroom alike, a number of tests and measures dealing specifically with attitudes toward hostility and television were utilized to throw additional light on the children's reactions. Thus, as base-line measures, although these children had been checked a number of times, the Sears Aggression Scale was administered once again.

PRE-EXISTING VARIATIONS IN CHILD AGGRESSIVITY

The specific purpose for giving the Sears test at the beginning of this study and the following one (Project VIII*) was to provide a base line of personality variables in aggression among the child population. Such a measure would allow the testing of specific hypotheses relating to whether pre-existing personality variables in aggression determine how television content will be evaluated or assimilated by each child.

For example, it was postulated that children testing high in projected and antisocial scales would be more accepting of antisocial aggression in television portrayals. In simplest terms, if one wanted to test whether certain types of aggressive youngsters had a greater preference for apples, for example, than did less aggressive youngsters, then one would need to establish a base line of the children's pre-existing variations with respect to aggression, prior to measuring their affinity or preference for apples. The use of the Sears base line measurements in this and the ensuing project (Project VIII), therefore, allow for the comparative examination of viewer responses among children of different pre-existing characteristics with respect to aggression.

* Bryn Mawr College study

In addition to the Sears base line tests a Television Attitude Questionnaire assessed the basic attitudes which each child associated with television viewing, and included attitudes of both a positive and negative nature. For example, "Television programs give me ideas on how to get away with something without getting caught" (- often - sometimes - not too often - never).

PROGRAM MEASURES

Following their viewing of each television program, the children were administered so-called Program Reports or Post-Viewing Measures. These included the Television Affect Questionnaire which measured the degree of affect or feeling aroused in the children by either prosocial or aggressive elements in the television programs.

In addition to the Reactions Test described in our previous reports, Story Reviews (also called Movie or TV Reviews by the children) evaluated the awareness of each child for details of the plot, comprehension, the assimilation of the program's factual content, and its message or moral. The data obtained from the Story or TV Review was organized, discussed and analyzed by child psychologists, special educational teachers and research personnel.

COGNITIVE STYLE

Finally, this project utilized data concerning "cognitive style," a concept pertaining to the individual child's patterns of thinking, perceiving, remembering and other related cognitive activities. The concepts of cognitive style and cognitive control are helpful in understanding consistencies or inconsistencies in children's reactions to a range of viewing encounters in contexts which range from violent to prosocial, with respect to how the individual child assimilates different content and material.

Two particular measures of cognitive style that were obtained included the sharpening-leveling dimension as studied in the House Test, and the impulsive-reflective dimension, utilizing the Matching Familiar Figures Test. In terms of cognitive style, children who are sensitive to changes, subtleties and details are characterized as "sharpeners" in contrast to those youngsters who are slow to detect changes and inuendoes, or who detect fewer of them, and are known as "levelers."

PROGRAM STIMULI

The stimuli in this project included five complete television programs. One of these contained a combination of action-adventure and prosocial factors, "Welcome to our City," an episode of the Mod Squad series. In contrast to this "prosocial program," four contrasting programs were presented as primarily "violent," including "The Favor," "David and Goliath" (an episode of Rat Patrol), "The Smith Family" and "The Hero" (Will Sonnett).

COMPARISONS INVOLVING SUSCEPTIBLE CHILDREN

In comparing the findings obtained with our two groups of susceptible children, one must remember that by tests and measurements as well as clinical observations, one group is more disturbed than the other. We also hypothesized that if the most disturbed (susceptible) children are not adversely affected then no youngsters will be.

Since we are seeking the measured responses to television stimuli of the most disturbed children in comparison with less disturbed children, we need in each project to determine which group is the more emotionally disturbed, or the more "susceptible." The focus in these studies is on the so-called susceptible child, rather than on a comparison of a theoretically "normal" group of children (if one could find and agree

upon a proper definition of normalcy) with a disturbed group.

The point in these studies then is to compare the measurable results of television viewing on the most disturbed groups of children in comparison with less disturbed groups of children, in seeking to identify the "susceptible" child. In this project, as a result of ongoing evaluations of each child both clinically, and by special psychological testing, as well as the observations of special teachers, the emotionally impaired children with learning disorders were determined to be more disturbed than this particular sample of institutionalized children from broken homes.*

FINDINGS

The significant findings include the following:

1. The children in the More Disturbed sample showed significantly more aggressive test preferences (rather than actual aggressive behavior) than non-aggressive test preferences following the viewing of violent

*In contrast to the comparisons in Project IX which compare a second broken home group of youngsters who turned out to be more disturbed and therefore susceptible than the emotionally impaired group with learning disorders which had been studied for five years.

television programs. These differences were not found in the Less Disturbed group of children. However, the More Disturbed children were significantly more predisposed from the start of the project to stated expressions of antisocial tendencies than were the children in the Less Disturbed group.

