The effects of viewing television violence on school children

Jennifer M. Morgan
Rowan University

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THE EFFECTS OF VIEWING TELEVISION VIOLENCE ON SCHOOL CHILDREN

by
Jennifer M. Morgan

A Thesis
Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Master of Arts Degree of The Graduate School at Rowan University
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Approved by Professor
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The purpose of the study was to examine the effects of viewing television violence on children. It was hypothesized that children who watch more than 3 to 4 hours of television daily, and who are exposed to inherently violent television programming in which physical and/or verbal confrontations and actions are commonplace, will be more likely than other peers to have received disciplinary referrals.

The study took place within an urban middle school serving children grades 6 through 8. A sample of 52 students was randomly selected, consisting of some students who had and some who had not received disciplinary referrals. A researcher-developed survey was used to collect data. Correlational analysis was used to test the hypothesis.

Findings partially supported the hypothesis: television-watching hours was positively correlated with disciplinary referrals; action and adventure content was not
significantly correlated with disciplinary referrals; fighting was not significantly correlated with disciplinary referrals; and there was a significant correlation between the number of disciplinary referrals and the age of subject, with stronger correlations than between referrals and hours of television watching.
MINI ABSTRACT

Jennifer M. Morgan
The Effects of Viewing Television Violence on School Children
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Dr. John Klanderman
School Psychology

The problem is that viewing television violence may affect school children.
Findings of this study showed that television-watching hours was positively correlated with disciplinary referrals, action and adventure content was not significantly correlated with disciplinary referrals, fighting was not significantly correlated with disciplinary referrals, and there was a significant correlation between the number of disciplinary referrals and the age of subject.
Acknowledgements

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Table of Contents

Chapter I Introduction..............................................................................................................1
Need for the Study....................................................................................................................1
Purpose....................................................................................................................................2
Hypothesis...............................................................................................................................2
Theory.......................................................................................................................................3
Definitions...............................................................................................................................8
Assumptions............................................................................................................................8
Limitations..............................................................................................................................9
Overview................................................................................................................................10

Chapter II Review of Literature..............................................................................................11
Impact of Media......................................................................................................................11
Sex Role Stereotyping Study..................................................................................................12
Gender Portrayal Study..........................................................................................................12
The Androgynous Woman......................................................................................................13
The Committee on Communications....................................................................................14
Laboratory Experiments........................................................................................................16
National Television Violence Study....................................................................................16
Rock Music and Videos..........................................................................................................17
“Gangsta” Rap Vs. “Traditional” Rap....................................................................................18
Aggression/Victimization Study of Gender and Race.........................................................18
Sexual Imagery Experiments...............................................................................................19
Appendix........................................................................................................46
List of Tables and Charts

Table 4.1 .................................................................................................................. 30
Table 4.2 .................................................................................................................. 30
Table 4.3 .................................................................................................................. 31
Table 4.4 .................................................................................................................. 32
Table 4.5 .................................................................................................................. 33
Table 4.6 .................................................................................................................. 33
Table 4.7 .................................................................................................................. 34
Table 4.8 .................................................................................................................. 35
Table 4.9 .................................................................................................................. 35
Table 4.10 ................................................................................................................. 36
Table 4.11 ................................................................................................................. 36
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

NEED FOR THE STUDY

American children watch an average of 3 to 4 hours of television daily, and it has long been recognized that television can be a powerful influence in developing value systems and shaping behavior. Unfortunately, a substantial portion of all "entertainment" programming on network and cable television contains some type of violence. Hundreds of studies of the effects of TV violence on children and teenagers have found that children may: 1) become immune to the horror of violence through repeated viewing; 2) gradually accept violence as a way to resolve problems; 3) imitate the violence they see on TV; and 4) identify with certain characters, victims or victimizers. In essence, many psychologists, educators, and criminologists argue that extensive viewing of TV violence by children is linked to greater aggressiveness; specifically, children who regularly view TV programs in which violence is realistic, frequently repeated, or unpunished are more likely to imitate what they see.

Children in the United States spend more time watching TV than learning in the classroom or interacting with positive, personal adult role models (Bar-on, 1999). By the time a child is 18 years old, he or she will have seen 16,000 murders on the screen and heard some 14,000 sexual references and innuendos (Bar-on, 1999). Over 4,000 studies have been published to date that measure the effects of TV violence on children (Bar-on, 1999), but debate over this topic continues to rage. Given the substantial body of
scholarly research that has identified a linkage between excessive viewing of TV violence and aggressive behaviors, the present study was developed to shed additional light on a topic of great social concern.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the study was to examine the effects of viewing television violence on a sample of middle school children and to examine if any correlation existed between such variables as amount of time spent watching TV, type and content of programs that were watched, and school-based disciplinary referrals for aggressive, assertive, or antisocial behaviors. Bar-on (1999), as well as Uberos, Gomez, Munoz, Molina, Galdo, and Perez (1998), have argued that such a correlation and/or associative linkage has been identified by numerous studies. It was the purpose of this study to assess the nature of such a relationship, if any.

HYPOTHESIS

The research hypothesis to be tested in this study was stated as follows:

Children who watch more than 3 to 4 hours of television daily, and who regularly are exposed to inherently violent television programming in which physical and/or verbal confrontations and actions are commonplace, will be more likely than other peers to have received disciplinary referrals for aggressive, assertive, or antisocial behavior in their schools.

The critical variables in this study were: 1) hours watching TV daily, measured as less
than 3 or more than 3 hours daily; 2) violent television programming, which consisted of 
etertainment programs that usually and graphically depict physical, emotional, sexual, or 
psychological and verbal violence directed against others; and 3) in-school disciplinary 
referrals or incidents in which a child employs aggressive, assertive, or antisocial 
behaviors directed against others, including both peers and adults.

**THEORY**

Strasburger and Donnerstein (1999) have commented that television and other 
media represent one of the most important and under recognized influences on children 
and adolescents' health behavior today. Most children and adolescents average between 
16 and 17 hours of television viewing each week, beginning as early as age 2. Media exert 
a significant displacement effect, in which alternative activities (athletics, social play, 
reading and school work, etc.) are sacrificed to television viewing and other forms of 
electronic entertainment. Further, while watching television, young people view an 
estimated 10,000 or more acts of violence each year.

