ABSTRACT

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VANN, KENDRA E.   B.A. MORRIS BROWN COLLEGE, 1993

ADOLESCENT POTENTIAL TO HARM AND PREVAILING ANTECEDENTS:
EXPOSURE TO MASS MEDIA, SUBSTANCE USE,
AND SELF-EVALUATION

Advisor: Dr. Sandra E. Taylor

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This study examined the potential to commit harm by youth aged 11-16 in relation to the mass media, substance use, and self-evaluation.

A questionnaire was designed to examine selected variables associated with youth who commit harm to others. The research sample consisted of 186 students who attended an elementary school and a middle school located in a southern metropolitan area.

Analysis of variance was used to analyze the data collected. The research indicated that two of the three hypotheses tested were statistically significant including substance use and self-evaluation. There was no statistically significant relationship for self-evaluation and mass media. Although there was not a statistically significant relationship regarding mass media, it can be

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concluded from the data that adolescents' behaviors are

somewhat affected by their daily viewing of television.

An important implication of this study is not just the

need for further research, but also the need for an enhanced

focus on practical solutions to reverse the observed

potential to harm others. Previous literature on

adolescents and their potential to harm others has explored

an array of factors; however, a decrease in youth violence

continues to be a most challenging goal for all involved in

juvenile rehabilitation and resocialization.

ADOLESCENT POTENTIAL TO HARM AND PREVAILING ANTECEDENTS:

EXPOSURE TO MASS MEDIA, SUBSTANCE USE, AND

SELF-EVALUATION

A THESIS

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KENDRA E. VANN

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

A review of literature suggests that there are
several components that contribute to the increase in youth
violence. Race, socioeconomic status, family influences,
gender, geographical location, substance use, and self-
evaluation are factors found to be related to youth
violence. Substantial progress has been made in identifying
the circumstances that contribute to youth violence;
however, youth violence continues to increase dramatically
in the U.S. compared to other countries.[1] Reasons for this
increase are socioeconomic status, low self-esteem, family
influences, and school environment. Most of these factors
are associated with the home, others are related to school.
The school environment has a responsibility to the students
to provide a healthy and safe atmosphere that promotes
learning. A common contention among researchers is that
there is a path that leads to youth violence which is not

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[1]Gloria E. Miller, "School Violence Miniseries: Impressions
and Implication," *School Psychology Review* 23, no 2 (1994): 258.

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spontaneous.[2] Youth violence primarily begins with family influences which establish the foundation for this behavior. A dysfunctional family can cause significant problems socially and emotionally in relation to interpersonal relationships. Many of the research studies that have been conducted strongly suggest specific prevention and intervention methods to reduce the mortifying statistics associated with youth violence.[3] Programs have been established to decrease the rate of delinquency by identifying children who appear to be at risk for youth violence. Programs such as parent-training provide parents with better skills to monitor their children and reduce problematic behavior. Specific communities are targeted that have prevalent delinquency and substance use in order to develop early intervention and prevention strategies.

Social scientists express strong concern about youth violence and recognize its severity to the community as well as to the individual. Youth violence was once viewed on a case by case basis, but now it is regarded as a public health concern in that it affects all parts of the American

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[2]Mark W. Fraser, "Aggressive Behavior in Childhood and Early Adolescence: An Ecological-Developmental Perspective on Youth Violence," *Social Work* 41 (July 1996): 348.

[3]David Hawkins, Jeffrey M. Jenson, Richard E. Catalano, and Denise M. Lishner, "Delinquency and Drug Abuse: Implications for Social Services," *Social Service Review* (June 1988): 270.

society.[4] It does not strictly occur in urban areas
anymore. With the increase of youth violence throughout all
racial and ethnic groups, public health departments have
established various methods of prevention. These prevention
methods are designed to curtail adolescents' behavior in
regards to violent surroundings.

Although, there are many reasons for the increase in
youth violence, this study focuses on exposure to the mass
media, substance use, and self-evaluation as selected
factors for this increase in its analysis.

