THE EFFECTS OF TELEVISION VIOLENCE ON CHILDREN: A SELECTED ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

EDITH M. FAIRMAN
Research Assistant
Science Policy Research Division

July 11, 1973
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. HEARINGS</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. U.S. Congress. Senate. Committee on Commerce. Subcommittee on Communications. Surgeon General’s Scientific Advisory Committee on Television and Social Behavior. 92d Congress, 1st session</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. U.S. Congress. Senate. Committee on Commerce. Subcommittee on Communications. Surgeon General’s Scientific Advisory Committee on Television and Social Behavior. 92d Congress, 2d session</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. BOOKS</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Arnold, Arnold. Violence and Your Child</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Feshbach, Seymour, and Robert D. Singer. Television and Aggression; An Experimental Field Study</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. ARTICLES</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Ambrosino, Lillian. Do Children Believe TV?</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Bogart, Leo. Warning: The Surgeon General Has Determined That TV Violence is Moderately Dangerous to Your Child’s Mental Health</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Comstock, George A. Television Violence: Where the Surgeon General’s Study Leads</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Edgar, Patricia and Donald E. Edgar. Television Violence and Socialization Theory</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. Liebert, Robert M., and Rita Poulos. TV For Kiddies: Truth, Goodness, Beauty—and a Little Bit of Brainwash. 10
6. Littner, Ner. A Psychiatrist Looks At Television and Violence; A Lecture at the Northwestern University Television Symposium. 10
7. Looney, Gerald. Television and the Child: What Can Be Done. 11
9. Shaffer, Helen B. Violence in the Media. 12
10. Steinfield, Jesse L. TV Violence Is Harmful. 12

ADDITIONAL REFERENCES, not annotated. 13
I. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this bibliography is to provide selected reading sources on the effects of televised violence on children for Congressional readers. During the 92d Congress, bills were introduced concerning this matter, but no action occurred on any of the bills. At the time of this writing, the following bills have been introduced in the 93rd Congress, 1st Session: S.J. Res. 34 by Senator William Scott (to the Senate Committee on Commerce), H.J. Res. 39 by Congressman John Murphy and H.J. Res. 175 by Congressman Melvin Price (to the House Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce) "to direct the Federal Communications Commission to conduct a comprehensive study and investigation of the effects of the display of violence in television programs," and H. Res. 43 by Congressman William Chappell Jr., (to the House Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce), "expressing the sense of the House that the Federal Communications Commission establish advisory guidelines which recommend that certain physical violence not be broadcast over television during certain time periods, because such violence is not suitable to be viewed by children."

Concern about the issue of whether there is a connection between the viewing of television violence and anti-social behavior of individuals, particularly children, has been evident since the 1950's. Rising violent crime rates and the political assassinations of the late 1960's stimulated fresh Congressional concern. In March, 1969, Senator Pastore expressed concern about the fact that no effort was apparently being made to resolve the issue of a possible connection between anti-social behavior and television violence. He expressed this concern in a letter to the then Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, Robert H. Finch. Dr. Jesse Steinfield, United States Surgeon General, then appointed an advisory committee to conduct a scientific investigation to establish what effects, if any, televised violence would have on children. The committee filed a report on January 19, 1972
entitled, "Television and Growing Up: The Impact of Televised Violence." The basic finding of the study was that a "modest relationship" between the viewing of television violence and aggressive tendencies in individuals does exist." (Television violence. Congressional quarterly weekly report, April 1, 1972: 30:745).

Various reactions and comments about the committee's report were usually critical in nature, including comments from several researchers who were involved in the study. Many felt the report favored the television industry and that the summary of the report seemed vague. Hearings were held, March 21-23, 1972, by the Senate Commerce Communications Subcommittee, to discuss the findings of the report.

The bibliography is divided into three parts: hearings, books, and articles. Fourteen additional selections are also included which are not annotated. The references appear in alphabetical order according to the author's last name or by the title of the articles.
II. HEARINGS


Jesse Steinfield, United States Surgeon General, presents a report on the progress of his advisory committee. Brief summaries of two progress reports from June to October, 1969 and of 23 research studies are included for the record. The petition filed by the Action for Children's Television before the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is also included. Statements are made by Dean Burch, chairman of the FCC, and Miles W. Kirkpatrick, chairman of the Federal Trade Commission conveying their interest in the issue.


Statements and testimony by Dr. Steinfield, some of the researchers who participated in the study, and other interested persons expressing their opinions of the Surgeon General's committee report on the effects of viewing televised violence on children, and its findings. Additional articles, statements, and letters, are also included by other researchers and persons interested in the issue.

This appendix is a portion of an ongoing study that was started by the Eisenhower Violence Commission and is now supported by a National Institute of Mental Health grant. This report involves measuring the amount of violence on prime time television on all networks in all types of shows, comedy, drama, cartoons, etc., with the use of a violence index.
III. BOOKS


   The author gives an overall view of different aspects of violence and how it affects the child. He discusses recent assassinations of prominent leaders in the United States, violent incidents throughout history, violence in nursery rhymes, crime, televised violence, the news media, as well as other factors. He draws a line between violence and aggression and also examines whether or not aggression is instinctive or learned.


   The author discusses how individuals in social settings react to different kinds of aggressive stimuli in their relationships with other people. Laboratory experiments were taken as well as observations in ordinary settings. The author devotes one chapter to media violence. An investigation was made over a large urban area in the United States in the fall of 1960, of television program content from five channels. It was found that there was a large amount of violence between four and nine o'clock in the evenings when children would probably be watching. Research was done to study the effects of fantasy violence on individuals. As a result, Berkowitz theorizes that persons who are aggressive will tend to enjoy the aggressive aspects of the media. Also, it is a possibility that children who view violent scenes on the screen will be incited to act aggressively. However, he concluded that only a small number of people will engage in anti-social behavior because of watching violent programs.

