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# The Convergence Theory: Causal Affects of Media Violence Communicated to Our Youth

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This research is a product of the graduate program in [Speech Communication](#) at Eastern Illinois University.

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The Convergence Theory: Causal Affects of Media Violence Communicated to

Our Youth

**BY**

Allan R. Alldredge

-1962-

**Thesis**

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

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Running Head: CONVERGENCE THEORY.

Convergence Theory: causal affects of media violence  
communicated to our youth

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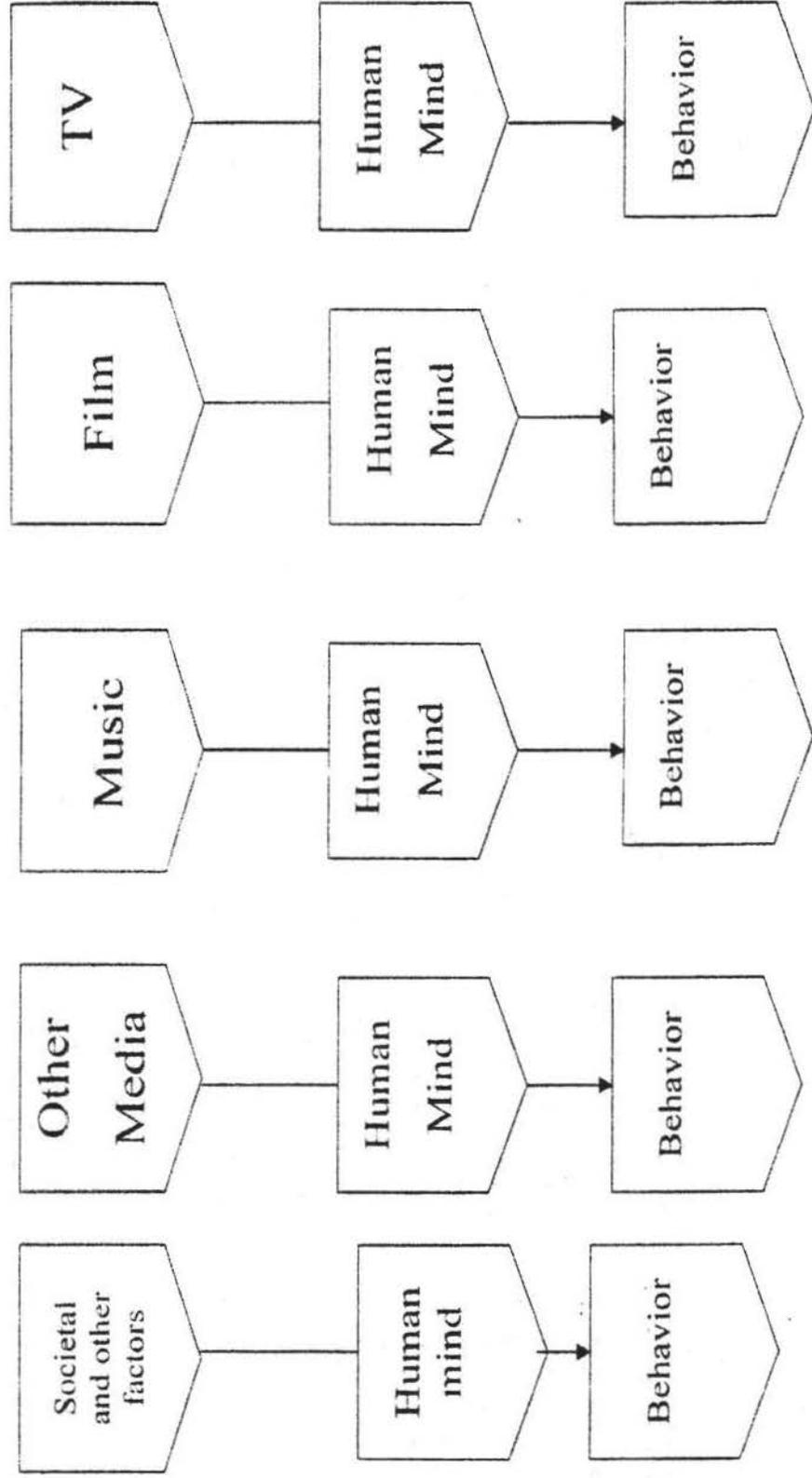
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## ABSTRACT

This paper observes present violent activities and how there appears to be a correlation communicated through media and societal influences that we, as natural observers, have noticed affecting our youths. Over 3000 studies have attempted to prove that television, music, film, Internet, even video games, and news is the single cause of violence. This paper does not confirm evidence that any of the mediums are responsible for the violence in our youth alone. Instead this paper expresses a theory that convergence of all the mentioned mediums along with other societal factors contribute to the violence. This paper explores the possibility that by convergence all forms of the media contribute to the violence in our society and especially our youth.

Convergence Theory: causal affects of media violence  
communicated to our youth

This thesis explores the possibility that all forms of media contribute to violence in our youth. Though not the only factor that has causal affects on violence in society, but does contribute proportionately to the phenomena. Over 3000 studies are reported to have been conducted addressing violence in the media. Each has tried to prove that either one form of media or the other is or is not the cause of the present violence perpetrated today in our youth and in society (Figure 1). An analysis of several of these reported studies indicate that violence is a problem in society and evidence suggests that media perpetuates it by presenting a glamorized presentation of violence. Television shows like "Jerry Springer" and "Maury Povich" present behaviors considered controversial by many. The host allows the participants to display aggression openly and many times physically on stage in front of the live audience and cameras. Rap and rock music stars sing about violence often and these songs make it to the top of the popular music charts. The news media follows a procedure commonly referred to as "if it bleeds it leads" when printing or reporting news events.



**Single Media Cause Theory**

Figure 1

I have reviewed much data related to communication of violence through the media. Some researched data asserts strong evidence that a particular media studied has a causal affect on violence in children. Much of this research was analyzed and converged together then compared to other statistics in society relating to our youths environments (Figure 2). It is supposed that a convergence of factors, not just one, in the youths' life trigger the violent behavior. The logic behind the media theory of convergence is that we are not created by one medium alone but by a number of mediums that manifest experiences in our lives. Therefore convergence theory can be utilized to study different factors that create phenomena in society. I will utilize the convergence theory to study violence communicated through the media.

### **Literature Review**

In order to observe the convergence of different mediums one must first explore the main areas of media. The most popular areas are music, television, film, and written media. Much research has been done on these mediums. Before long the Internet, in my opinion, will take the top slot as the new area of intense research. Kathryn C. Montgomery from the center for media education states, "Commercialization of the digital media is taking place so quickly that there has been