Purpose and Rationale

This study will examine youth's potential to harm
others in relation to the mass media (television, cinema,
video games, and music), substance use, and self-evaluation.
For the purpose of this study, potential to harm is defined
as verbally or physically threatening or harming another.
Youth are defined as students between the ages of 11 and 16.
This study will examine the various controversies regarding
youth and their potential to harm others. One argument
concerning a relationship between the exposure to mass media
and youth violence focuses on exercising the First
Amendment, and the duty of society to protect its children.

[4]James A. Mercy, "Youth Violence As a Public Health Problem,"
Spectrum: The Journal of the State Government 66 (Summer 1993): 26.

For instance, it argues that adolescents role-play their observations from the media which may be detrimental and life threatening. There are also controversies concerning the role of illegal substance use and self-evaluation in the potential to harm others. It has not been determined whether substance use initiates harmful behavior or whether it is a facet of it. Nevertheless, substance use is illegal in and of itself. Self-evaluation is examined for its relationship as a factor in this disturbing problem.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

There are many factors associated with the potential of youth to harm others. These factors include socioeconomic status, gender, self-evaluation, exposure to mass media, geographical location, substance use, and family influences. These have not been found to consistently explain the commission of harmful acts by adolescents; however, in some instances they do appear to explain some aspects of how and why adolescents harm others. There is even some argument as to whether an actual increase in youth violence exists. Nonetheless, some researchers have shown that there is a distinct increase in youth violence, although there remains much debate over the factors of causation.[1]

Race, gender, geographical location, socioeconomic status, and family influences weigh differently in relation to youth's potential to harm others. Additionally, other influences such as the mass media, substance use, and self-

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[1]Karen L. Kinnear, *Violent Children: A Reference Handbook* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, Inc., 1995), 91; Michael D. Kelleher, *When Good Kids Kill* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 1998), 153.

evaluation have been tested for their impact on youth violence. Elliott et al. and Mifflin have explained a significant, yet controversial relationship between the exposure to mass media and harmful behavior.[2] Previous literature on youth violence and influences of the mass media, reasons for particular vicious and disturbing crimes are examined. For instance, Elliott et al. and Mifflin question whether being exposed to violent images causes youth to commit harm to others. Brook, Whiteman, and Finch support the argument that there is a significant correlation between substance use and delinquency.[3] The relationship between substance use and delinquency also has been examined, given the controversy regarding the precedence of the two factors. Mruk has expressed a concern about self-esteem, delinquency, and whether self-esteem can be used as a reason for committing harmful acts.[4] Self-esteem has been shown to have some significance in relation to committing harmful acts; studies are inconsistent on the amount of

[2]Delbert S. Elliott, Beatrix A. Hamburg and Kirk R. Williams, *Violence in American Schools: A New Perspective* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 81; Lawrie Mifflin, "Many Researchers Say Link Is Already Clear on Media and Youth Violence." *New York Times* (9 May 1999): 27.

[3]Judith S. Brook, Martin M. Whiteman, and Steven Finch, "Childhood Aggression, Adolescent Delinquency, and Drug Use: A Longitudinal Study," *The Journal of Genetic Psychology* 153 (1991): 370.

[4]Chris Mruk, *Self-Esteem: Research, Theory, and Practice* (New York: Springer Publishing Co., Inc. (1995): 80.

influence. It is important to consider all factors of youth violence in order to understand more completely the most critical determinants. Although substance use, exposure to mass media, and self-evaluation are examined for this thesis, there are other factors to be considered by further research.

Mass Media

Television

Viewing the television set appears to be the most exploited form of mass media. In viewing the television, all spectrums of media are available such as comics, news, and dramas. With advancing technology and graphics, images have been enhanced; unfortunately, the number of hours watched by adolescents has also increased. Technology has become valiant in that partial nudity and grotesque violence is now shown on local stations without regard to youths. At one time, nudity and grotesque images were not extensively shown for fear of cancellation. Many broadcasts have overcome this fear by using the First Amendment as a defense.