Some 61 percent of all television programming contains violence, with children's 
programming being among the most violent. As much as 26 percent of all television 
vioence involves the use of guns. The National Television Violence Study, a longitudinal 
study that examined nearly 10,000 hours of television programming over a three year 
period, further found that attractive role models are the aggressors in more than 80 

There are numerous empirical studies which have demonstrated a correlation 
between high rates of television viewing and aggressive and violent behavior, lower 
academic performance, and stereotyped behaviors in matters of sex, race and age.
Similarly, Dorman (2000) reported that the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) has asked its members to work with patients and their families to understand how images and messages in the mass media affect the health and well-being of children and adolescents. Research shows that the media has a wide range of influences, both positive and negative, in areas such as aggressive behavior and violence, substance abuse and abuse, nutrition, obesity and dieting, sexuality, body image and self-concept. Given that young children are particularly vulnerable to images and messages (explicit and implicit) in the mass media in general and on television in particular, the AAP and other groups such as the National Education Association (NEA) and criminal justice organizations are legitimately concerned with the impact of media violence on the behavior and attitudes of young children, who often model their own affective presentation of self on such images.

Shelton (1998) commented that results of the National television Violence Study confirmed the worst fears of the American Medical Association (AMA) and other public health and children's advocates in that prime time TV violence has been seen as increasingly on both broadcast and cable networks. The study found that much of the aggression that appears on television is glamorized, sanitized, and trivialized. About 60 percent of all entertainment programming was found to contain some type and level of violence, a figure that has remained constant over the past three years (Federman, 1996, 1997, 1998).

Violent programming has increased 14 percent on broadcast networks and 10 percent on cable. Shelton (1998) further states that about 90 percent of programming on cable services such as Cinemax, Showtime and HBO, depicts violence. Research suggests that the context in which violence is portrayed is an important factor in assessing its impact on children; when the violence is perpetrated by an attractive character, the
chances are increased that viewers will become desensitized to aggression or become fearful of violence in their own world. Cartoon violence, which is common in children's programming, has the potential to seem realistic to children younger than 7 because they cannot easily differentiate between reality and fantasy, thus posing a special concern (Shelton, 1998).

Huston (1999), in a study of how young children spend their leisure time, found that when parents control or restrict television viewing, children find alternative entertainment options. Correspondingly, these researchers also commented that there are very real sex differences in program selection when young boys' and girls' viewing choices are compared. Males are more generally attracted to intrinsically violent programs, while females are less likely to gravitate toward such programs. The researchers also found an association between television viewing patterns and choices and expressions of approval for or acceptance of violence and abusive behavior directed against others.

Valerio (1997), studied the role of parental control or supervision in shaping children's viewing patterns. They found that while most children in their sample (consisting of 156 Italian children of nursery school age) watched television for three to four hours per day - a figure replicated in the United States by Bar-on (1999) as well as Strassburger and Donnerstein (1999) - parents who reported "editing" children's program choices also had fewer concerns or complaints about violent or aggressive behaviors than did parents who did not edit program selection. Parents also appear to be well aware that violent television images can foster excessive and inappropriate aggressiveness in younger children, and that children model their own behaviors and attitudes based on television programming and images.

Uberos (1998), examined the potential relationship between violent television
programming and children's injuries. They found that while watching TV for 3 to 4 hours a day may be associated with lessened involvement in potentially injurious activities (i.e., sports, rough play), there is no valid way at the present time to determine how children are psychologically and emotionally impacted by exposure to repeated acts of violence on TV. They argued that research is needed into how children translate on-screen violence into their own affective presentation. Similar comments have been advanced by Stapleton (2000), who believes that the effects of "virtual violence" are long-lasting and measurable.

Stapleton (2000) lists among the ill effects of TV violence the following:

* Children who see a lot of violence are likely to regard violence as an effective way of settling conflicts and as an acceptable behavior.
* Viewing violence can lead to emotional desensitization toward violence in real life, even decreasing the likelihood that one will take action on behalf of a victim.
* Entertainment violence feeds a perception that the world is a violent and mean place, and that survival and/or success necessitates violence.
* Viewing violence as acceptable may foster a propensity for real-life violence, and children exposed to TV violence have a higher tendency for violent and aggressive behavior in later life than children whose TV viewing is censored.

The Brown University Child and Adolescent Letter (1996) reported the results of a study by the Center for Adolescent Studies at Indiana University which asked a sample of 558 sixth through eighth graders at a Midwestern middle school about their own bullying behaviors. Those who reported the highest bullying behavior were almost likely to report significantly greater levels of forceful parental discipline, viewing of television violence, misconduct at home, school, and the community, and fighting. Though the
findings do not necessarily represent a cause and effect relationship, the study suggested that television images of violent behavior tend to reinforce a child's own episodes or incidents of bullying.

Finally, Strasburger and Donnerstein (1999) have noted that after more than ten years of research, the consensus among most of the research community is that violence on television does facilitate the emergence of aggressive behavior among viewers. Although not all children exposed to media violence become aggressive, most studies reveal a strong correlation between television violence and aggressive behavior. The research has moved therefore from asking whether or not there is an effect seeking explanations for the effect.

Coleman (1990), in a discussion of the impact of repeated exposure to violence on young children, has argued that from the psychological perspective, children absorb messages about adult behavior from such images. When violence, or otherwise abusive and damaging or destructive behaviors are depicted as commonplace and as the norm, children can become acculturated to such images and incorporate such behaviors and attitudes into their own world view. It was also noted that children who witness physical abuse of a parent, or are themselves victims of such abuse, often model these behaviors later in life or perceived themselves as victims of such violence (developing what is known as learned helplessness in the face of maltreatment by others). Reinforcement of violent behaviors or abusive attitudes through mass media, says Coleman (1990), can lead children and adolescents to become acculturated to and imitative of such behaviors or attitudes. It was within this theoretical orientation that the present study proceeded.
DEFINITIONS

Key definitions employed in the present study include:

**Excessive Television Viewing:** TV viewing that encompasses 3 or 4 or more hours per day.

**Television Violence:** Acts of physical, verbal or psychological aggression directed against another; includes murder, physical attacks, sexual attacks or victimization, verbal abuse, etc.