2. The More Disturbed children took in and retained significantly less of aggressive television material from the programs than did the Less Disturbed group. (Consistent with clinical findings that the More Disturbed group was less responsive to stimuli in general, and particularly to emotionally perceived stimuli). The More Disturbed group responded less to the aggressive content on a cognitive, intellectual and emotional basis than did the psychologically more intact, or Less Disturbed group.

3. The More Disturbed group showed greater discontinuity between the results of their cognitive tests, and their assimilation, discrimination and intellectual grasp of television stimuli, particularly in relation to the violent programs.

With respect to cognitive functioning, the findings support the conclusion that the More Disturbed group of children showed more discontinuity between their basic cognitive functioning as measured on standard tests, and their cognitive approach to television materials. Thus, the More Disturbed group tended to be more discriminating and

"sharp" on the neutral, cognitive test materials than they were in their actual cognitive responses to the non-neutral or emotionally stimulating television programs. Thus, there appeared to be a "break" in their cognitive and intellectual functioning in response to television viewing inasmuch as their measurable cognitive test scores did not transfer or generalize to their cognitive responses to television viewing. Furthermore, there appeared to be some tendencies for this discontinuity to be selective, depending on the content of the television programs. The discontinuity was more pronounced in response to the violent television programs than in response to the prosocial film, indicating that content plays some part in the degree of difference.

The Less Disturbed group demonstrated considerably more continuity or equivalence of response in comparing the purely cognitive tasks of the test situation with their actual cognitive functioning in response to television stimuli. The Less Disturbed group tended to be "sharp" and "reflective" on the cognitive tests (House and Matching Familiar Figures) as well as in their actual cognitive reactions to the television programs. Furthermore, they showed a consistency of cognitive approach to both prosocial and aggressive television film content.

PROJECT VIII: COGNITIVE STYLE AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO
PERCEPTION OF VIOLENT OR PROSOCIAL ASPECTS
IN TELEVISION PROGRAMS

In designing and coordinating the research of the past four years, we have found it desirable to utilize a variety of independent project directors, submitting the methodology and procedures to the discipline and corroboration of independent scrutiny. Thus, the content of the following independent study* represents an experimental approach to the relationships between learning, cognitive style and children's responses to television. This project was coordinated with the cognitive aspects of the studies reported in Project VII.

Research since the 1940's has viewed cognition in terms of stable individual differences which serve one's adjustment to a changing environment. Unique individual consistencies can be identified in the cognitive functioning of humans. The labels "cognitive style" and "cognitive controls" have been used to describe such consistencies.

*The project director was Dr. Janet Hoopes, Professor and Director, Department of Psychology, Bryn Mawr College, assisted by graduate students in partial fulfillment of a post-graduate program.

Cognitive controls are intervening variables which define principles by which perception, memory and other basic qualitative forms of cognitive functioning are organized as an individual coordinates himself with his environment. They become a relatively fixed aspect of a child's adaptive style which gives shape to his subsequent experiences.

The cognitive control concept of leveling-sharpening concerns the manner in which the child perceives and makes adaptive use of gradual changes in sequentially experienced stimuli. Some children (levelers) tend to merge new experiences with earlier experiences. Thereby, they construct relatively undifferentiated and contaminated memories, impressions and imagery of ongoing experiences.

By contrast, other children tend to maintain discreet impressions and memories of sequentially presented stimuli so that elements do not lose their individuality (sharpeners).

The cognitive principle of Reflection - Impulsivity, differentiates the tendency to reflect over alternative solution possibilities in contrast with the tendency to make an impulsive selection of a solution, in problems with high response uncertainty.

THE SUBJECTS

Eighty children in the fourth and fifth grades of an upper middle class suburban school constituted the normal learning group. Twenty children in the special education classes made up a learning disability group. Of the twenty, sixteen had been diagnosed as emotionally disturbed and four as minimal cerebral dysfunction. The special education children appeared largely "normal" but were found to be socially immature, often hyperactive, disruptive in the classroom and unable to learn despite normal intellectual potential. They had been diagnosed through psychological tests and psychiatric interviews. All of the children were from nine years, zero months to ten years, eleven months.

INSTRUMENTATION

Base-line measures included the Sears Aggression Scale to determine pre-existing differences with respect to aggressivity in each of the children.

SantoStefano's House Test was utilized to differentiate cognitive differences in leveling-sharpening. Kagan's Matching Familiar Figures Test was utilized to measure cognitive style differences in impulsivity-reflectivity.

A parent questionnaire was devised to elicit information regarding such items as amount of time child watches television, parental control over television viewing, child's attention to programs, child's emotional involvement in program (i.e. dreaming about it, acting out the program in play, etc.).