Television has become available in almost 100 percent of all homes across the nation. It has become a friend in many cases; with this friendship comes dedication

and intrigue.[5] The dedication and intrigue result from the enormous amount of time spent watching television. The American Psychological Association (APA) performed a study over four decades focusing on the effect of media violence. It was discovered that children between the ages of two and eleven watched an average of 28 hours per week while teenagers averaged 23 hours a week. Children from low-income families average more television watching than their middle-class peers. During childhood and adolescence, a child will observe an estimated 180,000 violent images. Children learn violent lessons of life from their first cartoons and superheroes long before they move on to high tech violence of adult action movies.[6] Using violence as a tool to cope with problems has become a norm throughout the world of television and our daily lives. Violence is seen on television as a means of resolving issues of the young and old. In the eyes of children, television is an advanced fantasy world.[7] It provides excitement and knowledge.

Bok (1998), Friedlander (1993), and Eron et al. (1972) contend that unlimited amounts of time spent watching

[5]Jane D. Zimmerman, "A Prosocial Media Strategy: 'Youth Against Violence: Choose to Defuse,'" American Journal of Orthopsychiarity 66 (July 1996): 354.

[6]Zimmerman, 355.

[7]Anne R. Somers, "Violence, Television and the Health of American Youth," New England Journal of Medicine 294 (April 1976): 813.

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television is unhealthy for children, but seem to differ when discussing the effects. Many researchers believe that watching television causes some harm to adolescents; however, Friedlander believes that the discussion about television violence and behavior has been exhausted, and there is a lot more to address than the actual relationship.

Bok expresses that there is a significant relationship between watching television and behavior. According to Bok, television watching desensitizes the viewer in that violence becomes tolerable and somewhat enjoyable. Also, through desensitizing, the adolescent's behavior may become aggressive. Through television, children view how conflicts are resolved and learn from those images. It has been taught through television watching that violence can resolve conflicts. In turn children role-play those images.

Bok agrees with the APA in its contention that higher levels of viewing violence on television are correlated with increased acceptance of aggressive attitudes and increased aggressive behavior. Children's exposure to violence in the mass media, particularly at young ages, can have harmful lifelong consequences. Aggressive habits

learned early in life are the foundation for later behavior.[8]

Friedlander (1993) somewhat supports Bok(1998) and Eron et al. (1972) regarding the relationship between viewing television violence and behavior. He feels that the discussion in reference to the two has become somewhat repetitive with little change. According to Friedlander, the continuous debates about behavior and television violence have been just that. The debates have not brought about progress nor change which is why he has chosen to focus on the outcome of viewed television violence.

Friedlander believes that the violence on television may be less immediate, less dangerous, and less terrifying than the violence on the street or in the family. To him, children are actually safer watching television mayhem than they are out on the street.[9] Friedlander appears to be more concerned about the recognition from peers and the media that adolescents receive after the commission of crimes and their immediate danger than children's absorption in hours of television violence.

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[8]Sisslea Bok, *Mayhem: Violence As Public Entertainment* (Reading: Addison Wesley Longman, Inc., 1998), 57.

[9]Bernard Z. Friedlander, "Community Violence, Children's Development, and Mass Media: In Pursuit of New Insights, New Goals and New Strategies," *Psychiatry* 56 (February 1993): 70.

Friedlander suggests that while television might be hazardous to the health of adolescents, physical violence is clearly more detrimental. What he fails to realize is that adolescents' unlimited and profuse exposure to television violence prepares them for real life violence. He has basically accepted the impact of television violence on behavior and his focus becomes the exposure to community violence.

Eron et al. support Bok and the APA in their contention that aggressive behavior can stem from watching television violence. Eron et al. conducted a study regarding the relationship between television violence and aggression. These researchers found that television violence has a significant impact on behavior especially during the formative years and shortly beyond. They also found that while television violence incites aggression, it also teaches viewers specific techniques of aggressive behavior.[10] These and other researchers, including the APA, also cite other factors for aggressive behavior such as socioeconomic status and ethnicity. Nevertheless, television violence may initiate and enhance the aggression.

