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Violence in the Media: A Study of Adolescent Behaviors Towards Others in the School Setting

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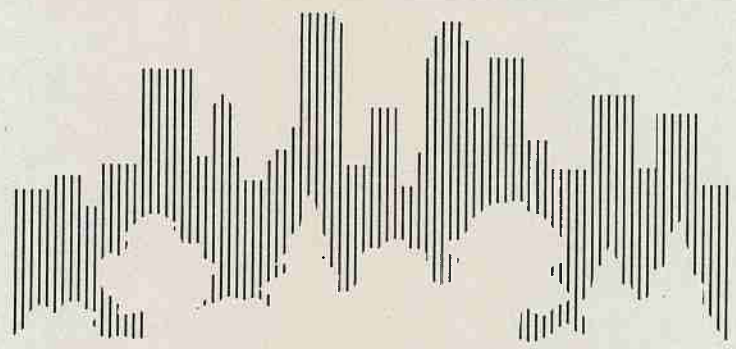
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MASTERS IN SOCIAL WORK THESIS

Kathleen Krystofiak

**Violence in the Media: A Study of Adolescent
Behaviors Towards Others in the School Setting**

1993

**MSW
Thesis**

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VIOLENCE

IN THE

MEDIA

*Augsburg College
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Kathleen M. Krystofiak

1993

MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK
AUGSBURG COLLEGE
MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

This is to certify that the Master's thesis of:

Kathleen M. Krystofiak

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*Many thanks to
Andrew,
for all your
support, patience and
love.*

*Dedicated
to
children everywhere,
with the hopes
of
futures
filled with
peace and harmony.*

ABSTRACT OF THESIS

**VIOLENCE IN THE MEDIA:
A STUDY OF ADOLESCENT BEHAVIORS TOWARD OTHERS,
IN THE SCHOOL SETTING**

KATHLEEN M. KRSTOFIAK

JUNE 15, 1993

Violence in the schools appears to be increasing. The purpose of this exploratory study is to determine if the numbers of hours middle schools students watch violence on television could be a factor in how students handle potentially violent situations with other students in the school setting.

Students in a middle school setting, grades 6, 7 and 8, were surveyed. The results showed that an increase number of violent reactions to different conflict situations that happen in a school setting, correlated with students watching more hours of violent television on schooldays and non-school days.

Based on the findings of this study, social work intervention modalities in the school setting, with families, and in society, are discussed.

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INTRODUCTION

VIOLENCE IN OUR SOCIETY

Violence is part of everyday life. It is no longer something we can ignore, because there is no place to hide. It has permeated every facet of our lives.....our homes, our schools and the streets of our communities. We see this evidenced in our morning newspapers and when we turn on our TV's to the evening news. We are bombarded with stories of murders and mass murders, child abuse and partner abuse, rape and sexual abuse, erupting neighborhoods and wars..... and the list goes on.

How and why has our society become so violent? Violence is a learned behavior. We have learned that violence or the threat of violence is an effective means of modifying a person's behavior. People make choices to use violence rather than peaceable solutions to conflict. According to Gilda Berger (1990), as early as the seventeenth century there were "stubborn child laws" that gave Puritan fathers the right to put unruly children to death. Husbands could collect their wive's wages and could punish their wives who displeased them. Generally speaking, in those days, men considered themselves their wives' and childrens' masters and superiors. For many years, the mindset that "a man's house is his castle", was accepted and enforced in our society. During the early years of the twentieth century changes took place under the growing influence of feminism. The continuance of the women's movement from the early years of the

century to the 60's and 70's started to bring to light the problems and proliferation of family violence. It was not until the early 60's that child abuse became recognized as a national problem and California passed the first law regarding child abuse. Now every state has laws regarding reporting and prosecuting perpetrators (Berger, 1990).

The Journal of Marriage and Family did not include a single article on domestic abuse between 1932 and 1969. However, in the 1970's, research on abused children brought light to other forms of family abuse. In September of 1984, the Attorney General's Task Force on Family Violence issued its report. This report made recommendations for action by all levels of society and government. It also gave specific suggestions for the law enforcement and criminal justice systems, victim assistance, abuse prevention and education programs (Berger, 1990).

The family has been purported as being the cornerstone of the American community and culture, and preserving various traditional values and nurturing children are our nation's greatest strengths and hopes for the future. Included in the previous statement, one must also appreciate each individual's definition of "family." As people come to realize that the repercussions of violence extend beyond the walls of home, we can also look at the costs of violence not only in human suffering but economically as well. The costs of law enforcement, legal and medical expenses, mental health services and other social services has escalated to phenomenal

expenditures, and those expenses are passed on to the nation's citizens.

Violence is part of the American culture. In the media, on the streets, in sports, and so on, violence is commonplace. And violence can beget violence. The depiction of violence on television may contribute to family violence and other situations that can become violent, and may also affect how adults and children approach conflict. What children and adults get from the media can be an instructional tool in terms of teaching abusive and violent behavior (Berger, 1990). Viewing violence in the media can become all the more lethal when people make the connection between the imaginary violence and the real violence that we experience on a daily basis. A study by researcher Thomas Radecki of the National Coalition on Television Violence, found that by the age of 18 years, the average American has witnessed 200,000 violent acts on television, including 40,000 murders (Plagens and Miller). According to Berger (1989), a longitudinal study was conducted by psychologists Leonard Eron and L. Rowell Huesmann over a period of twenty years. They found that kids who watched significant amounts of TV violence at the age of 8 were consistently more likely to commit violent crimes or engage in child or spouse abuse at age 30. They wrote in a report in 1984 that it was their belief that heavy exposure to televised violence is one of the causes of aggressive behavior, crime and violence in our society. They also stated that, "Television violence affects youngsters of all ages, of both genders, at all socioeconomic

levels and all levels of intelligence... it cannot be denied or explained away."

Our society pays a great price when violence is used. Thousands of deaths occur each year due to violence related crimes. Our country pays millions of dollars to keep criminals confined in prisons. Healthcare expenses related to violence continue to rise each year. The stress and fear of violence taking place in our communities and homes plays itself out in health, family and educational problems. As a society, we spend a great deal of time and money trying to determine how to keep safe and protect ourselves and our families (Henkoff, 1992).

In a recent article in Fortune magazine, author Ronald Henkoff (1992), referred to a recent article in the Journal of the American Medical Association by former surgeon general Koop and journal editor Lundberg, who stated, "We believe violence in America to be a public health emergency, largely unresponsive to methods thus far used in its control." They went on to say that future efforts must be focused on violence prevention.

VIOLENCE IN OUR SCHOOLS

Albert Einstein once said that with the advent of the nuclear age, everything has changed but the human race's way of thinking. In this statement he pointed out the necessity of thinking about conflict in new and less destructive ways. Conflict takes many forms. Whether global disputes between superpowers, strategic differences between business people or arguments

between schoolchildren, they can take either a constructive or destructive course. They can lead to lively controversy or deadly quarrel depending upon how they are managed (Prutzman, Stern, Burger & Bodenhamer).

There is much conflict today in our schools-conflict that too frequently takes a destructive course. Many students never develop the attitudes and skills to handle productively the conflicts they face in the course of their lives. Much of their knowledge of handling conflict is acquired haphazardly and in contexts of television, video and movies, which emphasize destructive methods. If students are taught how to manage conflicts constructively the hope would be that they would be less vulnerable to emotional disorders, suicide, violence and other forms of antisocial behavior. Beyond this aspect, we must prepare our children to deal constructively with the conflicts that inevitably occur among nations, communities, schools, families and individuals.

For the purpose of my study, I will begin by exploring the previous research on violence and the media in order to find some information and evidence that shows a correlation of exposure to television violence and how adolescent students handle conflict situations in the school setting. My research questions are- Is excessive violence in the televised media tending to desensitize children's attitudes toward violence? Are students using violent means to handle different conflict situations that could occur in the school setting? Does exposure

to violence in televised media tend to increase violent actions/behaviors in youth ages 10-14?

To answer my research questions, I will start with an extensive literature review, formulate a survey tool and then survey students in a middle school setting. Based on the results of the survey, I will also consider social work practice implications in the school setting, with families and in society.

LITERATURE REVIEW

WHAT DO OUR CHILDREN SAY ABOUT TV VIOLENCE?

To begin understanding the overall effects of increased exposure to violence in the televised media, we must open our ears and listen to the comments children are making about this controversial subject. The following statements were made by children as part of the Mindworks articles in the Minneapolis Star and Tribune (1991):

"I like violence, but not when it is real. I like it because it makes my heart pound faster and faster and it makes my eyes focus harder. And best of all, when my parents tell me to do something, I can't hear them because I'm focusing so hard on the TV". - Jason, 11

"They include violence to make the movies more exciting and because big men have to be strong like warriors. Some people expect men to be strong and violent" - Ben, 11

"Sometimes violence is nice. If you want to hit someone or hurt someone you can sit down in front of TV and watch someone do it for you. "- John, 12

"As a kid, life is pretty scary. We don't need violence to scare us more than we already are." -Lori, 10

"I want to see less violence because it makes me soooo scared. I feel like I am going to get killed. " - Rita, 7

"My stomach turns when a character we know from the story dies. I am afraid that if people don't feel this emotion when people die on television, then maybe they could easily kill somebody in real life. It is a scary thought." - Dave, 14

"I would like to see less violence on TV because it puts bad thoughts in your mind that you can't erase." - Jason, 11

"Violence on television is turning the world into a junkyard." -Marie, 9

I would like to conclude these thoughts our children are having with a very poignant message from a girl named Rebecca, age 15 who reminds us that violence in the media is affecting all of us in a personal way and also has effects whether positive or negative on every individual in our society.- *"When my family is watching TV and my sister runs out of the room scared, I know something is wrong with television today. You may be thinking, "She's a kid! What can you expect?" I think we expect a lot. The instinct inside my sister and all children tells them what is frightening, what is not good for them. You used to have that instinct before your became accustomed to violence. Do you remember?"*

Do we remember? The purpose of this study is to find an answer to Rebecca's question. As a multi media society, have we lost some of the feelings and attitudes of disgust toward violent crimes? Are we numb to the amount of violence displayed daily on televised programming and in the news presentations? Do our hearts pound and stomachs turn as we witness violence or has it become mundane and routine? We must listen to our children

for the answers. As I read through the Mindworks excerpts on children's perceptions of violence in the media, I felt sad, angry, and worried.