**Disciplinary Referrals or Incidents:** In-school infractions of rules regarding on-campus and in-class physical and verbal conduct which result in a school-determined punishment.

Other terms will be defined as needed in the text of the study.

ASSUMPTIONS

Several assumptions substantiated the present study. One assumption was that the population being examined in this study was normally distributed. In this case, the population consisted of children who viewed less than three hours of television per day and of students who viewed three or more hours of television per day. In situations with 20-30 cases per sample considerable departure from a normal distribution can be tolerated, and for still larger samples, it can be ignored (Minium and Clarke, 1982). This study consisted of more than 20 cases.

Another assumption was homogeneity of variables within the sample examined in this study. This assumption, which is applicable to any study consisting of an independent sample, demands that the population is equally variable. Research has shown
that violation of this assumption is not likely to be a problem unless the sample size is quite small. (Minium and Clarke, 1982).

Finally, the study proceeded with information that relied upon children's self-reports. Studies that include self-reported data regarding behavior and/or attitudes must be carefully scrutinized to ensure accuracy, reliability and validity of responses (Coleman, 1990). Although the researcher was partially assisted during the collection of data, it was assumed that the data collection itself would be uniform and consistent. It was also assumed that participants in the empirical portion of the research would be accurate and truthful in their responses to the instrumentation to be employed.

LIMITATIONS

The present study was limited in several key areas. First, it was limited because a relatively small and potentially homogenous sample of middle school-age children was asked to participate. This limited generalization of results to a larger population, but permitted the researcher to make selected observations as to how the sample population did or did not represent the larger population.

Secondly, the study was limited in that employed self-report measures obtained from subjects to determine how many hours of television were viewed each day and which programs were frequently watched. Accuracy of self-reports can be troublesome (Coleman, 1990).

Third, the study was limited in that the instrumentation to be employed was developed by the researcher. Previous testing for instrument reliability and validity was not possible. Despite these limitations, the study had the potential to provide insight into the hypothesized correlation between daily hours of television viewing, selection of
television programs, and in-school disciplinary problems manifested by subjects.

OVERVIEW

In the chapters that follow, the information discussed will help formulate the researchers presenting argument that postulates children who are repeatedly exposed to violent television programming, will be more likely to have received disciplinary referrals for behavioral problems in their schools. Chapter Two will be a thorough review of relevant literature collected by the researcher. Chapter Three will describe the research design, methodological approach, and data analysis plan for this study. Chapter Four will contain the results of the research carried out in accord with Chapter Three. Finally, Chapter Five will contain a full discussion of the results of this study, a summary of the researchers findings, recommendations for future research, and final conclusions.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter of the thesis will present a comprehensive review of relevant literature, addressing several key issues. First, a general assessment of the impact of media on the formation of opinions, attitudes and behaviors will be offered. Secondly, an analysis of the research on the extent of television violence will be presented. Third, research on the effects of viewing television violence on children and adolescents will be analyzed. Finally, a summary of the central themes identified in the literature will be given, as a preliminary to Chapter III, in which the research methodology of the present study will be described.

IMPACT OF MEDIA

Fenton (1995) states that all mass media are useful, whether directly or indirectly, in creating and communicating role images ascribed to both genders and groups. Media, she suggests, both responds to and shapes social mores, values, and norms. With television, the power and influence of mass media has advanced dramatically; many Americans now regard television as their primary source of current news, entertainment, and information on a wide range of issues and subjects. What is seen over and over again, says Fenton (1995), takes on legitimacy and reliability in the minds of the viewer because it affirmed again and again via frequent communication. Television advertisements depicting women in various roles tend to reinforce stereotypes of various sorts, including those of the "good mother," the "sexy woman," and the "dedicated worker"; similarly,
images of violence directed against peers, women, children, and the elderly or "other" have the capacity to reinforce the assumption that violent behavior is an acceptable expression of affect and attitude (Fenton, 1995; Shelton, 1998).

SEX ROLE STEREOTYPING STUDY

A study by Browne (1998) employed content analysis to examine sex role stereotyping and violence in television commercials and programs aimed at children in the United States and Australia. The research found that in both countries, women tended to be portrayed as essentially passive, deferential, lacking in intelligence and credibility (with notable exceptions in terms of caring for homes and children). In contrast, males tend to be depicted in such advertisements as constructive, powerful, autonomous and achieving. Subtle aspects of self-presentation, such as pose, body language, and facial expression were found to suggest gender stereotyping. Browne (1998) also found that in the visual atmosphere of commercials -- lighting, sound/music, background decor and setting -- commercials featuring females tended to be softer, "dreamier," and less vivid. Finally, Browne (1998) commented that the roles of females in media presentations aimed at children tend to present women functioning in domestic settings while males are seen in occupational roles outside of the home.

GENDER PORTRAYAL STUDY

Signorelli, McLeod and Healy (1994) conducted a content analysis of television programs and advertisements played over MTV to examine gender portrayals and stereotyping. They found that female characters appeared less frequently, were more likely to be extremely attractive and physically fit than males, wore sexy and skimpy
clothing, and were more often the subject of another's gaze than their male counterparts. They also noted that when voice-overs are used to describe a product, relatively few female voices are used. Women were more likely than males to be portrayed in sex-typed occupations. Additionally, a relationship between gender of spokesperson and products was revealed by the study; specifically, females were more likely than males to be associated with "personal products" such as body and bath articles, hair care, and other products with the primary purpose of improving or enhancing the physical attractiveness of the buyer.