EXPERIMENTAL STIMULUS

A complete television program was selected after viewing a number of choices. The main criterion for selection was that the action-adventure drama contained a balance of violent and prosocial elements. The program had to be of proper length, and have intrinsic appeal to the age range selected for the study. The Mod Squad episode, "Welcome to our City" was shown as originally broadcast, requiring approximately one hour for viewing. The advertisements were retained in order to simulate typical viewing conditions.

Post-test measures focused on such items as significant details remembered by the children, evaluation of the program and its characters with respect to both violent and prosocial aspects, the degree of involvement of the child with the show, and how real the story and its characters appeared to the child.

FINDINGS

1. It was hypothesized that there would be significant differences in cognitive style between emotionally impaired children with learning disabilities in special classrooms, and "normal" children in regular classrooms. The anticipated direction was that learning disabled children would be "levelers" and "impulsives" in terms of cognitive style.

This hypothesis was confirmed by a statistical technique (two-way analysis of variance) in which scores of the "normal" regular class children were compared with the scores of the special class children with learning disabilities and emotional impairment.

2. It was hypothesized that home viewing patterns would be different for cognitive style "levelers" in comparison to "sharpeners." The direction of the difference would anticipate that less time spent viewing television, and greater supervision of television viewing would be found in "sharpeners" rather than in "levelers."

A number of statistical correlations were consistent with this hypothesis. Thus, it was found that learning-disabled children who tended to be cognitive "levelers," did indeed spend more time viewing television, and spent less time in outside activities than did the majority of children in regular classrooms.

3. The findings of Project VIII indicate that cognitive style in children and their response to television constitute significant relationships worthy of further investigation by child researchers.

PROJECT IX: RESPONSES OF SUSCEPTIBLE CHILDREN TO
VIOLENT VS PROSOCIAL TELEVISION PROGRAMS

This study compared the responses of groups of emotionally disturbed ("susceptible") children to two distinctly differing themes of televised drama: network programs with a high level of violent action and prosocial network programs with little or no violence.

Project VII in this Overview compared the viewing responses of susceptible children to two types of dramatic fare, both of which featured violence. The difference between the two types of television stimuli in Project VII, however, was that one set of stimulus programs featured violence with minimal prosocial content, while the other test program contained both violence and significant prosocial content. Project IX makes direct comparison of child viewer responses to violent vs. distinctly prosocial, non-violent television dramas.

SUBJECTS

This study retained an emotionally impaired group of children with learning disorders. Children in this category have been under ongoing, long-term study since 1970. They include youngsters with whom the Project Director and his research team have ongoing familiarity as the result of their regular clinical and classroom relationships, augmented by a number of specific studies and measurements involving their response

to television stimuli. This long-term sample is comprised of thirty children extending in age from ten through fourteen, and fairly evenly divided between boys and girls, and black and white youngsters.

They were considered to have at least average intellectual endowment despite their poor history of academic achievement. The great majority of these emotionally impaired children were living at home with an apparently "intact" family.

In contradistinction to the broken-home population of children utilized in Project VII and earlier studies, the following broken-home group consisted of sixty emotionally troubled children who had generally experienced significant home instability in their early developmental years.* These children were evenly divided between boys and girls and comprised a representation of black and white children. The age range

*These youngsters were from a different institution than that reported in earlier projects. As sometimes occurs in long-term research projects, modifications may be the result of a combination of fate, adaptation and revised planning. Because of the untimely death of one of the key research members at the first institution, Bernard R. Meehan, and the subsequent opportunity to broaden the sample with another group of youngsters from a different residential home, Project IX was undertaken involving methodology and testing instruments similar to those used in the previous projects involving susceptible children from broken homes.

extended from eight to fifteen. The children in this broken-home sample bore considerably more psychological trauma than did the previously studied residential children reported in Project VII and previous studies. Moreover, the second broken-home group of children involved in this project was generally more disturbed and "susceptible" than the emotionally impaired group of children with learning disorders. Thus, in this study, the Most Disturbed group (in our focus on the "susceptible" child) is the broken-home sample.

TELEVISION STIMULI

Six complete television programs were used as stimuli in Project IX. Three programs consisted of action-adventure drama with a number of violent segments.

Three additional programs had minimal to absent violence, and represented the prosocial viewpoint, stressing motivation and understanding. In the prosocial television programs, issues were portrayed in a more psychological than action oriented manner, although action was not lacking. The selected programs are listed hereunder.

Overview, PROJECT IX

Programs:
with violent action

"Crime Without Victim" (Toma)
"The Payoff" (FBI)
"The Assassin" (Kung Fu)

Programs:
with prosocial themes

"Psst - Hammerman's After You"
(Wednesday Afternoon Special)
"The Mysterious Mole" - Magic Mystery
Trip

Each of the children saw three "violent" and three "prosocial" programs.