PN1992.6.F4

The authors conducted a field experiment on viewing televised violence, in Southern California and New York. 625 adolescent boys from upper-middle-class families and four "boys homes" were used. Aggressive and nonaggressive television viewing groups were set up in a study that lasted six weeks. It was found that the boys who watched nonaggressive programs were more aggressive in social relations than the boys viewing the aggressive programs. Results of the experiment in the "boys homes" showed that the youngsters who viewed the aggressive programs declined in aggression toward their peers while the opposite was true for the boys who watched the nonaggressive shows.


HQ784.T4835

This book is a discussion of a research study concerned with how television is used by children, the effects of television on children, and the relationship that television has on family life. The authors investigated ten communities over a period of three years, in Canada and the United States. They were particularly interested in the types of programs a child watches and considers his favorites, the amount of viewing time spent, and how often a child may watch adult programs. As a result of the investigation, they concluded that if a child's family environment is comfortable, including friends and outside activities when he is not
watching the television set, then it is not very likely that any terrible incidents will occur because of the child's television viewing habits.
IV. ARTICLES


Jack Lyle and Heidi Hoffman of Stanford University, observed the viewing habits of about 7,000 first, sixth, and tenth grade children in the Los Angeles public school system. They found that commercials caused more doubt about the authenticity of television in children even as young as six years old. However, it is more difficult for the younger child, five and under, to discriminate between fantasy and reality.


Mr. Bogart re-examines the report on Television and Social Behavior and discusses each of the five volumes of research. It is his opinion that the link between violence in the media and anti-social behavior in children had been implied before this study was conducted. Also, what the participating scientists found seemed to be consistent with previous observations. Although, the author indicates that none of the research studies would be "clear-cut proof that media violence has harmful effects," he suggests that the final word on the subject was stated by the Surgeon General during his testimony before the Senate subcommittee that "the data is sufficient to justify action."

The author discusses the Surgeon General's report and brings into question what can be done as a result of the study. He feels that a more complete and far-reaching examination should be made with concern for "the circumstances which increase the likelihood of aggressive behavior attributable to the viewing of televised violence, and the circumstances which mitigate any such effects." He expresses the opinion that attention should be drawn toward public policy and that action should be taken to determine how this knowledge can be applied and how it can be beneficial in helping television programs become more acceptable.


The authors are concerned with the idea that television has a socializing effect on children. Their research is based on a September, 1971 study that they conducted in the city of Darwin, Australia. They felt that Darwin would make an interesting laboratory for studying the effects of television on a city since it was being introduced to Darwin at that time. The authors pretested the city in July, 1971, targeting its "social conditions, parental values, children's attitudes, and people's attitudes towards violence." They measured "anti-social" acts, such as crime and delinquency, before the introduction of TV, and content analysis after its introduction. The authors offer the theory that a person would probably not be inclined to act violently after watching fantasy violence because "actual violence would be more realistic and anxiety producing." Furthermore, one who adjusts to the pressures of everyday life would be unlikely to act violently after viewing violence "because he would be able to cope realistically with real-life situations." A post-testing is planned for two years after this study.

The authors conducted experiments with both pre-school and elementary school age children to prove that children will imitate what they see on television. The first study was made with 18 pre-school age boys who were afraid of dogs. They were pretested with a large German shepherd which none of them would approach. They were next divided into two groups. One group viewed a film which showed an older boy playing with a dog while a younger, fearful boy looked on. The fearful child overcame his fright by copying the older boy, and the film ended with both boys playing with the dog. As a result, eight of the nine children who saw the film readily approached the German shepherd. However, the children in the other group, who did not see the film, retained their fear. Similar studies were made that led to the authors' conclusion that a continuous television viewing pattern will prove influential on children.


This article was written before the Surgeon General's study was made. However, the author presents ideas concerning the effects of television and movie violence on children which still may prove relevant. He suggests that the assassinations of the three prominent leaders in the United States started the criticisms of the violent content in television programs. He feels that showing violence on television can have both positive and negative effects. It is his theory that "televised violence is the most recent
'scapegoat' in an attempt to divert our attention from the basic causes of community violence."


In his report to the American Academy of Pediatrics, Dr. Looney discusses how television in the last decades has dominated the lives of children. He feels that medical doctors are not concerned with the effects that television viewing has on children and should become involved.


The author theorizes that children who have been frustrated before watching violence on television, will exhibit anti-social behavior after viewing. An experiment was conducted with forty children in second and third grades. From their observations, the authors concluded that "some sort of interaction apparently occurs when a frustrated child sees violence on television, which combines to produce even more aggressiveness than either frustration or (television) violence alone."

It was also found that children whose viewing habits are regulated, respond less aggressively, after watching televised violence, than those who watch very little

The author discusses the impact of violence in different aspects of the media and society. She summarizes the incidents leading to the Surgeon General's report and the hearings held by the Senate subcommittee concerning the report. Earlier interests and investigations into the effects of violence in the media on children is covered, specifically, hearings that were held in 1955 to study juvenile delinquency. The author concludes that "television might be able to move people to be 'more human.' With this kind of empathy, there may be no less violence in media entertainment, but less violence in society itself."


Dr. Steinfield expresses his opinion that, from recent research findings, a child's viewing of televised violence can cause him to become aggressive. He cites research that was done at the University of North Carolina Child Development Center, Pennsylvania State University, surveys taken at several schools across the nation, and a follow-up study of research done ten years ago. He feels that these and other studies demonstrate that "the relationship between televised violence and anti-social behavior is sufficiently proved to warrant immediate remedial action." At the conclusion of the article, he suggests different types of reforms that could be made to improve this situation.
ADDITIONAL REFERENCES