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[10]Leonard D. Eron, L. Rowell Huesmann, Monroe M. Lefkowitz, and Leopold O. Walder, "Does Television Violence Cause Aggression?" *American Psychologist* 27 (April 1972): 253.

A large body of research of observational learning on preschool children confirms children can, and do learn aggressive behavior from what they see in a film or on a television screen. The vast majority of experimental studies have found that observed violence stimulates aggressive behavior rather than the opposite; however, there are other contributing factors to youth violence.[11] In the eyes of children, television puts everything into perspective. Children can be falsely misled into a world of controlled images and actions. They are not mature enough to decipher between real life and television with scenes and issues of real life. Hence, children fail to realize that every situation does not necessitate an act of violence as a resolution.

Pediatricians argue that the mass media can be hazardous to a child's health. They suggest that a child have limited access to the television in conjunction with monitoring.[12] Also, it is strongly suggested for children not to watch more than two hours of television daily. It has been advised by the American Academy of Pediatrics to have computers and televisions in rooms other than the children's so there could be monitoring over the amount of

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[11]Somers, 814.

[12]Lawrie Mifflin, "Pediatricians Suggest Limits on TV Viewing by Children," *New York Times* (4 August 1999):1.

television children watch. When discussing this issue with some parents, researchers found that both mothers and fathers were concerned about outside intervention into the family's routine schedule. These parents presumed it unnecessary for doctors to intervene unless a child already had social or emotional problems that might be related to media exposure.[13] Parents tend not to show sufficient support for the suggestions made by pediatricians in reference to media exposure by children. Television is not seen as a problem by parents until it becomes detrimental to others. With this mindset in rearing a child, it appears that part of the problem stems from the parents. While the American Academy of Pediatrics may appear to be venturing in "sociological territory" with little direct connection to medical health issues, the study's authors state that the influence of mass media is a public health concern.[14] The influence of mass media is a public health concern in that the exposure has immediate effects on our actions towards others. Viewing the television may primarily cause adverse effects to others. Bok agrees with these pediatricians in that sitting too long in front of a screen can prove both physically and psychologically debilitating, no matter how

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[13]Ibid.

[14]Ibid.

innocuous or even beneficial the programs may be. Children are becoming physically unfit and overweight from many hours a day spent in front of the television.[15] Besides adolescents becoming physically unfit, they are also becoming emotionally unhealthy by imitating behaviors exhibited on the television. Adolescents are using television programs as a guideline for dealing with situations.

Research has shown that children can be traumatized given that they cannot fully distinguish between violence witnessed in "real life" and on the television screen. Therefore, it is important to consider the risk that children will be traumatized by what they witness on their home screens.[16] It repeatedly appears that the situation involving violent images in relation to behavior is not being taken seriously.

It has been found that most of the violence viewed on television is between 8-11 p.m.[17] In 1972, it was suggested by the Federal Commissions Committee (FCC) to provide specific hours for children and adult programs. Three networks agreed to the decision but reneged in two

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[15]Bok, 53.

[16]Ibid., 65.

[17]Somers, 812.

months in response to the decrease in Neilsen ratings. Several network unions filed a lawsuit against the FCC for violation of the First Amendment.

In light of the defeat of the FCC, organizations have been formed to regulate questionable or inappropriate material. Some of these include the National Institute on Media and the Family, the Center for Media and Public Affairs, and the National Alliance for Nonviolent Programming.

There is sharp conflict between the Federal Commissions Committee, parents who side with the American Academy of Pediatrics, parents who disagree, and the entertainment industry. The entertainment industry stands firm in reference to their lack of influence on aggressive behavior. To date, evidence linking entertainment directly to violent death and assault is anecdotal and circumstantial.[18] The linkage to the media, violent death and assault is considered anecdotal because the exposure to media cannot be measured as can be illegal substances. Media exposure and the behavior outcome can only be observed over a period of time requiring rigorous methods as opposed to a more instantaneous design.