I feel that as members of a society, one purpose we must try to achieve and attain is peace and harmony. ---

"If we are to reach real peace in this world..... We shall have to begin with the children." --Gandhi.

Our children need answers to their questions and hope for the future. Therefore it is my hope that through this study, I can gain a better understanding of how children are effected by exposure to excessive violence in the media. And based on the amount of violence on TV children are exposed to, do they tend to handle conflict situations or other situations that could lead to violence in the school setting in a violent manner.

Based on the results of this project, I also intend to look into ways of educating our children about the implications of violent behavior, both in the media, and in real life. It is important to not only listen to our children's voices but give them tools to handle exposure to violence in the media and violence in their lives.

My research questions are- Is excessive violence in the televised media tending to desensitize children's attitudes toward violence? Are students using violent means to handle different conflict situations that could occur in the school setting? Does exposure to violence in televised media tend to increase violent actions/behaviors in youth ages 10-14?

My hypothesis is- Exposure to violence on television affects student behaviors toward others in the school setting.

MEDIA VIOLENCE AND AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR

Do media portrayals of interpersonal violence engender aggression among the observers? This question has been the focus of social scientific inquiry for over a quarter of a century. The initial research efforts of numerous investigators led to the surgeon general's research program on television and social behavior in the late 60s and early 70s (Huesmann & Malamuth, 1986). According to these researchers, the surgeon general's report concluded that television violence does have an adverse effect on certain members of our society. As a result of the findings during this period, a torrent of research was undertaken looking at the adverse effects of media violence on various population groups. Also congressional hearings on media programming and expressions of public concern came into focus and consideration.

In 1982, the National Institute of Mental Health commissioned a comprehensive review of recent scientific literature on television and social behavior as a 10 year follow-up to the surgeon general's report. It indicted television violence in even stronger terms than did the earlier report (Huesmann & Malamuth, 1986).

Albert Bandura (Perry, 1987), an authority on social learning, points out that viewing violence has several effects on

the viewer. First, television violence teaches children aggressive styles of conduct and the general lesson that conflicts are to be settled through force. Second, witnessing violence alters inhibitions against aggression. Seeing others perform aggressively makes one feel that aggression is commonplace and acceptable and reduces the level of guilt that one might expect for behaving aggressively. Third, repeated viewing of violence desensitizes and habituates children to violence and suffering. Fourth, viewing violence shapes children's images of reality. Social learning theorists including Bandura, Aitkin, Murry and Maymar (Cline, Croft & Courier, 1973), suggest that through the process of modeling and imitative learning, people and their behavior can be influenced by violence witnessed on the television.

Wood, Wong & Chachere (1991) conducted a meta-analytic review of the experimental effects of media violence on the viewer's aggression in unstructured social interaction. In the review experiments, children and adolescents were exposed to violent or control film presentations and their post exposure behavior was coded for aggression during spontaneous social interaction. The study hoped to establish whether a causal relation exists between exposure to media violence and naturally occurring aggression. Variables included media effects, media presenting violent depictions, level of aggressiveness after viewing a movie and media with non aggressive films and the post viewing effects of aggressive behavior. Other variables included the age and sex of the participants and the setting where

interaction took place. Participants were shown either aggressive or non aggressive films and afterward were asked to play with others for a while in a viewing room or to return to their classroom and interact with non participants.

Using the above stated criteria, 23 research reports were identified to support the author's hypothesis. The important components of each report included that participants had been randomly assigned to experimental or control conditions, and that post viewing of behavior was in an unstructured setting. The variables were coded in the study to support outcomes based on individual study designs.

The set of findings in their analysis of 23 experiments examining children's and adolescent's spontaneous aggression during unconstrained social interaction revealed that exposure to media violence does increase viewer's aggression.

Behaviorists look at learning theory as a stimulus and response theory (Pavlov, Watson, et al). Classical conditioning links a response to a known stimulus. If we look at television as the stimulus, then the question becomes,- what is being learned by our children as they are inundated with violent programming in commercials, cartoons, sitcoms and movies?

Two 13 year old boys in Manteca, California brutally murder one boy's father and then they pour salt in his wounds. Why, the police questioned, did they do this, even after such a savage slaying? "Oh, I don't know, I just saw it on T.V.", was the reply from one of the boys. (AV Action, Fall 1990).

The following study on violent depictions on television is important in showing how unrealistic violence is portrayed in the media and the adverse effects that can have on certain members of society.

VIOLENT DEPICTIONS ON TELEVISION

In a study by Price, Merrill, & Clause (1992), the authors were looking at the depiction of guns in violent scenes on prime time television. Two weeks of prime time programming on four major networks (ABC, CBS, NBC and Fox) was monitored for scenes in which guns were either displayed or used. Guns were seen most often on CBS, on Saturdays and Sundays and later in the evenings. Middle aged, white males were depicted as gun users in better than 75% of the scenes. Most scenes involved pistols and usually the person who used the gun suffered no repercussions. When a victim was depicted as being shot, seldom was the pain of the victim or the victim's family and friends depicted.

The variables included gun usage, who used the gun and why the gun was used. The study was exploratory in nature trying to assess the amount and type of gun usage in television and to lead toward answering the question of what role does gun usage play in increased violence using handguns by adolescents.

To begin answering the question, gun usage was assessed on the four networks by the toss of a coin during the summer of 1990. Each program was videotaped from 8-11 p.m. Two trained research assistants viewed the tapes and coded

displays of guns and their use. The research assistants were trained by watching and coding the same taped TV programs and inter-rater reliability was considered acceptable only after 90% agreement between raters. The type of weapon used, the demographics of the person using the gun, how the gun was used, outcome of gun usage, demographics of the person whom the gun was used against and whether the pain of being shot was displayed, including the physical and emotional pain of the victim and the emotional pain of family and friends were all significant coded variables in the study.

The authors determined that television inappropriately portrayed the use of guns. Since defense was one of the most commonly displayed ways of using a gun, it may give the impression to viewers that guns are an important part of protecting oneself and family. Frequently gun violence led to little or no punishment and may increase the perceptions of young people that gun use without retribution or legal intervention is characteristic in society. The absence of pain when someone was shot was also paramount. The "sanitized" version of shooting someone on TV inappropriately depicts the absence of anguish and the emotional effects of victims and their families.

The significance of this study is the excessive gun usage noted on television and the depiction of gun violence in an inappropriate manner. The authors would like to see more research on gun usage and the media to give direction to schools desiring to reduce the growing menace of guns and violence.

From the Center to Prevent Handgun Violence, the following statistics which support the above stated concerns:

1. Every day, 10 American children ages 18 and under are killed in handgun accidents, homicides and suicides. Many more are wounded.
2. In 1987, 1 out of 10 children who died before age 20 was killed with a gun.
3. California schools reported a 40% increase in student gun possession between 1988 and 1990.
4. The suicide rate of adolescents has tripled in the past three decades. Guns are the leading method used by teens to commit suicide and 9 of 10 attempts involving handguns are completed.

It is important to note that only recently, in most of the schools in Minnesota, weapons policies have been implemented as a result of the increase of students carrying weapons to schools and using weapons to intimidate, threaten or harm another person. I address this issue because I work in the schools and have been involved in handling weapons infractions and inservicing students and staff on the weapon policy in our district.

VIOLENCE IN THE MEDIA AND ATTITUDES

It is important, for the purpose of this study, to look at how attitudes and subsequent behavior toward others because of certain attitudes, are shaped by viewing violence on television.

In his classic works, Bandura (1969, 1973) laid a firm

foundation for our views on social learning. He noted the observations of aggression affects symbolic processes. Children presumably learn that aggression is acceptable, they learn the means to aggress and they store mental representations of these attitudes and means of expressing aggression. Whether the child actually expresses the aggressive behavior that he or she has learned depends on certain instigating conditions (e.g., whether he/she is provoked) and/or reinforcing conditions (e.g., whether he/she will be punished) (Rule & Ferguson, 1986).

Another theoretical approach is the notion of *scripts* developed by Abelson (1976). The fundamental element in a script is the vignette, an "encoding of an event of short duration" consisting of both an image and a "conceptual representation" of the event. Scripts define situations and guide behavior. Thus, violence observed in the media may provide adequate explanations for, and guides to behavior within, situations that could otherwise remain ambiguous for the person (Geen & Thomas, 1986).

The correlates of attitudes toward aggression have been examined in studies by Dominick & Greenberg, 1972, and Mcleod, Aitkin & Chaffee, 1972 (Rule & Ferguson, 1986). The results show that adolescents' self reports of perceived learning of aggression were positively related to favorable attitudes toward aggression, but this study by Mcleod et al, did not show that the amount of viewing violence was related to attitudes. For Dominick and Greenberg, results did show a correlation between viewing violence and high approval for aggression as well as a

willingness to use violence as a means to solve problems, however other attributes were also considered as a predictor including social class and family attitudes. Both studies show some indication of viewing violence as a predictor but not a strong one from the study results.

Implications for further research include more testing of attitudes regarding the effects of viewing violence in the media for children and adolescents.