THE ANDROGYNOUS WOMAN

Walker and Morley (1991) pointed out that in popular media, including commercial advertising as well as dramatic videos, a new image of the androgynous woman has emerged. This woman is depicted as physically strong, assertive, and independent while simultaneously depicted as affectionate, nurturing and empathic. At the same time, these strong-soft women (as in the case of the three females on the television series "Charlie's Angels") are also extremely sexy, physically attractive, clad in skimpy clothing, and depicted in violent, physical interactions with men. Thus, a double standard appears to still be operational and is communicated in the media. Additionally, Walker and Morley (1991) argued that by depicting women and other physically vulnerable individuals as "weaker" than males, the image of males are more "naturally aggressive" and violence as associated with desirable masculine traits is reinforced. For young children with unformed views of the world and human nature, these images, repeated frequently, can lead to stereotyping as well as acting out behaviors.
THE COMMITTEE ON COMMUNICATIONS

Why do media images exert such an influence on young children (and adults as well)? Shelton (1998) and Phillips (1998) both suggested that the inherent appeal of mass media such as television is such that it creates a fantasy world that is viewed by many children and some adults as glamorous and exciting. Further, Hepburn (1997) states that in recent years, children have become more and more avid television viewers as programs directly developed to appeal to this market have multiplied, drawing upon elements of science fiction, adventure, and fantasy to create appealing worlds that are often more attractive than the normal world in which children live. The Committee on Communications (1995, 1996, 1998) believes that all too many parents employ television as an in-house "babysitter," permitting children to select virtually all of their own programming and dedicating as much as 60 percent of their waking hours prior to attending school and three to four hours daily after beginning formal education in front of the television set. This tends to overwhelm young children in their formative years, while simultaneously reinforcing on-screen images, behaviors and attitudes. Further, the Committee on Communications (1998) states that because so much time is spent by children immersed in a fantasy world, images and actions from that world then to assume a greater reality than parental instructions or role modeling.

Part of the problem as identified by Huston, Donnerstein, and Fairchild (1992) is that when television became widely available in the United States, there was no clear public policy regarding it. American television was established and regulated by the Communications Act of 1934, the Preamble of which states that the public owns the airwaves, which are leased to the networks to produce programs that are in the public's
best interests. Because of the industry's reluctance to regulate itself (an artifact of the demand for free speech in a democracy, as well as a commercial need to respond to public interests and demands), especially regarding violent children's programming, congress and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) have taken an increasingly aggressive role in overseeing television in the past decade (Kunkel & Canepa, 1994; Palmer (1988). In 1996, the Telecommunications Act was passed by Congress, putting teeth into the 1990 Children's Television Act requiring ratings for programs and mandating that as of September, 1997, broadcasters must air three hours of core educational programming per week (Gerbner, Morgan, & Signorelli, 1994; Jordan, 1997).

Efforts to ensure that ratings will accurately depict television program content have been ongoing since the 1970 and even after the passage of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 (Broder, 1997; Cantor, Harrison & Krcmar, 1996). The industry developed a complex set of ratings that parallel current Motion Picture Association of America movie ratings. However, despite the so-called "best efforts" of the networks and independents, and those of parents and advocacy groups, the reality is that America's children are being exposed to increasing as opposed to decreasing levels of television violence. Strasburger and Donnerstein (1999) argue that this may well be due to the fact that many parents do not monitor their children's television viewing habits, and to the related fact that young people average 16 to 17 hours of television viewing per week -- with Shelton (1998) reporting that about 60 percent of all TV programming contains some type of violence, which has increased 14 percent on broadcast networks and 10 percent on cable, where about 90 percent of all programming depicts violence.
LABORATORY EXPERIMENTS

As long ago as the 1960s, laboratory experiments by Bandura, Ross and Ross (1963) established that young children are liable to imitate what they see on the television screen, particularly if the behavior is performed by an attractive role model and is either rewarded or goes unpunished. American media are also rife with portrayals of justified violence (e.g., the "good guy" beating the "bad guy"), which serves as a positive reinforcer for young people (Bandura, 1965; Eron, 1995). Media violence has also been found to increase viewers perceptions that they are living in a mean and dangerous world (Strasburger, 1996). Thus, the impact of media violence -- and other images depicted commonly on television -- has been found to be both extensive and profound, serving as a means of shaping both positive and negative behaviors and attitudes among viewers.

NATIONAL TELEVISION VIOLENCE STUDY

Mudore (2000) notes that the National Television Violence Study says that 61 percent of all television programming contains some type of violence, and that children's shows are the most violent of all; children are likely to view up to 10,000 violent acts per year. Television violence is not limited to dramatic programming made for television or taken from the movies; it can be found in children's cartoons, in music videos, on the news (where it is generally identified as taking place in the "real world"), and even in commercial advertisements. It can be implicit or explicit, physical or verbal or psychological. Dorman (2000) offered the following general statements regarding media violence and related programming:

* 75 percent of music videos contain sexually suggestive and/or violent materials, with women portrayed in an
objectified or condescending manner.

* The level of prime-time violence is 3 to 5 violent acts per hour.

* Children's Saturday morning cartoons depict between 20 to 25 violent acts per hour.

* By age 18, the average American youth will have seen about 200,000 acts of violence on TV.

Other data also highlight the extent of this problem. Bar-On (1999) argues that the typical 18-year-old will "witness" 16,000 murders on the screen and 14,000 sexual references per year. Taking these and other data of a similar nature into account, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) warned parents in 1990 that there was a distinct possibility that television viewing may increase unhealthy behaviors in children (Valerio, et al, 1997). Part of the problem is that violence need not be explicit to have an effect on children and adolescents' attitudes and behaviors. A case in point is music television, which has gained in popularity among younger (even elementary school age) viewers.

**ROCK MUSIC AND VIDEOS**

Rock and Roll is considered the most powerful type of American music, a form that erupted in the middle of this century and has continued to grow (www.olyweb.com/funkingrooving, 1999). Almost since its creation, parents and others have been concerned that the music has a negative effect on teenagers and young people. Guardians of public morals, even medical doctors, became concerned with the spiritual and psychological effects of rock music on teenagers. An editorial in CQ Researcher (Music videos that...,
1993) noted that heavy metal rock, gangsta rap and other music videos that showcase violence and sexual degradation of women are sending out confusing and possibly harmful messages to the public. The situation is such that a number of researchers, including Hansen and Hansen (1990), have found that many viewers of both genders are responding negatively to these images. Violence has increased in these music videos and songs, and the music itself is being subject to increased oversight and growing criticism from a number of very different sources.