TESTS AND PROCEDURES

In seeking the answer to whether or not exposure to violent television programs has untoward behavioral effects on certain children, one must assume that the most "susceptible" children would be the most disturbed or emotionally impaired people. In each instance, then, the study seeks to compare the results of tests and measures following the viewing of violent programs and prosocial programs on the most disturbed group of clinically evaluated children in comparison to a group with lesser emotional disturbance, and presumably less "susceptible" to postulated untoward viewing effects.

As in previous methodologies, base line measures were given. These included a television attitude questionnaire, a conflict situation test, and a composite aggression inventory. These psychological tests were additional specific measures superimposed upon the ongoing clinical and

teacher evaluations of each child in the project.

Program measures were applied to each child after viewing each program, and these measures were dependent on whether the content of the particular television program was "prosocial" or "violent."

These elicited from children the extent to which they indicated their preference for modeling themselves after various characters and categories of behavior in each of the two types of program stimuli. Thus, the range of modeling or imitative choices available to each child is drawn from both "good" and "bad" characters in both the prosocial and violent television program stimuli.

FINDINGS*

1. The Most Disturbed children showed preferences to model or imitate the "good" characters rather than the "bad" characters to a highly significant degree in the prosocial programs.

*The data obtained in the numerous tests and measurements was statistically handled in order to obtain a Mean or average score for the Most Disturbed group and Less Disturbed group on each particular test. Following this, the Standard Deviation for the particular distribution of scores was calculated. Thereafter the Standard Error of the Mean was derived, followed by the determination of the Standard Error of the Difference. The Critical Ratio or the "t" score was then obtained.

2. The Most Disturbed children showed preferences to model or imitate the "good" characters rather than the "bad" characters in the violent programs.

3. The Most Disturbed children experienced a significantly greater degree of affective arousal or response to the prosocial television stimuli than did the Less Disturbed group.

4. The Most Disturbed children prior to exposure to the television program stimuli showed a greater degree of negative attitudes than the Less Disturbed group, an expected finding. The Most Disturbed children began the project with a significantly higher level of preoccupation with aggressive aspects of television content.

5. The Most Disturbed children scored significantly higher on positive television attitudes and general empathy, indicating that a shift had taken place in their attitudes. The base line findings indicated that the Most Disturbed children came into this study with some readiness to see that television would put "bad" ideas into their heads and teach them antisocial "tricks" or negative attitudes. Remarkably, the Most Disturbed children left the study with a significant attitudinal shift as measured by the testing instruments.

6. The Most Disturbed children, following exposure to the television stimulus materials were more responsive to the prosocial messages obtained

from television programming than they were at the start of the study. They wound up, in other words, with less antisocial attitudes than they started with, at least as indicated on the tests and measures. There were no outwardly manifest behavior changes in real activities in the classroom or schoolyard which manifested real behavioral shifts reflecting the underlying attitudinal changes.

7. It would appear that the systematic inclusion of a mixture of prosocial programs and violent programs had a felicitous effect on the Most Disturbed child viewers.

8. Overall, the showing of violent television materials to the Most Disturbed (susceptible or high risk) children does not result in a significant modeling on antisocial characters.

9. The Most Disturbed children were more attuned to the prosocial elements in whichever type of program was shown (prosocial or violent). For whatever reason, they selectively tuned in preferentially on the more prosocial materials and tuned out or downgraded their testing responses to the violent materials.

10. Clinically it was observed that television program material served as a perceptive organizer or focusing vehicle which assisted the Most Disturbed, emotionally vulnerable children in crystallizing their functioning on a higher rather than a lower level of integration. In this way, television programs appear to provide a kind of "organizing

vehicle" for certain cognitive supports and auxiliary ego-strengths which the Most Disturbed group of children require.

SUMMARY OF STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES RELATING TO THE MOST DISTURBED CHILDREN, PROJECT IX

1. Prior to viewing the television stimulus programs, the Most Disturbed children showed significantly more negative attitudes than did the Less Disturbed group. However, following the viewing of the television programs, the Most Disturbed children showed more positive attitudes in testing than did the Less Disturbed group.

2. Prior to viewing the programs the Most Disturbed children showed greater degrees of empathy than did the Less Disturbed group. In addition, following the viewing of television, the Most Disturbed children showed greater degrees of empathy than did the Less Disturbed group.

3. In response to each individual film, the Most Disturbed group showed a higher preference for modeling after "good" characters than modeling after "bad" characters in response to the prosocial film.

The Most Disturbed children also showed a greater degree of modeling or imitation for "good" characters than did the Less Disturbed group in response to prosocial television. The Most Disturbed children were more aroused by the prosocial program than was the Less Disturbed group.

4. In response to the viewing of violent films, the Most Disturbed children showed a higher preference for "good" modeling than they did for "bad" modeling.