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[18]Stewart Powell, Ronald A. Taylor, Kenneth T. Walsh, Steve L. Hawkins, Dan Collins, and Micheline Maynard, "What Entertainers Do to Our Kids," *U.S. News and World Report* (28 October 1985): 46.

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Nevertheless, a proposed deterrent has been introduced to decrease viewing of violent images known as the V-chip. The V-chip is a rating system device that can be installed on televisions to assist parents in monitoring children's television content.[19] The violent images abhorred by some seem to be at the core of this invention. There is a continuous debate focusing on violent images and the behavior of children. The entertainment industry has repeatedly argued that television has no bearing on children's behavior and has aggressively defended its position.

The Federal Communications Commission and Congress have agreed to require the automatic installation of the V-chip on 13-inch or larger television sets purchased in January 2000, and thereafter. Disturbingly, the V-chip has low consumer value. Consumers are not presently buying V-chips to restrict specific programs from their children's reach, according to retailers, industry experts and consumers. Consequently, the federal mandate is viewed as having low consumer value. The federal mandate is also viewed by many manufacturers, broadcasters, and parents as unwanted government interference.[20] Many parents and

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[19]Catherine Greenman, "The V-chip Arrives with a Thud," *New York Times* (4 November 1999): D7.

[20]Ibid.

manufacturers believe that if the government becomes involved in our daily activities, such interference could well become an intricate part of our households. Accordingly, this unwarranted interference will not hinder the government from using another form of censorship as it relates to the First Amendment.

Television is a significant facet of mass media that appears to be taken lightly by parents and the entertainment industry. Pediatricians, social scientists, Federal Commissions Committee, and Congress strongly believe that aggressive behavior is incorporated more so through television viewing than any other medium.

Music

Music targets youth as consumers by recording songs that relate to their issues of love, survival, retaliation, profanity, and anger. Music is used as a form of expression, especially for adolescents. Wass (1991) and Gardstrom (1999) show a similar yet different outcome when relating aggressive behavior to music listening. Wass et al. contend that rock music harbors harsh lyrics relating to homicide, suicide, and satanic practices.[21] They performed a study of youth offenders and their favorite music and

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[21]Hannelore Wass, M. David Miller, and Carol Anne Redditt, "Adolescents and Destructive Themes in Rock Music: A Follow-up," *Omega* 23 (1991): 199.

found that over half of the offenders listened to rock music which produced destructive behavior.

Gardstrom contends from her study of music exposure and criminal behavior that music does not necessarily influence behavior but imitates it.[22] Her study focused on the most criticized genres -- heavy metal and rap. For three decades, both heavy metal and rap have been severely criticized, and thought to arouse unhealthy or destructive feelings and contribute to maladaptive behavior.[23]

Some parents and legislators have rallied with the United States Congress contending that heavy metal and rap music influence aggressive behavior. The aggressive behavior stems from the disturbing lyrics harbored in the music. Steussy and Dyson argue within Gardsrom's literature that lyrics of much popular heavy metal and rap music revolve around topics such as extreme rebellion, substance abuse, sexual promiscuity, perversion, Satanism, and violence against women and whites.[24] It is believed that music having disturbing themes further influences troubling behavior. Gardstrom discusses how Arnett supports Congress

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[22]Susan C. Gardstrom, "Music Exposure and Criminal Behavior: Perceptions of Juvenile Offenders," *Journal of Music Therapy* 36 (1999): 210.

[23]Ibid., 208.

[24]Ibid.

by expressing that youth involved with heavy metal music
have a greater tendency than those not involved to engage in
life-risking or reckless behavior such as drunk driving and
assault.[25] She argues the lyrics of heavy metal and rap
music have a significant influence. Gardstrom concludes
from her study that art imitates life and not vice versa.[26]
The youth offenders who participated in the study did not
think that music had an impact on their past behavior.
Overall, the youth offenders felt they were responsible for
their previous disturbing behaviors without any influence
from rap music (which appeared to be enjoyed by most of the
respondents).