“GANGSTA” RAP VS. “TRADITIONAL” RAP

Hall (1998) has commented that there is surprising little empirical evidence supporting the notion that all rap music has adverse effects; it is gangsta rap, more than "traditional" rap, that has created negative effects. Johnson, Jackson, and Gatto (1995), for example, found that males regularly and frequently exposed to violent music had a higher degree of acceptance of the use of violence, including violence directed against women, than males whose musical encounters were either limited with respect to this genre or nonexistent.

AGGRESSION/VICTIMIZATION STUDY OF GENDER AND RACE

A critically important study by Rich, Woods, Goodman, Emans, and Durant (1998) examined portrayals of violence in popular music videos for patterns of aggression and victimization by gender and race. The authors conducted a content analysis of 518 music videos broadcast over Music Television Networks (MTV), Black Entertainment Television (BET), Country Music Television (CMT), and Video Hits-1 (VH-1) during a four-week period at randomly selected times of high adolescent viewership. The research
revealed that 14.7 percent of the analyzed music videos contained portrayals of individuals engaging in overt interpersonal violence, with a mean of 6.1 violent acts per violence-containing video. In 84.6 percent of the violence portrayals, aggressors were 78.1 percent male, whereas victims were 46.3 percent female. This relationship was influenced by race. Among whites, 72 percent of the aggressors were male and 78.3 percent of the victims were female. Although African-Americans represent 12 percent of the U.S. population they were identified as aggressors in 25.0 percent and victims in 41 percent of all music video violence.

Rich (1998), further found that while males and females were victims with equivalent frequency, males were more than three times as likely to be aggressors. Music videos appear, they argued, to be reinforcing false stereotypes of aggressive African-American males and victimized white females. These observations raise concern for the effect of music videos on adolescents' normative expectations about such diverse issues as conflict resolution, race, male-female relationships, violence, media, television, music videos, and gender.

SEXUAL IMAGERY EXPERIMENTS

Hansen and Hansen (1990) reported on two experiments that examined the effects of sex and violence in rock music videos on viewers' judgements and the music's appeal. As noted above, this study demonstrated that physiological arousal produced by rock music is an important area for research because of its theoretical status and as an important variable in affective responses. They found that sexual imagery increases the appeal of music videos but did not find support for the enhanced appeal of music videos combining sex and violence. Hansen and Hansen also argued that there is a substantial
body of evidence supporting the notion that violence on television is linked to violent behavior, particularly on the part of younger children and adolescents.

Of course, music videos alone do not account for all or even most incidents of violence to which young children and adolescents are exposed. Children's cartoons, movies directed toward younger audiences, and entertainment programs in prime time and the "family viewing hour" all regularly depict violent acts and statements. Shelton (1998) commented that cartoons are especially problematic because they contain scenes with numerous portrayals of violence in which violence seems justified, goes unpunished, or is committed without either remorse or criticism and with minimal consequences for the victim. Cartoon violence - and this category includes programs such as the "Mighty Morphin Power Rangers," which uses attractive teens fighting the forces of evil - can appear to younger children to be fantasy; differentiating between "good" violence and "bad" violence is also difficult for younger children.

EXPOSURE TO UNPUNISHED TELEVISION VIOLENCE

Many programs depict violence that is not punished. Phillips (1998), Schroeder (1999), and Huston (1999), have all commented that repeated exposure to unpunished violence sends a message to children that violence is an acceptable mode of action. When this message is coupled with attractive role models, the effect is enhanced. Hepburn (1997) noted that TV violence consists of three problems: the amount of viewing by children, the level of violent content in shows, and the effects of combining the two. Phillips (1998) argued that the type of show could contribute to violent behavior, with action/adventure, detective programs, violent cartoons, and action/fantasy shows encouraging aggressive behavior more than others.
Complicating the issue ever further is what Krcmar (1998) has described as the familial communication pattern. When communication between family members (and parents and children) is essentially hierarchical, and children tend to watch TV without adult supervision or commentary, Krcmar (1998) hypothesized that children were less likely to have their understanding of the appropriateness of violent behavior moderated by adult input. On the other hand, when an open communication pattern in families is present, and parents watch TV with their children on a regular basis, parental commentary can reduce the likelihood that a child will emulate behavior seen on TV.

EMPIRICAL STUDIES

Cesarone (1998) assessed a number of empirical studies of TV violence and its purported effects, and concluded that the portrayal of violence on TV is likely to be associated with an increased propensity for violent behavior in the part of younger viewers; teachers, according to Cesarone (1998), appear to support this assertion, with 88 percent of teachers in a national survey stating that watching TV violence was a contributory factor in classroom violence.

Strasburger and Donnerstein (1999) pointed out that more than 1,000 methodologically sound empirical research studies have confirmed that there is a linkage between regular viewing of TV violence and violent behavior in the part of children and adolescents. The research is voluminous and very clear on this relationship between media violence and real-life aggression. A cause and effect relationship does exist (Comstock & Strasburger, 1993; Dietz & Strasburger, 1991; Huston, 1992). Such research has consisted of cross-sectional studies (Andison, 1977), longitudinal studies (Heusmann & Eron, 1986), and meta-analyses (Paik & Comstock, 1994). After more
than 10 years of research, the consensus among most of the research community is that violence on television does lead to aggressive behavior by children and teenagers who watch the programs.

Strasburger and Donnerstein (1999) claim that not all children who watch violent television programming become aggressive, but the correlations between violence and aggressive behavior are positive. In magnitude, television violence is as strongly correlated with aggressive behavior as any other behavioral variable that has been measured. Consequently, the research question has moved to seeking explanations for this effect. There is a substantial body of research demonstrating that the more adolescents are exposed to violence or are victims of violence in their homes or communities, the more likely they are to use violence or carry weapons themselves (Singer, Anglin, Song, & Lunghofer, 1995). The witnessing of violence is therefore an important determinant of violent behavior and media violence represents a vicarious witnessing of violence on the television or movie screen.