The literature suggests that viewing violence in the media tends to increase aggressive behavior (Huesmann & Malamuth, Eron, Bandura, Perry, Cline, & Wood). Research also suggests that the use of weapons on television is often inappropriately portrayed, which may send messages to certain individuals that are not realistic (Price et. al.). Individual attitudes toward violence in the media are still inconclusive regarding the effects of violence as a predictor of attitudes about aggression (Rule & Ferguson, Abelson, Dominick & Greenburg). In my opinion, further studies should to be carried out in the future, looking at hours of exposure to media violence and how various age groups are effected by viewing violence and then handling situations that could lead to violence as a solution to conflict.

For the purpose of my exploratory study, I will be surveying adolescents in a middle school setting, grades 6, 7, and 8, to see if there is a correlation between increased viewing of violence on television and using violence toward other students in the school setting as a means of handling potentially conflictual situations.

METHODOLOGY

HYPOTHESIS

Violence in the schools appears to be increasing. My questions are,- How do students react to a variety of situations that occur in the school setting, that could lead to violence? And if a violent thought, feeling or action is used toward another student, is there a correlation to watching violence on television and students using violence toward others in the school setting?

My hypothesis is:

EXPOSURE TO VIOLENCE ON TELEVISION AFFECTS STUDENT BEHAVIORS TOWARD OTHERS IN THE SCHOOL SETTING.

EXPLANATION OF TERMS IN THIS STUDY

Exposure to violence on television is the independent variable in this study. To define exposure to television, I have used two explanations. On the one hand, school age children watch TV on school days usually in the early morning and/or evening hours. Therefore I will be looking at hours of TV watched, on schooldays, that include violence in programming, as one variable. The other variable will be hours of TV watched that include violence in programming on weekends and non-school days. Since

the hours of TV watched will vary from school days to non-school days, I felt it necessary to include both variables as part of my study.

The independent variable in this study is student behaviors toward others in the school setting. For the purpose of this study, the school setting is a middle school with students in the 6th, 7th, and 8th grades answering the survey questions.

The actions toward others as well as the violence viewed on television are explained by a definition of violence which is included on the survey. The definition of violence which survey results are based on is as follows:

Violence is intentional actions or words that hurt other people or destroy property.

Violent actions include hitting, kicking, fighting, using a weapon to hurt someone, breaking things when you are angry, etc.

Violent words can include threats to someone that you are going to hurt them, or put downs that hurt people's feelings such as name calling, ridiculing them or insulting a person's family or cultural background.

The key terms I have chosen are a result of my literature review. Research results have given me reason to believe that violence in TV programming does have an effect on how certain individuals will handle situations involving conflict. In schools, conflict happens frequently between students. Violence does not have to be used as a solution, however, for some of the students, it appears to be the only tool they have

when faced with a conflict. My study will look at TV violence as a factor in how some students handle in day to day conflict situations.

RATIONALE FOR THIS STUDY

Why do children use violence to solve conflict or in other situations? Some of the answers include getting back at someone, to prove themselves and show they are tough, to get something they want, because they have poor self control, for self-defense, to teach someone a lesson, or because they have witnessed violence as a means to solve conflict through the media or other sources.

Children have the right to grow up in schools that help them develop skills and attitudes that will help them live and work cooperatively with others. It is not enough to tell children that there are ways to solve problems without violence. For many children, as well as adults, violence has been a regular part of their lives and, in my opinion, some become psychologically numbed to its seriousness.

One of the first steps toward successful violence prevention is to recognize and label hurtful acts and words in day-to-day situations as "violence". However, children also need to be aware of the consequences of using violence and how to recognize and practice alternative ways to solve problems. As a society and as individuals who care, we have to let our children know that violence is hurtful, not glamorous.

STUDY DESIGN

Before I start explaining the study design, I need to clarify the purpose of the study and limitations which effect analysis, selection of subjects and validity issues. The study I implemented is exploratory in design. In my literature review, I did not find research results specific to middle school students, or school conflict issues as related to watching violence on TV.

As I began the study, I realized that time constraints and budget limitations would limit the scope and ensuing results of my study. I was only able to survey a very small number of students and therefore, the results will not be statistically significant. However, tendencies from the study results will show that my hypothesis may be proven if a larger scale study is replicated. Because of the constraints and issues in my study, statistical analysis will not be used. In my opinion, however, this study has relevance and importance in looking at student attitudes and behaviors toward others as a result of viewing violence on television. And the study results will give implications for educational programming in helping students understand violence and conflict, and in learning healthier and more appropriate ways to handle feelings and behaviors in conflict situations in the school setting and in general.

SUBJECTS

Subjects for this study were students randomly selected from the Pathways class lists (grades 6, 7, and 8), currently enrolled in a middle school. A random number assignment method to determine which Pathways group participated, was used. Pathways is a home room period, at the beginning of the day, usually used for small group discussions or doing schoolwork that students need to finish.

The rationale for choosing the Pathways period was that teachers have less than twenty students during this class period, the students do not miss academically significant course work as a result of participating in the survey during this period and teachers are willing to help with additional projects involving students as long as they do not interfere with specific classroom instructional time.

DATA COLLECTION

I designed a survey specifically for this study, which includes the components of hours of violence on television watched on school days and non-school days, and seven various scenarios which typically happen in the school setting. Based on the presented situations, students needed to make a decision about how they would think, feel, and act in that conflict situation. Both the hours of violence on TV watched and the handling of conflict situations were decided by students, using

the definition of violence that was included on the survey and used for the purpose of this study (Survey included in the appendix).

Teachers, whose Pathways groups were selected, were personally briefed by me, prior to handing out the survey to their students. The teachers were also given a letter explaining the survey, rationale of the study and procedure to follow in implementing the survey (Teacher letter included in the appendix).

A statement teachers needed to read to students before they filled out the survey was also verbally explained and included in written form to/for the teachers. This was done so all teachers whose Pathways groups were selected would be reading the same study information students needed to hear and have explained to them. The statement includes a rationale for the study, the fact that students were not to put their names on the survey so responses would remain anonymous, and that participation was voluntary (Student read statement included in the appendix). Teachers were asked to stress the voluntary nature of the study and explain any terms the students did not understand and the selection process if that needed clarifying. The students were then handed the surveys and asked to replace them in an envelope, completed or not, as they left class that morning. Teachers then returned the surveys directly to me, or placed the sealed envelope with the surveys in my PO box in the office. The teachers, in their feedback to me, expressed that

students did understand the participation choice and no problems or concerns were expressed by students regarding this matter.

ANALYSIS

Once the surveys were returned to me, I began to determine results based on student responses. The definition of violence was a factor in student responses and also in my determination of whether responses were violent or non violent.

Seven scenarios were presented regarding potentially conflictual situations in the school setting. Based on the situation, the student needed to answer three areas:

1. What would you think?
2. How would you feel?
3. What would you do?

Answers that included violent thoughts and/or feelings but not actions were considered non-violent. However, if the thoughts, feelings and actions were all violent, the reaction would be considered violent. For example, one of the scenarios asked students to decide how they would handle another student punching their friend in the hallway between classes:

A non-violent response may include they thought the person who punched their friend was a jerk, they were mad at that person, however they pulled their friend away and kept on walking instead of getting into a hassle.

A violent response would be they thought the person who punched their friend was a jerk and should get punched too,

they were really mad at the person who punched their friend, and they in turn punched the person to handle the situation.

The clear difference in the two responses is the resulting action. If a person has thoughts or feelings toward another, in any situation, which are essentially violent, but does not carry out those feelings in a violent manner, than it is my opinion that the person has thought through the solutions to the presenting problem and chosen a solution which is nonviolent. For the purpose of my study, the choice of violent or non-violent actions in a given situation, then became the resulting interpretation of whether a person responded violently or non-violently to a conflict situation, and this response was then correlated to the number of hours a student watched violence on television on schooldays and non-school days.

DATA PRESENTATION AND FINDINGS

The middle school student population in this setting is approximately thirteen hundred students. Because of time constraints and budget limitations, only 171 surveys were sent out to students in 9 of the 70 Pathways groups. Groups were chosen by a random number assignment in each grade level. Of the 171 surveys handed out, 80 were returned completed, a return rate of 47%.

Broken down by grade level, the return rate was:

6th Grade- 25 returned out of 57 handed out. A return rate of 44%.

7th Grade- 20 returned out of 59 handed out. A return rate of 34%.

8th Grade- 35 returned out of 55 handed out. A return rate of 64%.

Hours of violent TV watched were in two different categories:

1. Hours of violence watched on TV on schooldays from 0-5+ hours.
2. Hours of violence watched on TV on non-school days including weekends from 0-5+ hours.

Students made a check mark by the number of hours that describes how many hours they watch violence on television in both categories:

Schooldays:

_____ less than 1	_____ 3
_____ 1	_____ 4
_____ 2	_____ 5+

Non-school days and weekends:

_____ less than 1	_____ 3
_____ 1	_____ 4
_____ 2	_____ 5+

To determine the violent actions toward others in the school setting, I needed to determine whether the action taken was violent or non violent as defined by the definition of violence on the survey. Seven scenarios were presented in the survey and each scenario was treated as a single occurrence for data

analysis. To determine the non-violent to violent reactions I set up the following determination:

Type of response:

Nonviolent.....Violent

Incidence of non-violent to violent responses categories:

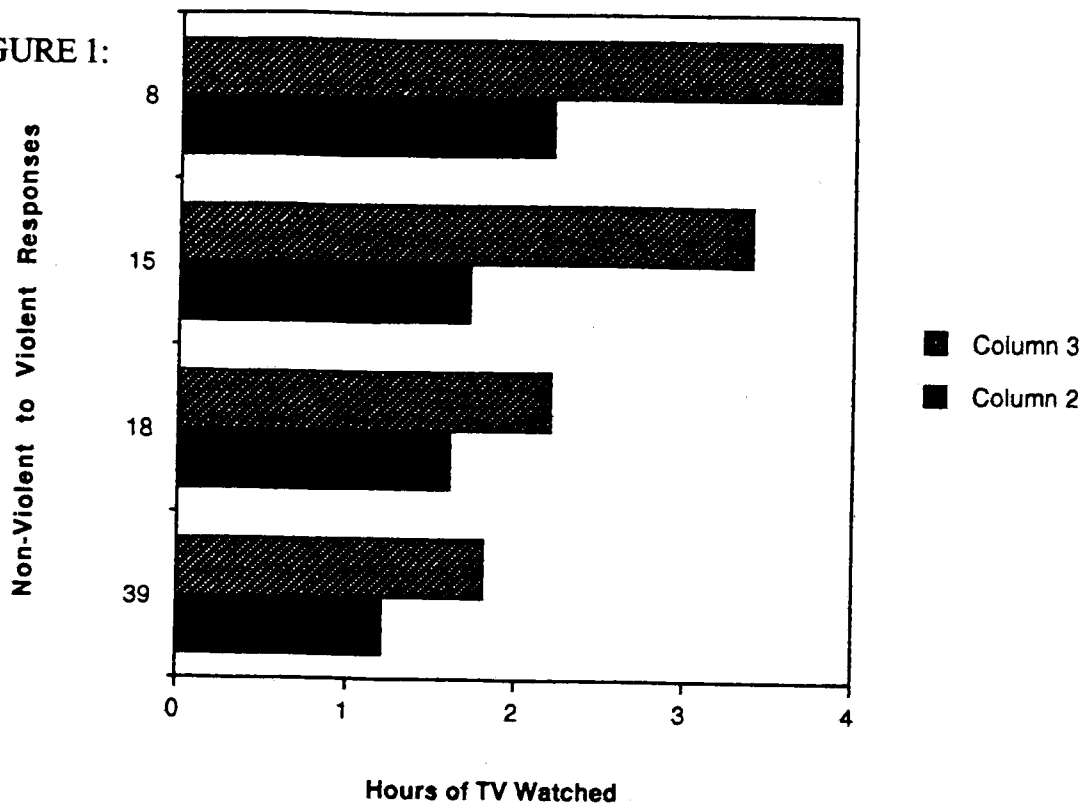
0-1 2-3 4-5 6-7

The following discussion will look at actual responses from the students about hypothetical situations in the school setting that could lead to violence. The students may or may not respond differently if these were real situations. The graphs show correlations of TV watching to responses to the scenarios presented to students, comparing hours of violence watched on TV with violent responses to conflict in the school setting.

The first graph I will discuss, shows a breakdown of the 80 survey respondents and the number of hours of violent TV watched in comparison to the non-violent to violent responses given to the scenarios involving conflict in the school (Figure 1).

The darker graphs (Column 2) shows the number of hours of violent TV watched on schooldays The shaded graphs (Column 3) shows the number of hours of violent TV watched on weekends and non-school days. Going from the bottom of the left side of the graph to the top of the graph is the number of non-violent to violent responses to conflict situations in the school setting. There is a correlation of the number of hours watching violence on television and the violent responses in the school setting displayed on the graph.

FIGURE 1:



According to the responses as shown on the graph the following represents a breakdown of the numbers of responses and hours of TV watched:

39 students gave 0-1 violent responses on the survey and watch an average of 1.2 hours of violent TV on schooldays and 1.8 hours of violent TV on non-school days.

18 students gave 2-3 violent responses on the survey and watch an average of 1.6 hours of violent TV on schooldays and 2.2 hours of violent TV on non-school days.

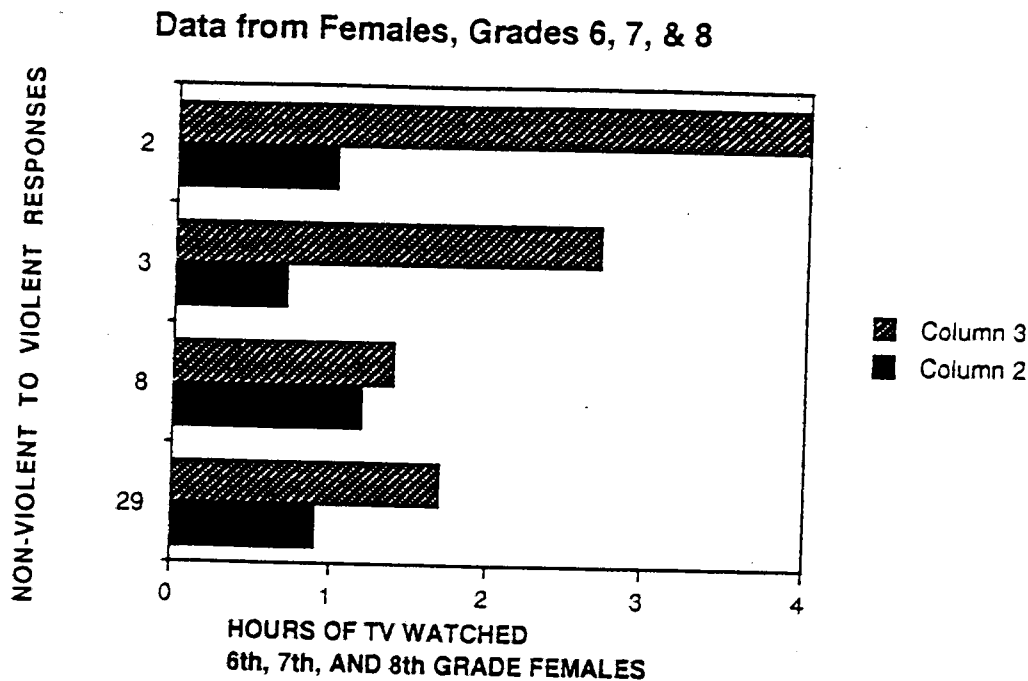
15 students gave 4-5 violent responses on the survey and watch an average of 1.7 hours of violent TV on schooldays and 3.4 hours of violent TV on non-school days.

8 students gave 6-7 violent responses on the survey and watch an average of 2.2 hours of violent TV on schooldays and 3.9 hours of violent TV on non-school days.

Based on the results from the survey involving all respondents, my hypothesis is showing correlations and reasons to think that a possibility exists that the more one watches violence on TV the more likely one is to settle conflict with violence.

For my own curiosity, I decided to break down the data into female and male responses to see if any differences exist. The following graphs show female (Figure 2) and male (Figure 3) responses:

FIGURE 2:



Of the female respondents, the following data was collected:

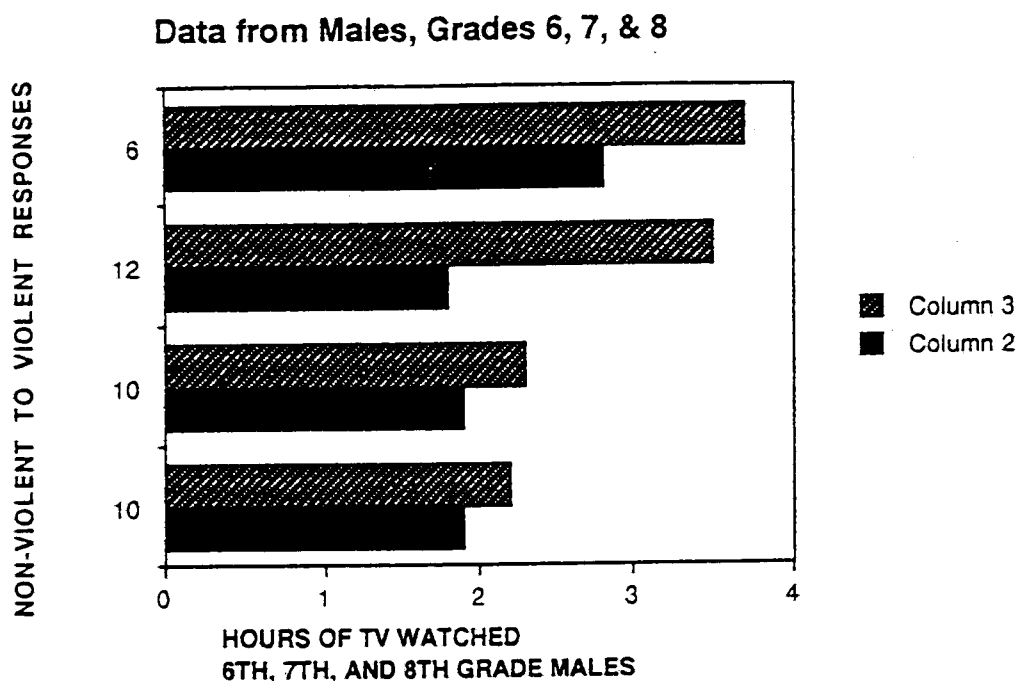
29 females gave 0-1 violent responses on the survey to conflict and watch an average of .9 hours of violence on TV on schooldays and 1.7 hours on non-school days.

8 females gave 2-3 violent responses on the survey to conflict and watch an average of 1.2 hours of violence on TV on schooldays and 1.4 hours on non-school days.

3 females gave 4-5 violent responses on the survey to conflict and watched an average of .7 hours of violence on TV on schooldays and 2.7 hours on non-school days.

2 females gave 6-7 violent responses on the survey to conflict and watched an average of 1 hour of violence on TV on schooldays and 4 hours on non-school days.

FIGURE 3:



Of the male respondents, the following data was collected:

10 males gave 0-1 violent responses on the survey to conflict and watched an average of 1.9 hours of violence on TV on schooldays and 2.2 hours on non-school days.

10 males gave 2-3 violent responses on the survey to conflict and watched an average of 1.9 hours of violence on TV on schooldays and 2.3 hours on non-school days.

12 males gave 4-5 violent responses to the survey to conflict and watched an average of 1.8 hours of violence on TV on schooldays and 3.5 hours on non-school days.

6 males gave 6-7 violent responses on the survey to conflict and watched an average of 2.8 hours of violence on TV on schooldays and 3.7 hours on non-schooldays.