PROJECT X: BEHAVIORAL AGGRESSION AND TELEVISION VIEWING IN CHILDREN: PSYCHOLOGICAL, DEVELOPMENTAL AND CLINICAL FACTORS

Our previous studies have tested in a variety of ways the hypothesis that increased exposure to the viewing of televised violence may result in increased violent behavior on the part of the viewer. A further hypothesis which remained to be tested carried over from previous work with youthful and young adult violent offenders. If televised violence causes behavioral violence in certain children, then children who are known to be the most violent in a given population of known emotional susceptibility should show a significant preference for, and a history of greater exposure to, violent programming.

SUBJECTS

This work continued the study of many of the emotionally impaired and learning disordered children (Group A) in our previously reported projects. Some of these children have been under study since 1970. The outstanding common symptom shared by the learning-disordered sample was some type of learning disability imbedded in a complex of related emotional and behavioral problems. This study included 34 such children.

There were twenty-eight boys and six girls, twenty-four blacks and ten whites in the group. The children ranged in age from twelve to sixteen.

The second group of children in this project involved the emotionally vulnerable, broken home children of Project IX for a second year. (See "Responses of Susceptible Children to Violent vs. Prosocial Television Programs"). This group shared a common background of broken and disrupted homes in their early developmental years. It consisted of fifty-one children who ranged in age from four to sixteen, with the majority between the ages of eight and twelve. There were thirty-three boys and eighteen girls, twenty-six whites and twenty-five blacks.

PROCEDURES

Both groups of children were followed clinically in an in-depth study with reference to their multiple developmental, psychological and behavioral factors. The relative importance of their past, and present television viewing as a behavior modifier was assessed in their personality development. Daily observations by teachers, research staff, houseparents and mental health professionals involved with the management and care of these children were available as an extensive body of clinical information.

In addition to a clinical battery of special psychological tests, measurements such as the Sears Aggression Scales and the Composite Aggression Inventory* were included. These evaluations included individual in-depth interviews with each child and standardized child psychological tests such as the Rorschach, Children's Apperception Test, figure drawings and sentence completion, and such intelligence tests as the Stanford-Binet and Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children. Finally, interviews and conferences with teachers, houseparents and other staff were assessed at regular research conferences.

In addition, a specially developed history form and clinical interviewing guide was adapted following the methodology of the retrospective studies used in our previous research with young adult violent offenders, and utilized with each child.

*The Sears Aggression Scales were originally administered in previous studies of this series to the Learning-Disordered Group and were again given to them at the end of this study for comparative purposes. The Composite Aggression Inventory was used for the Broken Home Group because it was felt to be a more refined composite of several existing aggression scales. It was then readministered at the end of this study for comparative purposes.

Clinical Inquiry:

The clinical evaluation team sought specifically to rate the children with respect to the following factors, based on direct interviews with each child and on information available from parents and the child-care, teaching, research and clinical staff. They asked:

1. Was this child more aggressive, less aggressive or unchanged compared to his initial evaluations in our earlier projects with these children?
2. What factors in the child's home life, school, peer relations, learning, emotional development, apperception and fantasy were associated with behavioral changes in aggressivity? To what extent was television content associated with aggressive or prosocial attitudes, behavior, fantasies and life content?
3. If the child was more aggressive, what were the child's favorite television programs and characters?
4. If the child was known to be directly influenced by television viewing, were there particular characteristics of this child's personality other than his pattern of exposure to the television programs which made him more

susceptible to imitation, modeling or suggestion?

These kinds of questions, specifically put to the research team focused on the child's everyday life experiences and considered television among the totality of stimuli influencing his everyday behavior.

Assessment of Aggressive and Violent Behavior:

The evaluation of each child's aggressivity was arrived at in consideration of multiple developmental factors, measurements and direct behavioral observations.

Whenever a child was evaluated as a highly aggressive or assaultive one, this study sought to determine whether there were any significant differences in comparison to less aggressive children in terms of family background, parental control and punishment, school behavior and performance, television viewing and all available clinical factors pertaining to their physical and emotional development.

Classification of Aggressivity and Ego Functioning:

During the initial phase of this project, the children were classified in three groups with reference to (a) violent (assaultive) behavior, (b) non-assaultive, high aggressivity and (c) low aggressivity.*

Thus, children were classified into two groups with reference to aggressivity (high or low), and in a third or violent group if they were actually assaultive to property or persons.

The children were also classified into weak and strong ego functioning groups. These assessments were based on extended clinical evaluation of each child's mental mechanisms of adjustment and coping in such areas as their relationship to reality, control of drives, interpersonal

*In our studies violence was distinguished from aggression. Violence was defined as that kind of behavior which physically harms or threatens another person or valued object. It has a destructive quality. In contrast to this, aggression was defined as the active pursuit of an object, goal or person without necessarily seeking the harm of that object or person. Our experience in working with large numbers of violent persons led to the conclusion that there are many advantages in regarding aggression as the opposite of passivity, while reserving violence for that behavior which has a more destructive aim and quality. As aggression can be seen as the opposite of passivity, violence can be viewed as the opposite of care or gentleness.

relationships, synthetic function, apperception and intelligence.