However, media violence is not the sole cause of violence in society. Poverty, racism, inadequate parenting, the dissolution of the American family, and individual psychological differences may all have a far greater impact. Studies have found that child abuse, sexual abuse, and witnessing domestic or community violence all play a key role in determining in who will become violent (Hoffman, 1996). The use of violence to achieve goals or to settle conflicts is essentially learned behavior that occurs in social groups such as the family, peer society, and gangs. Television and other media may actually function as a "super peer" in this respect (Dietz & Strasburger, 1991).
SUMMARY

The literature strongly supports the identification of television violence as one of the contributing factors in violent or aggressive behavior exhibited by school children. This relatively brief review of literature supports the significance of the present study and provides direction for the specific research methodology. This methodology is described in Chapter III.
CHAPTER III

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

SAMPLE AND MEASURES

The study was located within an urban middle school serving children in grades 6 through 8. Permission from the school's administration and classroom teachers was obtained by the researcher. A sample of 52 students was identified in association with the school's administration.

The first subjects consisted of students previously identified as having received at least three in-school disciplinary referrals for aggressive, violent, verbally abusive, bullying, or other antisocial acting-out behaviors directed against peers or adults in the school environment. A total of no less than 28 students, ages 11 through 13 and in grades 6 through 8 were randomly selected from among those students whose disciplinary records and school files identified them as meeting this selection criteria.

The next subjects consisted of a randomly selected sample of a minimum of 24 students of the same age range and classroom peers who had not received any disciplinary referrals of this nature. Demographics and potentially interfering variables such as age, grade and gender were included to create a matched sample.

When a potential subject was identified, the subject's parents or guardians were provided with an explanatory letter describing the study and its purposes and outlining the procedures to be employed. Participation was voluntary, with parental consent required for each subject. Confidentiality was guaranteed to participants and their parents.
or guardians, and all materials used in the study were coded to identify only ethnicity, age, gender, and grade. No personally identifying information was captured or maintained by the researcher. Results were shared with the school administration and any interested parents or teachers.

The survey instrument (see appendix) was developed by the researcher in conjunction with a thorough review of relevant literature. About 15 minutes was required to complete the survey, which was administered by the researcher during the regular school day.

**HYPOTHESIS**

The research hypothesis tested in this study was stated as follows:

There is an association between children who watch more than 3 hours of television daily, and who regularly are exposed to inherently violent television programming in which physical and/or verbal confrontations and actions are commonplace, and the number of disciplinary referrals aggressive, assertive, or antisocial behavior in their schools.

The null hypothesis was stated as follows:

There is no association between children who watch more than 3 hours of television daily, and who regularly are exposed to inherently violent television programming in which physical and/or verbal confrontations and actions are commonplace, and the number of disciplinary referrals aggressive, assertive, or antisocial behavior in their
The independent variables in this study were:

1. Hours watching TV daily. This variable was divided into two levels, defined as subjects who watched less than 3 hours of television daily and subjects who watched more than 3 hours daily.

2. Type of programming preferred. This was divided into two levels, defined as subjects who primarily watched violent programming and subjects who primarily watched non-violent programming. Violent television programming was defined as programs that usually and graphically depicted physical, emotional, sexual, or psychological and verbal violence directed against others.

There was one dependent variable in this study:

In-school disciplinary referrals or incidents in which a child displayed aggressive, assertive, or antisocial behaviors directed against others, including both peers and adults. These variables were identified by numerous studies as critical to the association between exposure to television violence and aggressive and/or directly violent behavior targeting others.

ANALYSIS

This study was a correlational research project designed to test a specific research hypothesis. This design enabled the researcher to identify the relationship of television
viewing variables (hours spent watching, type of program preferred) on disciplinary referrals for aggressive, assertive, or antisocial behavior (manifested incidence of violent, aggressive, or abusive physical and verbal behaviors directed against others by school age children in the school setting). As Strasburger and Donnerstein (1999) have pointed out, it is well established that an association between television or media violence and violent behavior on the part of children and adolescence does exist. The purpose of this study was to identify the degree to which these specific variables related to television viewing behaviors and how they influence the behavior of children.

The data collected by the researcher was analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation. This data is depicted in appropriate charts, tables and other figures. Means, medians, modes and other simple statistics were employed as appropriate to identify the key characteristics of the subject group.

Next, the hypothesis was tested by means of correlation. The research hypothesis predicted that the level of television viewing was positively correlated with the amount of disciplinary referrals, and that the viewing of violent programming was also positively correlated with referrals than those who view non-violent programming.

**SUMMARY**

It was anticipated that the research would support the hypothesis that there would be an association between children who viewed more than 3 hours of TV per day and who primarily were attracted to programming that includes violent behaviors and children who had received disciplinary referrals for aggressive, bullying, or violent behaviors in school. It was further anticipated that neither age, classroom level, gender or ethnicity would be associated with an increased likelihood that such disciplinary referrals
would have been received. It was also anticipated that when items regarding parental involvement in either selecting children's TV programming or discussing TV programming with children were considered, children's attitudes toward the acceptability of violent behavior would be affected.
CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

ORGANIZATION OF THE ANALYSIS

This chapter will present the results of the analysis conducted for this study. First, the research hypothesis will be restated and the methodology briefly reviewed. Next, the demographic information will be summarized. The third section of this chapter presents the results of the hypothesis testing. Finally, a number of analyses were conducted and are presented.

RESTATEMENT OF THE HYPOTHESIS

The hypothesis studied for this research was as follows:

There is an association between children who watch more than three hours of television daily, and who regularly are exposed to inherently violent television programming in which physical and/or verbal confrontations and actions are commonplace, and the number of disciplinary referrals for aggressive, assertive, or antisocial behavior in their schools.

A sample of 52 seventh grade students from a public school was surveyed along with their television viewing habits. These results were combined with school records on disciplinary referrals. The dependent variable was disciplinary referrals. This was correlated with the independent variables, number of hours of television watched per week and preference for violent shows. Also, a number of further analyses were
performed.

**DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION**

A total of 52 students were surveyed. Of these, 23 were female, 28 male, and one did not respond. Table One presents this information.