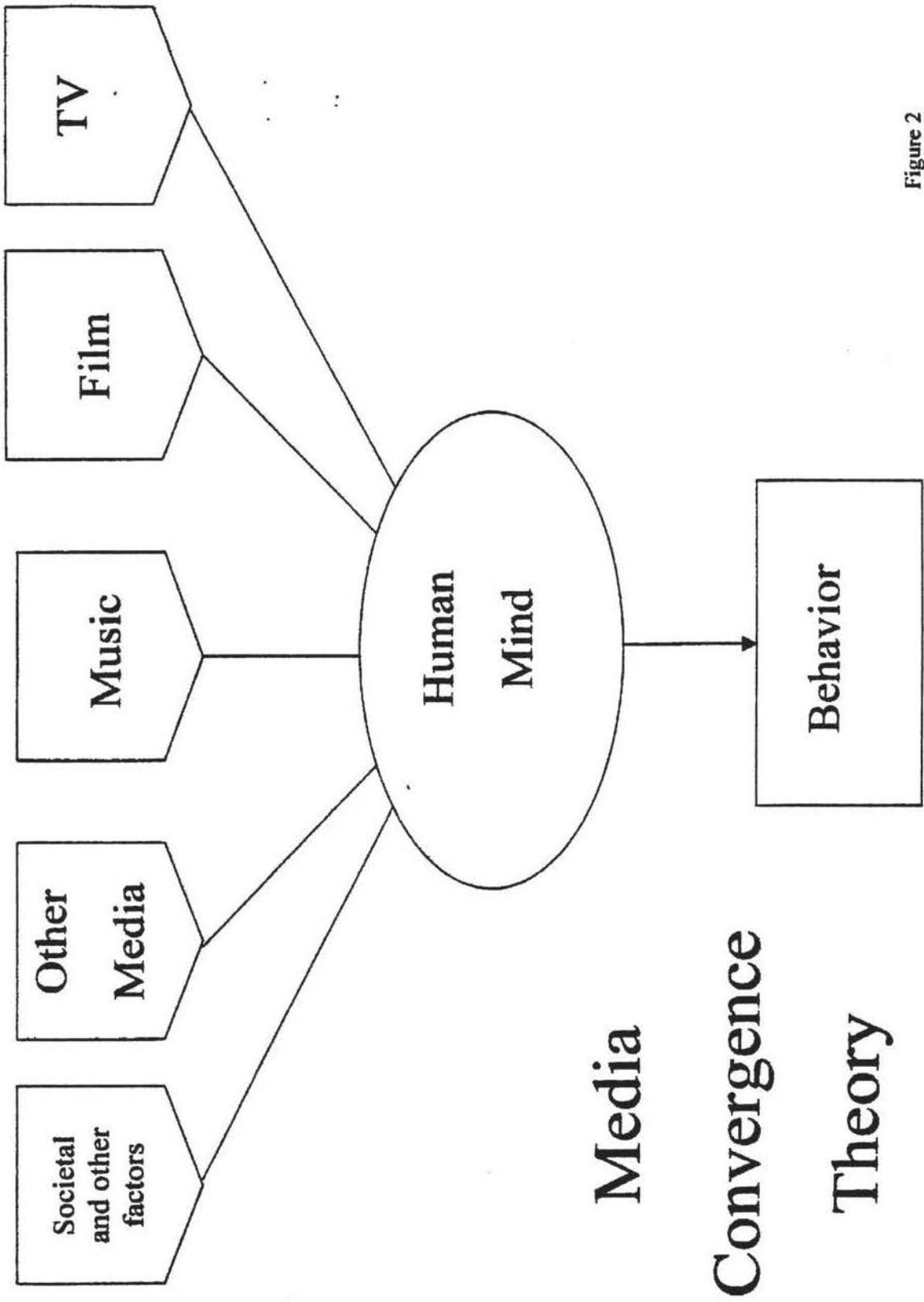


Figure 2

little opportunity for serious scholarly research on its impact" (cited in Singer and Singer, 2001). Therefore I will only make slight mention of this fascinating area of research.

### Music

Donald Roberts and Peter Christenson research of popular music derived a theory they labeled, "the primacy affect" from a study they conducted in 1998. This theory talked about gratification of young people through the utilization of music. Christenson and Roberts say, "When they (adolescents) want to be in a "certain" mood, when they feel lonely, when they seek distraction from their troubles, music tends to be the medium they choose" (pg. 398-399). Christenson and Roberts (1998) joined J. R. Brown (1976), R. Larson, R. Kubey, and J. Colletti (1989), J. Lyle and H. Hoffman (1972), and K. Roe (1985) in this assumption (cited in Singer & Singer, 2001). For almost thirty years, studies have shown that adolescents have utilized music to affect their moods. This warrants further exploration as to music's role in the convergence theory.

Our music seems to make a statement of some kind or another, sometimes a good statement and sometimes a bad one.

This portion of the thesis investigates whether there is, good or bad messages being communicated through music.

"All I kept thinking up are ways to die alone, and all I keep thinking up are ways to die alone, left hungry so feed me the pills, let me escape reality, then let the cycle start again...dreams are bad when all they do is leave the truth behind, when negative they seem a state of mind"

Untitled, by Silverchair, Godzilla Soundtrack, 1998 (Devlin, 1998).

I chose this excerpt of a song that was on the soundtrack of the movie smash hit *GODZILLA*, from Tristar Pictures 1998, directed by Roland Emmerich (Devlin, 1998). There were many songs on this soundtrack that had what many people, especially in the moral majority, viewed as negative connotations. The movie was a marvel of special effects and hailed for these accomplishments in reviews by Kevin Thomas, Los Angeles Times and Good Morning America's, Joel Siegel displayed on the video case from Tristar Pictures Inc. (1998). Of course, not all songs on the soundtrack were negative, but this particular soundtrack, because of its film popularity with the youth of today and the youth of yesterday, fits the bill (Godzilla first came to the silver screen in 1954).

The idea goes along with Frith (1981), he says that, "The power of Pop singers, is in other words, the power to

make ordinary language intense and vital; the words then resonate- they bring a touch of fantasy into our mundane use of them" (pg. 37-38). This is exactly what makes today's alternative and heavy metal rock as well as gangster rap music so popular and controversial. The test of a true singer songwriter is to find lyrics and music that can grab the audience and hold its attention. To do this, different artist sometimes resort to extreme shock value tactics to gain our attention. One can listen to EX-treme radio FM 93.5 out of Champaign and understand the premise of this research. Artist seem to use more traditional curse words in their songs, than before, such as "Damn", "F---", "Hell" and others that I am sure we have all heard at one time or another. In 1940, T.W. Adorno said, "pop fans are intoxicated by the fame of mass culture"; he also compared them to the people that chase film stars for their autographs assertively pursuing them until they sign something. The action was thought to be a way of belonging to the group of dedicated fans (cited in Frith, 1981).

When our youth become so infatuated with a personality or a certain kind of music that it affects their reality, we have a situation that is primed for almost anything. In the 1990's the popularity of gangster rap gained ground; then in the late 1990's an increase in gothic music was noted (Gunn,

1999). Along with the increase in gangster rap and gothic music one saw an increase in violence committed by our youth according to a 1996 report from the Center for Disease Control.

Parents and supporters of the music industry need to understand the nature of the beast. The artists are trying to make a living and will do what it takes to sell their records. Until the artists themselves take responsibility for the language and situations that are discussed in musical productions, there will always be controversy concerning these issues.

Today there are many artists considered to be alternative and dangerous to society by the moral majority (Brownback, 1997). Senator Lieberman asked that the music companies stop distributing music with offensive content in an effort to thwart violent behavior in our youth. In a letter to Senator Brownback, dated February 13, 1997, Mr. Raymond Kuntz blamed the music of shock rocker Marilyn Manson for the suicidal death of his son three months earlier.

In the fall of 1999 the Seattle Weekly featured an article on music violence. Columnist Richard A. Martin stated, "...The shootings at Littleton that touched off a media blitzkrieg that wound down to pointing less at the two teenagers that wielded the guns, than at the bands KMFDM and

Rammstein, whose lyrics were said to have inspired the teenagers' rage." The article goes further and describes the rapes and riot that took place at Woodstock '99' event. The article even claimed that unrest broke out at a Dave Mathews Band concert, a band known for its placid demeanor, in Connecticut by the end of the summer. The writer of the Seattle Weekly article would not say or could not prove that it was the music or if other factors were involved. The article also claims, "...Limp Bizkit, Eminem, Kid Rock, and countless hip hop acts play aggressive music that, it could be argued, glorify violence" (McCarthy, 1999).