Thus, when considering the effects and influence of televised violence on their behavior, six categories were utilized for comparison purposes:

1. Weak Ego - Low Aggressivity
2. Weak Ego - High Aggressivity
3. Weak Ego - Assaultive
4. Strong Ego - Low Aggressivity
5. Strong Ego - High Aggressivity
6. Strong Ego - Assaultive

Assessment of Viewing Patterns

The children were additionally studied in accordance with their television viewing patterns including current viewing habits, previous year's viewing habits, and their early history of childhood viewing. Moreover, the types of program preferences (i.e. action-adventure, sports, comedy, cartoons, violent versus non-violent, etc.) were noted.

Finally, all data from the clinical evaluations, tests and measurements, viewing patterns, and clinical and developmental histories for the children in each classification were examined and assessed to determine the

influence of televised violence on their behavior patterns.

FINDINGS

1. Innate, constitutional and early developmental differences were observed in the behavioral patterns of these children from infancy. These included early behavioral tendencies toward passivity on the one hand, and hyperactivity or aggressivity on the other. Early pediatric reports, nurses' observations, and developmental data obtained from mothers and nursery school teachers indicated that these children varied in behavioral aggressivity long prior to their exposure to, or interest in television.

2. Similarly, clinical data confirmed the observation that these children varied in their ability to bind or tolerate anxiety and frustration. What was first noted as infantile irritability was later reported as hyperactivity, aggressivity and tantrum violence by nursery school teachers and other observers. Again, these characteristic tendencies and behavioral differences long preceded the exposure of this population to television and cannot be attributed to television viewing.

3. Variations in the constancy of parental attention, nurturing, emotional care, control and discipline were associated with the development of patterns of aggressivity and assaultiveness, or withdrawal

and passivity as the single most significant set of factors in the backgrounds of these children..

There were no consistent observable differences in television viewing habits, patterns or preferences which could account for the early observed differences in behavioral aggressivity in this child population.

4. Differences in behavioral patterns and attitudes relating to aggression and violence in these children reflected variations in the development and adequacy of the apperceptive, defensive and coping mechanisms of their ego functioning. Their acceptable management of aggressive drives required an adequate degree of ego functioning and adaptation to the constraints of social reality...

5. The acceptable expression of aggressive drives was found to involve the interplay of various ego functions which were constitutionally determined and developed during their early experiences. Thus, children who showed marked tendencies toward aggression and violence were found to have had early histories of undue frustration, abuse and neglect, and inadequate quantities of early emotional nurturing and care.

6. The measures of antisocial aggression in the Sears Aggression Scales showed a significant increase of group scores in the 1972-73

Learning-Disordered group in comparison to the 1970-72 and 1974-75 scores. Broken Home group scores on the Composite Aggression Inventory showed a significant increase of the 1973-74 group over the 1974-75 group.

Inasmuch as neither of these groups of children were exposed to any experimental or other viewing increases of television portrayed violence, the increases in group aggression scores cannot be attributed to known effects or variables relating to their television viewing. Given the multiplicity of other emotional and adjustment factors operating in the lives of these children, the differences in their group test scores can be readily attributed to known changes in the composition of the groups and other environmental and developmental factors. Moreover, there was no increase in behavioral aggressivity accompanying the changes in test measures of attitudes and preferences.

7. Both increases and decreases in actual behavioral aggressivity of small numbers of children in both research populations were noted during the course of this project.

- a) Six children increased their levels of aggressive behavior. Of these, four children increased their aggressive behavior favorably, in that they changed from passive withdrawn behaviors to more appropriate

assertive behaviors within the lower aggressivity category.

Two children increased their already high behavioral aggressivity in an unfavorable, antisocial direction and became repeatedly assaultive or violent.

- b) Nine children decreased their levels of aggressivity. None of these decreases approached passive or withdrawn behavior. Some went from assaultive to highly aggressive behavior while others went from highly aggressive behavior to behavior in the low aggressivity category.

8. Behavioral changes in aggressivity were found to result from a variety of emotional changes and observed responses including known frustrations, school and cottage adjustment difficulties and peer relationships. In both the Learning-Disordered group and the residential children changes in behavioral aggressivity could not be attributed to changes in their television viewing habits. While television cannot be said to have caused changes in character or behavioral aggressivity, it did provide some models for imitation and identification in these children. Prosocial children with both low and high patterns of behavioral aggressivity extracted

prosocial materials from television programs. Children predisposed to assaultiveness and antisocial behavior responded to antisocial models and were noted to imitate observed antisocial techniques.

The implications for television underline the risk of demonstrating replicable antisocial acts and portrayals for imitation and identification in children predisposed to violence.