**Table 1: Gender Distribution**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Pct.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>44.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>53.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>52</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although all students attended the seventh grade at a single school, there was a distinct variance in the age distribution. Most of the children were 13 years old at the time of the survey, but nearly equal numbers were 12 or 14 years old. One respondent was 15 years old. This information is presented in Table Two.

**Table 2: Age Distribution**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Pct.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12 years old</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>23.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 years old</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 years old</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 years old</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>52</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The respondents were drawn from a school with a diverse ethnic background. No ethnic group constituted a majority. The largest groupings consisted of white students, who made up 38.5% of the sample, and African-Americans constituted 32.7% of the total. Students who reported a mixed ethnic background accounted for 15.4%. No other group exceeded 6% of the total. The full ethnic breakdown can be found in Table Three.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>38.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>32.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian-American</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed Ethnicity</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>52</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**HYPOTHESIS TESTING**

The hypothesis actually consisted of two parts. First, it was proposed that students who watched three hours or more of television per day would be more likely to receive disciplinary referrals. However, preliminary analysis of the data led the researcher to slightly change this hypothesis. Table Four presents a breakdown of the reported daily television viewing. Only 30.8% of the sample watched three hours or less daily. The mean response was 4.38, and both the median and mode was 4 hours. For that reason, the hypothesis was re-stated that students who watched four or more hours daily were more likely to receive disciplinary referrals.
Table 4: Frequency of Responses, Hours of TV Daily

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>13.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>17.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>30.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>32.7</td>
<td>63.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>76.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>84.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>88.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>94.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>98.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>52</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Mean:** 4.3846  **Median:** 4.00  **Mode:** 4.00

The first part of the hypothesis was that television viewing would be correlated with disciplinary referrals. Hours watching television was positively correlated with disciplinary referrals at $r=.275$, which was significant at $p=.049$. This part of the hypothesis was supported. The results of this analysis can be found in Table Five. The letter "r" is the level of correlation and the letter "P" stands for probability. The correlation (r score) has to have a p value of less than .05 in order to be considered a significant finding, although a p value of between .05 and .10 is sometimes called "marginally significant".
Table 5: Correlation of Hours Watching TV with Disciplinary Referrals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REFERRALS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HOURS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>r=0.275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P=.049</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N=52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The second part of the hypothesis concerned the viewing of specific types of shows. Two questions from the survey assessed the preference of the respondents for violent shows. The first asked if they liked shows with a lot of action and adventure. This item was identified by the variable name ACTION. As Table Six indicates, SPSS found ACTION to be positively correlated with disciplinary referrals at r=.084, which was not a significant result at the p=.05 level (note that there were only 51 valid observations for this correlation, because one student left the question blank).

Table 6: Correlation of Preference for Action Shows with Disciplinary Referrals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REFERRALS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACTION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>r=0.084</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P=.557</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N=51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The second question used to assess this correlation asked if the subjects preferred to watch shows that had a lot of fighting in them (identified by the variable name 33
LIKEFITE). As seen in Table Seven, this item actually had a negative correlation with disciplinary referrals at $r = -0.108$. Also, this correlation was not significant at the $p = .05$ level.

Table 7: Correlation of Preference for Shows featuring Fighting with Disciplinary Referrals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REFERRALS</th>
<th>LIKEFITE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$r = -0.108$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$P = .613$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$N = 52$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In summary, the hypothesis was only partially accepted. Although there was a significant, positive correlation between hours spent watching television and number of disciplinary referrals, there were no significant correlations with measures of types of shows preferred. Also, one of those correlations was negative. These results led the researcher to undertake further analyses, described in the next section.

FURTHER ANALYSES

In order to assess the mixed results of the hypothesis testing, some additional analyses were performed. First, the distribution of disciplinary referrals was examined. As Table Eight shows, the vast majority of the sample had received no disciplinary referrals during the year of the study. Of the 16 subjects who had received referrals, 13 had received only one, meaning that only 3 out of 52 total respondents had received multiple referrals.
Table 8: Frequency of Disciplinary Referrals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Referrals</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Pct.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>69.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 or more</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>52</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Because the ages of the respondents were more varied than had been expected, the researcher conducted an additional correlation between the number of disciplinary referrals and the age of the subjects. This was found to be a stronger correlation than that found between referrals and hours watching television, with $r=.349$, significant at beyond $p=.05$ (see Table Nine).

Table 9: Correlation of Age with Disciplinary Referrals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REFERRALS</th>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>$r=.349$</th>
<th>$P=.011$</th>
<th>N=52</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Two other demographic variables were also assessed. Gender and ethnicity are categorical variables, so the variable number of disciplinary references was converted to a categorical variable (0=no references, 1=1 or more references) and a chi-square analysis was made on each. Table 10 presents the results for ethnicity, which was not found to be significant at $p=.05$. 

35
**Table 10: Tabulation and Analysis, Ethnicity and Disciplinary Referrals**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>None</th>
<th>1 or more</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian-American</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>36</strong></td>
<td><strong>16</strong></td>
<td><strong>52</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With 5 degrees of freedom: 4.929  
Significance: $p = .425$

Table 11 presents the results of the chi-square analysis on the relationship between gender and referrals. While not statistically significant at $p = .05$, gender was found to be marginally significant at $p = .10$. Note that there are only 51 cases in this analysis, as one subject neglected to fill out the gender question.

**Table 11: Tabulation and Analysis, Gender and Disciplinary Referrals**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>None</th>
<th>1 or more</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>36</strong></td>
<td><strong>15</strong></td>
<td><strong>51</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With 1 degree of freedom: 2.916  
Significance: $p = .088$
CHAPTER V

This section presents a summary of research objectives and hypotheses and findings related to each. The discussion explains the significance of the findings and their relevance to previous research as well as study limitations. The conclusion addresses implications of the results and recommendations for future studies.

SUMMARY

The general research objective was to examine the effects of viewing television violence on a sample of school children to determine if any correlation exists between the amount of time spent watching TV, type and content of the programs watched, and school-based disciplinary referrals.