The problem is the music and the artist, according to Senator Brownback (1997). At least two gangster rap artists have been gunned down. Several heavy metal artists have died from over indulgences. The same is true for several pop stars, which have died or committed suicide over the years, such as Kurt Cobain from "Nirvana".

As far back as 1928, there was violence associated with music. Delta-blues man, Son House went to prison for fatally shooting a man at a house party in Lyons Mississippi. In May of 1937, honky-tonk singer Rex Griffin, recorded "The Last Letter," a suicide note set to music. In 1952, Merle Haggard robbed and beat another teen and was returned to Preston

School of Industry, a high security detention facility for boys; he was 16 years old.

On April 3<sup>rd</sup> 1961, the self-proclaimed king of western swing music, Spade Cooley, stomped his wife to death as their daughter watched. Los Angeles motel manager Bertha Franklin killed Sam Cooke, on 11 December 1964, claiming she did it in self-defense after watching him rape another woman; the shooting was ruled a justifiable homicide. In 1978, punk rocker Sid Vicious, of the Sex Pistols, stabbed his girlfriend. In April of 1984, singer Marvin Gaye's father, during a domestic dispute killed his famous musician son.

In 1987 much media controversy forced Guns 'n' Roses to move artwork on the cover of the Appetite for Destruction album to the inside jacket because it was said to be depicting the aftermath of a rape. In the 1990's Tupac Shakur and the Notorious B.I. G. were shot and killed; speculations for these two yet unsolved murders are that they were gang-related. Puff Daddy was arrested for beating up Interscope Records' executive Steve Stoute in 1991, but later it was settled out of court (McCarthy, 1999, "Music Timeline").

These examples of violent behaviors by musical artists, and their counterparts, seem to lend credence to the old saying "power and fame breed corruption." Does the music cause the people to be violent or are violent people

attracted to the music business? Experiences watching some high energy and popular bands performing in local clubs can lend support to the convergence theory.

It is in the opinion of this researcher that it is a little of both; meaning that the music "pumped people up" and while in a heightened state of stimulation they would feel released from their inhibitory emotional restraints. Many times people were observed acting out aggressively and communicating to one another in loud assertive tones. This gave the appearance of trying to escalate the voice communication into a physical altercation. My observations after the participants had partaken in several hours of alcohol and loud music revealed that when high-energy music meets alcohol many things that are not usually witnessed in society become reality.

The Social Penetration theory coined by Altman and Taylor (1973) explains that relationships become more intimate over time when more information is disclosed. This also serves as an explanation for group behavior in a stimulating environment such as a nightclub. Music has been said to create social environments, and alcohol has been proven to reduce inhibitions. Some behaviors are bad from a social perspective. This I contend encompasses a convergence of chemicals and music, which in relation to each other spur violent behavior. Each medium has the potential to create

behaviors, chemicals alter physical and mental views and so does music. Which is the cause? A more holistic view is developed in accordance with the dialectical philosophy: we act and react, in accordance with that to which we have been exposed (Baxter, 1988, pg. 257-253).

A few years ago while researching articles concerning possible biological cases of violence for another paper, an experiment conducted by one high school student exposing rats to heavy metal music stuck in my mind. The results of the experiment, to my best recollection, indicated that after prolonged exposure to heavy metal music the rats were said to have become cannibalistic. From a communication standpoint, does this prove heavy metal music is the cause of the violent behavior exhibited in the experiment? Or was it survival driven much, like the overcrowding of a musical concert, some people react violently to the conditions and trample others in their quest for personal space or to get closer to the stage.

McCarthy ("Fire Starters", 1999) relates a story about Detroit, Michigan concerning violent behavior. In the story she brings it to our attention that riots have exploded out of celebrations as well as musical festivals. For instance, the World Series of 1984 and NBA Championship of 1989 earned Detroit the nickname "murder city". According to McCarthy

(1999) "Detroit seems to depict the burned out American dream, vacant, rusty and charred. When you have been written off—when people expect nothing from you—you can do whatever you want, and you have to amuse yourself somehow." A dismal view such as this may in fact be an underlying cause of violence.

It is thought that when an artist has made it big in the music business he or she is expected to sell records. If they cannot produce something of significance they vanish from the music industry. A well-documented speculation, relating to stress, is that this could and is a major cause of the corruption and self-destruction of the artists themselves. If we read Hit Parade magazine or local entertainment section of our newspapers, we will learn the good and the bad things about our favorite artists, but it is a seemingly safe notion that the bad things sell more albums, newspapers and magazines. Consumers of musical media appear to love the "bad boy/girl" image and view those depicting that image as, free spirits bucking the system. Is this a true testimony to violence in the industry, or is violence in society and manifests itself in the entertainment profession more often than in other professions? Do music fans expect it, or do the artists themselves feel as though it is communicated to them by the fans that they must "buck the system" to be popular?

Charles Berger developed a theory in the 1970's that does explain this artist/fan relationship. The theory explains that, in Uncertainty Reduction theory, one employs a process using communication to gather information about someone to increase the ability to explain and predict his or her behavior toward one in any given situation.

Brownback (1997) reports his assertion in several of his reports from the Senate Committee; his report all but says in plain language that it is the music business that perpetuates violence in our youth. Portions of society call them Musical Scapegoats; the blame must fall somewhere. We do tend to always look for someone to blame in our society. In almost every report reviewed for this thesis blame was cast upon something, and that something was attacked harshly.

Can we as ordinary people solve the nation's violence problems by censoring music and the artists that make them? Can we make Marilyn Manson stop wearing the uni-sexual body suit and censor his lyrics? Would the abrupt stop of record companies' distributing controversial music control the violence? The answers to these questions and many more will probably never be discovered. As to speculation that there are causal factors involved, one possible answer can be identified in a theory developed by Palmgreen a theorist in the study of communication.

Palmgreens theory, called Expectancy-Value theory (cited in Littlejohn, 1996, pg. 345), contends that humans will seek gratification according to their beliefs. We as consumers will keep buying what we believe to be good, whether it fits in the mainstream of musical tastes or not. The music industry makes money. The music industry and the rest of the entertainment industry provide an enormous amount of revenue to our economy as well as to the world's economy. After all is it not said that music is the universal language?

Music is viewed as an outlet for the anxieties of life. We often say that we prefer to listen to some soft music and relax after a hard day's work. When music soothes, it is considered to be great and properly utilized; when it incites riots or increases anxieties within groups of people, making them explode with activity, it is considered to be improperly used by many. Artists argue that their music is a direct reflection of what is in their environment and maintain violence would still escalate whether they sang about it or not. I believe many mainstream magazines that report about the music industry would agree with the artists' belief that music is a mere reflection of modern society, this also perpetuates the media theory of convergence.

## Television

Much literature has been generated concerning the effects of television and movies upon our youth. Television often times presents programs that discuss and explore the findings about themselves to the general viewing public. Many times these studies reveal the existence of converging factors that cause the violence as a side note.

Newton Minnow, famous for his 1960's speech calling television a "vast wasteland" says, "we as television viewers are more inclined to stay on a channel that promises or makes us believe that they are going to show something exciting, realistic and curious, if cutting someone's head off gets the ratings then that is what will be shown" (Moyer, 1995). If it lends our thoughts to believe that the television show could have some violence in it, we are many times more curious and hungry for the experience. This is not always the case but speaking in first person I know if I feel that something is going to be shocking or violent my curiosity is piqued. It is piqued more so in observance of what unsettling special effect the producer is going to try and get away with and how they will depict the scenes.

The American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP) report No 13, (updated April 1999), states that

American children watch an average of three to four hours of television daily.