In comparing the data from the males and females it is notable that higher numbers of students reporting 4-7 violent solutions to conflict came from males (18) as opposed to females at 5 respondents. However the two female respondents had higher numbers of hours of watching violent TV both on the school days and non-school days compared to the 6 male respondents. When looking at the graphs the male responses and numbers seem to be less erratic in the comparison of hours of violent TV to violent responses. The female students' graph shows definite elevations in the hours of violent TV watched and violent reactions however, some of the categories are not as strong in correlations as shown on the male students' graph. What I hope to see as a correlating factor is a steady rise in the number of hours of violent TV watched and the number of violent responses to conflict.

In the graphs shown from the study results, I believe I can report there is a correlation in viewing violence and acting more violent, even though some of the numbers do not maintain a steady rise on the graphs. For the most part, the study shows that

more students use non violence in their responses to conflict, however, there is a smaller number of students who use violence to settle conflict. Exposure to violence on television can be considered a factor in violent behavior toward other students based on the study results in this exploratory study of middle school students.

Although I am not including a breakdown of grade levels in the study results, I have included graphs in the appendix showing results from students overall in grades 6, 7 , and 8 (Appendix). The main area of difference in comparing grade level responses appears to be in violent responses to the scenarios. Sixth grade students overall gave more non-violent responses than seventh and eighth graders although they tended to have a similar amount of watching violence on television. Sixth grade students did not give any responses in the very violent category of 6-7 responses to conflict. Seventh grade had three responses and 8th grade had five in that category. This may be due in part to survey return rate, eighth graders having turned in the most surveys. The other component could be that older students may handle conflict in the schools more violently than younger students. There is no proof in my data that this is a factor, however on a larger scale study, this would certainly be worth considering and checking out with student responses.

Because of the small scale of my study, actual statistical methods are not being used as part of the data analysis. However, the findings do show tendencies and correlations to violent TV watching and subsequent violent

actions when presented with a conflict situation in the school setting. There is also strong implications based on these findings to look at violence prevention programs and curriculum in the schools.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

As I began this study, I formulated my hypothesis to determine if exposure to violence on television affects student behaviors toward others in the school setting. The results of the surveys that were returned to me, gave me reason to believe that yes, there is a correlation between viewing violence on television and subsequently solving conflict in violent ways in the school setting.

The graphs I used to show a correlation, did demonstrate a rise in the number of times a student will use violence to solve a conflictual situation with another student in the schools and an increased number of hours of violence on TV that are watched by students who use violent means to settle conflicts with others.

Implications of the previously explored research suggest that violence in the media does tend to increase violent actions and cognitions. The article on weapons, specifically gun usage in the media, did bring into account that the portrayal of guns in televised media sends inappropriate and unrealistic messages to viewers. During the past two decades, the percentage of programs containing aggressive behavior ranged from 73% to 89%. Also during that time frame, two leading causes of death for adolescents-homicides and suicides- increased. Both increases are associated primarily with firearms, especially handguns (Center to Prevent Handgun Violence-Appendix).

The articles on viewing violence in the media and a correlation with increased aggressive behavior (Berger, 1989, Wood, et. al.,1991, & Rule & Fergusen, 1986), provided evidence to support the idea that viewing violence increases aggressive thoughts and behavior. This same correlation was shown in my study with adolescents in the middle school setting.

Social learning theorists, (Bandura, et al, 1987) point out that viewing violence has several effects on the viewer. First, television violence teaches children aggressive styles of conduct as well as the general lesson that conflicts are to be settled by force. Second, witnessing violence alters inhibitions against aggression. Third, repeated viewing of violence desensitizes and habituates children to violence and suffering. Finally, viewing violence shapes a child's image of reality. Heavy television users tend to view the world as a hostile place.

My literature review research to date and the results of my study show some evidence to believe that viewing violence in the media leads to violent behavior toward others. Implications of these findings include a need to create an atmosphere for our children which is non-threatening and non-violent. The media will not change programming entirely. They stand on the rights of freedom of speech which is a part of the Constitution of the United States. However, as parents, social workers or other professionals in the mental health fields and consumers of the media, we can make a difference. Knowing that children are exposed to violence on a daily basis, we must start to use teachable moments and show our children there is a better way,

to handle conflict. We can help children understand that more conflicts do not make things better. The opposite is true. Schools can teach non-violent conflict resolution, parents can discuss violence on TV and in other situations with their children to point out what is going on, what is the reality, and what can be done instead. As a society, we can request that our government look at the media and the implications of violence on children and adults, so regulations of prime time programming could be put into effect without taking away the constitutional rights of media personnel involved in television programs

Further research is needed to look at overall attitudes of all age groups regarding violence in the media. Attitudes include our thoughts feelings and actions, and if we as a society or specific members of our population are becoming desensitized to violence because of excessive exposure in the media and other sources than we need to look at a way to become more sensitive to the effects of violence and the implications of increased violence in the future.

LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY

The study I implemented, although it shows tendencies and correlations of increased viewing of TV violence and reported beliefs about violent behaviors toward others in the school setting, was not proven using statistical measures. Part of the reason for this was the size and scope of the study. I only surveyed a small number of students in one middle school, and

therefore, it did not seem appropriate to use statistical proof of my results. According to Rubin and Babbie (1989), for a sample to be significant, it must be representative of the total population.

Time constraints and budget limitations were the main reasons that my study was small in size. Because of the time issues, I was not able to pre-test my survey to see if any changes needed to be made before the actual study implementation. Although the survey did give me valuable information for my study purpose, I would change some parts of the survey to include the students definition of violent programs, for example have the students rate a list of programs that are violent from the least to the most violent. I wasn't sure, based on the results, if students had a clear understanding of what was meant by violence on TV. So that aspect of the survey is a limitation to the credibility of the results. It would also be important to give the survey to middle schools in various areas including inner cities, rural areas and small towns to see if there are differences in results. My study was limited to one school in the suburbs and therefore did not give general information that could be incorporated into an all inclusive framework instead of a single locality.

Even though the study was small in scope and exploratory in design, there is some evidence to say that further studies of this type are important in finding stronger evidence to support my hypothesis that exposure to violence affects student behaviors toward others in the school setting.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Violence has been, and continues to be, a major social issue in contemporary society. Although many persons assume that human beings are by nature violent creatures, the consensus of the scientific community, described in the Seville Statement, is that "there is no scientific basis for the belief that humans are naturally aggressive." (Seville Statement included in appendix) Rather, violence is largely a function of social learning and environmental contingencies (Bandura, et. al). Multiple factors are involved in the facilitation and occurrence of violent behavior. Media portrayals of violence, although not the sole or primary factor in violent behavior, appear to be important influences on such behavior (Hoberman, 1990).

The literature review presented in this paper and used as part of my study shows evidence to support the above stated opinion of the author. Social learning theory seems to show a strong basis for learned behavior via what we see, hear and put into practice. My study, although not statistically proven, also shows a correlation to what we see and learn through the media and how we subsequently act in conflict situations with others. My results showed that increased exposure to viewing violence in the media led to an increase in handling conflict situations using violence.

The need for further research in this area is paramount. Greater knowledge is required of the implications of portrayals of media violence for the attitudes and behavior of adolescents. Studies are needed to determine if and how media portrayals of violence have changed over the last 30 years. Content analysis of youth-oriented movies, particularly those involving violent acts are needed. In particular, information is needed as to the manner in which adolescents are portrayed both as victims and as perpetrators of violence. Research should also be conducted to determine whether certain groups of adolescents may be especially susceptible to media violence. And studies are needed to carefully examine the developmental implications of age as a variable interacting with media experiences. In my study, although I did not look specifically at age as a factor in analysis, use of violence to solve conflict increased from grades 6 to 8. Studies are also needed to help gain a knowledge of the effect racial and cultural differences have on the impact of media violence. On a positive note research can and should be conducted on how the media can promote constructive solutions to conflict in programming and still keep the media audience captivated.

My study was valuable in showing correlations and implications for a larger study along the same lines. Any study that is conducted on the basis of my hypothesis should also look beyond the data and start integrating solutions to the problems that arise from violence in our society in any given age group as a result of media violence being a factor of that violence.

When I think back on shows I remember watching in my childhood that contained violence, I would have to agree with Misti Snow (1992) that Marshall Dillon in a shootout, Ben Hur in the chariot races, King Kong swatting airplanes from atop the Empire State Building, and the shower scene in Psycho appear to be mild references to violence compared to the scenes children view today.

A disturbing theme when the Mindworks editors (1991) asked children to send in essays on their feelings toward media violence is the very common attitude that children love violence and that violence is cool.

It is important to note these attitudes and to look at what parents, educators and society as a whole can do to help children understand the implications and consequences of violence in our society. We must indeed listen to our children with open minds and hear the messages they are including in their mental processes and outward behaviors. And then as adults who care, we must take the responsibility to provide education, prevention and a sense of hope for a future that isn't scary and hopeless for our children.

In the following section I will try to give some suggestions on ways to implement non-violent education and awareness in our schools, homes, and in society.

IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL WORK PRACTITIONERS

SOCIAL WORK SERVICES IN THE SCHOOLS

School Social Workers have the unique ability to educate children beyond the scope of academic course work. In the schools, formal media education is critical because statistics are showing that most children are going to watch 1,000 hours of TV every year for the rest of their lives (Kubey, 1990). It is important in the role of a social worker and educator in the schools to develop and implement curriculum that helps children understand what the media is all about and how to analyze what they experience via the media.

In the schools, social workers can also inservice teachers and students in the process of creative problem solving and non-violent conflict resolution techniques. We can also work in small groups and in the classroom on issues such as self-esteem, social skills training, implications of violence in the family and in society, and respect and courtesy issues. Social Workers also inservice students and faculty in school policies such as discipline, weapons and sexual harassment. But we can go beyond the formal aspects of the policies and lead discussions of why these policies are necessary, what would happen if these

policies didn't exist and what is the student/teacher/social worker/administrator role in these policies.