Roberts et al. contend that adolescents who have
negative emotions and listen to rock/metal music are at risk
for partaking in high-risk behavior, including cheating,
stealing, smoking, sexual intercourse, fighting and using
weapons, animal abuse, alcohol use, and drug use.[27] He also
notes that in previous studies of music and high-risk
behavior there is a significant relationship. Moreover,
music itself has been found to directly influence mood and

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[25]Ibid.

[26]Ibid., 210.

[27]Kendall R. Roberts, Joel Dimsdale, Patricia East, and
Lawrence Friedman, "Adolescent Emotional Response to Music and Its
Relationship to Risk-taking Behaviors," *Journal of Adolescent Health* 23
(1998): 49,51.

affect.[28]   Roberts et al. also contend that adolescents desire music with certain moods, and they tend to engage in high-risk behavior when emotionally disturbed.   He supports Arnett and Congress in that certain music may cause a change in behavior.   They take the discussion a step further by discussing emotions of individuals which are influenced by music.   From their study of adolescent behavior, the authors found that strong negative emotions were correlated with greater health-risk behavior. Any strong emotional reaction to music (whether positive or negative) was associated with increased risk behavior.[29]

Music provides relaxation and understanding for adolescents, but may also cause disturbing behavior.   This disturbing behavior may cause harm to self or to others. Music appears to have some influence in relation to behavior; however, this relationship is extremely controversial.

Cinema and Video Games

Cinemas have been present in societies just as long as the television; video games on the other hand are novel. Movies have grown and advanced graphically in their content just as video games have advanced technologically.   Both

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[28]Ibid., 50.

[29]Ibid., 52.

cinemas and video games are involved in the controversy as to their influence on adolescent behavior.

Lande discusses video violence and the vulnerable viewer as opposed to aggression and movie violence. The constant debate involving aggression and mass media violence usually focuses on television and movies. Lande contends another approach is needed to accurately assess the impact of movie video violence. He suggests an alternate focus of research which attempts to characterize a small group of vulnerable viewers.[30]

Another concern of Lande's is the legal aspect of making the entertainment industry responsible. According to him, no court has granted monetary damages for harm alleged to have resulted from a video program.[31] Since the responsibility has not been placed at the door of the entertainment industry, there still appears to be some hesitancy in supporting the debate of aggression and movie violence. It appears that if there were mounds of support, the entertainment industry as a result would be held accountable and the violent images would be lessened.

Lande also notes that negligence of the entertainment industry is constantly perpetuated. Several

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[30]Raymond G. Lande, "The Video Violence Debate," *Hospital and Community Psychiary* 44 (April 1993): 347.

[31]Ibid., 349.

court cases have argued the relationship between movie
violence and aggression; causation has been virtually
impossible to demonstrate, however.

Lande suggests an assessment of the viewer instead
of the movie violence. He argues there could be other
possibilities for the aggression other than movie violence.
The viewer may have an incapacity to determine that movie
violence is imaginary instead of real life, and may depict
these imaginative images. He continues by suggesting that
mental impairment, substance use, and family background need
to be extensively researched to identify similarities among
viewers who behave aggressively.[32]

Anderson supports previous research including that
of Lande in relation to aggressive behavior and viewing
violent content. He conducted a study of undergraduate
students and their reaction to violent and nonviolent movies
and found that there was a significant change in behavior.
In all the respondents, Anderson found that the violent
movies produced aggressive thoughts. He also found that the
respondents who were diagnosed as being aggressive had no
change in aggressive thoughts after viewing a violent movie.
It can be generalized that if his respondents were
adolescents, the results would be similar.

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[32]Ibid., 350.