The AACAP complains that unfortunately much of the television shows watched by the children are violent. The report also outlines ways that parents can try to control what is watched and protect their children from too much exposure to violence. A 1982 report by the National Institute of Mental Health report confirmed an earlier study conducted by the Surgeon General, and as a result a resolution was passed in February 1985. The resolution informed broadcasters and the general public of the potential dangers of viewing violence on television by children. Three effects were shown to exist: Children may become less sensitive to pain and suffering of others; children may be more fearful of the world around them; and children may be more likely to behave in aggressive or harmful ways toward others.

Researchers agree that a direct link between television and violence does not appear to be plausible, because we do not have the ability to study the processes that go on in the minds of children that have not yet reached the age of eight. The study conducted by Leonard Eron in 1960 was the first to study television affects on children's behavior. Eron used eight year olds because he believed that at this age they new the difference between reality and fantasy (Moyer, 1995).

A study sponsored by the National Broadcasting Company in the United States (Milavsky, Kessler, Stip, & Rubens, 1982) About 3200 elementary school children and teenagers participated in the research over a three-year period (from May 1970 thru December 1973). The participants reported on themselves and were given a checklist of available television programs on the networks that had been pre-classified for violent content. This allowed for researchers to obtain information about levels of exposure to viewed violence as well as information about their aggressive behavior. During the analysis phase researchers assessed links between aggressive behavior and claimed viewing of various types of programming. Only small statistical associations were found in any of the cases concerning links of television viewing and aggressive behavior. Gunter states in Chapter 7, The question of media violence (Bryant & Zillmann, 1994), "Further analysis showed that compared with the influence of family background, social environment, and school performance, the significance of television viewing as an indicator of aggressiveness was very weak. This lead authors to conclude that television viewing was not a factor in the development of aggressive behaviors among the children in their samples (pg. 176).

K.M. Henigan, M.L. Del Rosario, L. Heath, T.D. Cook, J.D. Wharton, B.J. Calder (1982) conducted a study that compared crime statistics from cities that did and did not have television because of the freeze concerning introduction of television from 1949 to 1952. This study found no effect of television on the instances of homicide, aggravated assault, burglary and auto theft. There was, however, an increase in larceny after cities received television services. The authors of the study speculated that this increase had something to do with the fact that, after television was introduced, information concerning how the more affluent people live triggered jealousy causing the rise in larceny: minor thefts. Whether or not the speculation is correct, no real evidence was discovered linking television viewing and increased aggression in this study.

David P. Philips, from the University of Southern California, from the 1970's and the 1980's conducted a series of studies about the acts of violence viewed or reported on by the television networks and its affect on the violent acts in real life. The result of this study was very interesting because a correlation was shown to exist concerning "copycat" violence. Philips analyzed eighteen televised heavyweight prizefights from 1973 to 1978. During the 10 days following the fight he reported the affect on homicide rates in the

United States. The number of homicides increased from the daily national average on day 3, 4, 6, and 9 after the televised fight. The major increase was shown to exist on day 3. Another analysis indicated that when the fight took place outside of the United States an increase was noted. If the loser of the fight was white, more young white men were victims of homicide on the day of and on day 2 and 6 after the fight. If the loser of the fight was black, more young black men were victims of homicide on day 4 and 5 after the fight. Also Philips claimed a 12% increase in teenage suicides nationwide within a short time after the Marilyn Monroe suicide was reported on television news. Replication of Philips suicide study has been unsuccessful (Moyer, 1995; Bryant, & Zillman, 1994).

A program shown on Public Broadcasting channel, narrated by Al Austin, titled "Frontline: Does TV Kill" (Moyer, 1995), states that most adolescents will have viewed 8000 murders on television by the time they are out of elementary school. During this program, results of a study, conducted by "Frontline" in Hudson, New York was reported upon as well as many of the before mentioned studies. The programs producers picked three families to set up cameras in their homes to watch them watch television and also record what was being watched on television. The study also presented outside

factors involving the family's television watching habits and reasons for watching television. One boys' parent preferred that he stay in the house and watch television, and she encouraged it, because the neighborhood that he lived in was bad and his mother would rather the boy stay in the house than to be exposed to the environment outside. This follows the "mean world syndrome" popular with communication scholars (Moyer, 1995).

In this frame of thought all things in the world seem meaner and more dangerous than they were in days gone past. During the panel discussion presented in "Frontline: Does TV Kill (Moyer, 1995), the author of the book Media Virus, by Douglas Rushkoff states, "You can't fight real world violence with fictional violence." Dr. Chin challenges television to be more responsible and be utilized more pro-socially to teach children. The Director of Media Literacy, Elizabeth Tonan, believes that what a child views on television must be controlled by the parents or guardian of a child, not the government. All of the panel members believed that the media was a contributing factor to violence in adolescents and society but not the cause.

The study conducted by "Frontline" also established evidence that viewing violence as a child does not guarantee a violent adult. This was addressed by utilizing two men from

the original Eron Study in 1960. It was discovered that neither of them became violent adults by age 42, even though they were in the high-risk category and had watched very much violence on television as children. The two men Paul Abeltopple and Mike Soco were not proven to have violent tendencies as adults. The studies conducted in Hudson New York are still considered to be valid in scholarly circles.

### Movies

Causal factors of violence contributed to movies are much like that in television. Not as many studies have been conducted on just movies compared to the studies on television but they are in many ways meshed together. Movies and film is meshed with television in that after a movie has made its rounds through the local theaters it is often times shown on television. With the onset of cable pay channels almost all movies can be viewed on television, if you can afford to pay for the channels. Only 33% of American homes have premium cable channels according to the 1999, Annenberg Public Policy Center survey. Even if economically one cannot afford cables premium paid channels, at the least the movie will eventually be available on video and the instrument utilized to view the video is a television. In 1999, (APCC) survey indicated movies are 5<sup>th</sup> on the list of media influence of most concern to parents surveyed (4.6%), Television is

number 1 (43.8%). Movies are less of a parental concern than the Internet (19.8%), music (14.1%) and video games (6%) (Singer & Singer, 2001).

The studies that have been done on movies parallel those done on television because they provoke similar responses in behavior (Bryant & Zillmann, 1994). This portion of thesis describes movies contributions to the media convergence theory in short detail attempting not to draw identical conclusions with television. There are some significant contributing factors of movies in that they are not as restricted in their presentation of violence. Because of the film rating system (G, PG, PG14, R, and XXX), restrictions upon our youths apply when viewing movies in the theater. However many debates stem from and around the release of a new movie for it is the testing ground for the convergence of social phenomena and entertainment extravagances. The news media reports weekend box office receipts as readily as the NASDAQ and DOW levels of stock trading.

How do movies contribute to violence in our youth? Children utilize movie theaters as a social gathering place in junior high and high school all over the nation. Movie theaters provide a neutral area to be with friends and be entertained by sight and sound. As in any social setting peer

pressure and societal phenomena abound causing a modification of behavior in each individual. Modifications that sometimes lead to violence. Having two teenage children of my own who like going to the movies, and going to the movies often as a teenager and now an adult myself I was able to witness violent acts and behaviors that appeared to be causal factors stemming from the movie. After watching a high action movie I would witness many in a state of excitement; after a drama it would appear to be in a social awareness state; after a violent emotionally charged movie it would often manifest itself as calm in adults but as a heightened state of aggression in teenagers and other adolescents. I would witness mimicking of fight scenes and the scary parts of the movie as their friends would later reminisce about the movie on their way home.

Is it the scenes in the movie or not?

#### Newspapers and magazines

In written media a link between violence and children is hard to establish. For one, reaction to newspaper articles are not observed in our youth as often because it is not a medium that they readily utilize. Young people that I have spoken to about newspaper articles state they very seldom read them unless they are looking at the cartoons, or trying to see what is on at the movies or television. Young people

associate newspapers with older people (personal communication, 14 year old male and 16 year old female, May 5, 2001).