Through question and answer sessions with students and training in various aspects of the media and violence and the implications of both in our lives, the social worker can help promote non-violence and appropriate conflict resolution in the schools. One way of implementing conflict resolution and peer mediation is through programs which use peers as resources. The following is an explanation of peer programs and their components. Social workers in the schools are well trained in providing these kinds of program opportunities to students.

PEER RESOURCE PROGRAMS

The concept of peer resource programs in many of our secondary school systems is not a new one. In fact many high schools, junior highs and middle schools utilize peers helping peers in academics, support and conflict resolution. What school social workers should advocate for is the availability of peer resource programs for all grade levels. It would seem that providing ongoing opportunities for students to be resources to each other would be a positive experience for both the students and the teachers.

By way of definition, the term "peer resource" is used to refer to any program that uses children and youth to work with and/or help other children and youth. Included in this definition are programs such as cooperative learning, peer tutoring, peer helping for support and peer mediation.

RATIONALE FOR PEER RESOURCE PROGRAMS

In the last several years, research studies have shown that peer interaction is conducive, perhaps even essential to a host of important early achievements (Berndt and Ladd, 1989). According to Johnson and Johnson, the primary relationships in which development and socialization may take place may be with peers (1983). The following ways have been shown to contribute to a child's social and cognitive development and socialization:

1. Peer interactions are another arena besides family, school and community which provides support, opportunities and models for prosocial development. In this arena, children learn attitudes, values, and skills through peer modeling and reinforcement.
2. Peer interactions between peers tend to be more frequent, intense and diverse and allow for experimentation, therefore, can be very powerful in shaping a youth's behavior.
3. Through reciprocal peer interactions children learn to share, help, comfort and empathize with each other. According to Piaget and other developmental psychologists, the empathy perspective is one of the most critical competencies for cognitive and social development (Attili, 1990).
4. Through peer interaction, children learn critical social skills such as impulse control, critical and creative thinking and friendship skills. According to Attili, research supports the idea of social competence as a predictor of life success (1990).
5. Peer relationships have a strong influence on achievement (Ladd, 1990).

6, Peer interactions have strong influences on a child's development of identity and autonomy. It is through peer relationships that a frame of reference for perceiving oneself is developed (Berndt and Ladd, 1989).

POSITIVE OUTCOMES FOR PEER RESOURCE PROGRAMS

Peer resource programs are most effective when each person experiences both the helper and helpee role. According to Frank Reissman, peer helping is beneficial for the following reasons:

1. The helper feels good because he or she has something to give.
2. It is an active role in which the helper feels less dependent.
3. The helper obtains a feeling of social usefulness.
4. It is potentially empowering as it gives the helper a sense of control, a feeling of being able to do something.
5. It encourages the helper to be open to learning so that he or she can help effectively (1990).

According to William Glasser, peer resource programs work because they satisfy our four basic human psychological needs to belong and love, to gain power, to be free and to have fun (1986).

INGREDIENTS OF PEER PROGRAMS

In order to have effective peer resource programs the following elements should be taken in consideration:

1. Positive interdependence. Students should understand that it is to their advantage if other students learn well and visa versa. This can be accomplished through mutual goals, dividing tasks and resources and joint rewards.

2. Face-to-face interaction. Students must interrelate with each other to achieve a common goal.
3. Individual accountability. Each youth must be help responsible for the material at hand and providing help and support for the other.
4. Training in social skills. Students must be trained in appropriate social skills necessary to build and maintain collaborative relationships working on communication, assertiveness, conflict resolution, problem solving and general friendship skills.
5. Time for group processing. A time each week must be allowed for students to reflect and process how well things are going.
6. Heterogeneous composition. Groups should be diverse in academic ability, ethnic background or physical disability.
7. Each child as a helper. Each student should be given the chance to be the helper in different situations.
8. Youth involvement in the program implementation. According to Jason and Rhodes, by providing youngsters responsible roles in programs that foster autonomy and choice, the children are less likely to reject the messages and intervention processes and more likely to gain a sense of self acceptance, self worth and confidence (1989).

TYPES OF PEER HELPING PROGRAMS

1. Newcomer Programs: Students are recruited to welcome new and transfer students. Incoming students fill out an information sheet about their background and activities they like. Peer helpers with similar interests then act as welcomers and provide

a tour of the school, eat lunch with them the first week, give newcomers a list of activities at school, and followup with contact during the first few months.

2. Mentoring/Buddy Programs: Upper class students help with transitions from grades/schools or help in lower grade classrooms. In the elementary schools this might involve a fifth grade class adopting a first grade class.

3. Peer Tutoring: In school tutoring peer to peer in the classroom or cross age tutoring between two different classes.

4. Peer Support: Students provide one to one help for their classmates, frequently in the area of reaching out to someone who is having trouble making friends or is very shy or isolated from others.

5. Conflict Managers/Mediation: Students are trained in conflict management skills either to be a mediator on the playground or to formally resolve everyday disputes among their classmates. In the elementary schools, this type of program needs to be highly structured.

6. Peer Education: Peer education trains older students in areas of health education, such as prevention of drug and alcohol abuse and safety issues. These students in turn go into classrooms and teach younger students. Peer education has been shown to be a powerful tool in getting information to younger students and in impacting students knowledge, attitudes and behavior (Toole and Toole, 1990).

COMPONENTS OF ORGANIZING A PEER RESOURCE PROGRAM

The following elements are necessary in developing a peer resource program:

1. Helping tasks: How will the peer helpers be utilized?

A. Decide with the students exactly what areas of service are needed in the school. Ownership on the students part increases interest and investment in the programs.

2. Selection Criteria: How will the peer helpers be chosen?

A. Depending on the type of program/s chosen, leaders should establish criteria for the types of students to be recruited.

B. A variety of peer projects should be available in the school so everyone has a chance to participate in some way. Different selection criteria should be developed for different programs.

3. Recruitment Strategies: How will you recruit students to be in the peer program?

A. A leader may choose to use announcements, bulletins or posters.

B. For some of the projects such as peer mediation, faculty/student nominations, sociometric ratings in a classroom or interviews may be appropriate.

4. Training: What training will the peer helpers need to be successful in the chosen tasks?

A. Review existing training manuals and select lessons which fit the school philosophy and tasks to be accomplished. Develop a logical sequence of lessons which include homework,

speaker and real practice. Also consider the amount of hours needed to train students depending on the tasks they will be assigned.

B Leaders in training should have a strong background working with youth, facilitative skills and model/live the values peer programs are intending to teach.

5. Supervision: How will the peer helpers be supported and monitored?

A. Decide on the logistics of meeting times to process the student interventions, use questionnaires and individual conferences to monitor the progress and/or problems peer helpers encounter while helping/working with other students.

6. Accountability: How will you know that you have been successful?

A. Keep track of the number of students trained, the number of students served and the total number of contacts each helper had with the person being helped.

B. Develop an instrument which will measure the effectiveness in reaching the objectives of each peer helping program in the school (Toole and Toole, 1990).

SAFEGUARDS IN THE PEER RESOURCE PROGRAMS

The following examples explain what is needed to guarantee the safety of the peer helpers and those with whom they work:

A. An established criteria for minimal qualifications and training for adults who serve as trainers for the peer helpers.

B. A determination of which parts of the peer programs warrant parent permission.

C. Educating peer helpers as to how and when and where to make a referral within the school. Establish clear rules for the areas in which you would require helpers to make a referral to an adult.

D. Setting standards that you expect peer helpers to follow. These might include regular attendance at classes, not breaking school rules, attending all training sessions and serving as a role model to the person they are helping.

It is important, in my opinion, for school social workers and social workers who work in agencies that facilitate services in schools, to develop and implement programs that promote and teach non-violent alternatives to conflict in the schools and in one's daily life situations.

SOCIAL WORK SERVICES WITH THE FAMILY

According to Jay F. Davis (1990), parents are being told over and over again to watch TV with their children in order to help interpret what they see. He has formulated specific suggestions for parents in handling the explanations of what they are viewing on television with their children. His following five suggestions can be used as a guideline during a parent information night on media violence. Or they could be sent out in the school newsletter or community paper for parents to read and decide how they can use them in day to day discussions with their children about television.

1. You're Smarter than Your TV.

Let's face it, if we weren't smarter than our TV's, or at least different than the people in them, our lives would be dominated by gunfights, drug deals and quickly resolved living room fights. Parents can make connections to real life when scenes on TV tend to make children feel this is the reality. Based on the concept that each of us has "filters" that affect our reception of messages, parents can develop similar "filters" in their children that cause them to think of other things, "real life" things. With a little creativity, parents can connect everyday events and experiences to the stories children see on television.

2. TV's World is Not Real.

According to developmental theory, it is not until about second grade that children develop the intellectual ability to tell the difference between what is real and what is imaginary.

So parents of particularly, very young children need to be aware of the unreal nature of some things on TV and discuss them with their children. It doesn't hurt to do a reality check with older children also so parents can determine whether they are understanding what is fiction and non-fiction on television.

3. TV Teaches Us that Some People Are More Important Than Others.

This author talks back to his TV and suggests that when a person sees or hears something that they think is biased they should add their two cents as parents, especially when the children are around. In order for our children to know our values and beliefs, they need to hear them over and above what they hear on television.

4. TV Keeps Doing the Same Things Over and Over Again.

TV keeps using laughtracks, scary music, or romantic music and candlelight, closeups and chase scenes. And women always wear make-up, even in bed. Looking for these common television techniques is one of the more interesting and revealing ways to demystify TV for your children. Parents can schedule a trip to the local TV station where everyone can ask questions about how television is made. Once children are exposed to the actual making of a TV show or look at and discuss the same techniques used over and over again in television, it becomes hard to watch TV in the same way, Especially when one starts to notice makeup on sleeping women, and so on.