PROJECT XI: TESTING AND APPLICATION OF GUIDELINES

This area of our ongoing studies has been pursued not only along theoretic lines published in previous work, but has been enhanced and furthered by the practical application of preview analyses of numerous actual or proposed programs, intensively begun in 1972, as well as by a series of seminar-discussions with west coast editors, particularly during 1973, 1974 and 1975.

The methodology in this ongoing project which seeks to apply the findings of our own as well as the research of other investigators to the daily deliberations of program decision makers in Practices and Standards has involved working with proposed scripts or television materials, conferences, detailed reports and written commentary, and a library of consultative materials providing a growing collection of practical data for classification and analysis and for further recommendations in the area of Broadcast Standards and Practices.

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Heller, M.S. and Polsky, S., "Television Violence: Guidelines for Evaluation," Archives of General Psychiatry, 24:279-285, 1971.

In the review of all these materials practical policy decisions involved specific consideration of:

1. The televised portrayal of violence
2. The portrayal of sexual matters and problems relating to offensive language
3. Sub-cultural, ethnic, racial and minority portrayals, or related problems of stereotyping or villifying sub-cultural groups
4. The management of humor with reference to categories 2 and 3.

During a number of regularly scheduled west coast conferences and teaching seminars, a wealth of tape recorded, and transcribed data have undergone analysis for the development of staff-training materials. These experiences in the practical application of research results and data to the day-to-day work of Program Standards and Practices gave rise to the following conclusions and findings:

FINDINGS

1. Guidelines must be utilized as dynamic considerations. They must be subject to change and practical applications, rather than accepted as eternal or rigid value judgments.

The guidelines are more often a way of applying rules than rules in themselves. As rules, they are useful in the discussion of actual script materials under consideration. As ways of applying rules they provide a framework for resolution of differences of opinion at any stage.

3. The guidelines are teachable, and helpful alternatives to intuitive judgments, hunches or conclusions.
4. The guidelines are backed by the illustration or shared or reasonably accepted principles, and provide logical bases for Standards and Practices.

The development of guideline factors in the third, fourth and fifth year of this work has provided practical materials for a textbook of helpful utility to broadcast standards editors, writers, directors, programmers and communications students. This is currently in preparation for publication.

POSTSCRIPT: WHERE WE HAVE BEEN, DIRECTIONS TO BE PURSUED, AND
IMPLICATIONS FOR THE BROADCASTING INDUSTRY

We began our research studies five years ago with the proposition that disturbed children are more susceptible or vulnerable to possible adverse effects of television viewing. We asked: What is the nature of this vulnerability? What are the adverse effects upon the most vulnerable children?

These studies have indicated that:

1. Imitation is one problem area. Television is highly effective in suggestion of technique but not in actual causation or aggravation of antisocial behavior. Television will not cause the bully, thief or murderer to be a bully, thief or murderer; but it can show him new techniques of bullying, stealing or killing. The practical application for broadcasting practices is avoidance of specific instruction in the details of "how to do it."

2. Fantasy was strongly stimulated in children who watched television, and play activities were increased and enhanced by such stimulation, but actual levels of physical violence, deliberately and with serious intent directed by one child against another, were not increased or enhanced by television viewing.

Our long-term studies not only support these earlier findings (I, II), but continued to do so in longitudinal studies of the most disturbed (IX, X) children available to us. In the work most recently reported,* our findings are supportive of the conclusion that characteristics of the viewer are among the most important determinants of his response to televised materials.

Our studies have attempted to investigate the most high-risk, emotionally impaired children, including those from unstable and broken homes. Also, since known, violent offenders frequently present typical histories of childhood instability and broken homes, then it is among such child populations that one should focus future searches for untoward behavioral responses to television viewing.

Moreover, if television violence is associated with violent behavior, then the study of youthful violent offenders, convicted or charged with murder or assault with intent to kill quickly centers upon a known violent population in whom the retrospective influence of television may be evaluated. Thus, if television violence causes or influences crime in the streets, then the study of youthful persons who have committed street-crimes, and the study of children with emotional impairment or

* Heller & Polsky: Behavioral Aggression and Television Viewing in Children, October, 1975, American Broadcasting Company, NY.

unstable or broken homes, gets to the heart of the matter most quickly.

Finally, our studies have specifically investigated the potential role of television as a stimulus or real-life violence, in contrast to violent play, fantasy or laboratory-produced aggression.

In studying research subject samples whose known characteristics have special pertinence with respect to violence or susceptibility to commit violence, our methods have included ongoing, intensive clinical evaluations, as well as specific experimental projects using television stimulus materials and a number of specifically developed psychological tests and measurements to provide specific focus in the overall clinical evaluations by psychiatrists, psychologists, teachers and research personnel. These in-depth studies included individual assessments of each participant, his background, family cohesiveness, age at disruption of home, and a detailed view of his developmental history including physical, social, emotional and educational factors.