Barry Sanders, a professor at Claremont College in Pasadena, CA, fears that all the television and movies are producing a certain kind of kid that thinks there has to be sound and better yet if accompanied by pictures to be of any significance. Sanders argues, that kids are being taught that if they do not like you they can switch you off. Sanders says that, "Reading helps aid children to use there imagination, which creates hope that is a defense against real violence. It also lets them meet themselves and narrate to themselves by utilizing their own conjured images Of themselves letting them recognize that they have done something one way and help them to decide a better way of doing something" (Moyer, 1995). This train of thought encompasses media convergence in that it utilizes other factors than those piped into the far reaches of our mind by forms of media, while not discounting the media's uses.

On a spring afternoon in 1994, a University of Wyoming freshman was shot in the head at point blank range and left to die. On the front page of the Laramie Daily Boomerang newspaper a photograph of one freshmen's body, as it lay in front of the dormitory, was ran. This paper has a circulation

of about 8000 subscribers. The managing editor ran the photograph on the premise that he could shock people into realizing the horror of this incident and that this was not a movie but was happening in real life. The community was outraged about the incident but more outraged at the newspaper for showing such a graphic picture on its front page (Barringer, 1998).

Increasingly magazines and daily newspapers are reporting more real life tragedy. It sells magazines and newspapers because humans are obsessed with the tragic. The Agenda Theory developed in the late 1970's by McCombs and Shaw asserts that the media decides what is popular and what should be reported to the general public; going along with the agenda theory that all media reporting is biased to some extent, especially when reporting upon violence.

### Internet

Children tend to like magazines about wrestling, music, television and movie stars. The Internet has replaced instructional books and magazines as a means of getting information about a subject. A study conducted by HomeNet in 1996 revealed that teenagers used the Internet often for entertainment and occasionally for education (Singer & Singer, 2001). It is so much easier for a kid to get on the Internet type in a subject and have data available from

thousands of books with just the click of the mouse. Utilizing multi-media the information is presented as entertainment instead of dry information. There are stories in the news all of the time talking about kids getting directions on how to make bombs, and incendiary devices from the Internet

Since the Internet is still evolving more rapidly than ever with the new technologies available studies have not been as forth coming on the Internet as studies on the television, which has been around for more than half a century. The Internet has been public for a little over a decade and already it has been placed in the number two spot (19.8%) media influence of most concern to parents from a 1999 APCC survey (Singer & Singer, 2001). The Internet should be an area of extensive research in the years to come.

In communication theory students are taught, "The intended message is perceived by the receiver of the message" (Dr. Norman Greer, personal communication, March 2001). It often seems that violence and gore is depicted on the Internet for the sake of depiction. While researching this topic I was directed to a web site called rotten.com at <http://www.rotten.com/>. On this site a picture of the famous actor Chris Farley after he had allegedly overdosed on drugs was posted. The picture showed full detail of his face, which

appeared black and blue in color with a huge bubble protruding from his mouth, suspected to be hardened vomit. The body was discolored, partially dressed, and bloated. What I found most interesting was that there were a series of about four pictures and each one had captions that seemed to me to be very cold and sometimes off-color. One particular picture made a of the victim's face had the caption, "so that you as the viewer can tell that it is in fact Chris Farley." Also on that site and on another site linked to "rotten.com" was a sight that depicted shootings, which appeared to be from "police file" photographs.

Another danger described by a journalist, Lauren Greenfield (personal communication, 1999) reported two teenage girls stated they went to "chat rooms" and had invited males that they communicated with and invited to their homes when their parents were gone. One of the girls reported that one time a man who was very much older than her showed up at her house one day. She had communicated with him in a chat room and given him her address.

(cited in Singer & Singer, 2001). This situation could have easily made the teenage girl a rape statistic. Is this the Internet's fault? This appears to be in parallel with the argument that "guns don't kill people, people kill people".

**Method**

This study poses the following research questions: Does the viewing of violence make children more violent? Is violence communicated through the media? Does the communication of violence through the media affect adolescents aggression levels? Is violence a result of convergent factors including the media? I have chosen to utilize a meta-analysis approach of previously completed surveys to interpret the data discovered during research of this subject over the past decades. I chose this approach in hopes of making a more rounded and holistic report utilizing many different demographic factors, and in the hopes that the information will show evidence to the fact that media violence is a causal factor in the violence perpetrated by our youth and not the sole cause of it. Data compiled from the most popularly utilized studies was analyzed and common themes were identified to distinguish factors involved in the cause of violent behavior in or young people.

Participants in the study were from diverse cultural backgrounds and geographical areas. Most of the participants were in the children and teenagers age group. However two studies utilized adults and children combined to assess statistics of criminal activity in towns that received television late during its availability. One study stretched

out over a period of four decades, but most confined themselves to a period of five or less years and in some cases only days or weeks.

The American Psychological Association's Task Force on Television and Society asserts that there is evidence to suggest that viewing violence does change the behavior in children. They have posted findings in a report by George Gerbner Ph.D. at the University of Pennsylvania. Since the late 1960's, Gerbner and his colleagues have conducted the most widely cited assessment of the amount of violence on American television. Gerbner cites that using his definition of violence there are 5.4 acts of violence on television per hour, consistently 4 to 6 acts of violence per hour during prime time programming (National Television Violence Study, 1997). Gerbner's studies have shown that many children's programs contain about 20 acts of violence per hour. One study conducted at Pennsylvania State University utilized one hundred preschool children. The researchers observed the children both before and after watching television cartoons. One group watched cartoons with aggressive and violent acts in them, while the other group watched cartoons with no violence in them and the researchers reported the results. A marked difference in behavior and the ability to get along with others was identified.

In 1960 Leonard Eron and L. Rowell Huesmann and a group of researchers went to Hudson, New York (Moyer, 1995) to study effects of television violence on childhood aggression (Levine, 1996; Bryant & Zillman, 1994). Eron et al. utilized 800 eight year-old children in all obtaining information about the aggressiveness and amount of television viewing. Then did a follow up interview ten years later of around half of the original subjects to measure their aggression levels. Boys showed a significant correlation between TV violence viewing at age 8 and aggressiveness 10 years later. Two large-scale longitudinal studies conducted in the United States, Finland, and Austria (Bryant et al., 1994), Australia, Israel, and Poland in the 1970's confirmed a relation between TV violence and aggression (Bryant et al., 1994; Levine, 1996). Another development of the study reported children that watched many hours of television in elementary school tended to show higher levels of aggression when they became teenagers. Both reports are still debated. Some flaws to the reports were that the children were not identified by demographics and that the actual aggressive behaviors noted were not specifically mentioned.

The American Academy of Pediatrics published results in a report that declared over 1000 studies confirm media violence can lead to aggressive behavior in children. The

report revealed that the average American child would view about 200,000 acts of violence on television by age 18. According to the Academies report 20 to 25 acts of violence are displayed per hour on Saturday morning television. The Pediatric Academy also asserts that these acts of television violence are especially damaging to young children under the age of eight because they may not understand the difference between real life and fantasy (Moyer, 1995; Levine, 1996; Clifford, Gunter & McAleer, 1995).

A conflicting report by Cutler (2001) contends that the reason so many media violence studies have been conducted is because the phenomena may be too complex to be studied conclusively. Cutler cites James Garbarino, author of Lost Boys: Why Our Sons Turn Violent and How Can We Save Them, when he states that it makes no sense to talk about violent media as a direct cause of youth violence. Garbarino writes, "That it depends, and media violence is a risk factor that, working in concert with others can exacerbate bad behavior." According to Cutler (2001) another report by the American Psychological Association's Commission on Violence and Youth (1994) mentions violent media as only one of many factors in juvenile violence, L. Berkowitz (1984) agrees (cited in Clifford et al., 1995). The aforementioned report stresses that poor parenting, early abuse or neglect, inborn

temperament, economic status, and bad role models put children at greater risk for violence (Nation 18-20 272, no. 12, March 26, 2001, pg. 18-20; Levine, 1996).