5. Somebody is Always Trying to Make Money With the TV.

TV tends to use commercials based on the type of show that is on at the time. For example, during a basketball game, several commercials about Nike Air Jordon will come on. And if one is watching a sitcom about a single mom, most of the commercials will relate to women. It is good to point out to our children that commercials are there to make money and that both the networks and television stations make their money by selling commercials. It is important for your children to understand that just about everything we see on TV is impacted by someone's desire to make money.

If social workers in the schools and community agencies get this kind of information to parents so they in turn can use it in practical ways with their children, there is a greater chance that some of the stigma of TV effects on our children would be alleviated and children would have a better composite of what TV is all about and the impact it has on their lives.

As concerned citizens, parents and professionals we should take into consideration that there is validity to television operating as a social control mechanism. For the most part, we may at times feel somewhat powerless to impact this industry on a large scale, however, on a smaller scale within our families and communities we can make changes in how we view and interpret TV programming.

SOCIAL WORK SERVICES IN SOCIETY

In 1990, the Children's Television Act became a law in the United States. The main significance, according to Peggy Charron (1990), is that the act will help the public concentrate on what's missing from children's TV not just what is on TV. The act limits commercial advertising in children's programming to a cap of 10.5 minutes per hour on weekends and 12 minutes per hour on weekdays. Censorship is not part of the act since that goes against the freedom of speech. However, broadcasters do have to look seriously at the type of programming they have available for children since many cable networks are responding with family entertainment which could lead to a diminished audience for their stations.

The 1990 law is an important step in our society, recognizing that media does impact our children's lives and can do so either negatively or positively, depending on what and how much our children watch on television. As social workers we can continue to stress legislation in the area of the media by writing our Congressional Representatives about our concerns regarding media programming and presenting ideas for quality media programs in the future.

It is my opinion that children are not born hostile or violent. This has also been shown to be true in the research. As children grow, we as parents and professionals must help them learn self-control of their anger and impulses and to

communicate their emotions in constructive ways. Children learn from their experiences and from their environment how to deal with the problems and conflicts that come up in their lives. These learned responses and attitudes may be positive, constructive and caring, or they may be aggressive and hostile to others as well as to themselves.

In conclusion, the research to date and my exploratory study demonstrates a basis to believe that exposure to media violence increases violent responses toward others. My study gave a picture of how some of our adolescent population handle situations that could happen in the school setting, by using either peaceful or violent solutions to conflict. In correlating the responses to hours of watching violent TV programming, there was a tendency for students to use violent responses more often when they watched more violence on television. As parents, professionals, and citizens, we can help make a difference in the lives of our children through education and through positive, affirming and respectful interactions with our children and with other people.

APPENDIX

Dear Colleague,

Enclosed is a brief survey that attempts to determine what students think, feel and do when potentially violent situations occur in the school setting. It will also help determine how students are effected by violence in televised media. The survey is being given to randomly selected sixth, seventh and eighth graders in our school, using the Pathways class period. The research is being conducted as part of my MSW thesis topic regarding violence in the media and the effects on children ages 10-14, and has been approved by Augsburg College staff involved in student research projects, and the school principal.

Participation of the students who have been selected is critical to the success of this study and therefore I request that you read the enclosed statement to your students and ask for their help in this survey.

Please assure the students that responses are anonymous and that names will not be used on the survey or in the process of writing the research report. Please also convey to students that participation is voluntary in completing this survey and if they choose not to participate students can use the time for silent reading or to work on schoolwork or other projects which will not disturb the others.

The survey should take no longer than the twenty minutes allotted for the class period for the students to complete. Please choose a time during this week to have students complete the survey. When you have finished, please return the surveys in the envelope I have provided, to my PO box in the office. Please be sure all completed surveys are returned by_____.

Thank you very much for taking the time to help me in assessing student reactions and feelings toward violence.

Sincerely,

Kathie Krystofiak
School Social Worker

TEACHERS, PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT TO THE STUDENTS AFTER YOU HAVE HANDED OUT THE SURVEY:

Students: Your Pathways class has been selected to complete a survey on violence and television. Mrs. Krystofiak, the school social worker, is requesting you fill out the survey to help her determine what students, in grades six, seven and eight, think, feel and do when situations occur in the school setting that could lead to violent words or actions. The survey will also help determine how students are effected by violence on television. The survey is part of her Master of Social Work research project. Your opinion is very important and responses are anonymous, meaning you will not put your name on the survey. No student names or the name of the school will be used in the research findings and research report.

Mrs. Krystofiak would appreciate your help in completing this survey, but it will be your choice to participate in the survey or you may choose not to be involved if you wish. Students who do not participate can read a book or work on schoolwork or other projects that will not disturb the other students.

Your opinion will help determine what the school needs to look at in the future for programs and lessons on violence prevention. So again, your opinion is important and appreciated. The principal has given permission for the survey to be given during the Pathways class period.

Thank you for your help.

TEACHERS:

1. PLEASE ASK STUDENTS IF THEY HAVE ANY QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STATEMENT YOU HAVE JUST READ, WORDS THEY DON'T UNDERSTAND, ABOUT THE SURVEY ITSELF, OR THE PARTICIPANT SELECTION PROCESS.
2. PLEASE MAKE SURE ALL STUDENTS UNDERSTAND THIS IS VOLUNTARY, AND THEY MAY COMPLETE THE SURVEY, OPT OUT AFTER THEY HAVE STARTED IF THEY CHOOSE, OR NOT PARTICIPATE AT ALL.
3. PLEASE READ OVER THE DIRECTIONS AT THE TOP OF THE SURVEY BEFORE STUDENTS COMPLETE IT.
4. AT THE END OF THE CLASS PERIOD, HAVE ALL STUDENTS PUT THEIR SURVEY, COMPLETED OR NOT, IN THE ENVELOPE AS THEY LEAVE THE CLASS.

THANKS

STUDENT SURVEY ON VIOLENCE AND TELEVISION

This survey will help determine what students think, feel, and do when situations occur in the school setting that could lead to violent actions or words. It will also determine how students are effected by violence on television shows. Your opinion is very important and will remain anonymous. Based on the following definition of violence, please state your responses to the following situations that could occur in school.

DEFINITION OF VIOLENCE

Violence is intentional actions or words that hurt other people or destroy property.

Violent actions include hitting, pushing, kicking, fighting, using a weapon to hurt someone, breaking things when you are angry, etc.

Violent words can include threats to someone that you are going to hurt them, or put downs that hurt people's feelings such as name calling, ridiculing them or insulting a person's family or cultural background.

Please answer the following situations with how you would really think, feel and act:

1. You are busy doing your schoolwork in English Class and the student sitting next to you takes your pencil away from you and breaks it on purpose.

A. What would you think?

B. How would you feel?

C. What would you do?

2. You are walking to your next class and another student pushes you out of his/her way to get by you in the hallway?

A. What would you think?

B. How would you feel?

C. What would you do?

3. You are playing a game during Phy. Ed. and a student on the other team cheats.

A. What would you think?

B. How would you feel?

C. What would you do?

4. Your friend gets punched by another kid for no apparent reason, in the hallway, between classes.

A. What would you think?

B. How would you feel?

C. What would you do?

5. A student in your class teases you and calls you names in front of several people.

A. What would you think?

B. How would you feel?

C. What would you do?

6. A friend of yours gets mad at you and tells you they don't want to be friends with you anymore, and then starts telling others things about you that aren't true.

A. What would you think?

B. How would you feel?

C. What would you do?

7. A student threatens to beat you up after school?

A. What would you think?

B. How would you feel?

C. What would you do?

Definition of violence- Violence is intentional actions or words that hurt other people or destroy property.

Based on this definition, please answer as best as you can the following questions on the amount of time you think you see shows with violence on television.

On schooldays during the week, do you personally watch television shows that include violence:

- _____ less than 1 hour
- _____ 1 hour
- _____ 2 hours
- _____ 3 hours
- _____ 4 hours
- _____ 5 hours or more

On weekends and non school days, do you personally watch television shows that include violence:

- _____ less than 1 hour
- _____ 1 hour
- _____ 2 hours
- _____ 3 hours
- _____ 4 hours
- _____ 5 or more hours