The hypothesis assessed whether children who watch more than 3 to 4 hours of television daily, and who are regularly exposed to inherently violent television programming, will be more likely than other peers to have received disciplinary referrals in their schools.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS RELATED TO HYPOTHESIS

Findings showed that hours watching television were positively correlated with disciplinary referrals with an $r = .275$ at $p = .049$. These findings were significant and the first part of the hypothesis was supported. Findings also showed that action and adventure content was positively correlated with disciplinary referrals with an $r = .084$ at $p = .557$. This finding was not significant and therefore did not support the second part of
the hypothesis. It was found that fighting was negatively correlated with disciplinary referrals with an $r = -0.108$ at $p = 0.613$. This finding was also not significant and did not support the second part of the hypothesis.

Correlation analysis of number of disciplinary referrals and age of subject revealed an $r = -0.349$ at $p = 0.011$. This finding was significant and demonstrated a stronger correlation than the correlation between referrals and hours of television watching. A significant correlation was not found between ethnicity or gender and referrals.

**DISCUSSION**

**SIGNIFICANCE OF FINDINGS**

The significant finding that hours watching television was positively correlated with disciplinary referrals was consistent with theoretical perspectives and research studies found in the literature. It was theorized that young children are particularly vulnerable to images and messages in the mass media and on television. For this reason the AAA and other groups such as the National Education Association (NEA) and criminal justice organizations are concerned with the impact of media violence on the behavior and attitudes of young children (Dorman, 2000). Bar-on (1999) stated that there are numerous empirical studies which have shown a correlation between high rates of television viewing and aggressive violent behavior and lower academic performance. Hepburn (1997) noted that TV violence consists of three problems: the amount of viewing by children, the level of violent content in shows, and the affects of combining the two.

The finding that action and adventure content was not significantly correlated with disciplinary referrals was not consistent with the literature. Phillips (1998) reported that
the type of show contributes to violent behavior, with action/adventure, detective programs, violent cartoons, and action/fantasy shows encouraging aggressive behavior more than others.

The finding that fighting was not significantly correlated with disciplinary referrals was not consistent with theory and research found in the literature and the finding that the correlation coefficient was negative was even more inconsistent with the literature. Coleman (1990) reported that from the psychological perspective, children absorb messages about adult behavior from TV images. When violence or destructive behaviors are commonplace, children can become acculturated to such images and incorporated them into their own world view.

Phillips (1998), Schroeder (1999), and Hutson (1999), all commented that repeated exposure to unpunished violence sends a message to children that violence is an acceptable mode of action. Cesarone (1998) assessed a number of empirical studies of TV violence and its effects, and concluded that the portrayal of violence on TV is likely to be associated with an increased tendency for violent behavior on the part of younger viewers.

In a survey of teachers, 88 percent stated that watching TV violence was a contributory factor in classroom violence. Strasburger and Donnerstein (1999) reported that more than 1,000 methodologically sound empirical research studies have confirmed that there is a linkage between regular viewing of TV violence and violent behavior in the part of children and adolescents.

A unique finding of this study was the significant correlation between the number of disciplinary referrals and the age of the subject, particularly since it demonstrated a stronger correlation between referrals and hours of television watching.
LIMITATIONS

Study limitations include the small sample size. Self-reporting of results may also have limited findings. The use of the researcher-constructed survey to determine violence viewing was also limited and may have led to inaccurate results which may explain the negative correlation found between this variable and school referrals. For example the survey asked whether the child liked violent programs, which may have lead to approval-seeking responses. A more accurate assessment would have been to ask for a list of five favorite programs and then code the answers for violence.

CONCLUSIONS

IMPLICATIONS

Since this study partially supported the hypothesis that television watching hours is related to discipline referrals, this finding can be used to help educate parents regarding the importance of monitoring their young children’s television viewing habits.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Since this study presented the unique finding that age correlated with referrals, future studies will need to investigate the age variable and its relationship to television watching, television content, and discipline referrals. It is also recommended that future studies use a larger sample size and a more reliable and valid assessment technique.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX

Survey Questionnaire
Survey Instrument

Gender: _____
Age: ______
Class/Grade: _______
Ethnicity: ______

Please circle the answer that best describes your response to each item, or give your own estimate of the answer that best describes your TV viewing habits and preferences. There are no "right" or "wrong" answers to any question.

1. I watch TV about ______ hours each day.
2. I watch TV alone/with my brothers and/or sisters/with my parents.
3. My favorite TV programs are (Check all that apply):
   ____ Cartoons  ____ Action/Adventure Programs  ____ Sports  ____ News
   ____ Educational Programs  ____ Comedies  ____ Dramas  ____ Music Videos
   ____ Movies  ____ Soap Operas
5. My parents do/do not decide how many hours I watch TV each day.
6. I often/frequently/never watch TV with my parents.
7. I do/do not enjoy TV shows with violent action.
8. I like action and adventure programs. Yes/No
9. Cartoons are/are not realistic.
10. Some TV shows are too violent. Yes/No
For the following statements, please circle the answer that best describes how you feel.

11. I like to watch TV shows that have a lot of action.
   Always  Usually  Sometimes  Never

12. I like TV shows with a lot of fighting.
   Always  Usually  Sometimes  Never

13. People who get hurt on TV usually deserve it.
   Always  Usually  Sometimes  Never

14. I like to pretend that I'm like the heroes on TV.
   Always  Usually  Sometimes  Never

15. I like to try to do things I see my favorite TV characters do.
   Always  Usually  Sometimes  Never

16. Even good guys have to be violent to protect others.
   Always  Usually  Sometimes  Never

17. Fighting is an effective way of solving a problem.
   Always  Usually  Sometimes  Never

18. It's okay for people to fight to protect themselves.
   Always  Usually  Sometimes  Never

19. People should resolve their problems without fighting.
   Always  Usually  Sometimes  Never

20. What is okay on TV is not okay in real life.
   Always  Usually  Sometimes  Never

21. Violent actions on TV also happen in real life.
   Always  Usually  Sometimes  Never
22. I would fight to defend my beliefs.

   Always    Usually  Sometimes  Never

23. TV programs are realistic.

   Always    Usually  Sometimes  Never

24. My parents talk to me about programs we watch on TV.

   Always    Usually  Sometimes  Never

25. People in the real world act like people on TV.

   Always    Usually  Sometimes  Never