How bad is the violence within our youth environment? Utilizing statistics from various government agency reports will hopefully give some substance to the existence of violence and its communication to our youth and society. A report from the Center for Disease Controls (CDC) National Center for Injury Prevention and Control (NCIPC) was generated in direct response to the Presidents charge to come up with solutions to youth and school violence (April, 1999). The CDC, U.S. Department of Education, Department of Justice and the National School Safety Center worked collectively to provide possible solutions and procedures dealing with this issue. In an original report generated in 1996 from the four agencies mentioned above, statistical data was compiled concerning youth violence at school. The deaths and other criminal acts included in this study occurred in 25 states across the country and happened in both primary and secondary schools in communities of all sizes. The interview questions were seeking to obtain information about violent behaviors over the past 12 months.

About 2,023 interviews were completed with two representative samples of public, private and parochial

school pupils grades 7 through 12. The sample came from a list of 80,000 public, private and parochial schools in the United States. Samples were selected in two stages, first the schools were chosen based on average number of children in each class so that an equal weight was given to all schools. The second stage students were selected to depict an accurate demographic proportion of gender, grade representation, race, and parental marital status.

Demographics broken down further were 1,071 boys, 1,029 girls; 7-11<sup>th</sup> were in the three hundred range, and 12<sup>th</sup> was just below three hundred; 1,344 Caucasian, 294 African American, 273 Hispanic, 147 Other; Parents married 1,386, divorced 504, never married 126. All interviews were conducted between October 5 and November 16, 1995. These interviewed answered four questions - In the past twelve months have you?

1. Carried a weapon?
2. Started a physical fight?
3. Been in a physical fight?
4. Been in or seen a fight with a weapon?

The participants answered these questions and were placed in three categories (most, some and little) which depicted the amount of experience with violence; seven sub categories "aggressors" started and been in physical fights and carried

weapons (4.8%); "defenders" carried weapons but did not start fights even though they had been in a physical fight (4.2%); "combatants" did not carry weapons but had been in physical fights (10.2%); "carriers" only carried a weapon to protect themselves (3%); "fist fighters" had been in a physical fight but had not started a fight and did not carry a weapon (17.5%); "observers" have seen fights but had not been in one (11.8%); and "avoiders" never been involved with violence either by initiating or observing or ever having carried a weapon (National Television Violence Study 2, 1998). The percentages listed in the 1998 study are less than the 1997 study by as much as one half in some behaviors.

A report in 1997, generated by the same four agencies mentioned previously, entitled the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) on ninth through twelfth graders reported:

8.3% of high school students (HSS) carried a weapon (i.e. gun, knife, club) during the 30 days preceding the survey; 5.9% of HSS carried a gun during the 30 days preceding the survey; 8.5% of HSS carried a weapon on school property during the 30 days preceding the survey; 7.4% of HSS were injured or threatened with a weapon on school property during the 12 months preceding the survey; 4% of the HSS had missed one or more days preceding the survey because they had felt unsafe at school or when traveling to and from school.

The prevalence of weapon carrying on school property on one or more of the 30 days preceding the survey was 8.5% nationwide. Overall, male students (12.5%) were more likely than female students (3.7%) to have carried a weapon to school. Nationwide, the prevalence of students who had been threatened or injured with a weapon on school property one or more times during the 12 months preceding the survey was 7.4%. Overall male students (10.2%) versus female students (4%) were more likely to be threatened or injured on school property. Nationwide, 14.8% of the students had been in a physical fight on school property one or more times in the 12 months preceding the survey. Males (20%) were more likely than females (8.6%) to have been in a physical fight on school property. This significant difference was identified for white and Hispanic students and all grade subgroups. Approximately one third of students (32.9%) nationwide had property stolen or deliberately damaged on school property one or more times during the 12 months preceding the survey.

In 1994 the School Health Policies and Programs Study provided information that 91% of all the school districts have written policies prohibiting school violence. Of these, 80.3% have written policies specifically addressing weapon possession and use by students. The CDC continually monitors youth violence in various forms.

A group called; "Stop the Violence/Face the Music Society," added these statistics concerning street violence: While the 12-19 year old age group is only 14% of the population, they are victims in three of ten crimes and one of four thefts (Bureau of Justice Statistics, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice, 1991). Between 1986 & 1991 arrests for violent crimes involving youths 10-17 years of age increased by 48% (Kids Count Data Book, 1993). In 1991, 130,000 youth arrests were made for rape, robbery, homicide, or aggravated assault [42,000 more than in 1996] (Kids Count Data Book, 1993). Black males age 16-19 face enormous risk of death by murder (54.3 per 100,000 versus 12.6 Black females the same age). White males face an 8.7 per 100,000 risk and white females face a 3.4 per 100,000 risk for murder at 16-19 years old (Bureau of Statistics, 1991). Five percent of American teens have no productive role in society; they are not in school and do not have jobs, either inside or outside the home (Kids Count Data Book, 1993).

More general facts gleaned from the research that supports Gerbners' "mean world theory": Less than 1% of all homicides among school age children (5-19 yrs of age) occur in or around school grounds or on the way to and from school. About 65% of school-associated violent deaths were students; 11% were teachers or other staff members; 23% were community

members killed on school property. Research shows that 83% of school homicide or suicide victims were males. Also, 28% of the fatal injuries happened inside the school building; 36% occurred outdoors on school property; 35% occurred off campus. There were 173 incidents between July 1, 1994 and June 30, 1998. The majority of these incidents were homicides and involved the use of firearms.

The total number of multiple victim homicides has been increasing since 1995, though the number of incidents has decreased.

### **Results**

These surveys confirm that violence is a problem for our nations youth. Continued involvement by various organizations is still yielding information concerning violence involving our youth. The data analysis of the surveys and studies conducted for this paper do establish a link between the media and aggression. The hypothesis that violence is communicated through the media is supported. The hypothesis that communication of violence in the media causes violence is not supported. Violence communicated in the media is believed to be a factor linked to some violent acts not the cause; this supports a convergence of factors as the cause of violence in our youth. An interesting factor surfaced in the National Television Violence Study 2 (1998) of the 7-12<sup>th</sup>

graders surveyed they blamed drugs for causing the violence (pg. 347). More than half of the youths surveyed believed that it was OK to use violence to defend a friend when they are "dissed" (pg. 348). When the groups were asked if there was anything personally that they could do to help prevent crime in their neighborhood, two-thirds to three-fourths of each group said that they "did not know" or "no there was nothing that they could do" (pg. 351). The groups surveyed that had more experience with violence tended to be heavy viewers of television (National Television Violence Study One, 1997; and 1998). Overall, violence is communicated through the media and is sensationalized, causing a form of desensitization in those who view it. Though not directly linked to violence, communication of violent acts can serve as fodder for an already deranged mind, as seen in the cases of copycat crimes (Levine, 1996).

In an article by Mike Males ("Media Violence", 1993), he says social problems cause violence, and the media is only a small part of the picture. Males, a freelance writer, states that, "Despite claims that media violence is the best-researched social phenomenon in history, social sciences indexes show many times more studies of the effects of rape, violence, and poverty on the young" (pg. 130). Studies showed a 51% increase in youth poverty since 1973. Direct methods

used by social sciences utilizing criminal records produce consistent results about violence to children.