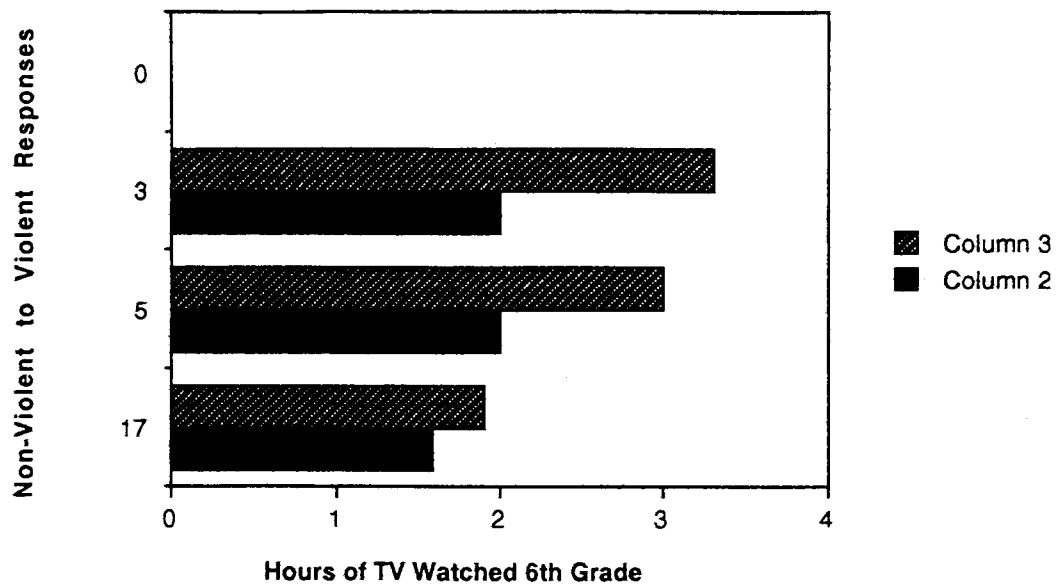
AGE _____

Grade _____

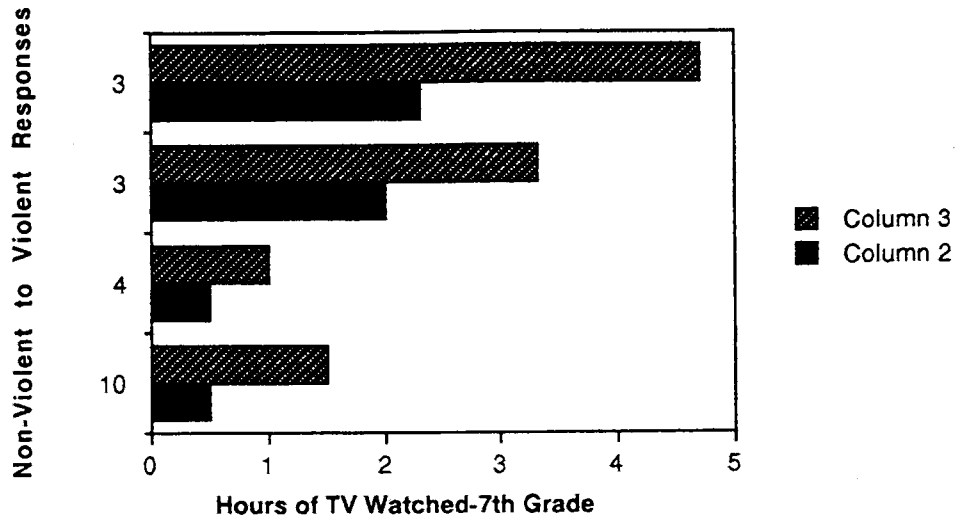
Male _____ Female _____

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS SURVEY, YOUR HELP IS APPRECIATED!!!!!!!!!!

Violent Responses to Hours of TV Watched



Violent Responses to Hours of TV Watched



The Seville Statement on Violence

EDITOR'S NOTE: The Seville Statement on Violence was drafted by an international committee of 20 scholars at the 6th International Colloquium on Brain and Aggression held at the University of Seville, Spain, in May 1986, with support from the Spanish Commission for UNESCO. The Statement's purpose is to dispel the widespread belief that human beings are inevitably disposed to war as a result of innate, biologically determined aggressive traits.

UNESCO adopted the Seville Statement at its 25th General Conference Session in Paris, October 17–November 16, 1989. The Statement has been formally endorsed by scientific organizations and published in journals around the world. UNESCO is preparing a brochure to be used in teaching young people about the Statement.

In August 1987 the Council of Representatives of the American Psychological Association voted to endorse the Seville Statement. The Board of Scientific Affairs emphasized that this is not a scientific statement on the issue of specific inherited behavioral traits. It is, rather, a social statement designed to eliminate unfounded stereotypic thinking on the inevitability of war.

Believing that it is our responsibility to address from our particular disciplines the most dangerous and destructive activities of our species, violence and war; recognizing that science is a human cultural product which cannot be definitive or all-encompassing; and gratefully acknowledging the support of the authorities of Seville and representatives of Spanish UNESCO; we, the undersigned scholars from around the world and from relevant sciences, have met and arrived at the following Statement on Violence. In it, we challenge a number of alleged biological findings that have been used, even by some in our disciplines, to justify violence and war. Because the alleged findings have contributed to an atmosphere of pessimism in our time, we submit that the open, considered rejection of these misstatements can contribute significantly to the International Year of Peace.

Misuse of scientific theories and data to justify violence and war is not new but has been made since the advent of modern science. For example, the theory of evolution has been used to justify not only war, but also genocide, colonialism, and suppression of the weak.

We state our position in the form of five propositions. We are aware that there are many other issues about violence and war that could be fruitfully addressed from the standpoint of our disciplines, but we restrict ourselves here to what we consider a most important first step.

It is scientifically incorrect to say that we have inherited a tendency to make war from our animal ancestors. Although fighting occurs widely throughout animal

species, only a few cases of destructive intra-species fighting between organized groups have ever been reported among naturally living species, and none of these involve the use of tools designed to be weapons. Normal predatory feeding upon other species cannot be equated with intra-species violence. Warfare is a peculiarly human phenomenon and does not occur in other animals.

The fact that warfare has changed so radically over time indicates that it is a product of culture. Its biological connection is primarily through language which makes possible the coordination of groups, the transmission of technology, and the use of tools. War is biologically possible, but it is not inevitable, as evidenced by its variation in occurrence and nature over time and space. There are cultures which have not engaged in war for centuries, and there are cultures which have engaged in war frequently at some times and not at others.

It is scientifically incorrect to say that war or any other violent behavior is genetically programmed into our human nature. While genes are involved at all levels of nervous system function, they provide a developmental potential that can be actualized only in conjunction with the ecological and social environment. While individuals vary in their predispositions to be affected by their experience, it is the interaction between their genetic endowment and conditions of nurturance that determines their personalities. Except for rare pathologies, the genes do not produce individuals necessarily predisposed to violence. Neither do they determine the opposite. While genes are co-involved in establishing our behavioral capacities, they do not by themselves specify the outcome.

It is scientifically incorrect to say that in the course of human evolution there has been a selection for aggressive behavior more than for other kinds of behavior. In all well-studied species, status within the group is achieved by the ability to cooperate and to fulfill social functions relevant to the structure of that group. "Dominance" involves social bondings and affiliations; it is not simply a matter of the possession and use of superior physical power, although it does involve aggressive behaviors. Where genetic selection for aggressive behavior has been artificially instituted in animals, it has rapidly succeeded in producing hyper-aggressive individuals; this indicates that aggression was not maximally selected under natural conditions. When such experimentally-created hyper-aggressive animals are present in a social group, they either disrupt its social structure or are driven out. Violence is neither in our evolutionary legacy nor in our genes.

It is scientifically incorrect to say that humans have a "violent brain." While we do have the neural apparatus to act violently, it is not automatically activated by internal or external stimuli. Like higher primates and unlike other animals, our higher neural processes filter such stimuli

before they can be acted upon. How we act is shaped by how we have been conditioned and socialized. There is nothing in our neurophysiology that compels us to react violently.

It is scientifically incorrect to say that war is caused by "instinct" or any single motivation. The emergence of modern warfare has been a journey from the primacy of emotional and motivational factors, sometimes called "instincts," to the primacy of cognitive factors. Modern war involves institutional use of personal characteristics such as obedience, suggestibility, and idealism; social skills such as language; and rational considerations such as cost-calculation, planning, and information processing. The technology of modern war has exaggerated traits associated with violence both in the training of actual combatants and in the preparation of support for war in the general population. As a result of this exaggeration, such traits are often mistaken to be the causes rather than the consequences of the process.

We conclude that biology does not condemn humanity to war, and that humanity can be freed from the bondage of biological pessimism and empowered with confidence to undertake the transformative tasks needed in this International Year of Peace and in the years to come. Although these tasks are mainly institutional and collective, they also rest upon the consciousness of individual participants for whom pessimism and optimism are crucial factors. Just as "wars begin in the minds of men," peace also begins in our minds. The same species

who invented war is capable of inventing peace. The responsibility lies with each of us.

Seville, May 16, 1986

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Correspondence concerning the Seville Statement on Violence or the UNESCO brochure should be addressed to David Adams, Psychology Department, Wesleyan University, Middletown, CT 06457.

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Kids & HANDGUNS

Every day, 10 American children ages 18 and under are killed in handgun suicides, homicides and accidents. Many more are wounded.

Gunshot wounds to children ages 16 and under have increased 300 percent in major urban areas since 1986. Additionally, one of every 25 admissions to American pediatric trauma centers is due to gunshot wounds. *(Barbara Barlow, MD, American Academy of Pediatrics, Committee on Trauma, Surgical Section)*

In 1987, one out of every 10 children who died before the age of 20 was killed with a gun. *(National Center for Health Statistics)*

An estimated 135,000 boys carried handguns to school daily in 1987, and another 270,000 carried handguns to school at least once, based on a survey of 11,000 students conducted jointly by four health organizations. Nearly 8.7 million youngsters have access to handguns. *(National School Safety Center)*

California schools reported a 40 percent increase in student gun-possession incidents between 1988 and 1990. The number of guns found in California schools doubled during 1986-1990. Florida reported a 42 percent increase in gun incidents in schools during 1987-88, and 86 percent of the guns that were traced came from the students' homes. *(California Department of Education, Florida School Boards Association & Florida Association of School Administrators)*

In 1987, more than half of the 2,498 murder victims ages 19 and under were killed with guns. *(U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reports, 1987)*

In 1987, gun accidents were the fourth-leading cause of accidental death for children ages 14 and under. *(National Safety Council)*

A study of 266 accidental shootings of children ages 16 and under revealed that 50 percent of accidents occurred in the victims' homes, and 38 percent occurred in the homes of friends or relatives. The handguns used were most often (45%) found in bedrooms. Boys were predominantly the victims (80%) and shooters (92%). *(Center to Prevent Handgun Violence)*

Easy access to loaded guns in the home is the chief contributing factor in accidental shootings of children ages 14 and under. *(Garen J. Wintemute, MD, MPH, University of California, Davis)*

The suicide rate of adolescents has tripled in the past three decades, making suicide the third-leading killer of teenagers. Guns are the leading method used by teenagers to commit suicide (60%), and nine out of ten attempted suicides involving handguns are completed. *(National Center for Health Statistics; Centers for Disease Control, Youth Suicide Surveillance, 1986; Omega Journal of Death and Dying)*

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Parents would certainly not allow their children to play at homes where illegal and dangerous drugs are easily available. They must establish the same rule when handguns are involved.

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