The correlations between specific child developmental patterns, specific symptoms and emotional conflicts and differential responses to television programming indeed constitute a promising area for further study, and refinement of our knowledge of the interaction of "susceptible" or emotionally vulnerable children to portrayed violence in television programming.

Children's clinical responses to television programs did not appear in absolute terms. The cognitive equipment of susceptible children, judging from our sample, appeared to have held up better in the prosocial action-adventure drama. In such programs, violent elements were counterbalanced or qualified in their emotional impact by the program's total context, which provided an understandable explanation of the motivations and personality of the characters. The "understanding" these children had of the prosocial action-adventure drama, as reflected in their tests, questionnaires and clinical studies in response to this type of program, has obvious implications for modeling and imitation of prosocial behavior in children's programs.

Emotionally impaired-learning disordered children were compared with less disturbed children in Project VII and with more disturbed children whom we were able to find in Projects IX and X. The comparative findings are of particular interest. The more intact children often had their aggressive fantasies stimulated by violent television programs (fantasy aggression). Thus, test indices of levels of fantasy-aggression were increased in these children, but these did not tend to be acted out in their behavior. On a seemingly positive side, the cognitive supports provided by action television materials enabled the more disorganized children to attach their own inner feelings and fears of violence to externalized portrayed objects.

If our findings regarding modeling and imitation were to be summarized in the pithiest manner, the conclusions would be to the effect that showing violent television materials to a population of emotionally susceptible "high-risk" children does not necessarily result in the children's modeling themselves on antisocial characters. Indeed, the most disturbed children studied were more attuned to the prosocial elements of whatever kind of television program was shown (prosocial or violent). For whatever reason, they selectively tuned in the prosocial material and tuned out the violent material. The further elaboration of prosocial elements in children's action programs and the inclusion of such distinct materials as part of children's action-adventure drama would appear to follow as an implication for the industry in children's programming.

While entertainment is the primary product of network television, it requires no research to recognize that television informs, teaches and influences child viewers through a variety of cues which encourage both conscious and unconscious modeling and imitation. Television's potential as a teacher and influencer of human behavior and thinking is awesomely larger than its entertainment function. Television is widely recognized as a powerful teacher and purveyor of impressions.

In a society increasingly beleaguered by violence, its portrayal on television is a matter of ongoing social concern and consequence.

The alternatives for television are these: to eliminate violence completely or haphazardly and make believe that it rarely if ever occurs, or to learn to handle portrayed violence responsibly so that its potential for good is augmented.

The entertainment of children requires supervision. Supervising children is neither a primary network nor governmental responsibility, but a basic parental one. Where parental supervision is inadequate, then there is a joint responsibility to be shared among parents, networks and the educational system.

The findings of our own and other television studies of violence can be supplied in tables of data which attempt to measure children's aggressive behavior as it is influenced by television programs.

Millions of dollars of laboratory or survey research alone will not supply the answer to what children learn from television or how. Nor will anecdotal accounts from individual parents, teachers or critics. What and how children are learning from television deserves continued study of the massive data which can only be collected by systematic attention to the response of young children to television programs as part of regular classroom discussions. If children are learning bad things from television, or anything at all, the logical place to find out more about it is where their learning is evaluated, tested and assessed daily - the classroom. It is clear that television teaches

something. What better prospect of utilizing, assessing and capitalizing on the impressions and misimpressions that children receive from television than in the classroom?

If half-hour programs were assigned to even first grade classes, and then discussed like any story or "show and tell," untoward reactions to programming could be quickly identified, misinformation or exploitive advertising could be debunked and children would learn to evaluate assigned television entertainment under the leadership of the person entrusted with their learning and intellectual development, their teacher.* Such systematic data collected in various states and regions from children of different age groups, would allow teachers and educators to assess over a longitudinal period the influence and impact of television experience as it affects the thinking and actual behavior of children. The monitoring and classroom discussion of children's responses to television programs would provide mutually rewarding information for researchers, teachers and television programmers alike.

* Certainly Bugs Bunny is worth as much discussion as Little Red Riding Hood or Hansel and Gretel, and in the estimate of some has at least as much artistic merit.

The best teachers are also good entertainers; and both professions need to come more closely together in the mutual and complementary development of the wide world of audio-visual techniques.

The completion of five years of studies has involved a major commitment and continuing interest of the American Broadcasting Company in supporting and responding to basic research pertaining to the relationships between children's television viewing and the psychological and child-developmental factors which pertain to any relationship between portrayed violence and behavioral violence.

Throughout the five years, editors' workshops, as well as regular consultations on selected scripts, pilots and other program materials have sought to apply pertinent child development and research findings to the day-to-day decisions of Broadcast Standards and Practices. This work has resulted in a large volume of additional materials which is in preparation for publication as a guideline text for editors, writers and programmers.