Males asserts that the studies report: 84% of prison inmates were abused as children; 60 to 90% of violent inmates were abused or neglected as children according to separate studies by Minnesota State Prison, Massachusetts Correctional Institute and Massachusetts Treatment Center for Sexually Dangerous Persons; National Institute of Justice indicates that some half-million criminally violent offenses are committed each year by offenders that have been abused as children; 2 million children are violently injured, sexually abused or neglected each year by adults who's average age is 32, according to Denver-based American Humane Association; A 1992 study reported that one million teenagers and children are raped each year; A California Department of Justice report in 1992 took 1,600 murders where the ages of the offenders was known and deduced that half of all teenage, six out of seven children, and 80% of adult murder victims were slain by an adult over the age of 20, not by "kids." (Males, 1993).

Considering the issue of race Males (1993) says that two thirds of all incarcerated youths are black, Latino, or Native American. This is up from 50% before 1985. Murder arrests of black youth are 12 times higher than white youth.

When Gender is tallied reports show low and stable rates of violence for female teenagers (180 murders in 1983, 171 murders in 1991). Murders by teenage boys skyrocketed (1,476 in 1983 to 3,435 in 1991).

### **Discussion**

In Support for the theory of media caused violence, there is extensive research by many organizations that report it is a factor. There are also conflicting reports that say the media is only a reflection of our society, therefore not a cause of violence, but only a contributing factor. The media convergence theory is supported by both positions. Media convergence theory states that all forms of media combined with social factors create violence. Agreement between communication research and social research also support this position.

Palmgreen addresses viewing of media and its effects on humans utilizing his Expectancy-Value theory, which declares that whatever we believe is good or provides gratification to us is what we will watch (Littlejohn, 1996). After reviewing research from the 1970's and 1980's, Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann believes that media has powerful effects, and contends that many researchers feel the same way as she does (Littlejohn, 1996). I would say that in some cases aggression is thought to be necessary to accomplish a desired task. For instance,

while viewing a television program, we may agree with the plot when it uses violence or aggression to provide closure or to reach a conclusion for the star. Like the responses of the teenagers in the National Television Violence Study 2 (1998) when some of the youth reported that violence was alright to use when protecting a friend who was being "dissed", or to retaliate for the wayward glances of another guy toward your girlfriend. We utilize violence to take back or protect what we consider important, justifying our actions.

An example that perpetuates this is reality-based crime television such as Americas Most Wanted and Cops, programs shown on the Fox Network and Crime TV. As we watch these shows we receive messages describing the world as a dangerous place but are assured by the media that the fearless men and women of law enforcement will tend to this problem. On America's Most Wanted, we watch as people actively assist law enforcement to capture fugitives from justice. We are invited and encouraged to call in and give any information that could possibly lead to the capture of these criminals. We watch future episodes hoping to see law enforcement crash into a house and throw the suspect down and take them into custody, maybe from the tip we gave investigators. We are praised for giving tips to assist law enforcement in the capture of these criminals on public television, sometimes the praise goes as

far as to mention a town or area of the country where the tips came from. In the movies we see violence rewarded, the hero after performing a violent act of vengeance gets the girl, or the job of his dreams (Fishman, 1999).

Other television news media programs, such as "Sixty Minutes" or "Nightline" convey situations that have resulted from violence and report on them in a most urgent manner. These programs use violence in a prosocial, developmental way, attempting to teach and inform the public (Moyer, 1995). This use does create an ethical dilemma for television, "who will decide for whom, what is prosocial or not" (Brown and Singhal, 1990, pg. 273). What affect do these reality based television programs have on society? They can be the drivers of printed news and magazine articles about violence. There exists a general consensus that the media feeds the violence epidemic.

Are we all Natural Born Killers? That is the title of a movie ridiculed by all factions of the moral majority and the media for its violent content. The 1994 film by Producer Oliver Stone depicts a man and a woman who go on a killing spree across the United States for the sheer thrill of it. People went out and watched the movie in droves and rented the movie as if it were a cult classic. The newest in horror movies is Hannibal. I have not viewed the movie since its

release. The movie makes claims to be another chapter of the life of the serial killer "Hannibal the Cannibal", supposedly based on a true person. There are only about 1% of murders perpetrated by serial killers according to the National Crime Statistics reports. There are mixed reviews but people to whom I have talked with and have viewed the film say it utilizes "gross out tactics", showing violence and gore to keep the audience's attention, or violence for the sake of violence. How do our young people process this onslaught of violent information?

Pornographic magazines flood the market competing to be number-one; it is a billion-dollar industry. These magazines depict bondage, torture, and degradation of women and men on a regular basis. Reports from the American Psychological Association link viewing pornography to violent crimes. The Christian Coalition also has produced reports linking pornography to increasing violence and crime.

Conflicting views of pornography by people in the business say that those involved participate freely and are in complete control as to how much or how little their involvement will be. The makers of pornographic materials cite protections for freedom of expression, speech, and the press, written in the United States Constitution, allows them to produce their materials. Does it matter that children and

otherwise "normal" adults are exposed to unsolicited pornography when in stores or surfing the Internet? Is there a link between pornography and the commission of sex crimes?

Several cases over the past decade involving sexual violence have alluded that the suspect committed the crime while in a heightened state of sexual arousal brought on by the viewing of pornographic material. I have witnessed this argument being used several times on "Court TV", "Justice Files", and other television programs dealing with sex offenders. I have also read many magazine and journal articles over the years that utilize that same argument. This argument is also recognized by the judicial system, because a standard condition stated in a sex offender's court ordered probation states they will not possess any pornographic materials of any kind.

Several reports from various government agencies were presented as evidence that violence and media are linked. Of the reports presented, a common theme appeared: violence in society seems to be on the rise, according to the media. There are numbers of surveys conducted concerning the topic of violence in society. Utilizing the statistics reported one might draw parallel to the rise of violence and the allowed depiction of violence in the media. In several documented cases evidence has been developed that offer "copy cat"

crimes as being committed after viewing the crime in the media. The study conducted by David Philips (e.g., Moyer, 1995; Bryant et al., 1994) presents evidence supporting "copy cat" criminal behavior.

At least two studies reflect behavioral differences in children that have viewed violence compared to behaviors in children that have not viewed violence. An increase of arrests for crimes as adults and increased aggressiveness as teenagers was also noted in the University of Illinois Study conducted in the late 1990's. Youths in the 12-19 year old age group constitute only 14% of the population but are the victims in three out of ten crimes and one of four thefts (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1991). Violence in the schools had increased and violence against teens had increased 48% between 1986 and 1991.

Many times we see conjecture and obvious attempts to lie to the public in tabloid newspapers. In the stories the tabloid newspapers and magazines often proclaim that the information came from a reliable source. In my experience, those in higher education, such as professors, teachers, or contracted instructors, do not recognize information from tabloids as credible. With good reason, as in the first place it cannot be corroborated with similar information much of the time. Non-corroboration is a common problem with tabloid

and sometimes-mainstream newspapers articles and more recently articles published on the Internet.

In terms of reliable information, we in higher education rely upon credible research from credible institutions including journals, professional papers and statistics gathering institutions. I feel the media should also hold themselves to this standard. Michael Smith a deputy picture editor for the New York Times states, "Some pictures just have outrage quality." Other editors in various positions state that pictures such as the ones mentioned are "more powerful", and "make the reader feel something" (Barringer, 1998). This is the goal of the media to make you feel something artificially, not at all like the real feeling of hunger or despair that kids below the poverty level experience. The world becomes a harsh place and to survive or vent your frustrations at your situation you sometimes lash out either verbally or physically. According to many critics of the media the social factor of poverty along with abuse and neglect of children is not addressed at all as a causal factor to violence.

Premium cable channels often show violent programs, and we as consumers pay for this entertainment readily. This solidifies the theory that we humans like gore and will pay to see it, but prefer our gore and personal tragedy at no

cost to us. "Rubbernecking" at the scene of a crime or accident is a very good example of human curiosity and bizarre obsession. What is it that we want to see? Whatever the reason it goes to prove our human obsession with tragedy and violence.

The World Wrestling Federation exhibitions, whether live or televised, demonstrate communicative evidence pertaining to inciting of riots, therefore, another link between media and violence. I can discuss this phenomena through personal experience, when the music starts playing and the crowd roars at the sight of a wrestler profiling, people get excited and adrenaline starts pumping; people can feel the intensity in the air and are ready to watch the fight. The music that is chosen to identify each wrestler, their personal theme song, stimulates thoughts about that particular wrestler. A relationship between the music and a character is deduced converging to make one entity that depicts power, money, fame, and strength. Do violent acts have a theme song? In movies and television we associate a certain audio cue that tells us something is going to happen.

As a police officer in the military, I handled many crimes committed in 1980's that were profit motivated, drug related, and self-serving. In the 1990's they seem to have become more personally vindictive, dominance directed and

viciously executed they amounted to more personal injuries to the victims. The crime of robbery was perpetrated in the 1980's by threats and coercion. The victim was not normally seriously harmed if he or she cooperated and gave the perpetrator what was wanted, this depicted a more respectful attitude for human life.

In the 1990's a trend of strong-arm robbery became popular and was almost always accompanied with excess violence to the victim. Upon questioning the perpetrators of these crimes during the course of the investigation they divulged that they would use excessive force because they could and many times got excited by it. Some would claim that they thought the person could hurt them, and therefore were going to hurt them first so they would not be able to get hurt by them. Many times they would use excessive violence to communicate a warning so the victims would not seek assistance from the authorities.

My observation is by no means conclusive but having worked in crime prevention for several years I have had the opportunity to review, submit, and in some cases create crime statistical data utilized by national organizations charged with compiling information of that type. Therefore, I contend that the theory that human life has been cheapened is also supportable by available statistics.

Violence is identified as happening only in higher species of animals. Does this provide evidence that intelligence is a signifier of potential violence in a species? Or does the higher animals, having the ability to reason, decide that violence is a way to accomplish personal goals? While watching the Discovery Channel I had the opportunity to view a program about chimpanzees sometime in the fall of 1999. The scientists studying the primates were ecstatic about the fact chimpanzee's hunted monkeys and ate them occasionally. The way these chimps killed the monkey was very brutal and masochistic. It appeared to me that they hunted the monkey for sport. They did not always eat the monkey; the species of monkey that they hunted lived in the area with them, did not compete with them for food or space, or pose any threat to the young chimps. Chimpanzee's in the wild do not watch television or listen to loud violent music. Evolution says that only the strongest will survive: is that a seed for violence?

Domination is stressed in all aspects of life, we say, "Don't let anyone get the best of you", "Stand tall and show them what you are made of", "If they start the fight you finish it"; I heard these clichés many times growing up. The media reinforces these ideas in films, music, advertisements, and news articles.

The prospect of a violent society seems to have been played to the maximum. We have nationwide groups forming to stop violence and politicians spouting statistical data to gain votes for their causes. Hate crimes are reported as rampant throughout the United States. Our youth listen to and wear the power expressive styles of gangsta rap and heavy metal music trying to express their individuality. Many young people believe that they are not respected but have done little in most cases to earn respect (National Television Violence Study 2, 1998). Somehow our society has went from a "earn as you go" humane view to a "give it to me now" materialistic view.

This area of behavior in our society should and is studied often. Communication of an idea to another is a very powerful act and, if done improperly, can and will cause negative affects. But if it is done properly, with responsibility, it can and is a powerful tool to affect positive social results. When we consider the convergence of mediums and societal factors in relationship to violence the scope becomes so large that we are overwhelmed. In the opinion of this author too much time is spent blaming the media for the violence. We need to approach the violence phenomenon as if it were a biological or medical problem, get

to the root of the problem by testing all factors that could be involved not just the obvious ones.

I am in agreement with Jennings Bryant, Dolf Zillmann, Mike Males, and Madeline Levine when they say that social factors contribute to the cause of violence as much and in some ways more than viewing or hearing messages of violence. After all 99% of us have a conscience and know the difference between good and bad.

We seem to have to be entertained or we become very disgruntled within our own lives. If we have no form of outlet for our anxieties and frustrations, as reported to be true by many professionals in the health and social fields, we self-destruct.

Through different forms of media we can identify causes and effects. Journalists report that violent crime is on the rise; the public hears, reads and observes this in the media and believes it. Information has been disseminated and passed on to future generations in the form of narratives, ethnographies, or statistical data and perpetuates the epidemic that may or may not have truly existed creating a reciprocal effect. This affect has been tuned and re-tuned to create a market for information i.e. media.

The National Crime Information Center (NCIC) statistics show that domestic abuse has increased and so has adult and

youth violence. Many police departments openly state that they are experiencing more violent crime incidents in their communities. Movies are displaying more and more violence in efforts to increase box office receipts. Television programs that show the aftermath of violence, police activities, sex deviation, public discourse concerning controversial topics are the most popular shows on television, "Jerry Springer", "60 Minutes", "Cops", "CSI: Crime Scene Investigations", "Homicide" are just a few. Newspapers and magazines delight in publishing pictures with "outrage quality" causing camps to form and making stress for the general public in local communities in the form of dissidence.

There are some positive aspects in this age of superior technology and expedition of information. We hear more about the crimes that are being committed than we did twenty years ago and can perform some kind of research studies more readily. We are more informed of incidents and therefore can and often do become educated as to what can happen and what we can do to avoid these unpleasant circumstances. Studies concentrating on specific crimes are possible since we have video equipment in squad cars and mounted on various structures, surveying areas where crimes are committed. Weapons developed by police agencies can more effectively deal with violent crime than in the past with less permanent

consequences. Chemicals and scientific techniques can ascertain information from crime scenes that was impossible to discover in years past. Law enforcement personnel are trained and educated better with the magnitude of information available to them. Science is playing a larger role in developing possible solutions to combat investigative problems so prevalent in years past. In a positive light, the flooding of violence presented to us in the media seems to have forced development of otherwise thought to be unnecessary tools for law enforcement and the private citizen.

Violence is not a new concept; violence has been recorded in history as far back as written records exist and beyond. Violence is an aspect of society that must be dealt with positively. Negativity breeds only negativity: therefore I submit for your review a recommendation that future studies delve into the sociological, psychological, and genetic aspects of the causes of violence, not the results. Most of the literature that I reviewed focused upon reporting the result of violence and not the cause of violence. However elusive that this virus may be, it is imperative that the causes be identified somehow. With the technology and information available today we should be able to identify some more specific causes that relate to violence.

**Conclusion**

After researching this topic I have many more questions than answers. We must press on to find solutions to this dilemma or possibly face a dismal future of even more barbaric acts performed on the whole of society. I am sure there are methods of brutality yet to be discovered in the belly of the beast of society and I am almost certain that they will be. What I hope is that we as a society can get control before it is too late. Someone once said that nothing is more disturbing than mans atrocities to man. A slogan used this century says it very well: "Stop the violence."

My contention was to provide communicators with a holistic theory encompassing all aspects of society. Therefore, utilizing convergence of factors that have causal effects upon the violence enacted upon us. Formulation of a convergence of factors as participants in an equation will be beneficial to further research on violence in that it does force researchers to view each factor as one part that adds up to a whole.

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