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Viewing violent content repeatedly has been proven to cause some change in behavior regardless of age according to the American Psychological Association.[33] Focus should be placed on the individual as well as society to control the exposure of violent content. Anderson also discusses other reasons for aggressiveness in society as a whole. He states that individuals may experience repeated aggression which intensifies their behavior. When many individuals interact with similar experiences, it causes the society/community to disintegrate. And with this disintegration, crime is likely to increase. He strongly suggests research into the societal level as being extremely important.[34]

Dill and Dill discuss many issues surrounding video game violence and aggression. Video games have similar effects on adolescent behavior as do television and cinema; however, video games allow the player to become engrossed and identify with the aggressor in the game.[35] Buchman and Funk warn that video games teach, through a powerful combination of modeling, practice, and reinforcement, that

[33]Bok, 57.

[34]Craig A. Anderson, "Effects of Violent Movies and Trait Hostility on Hostile Feelings and Aggressive Thoughts," *Aggressive Behavior* 23 (1997): 176.

[35]Marilynn Larkin, "Violent Video Games Increase Aggression," *The Lancet* 355 (April 29, 2000): 1525.

violence is fun, necessary, and basically lacks negative consequences.[36] The relationship between video games, television, cinema, and aggression is extremely similar in that the viewer is enticed to understand the unrealistic world of imagination. Players become so involved in the game that they begin to think and act as the game. The object of many video games is to win by any means. In destroying one's opponent, the desire has to be present. Aggression becomes a resolution, and a satisfactory one.

Dill and Dill discuss another concern surrounding video games which tends to reduce the empathy of victims. Empathy is normally lower among aggressors.[37] Aggressors lack concern for reason and their emotions have been desensitized. The repeated witnessing of violent behavior desensitizes the observer according to Bok.[38] The viewer becomes numb to situations, and sympathy for others is lessened. Dill and Dill support Goode in that video games (mass media) teach adolescents that aggression resolves conflicts.[39] In the mass media, the common way to resolve conflicts is through elimination.

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[36]Karen E. Dill and Jody C. Dill, "Video Game Violence: A Review of the Empirical Literature," *Aggressive and Violent Behavior* 3 (1998): 425.

[37]Ibid., 410.

[38]Bok, 70.

[39]Dill and Dill, 410.

Dorman discusses several studies concerning the inconsistencies of the relationship between behavior and video games. He contends that adolescents understand that video games are fantasy, and playing them whets their appetite. Dorman believes adolescents experience a lower level of aggression from playing video games.[40] He concludes with the argument that video games influence behavior just as do the television and other forms of mass media.

Griffiths supports Dill and Dill (1998) and Dorman (1997) on video games enhancing aggressive behavior; however, the aggressive behavior appears to be short-term.[41] Griffiths' research experiments were conducted on a child's free play. He found that the child's behavior became aggressive after playing video games.

In regard to aggressive behavior, movies, video games, and the massive number of school shootings, the U.S. President held a summit for chief executive officers of media conglomerates so an agreement could be made involving the present contents of their products. Some of the chief executive officers in turn extended the invitation to their

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[40]Steve Dorman, "Video and Computer Games: Effect on Children and Implication for Health Education," *Journal of School Health* 67 (April 1997: 134.

[41]Mark Griffiths, "Violent Video Games and Aggression: A Review of the Literature," *Aggression and Violent Behavior* 4 (1999): 209.

staff; however, they were not willing to compromise even to
the extent of attending the summit.

This avoidance clearly showed their resistance to
the question. With the chief executive officers not
present, it became blatant that they were not willing to
compromise their industry and monetary accomplishments to
reduce aggressive behavior.

There appears to be a constant mentioning of the
First Amendment, and the President's recommendations as
being unconstitutional. Consequently, cinemas have been
strictly enforcing valid identification for attendance to
PG-13 and R-rated movies.

Our society has images where violence is ubiquitous.
Children receive messages through movies and music that
acting violently is acceptable and/or is preferred when
dealing with a situation that offends or challenges.[42]
Violence appears to be the initial action by some youth when
being confronted or challenged. Instead of attempting to
resolve situations by talking and understanding, violence
becomes the resolution.

Other underlying factors have been examined
involving recent school shootings. It has been found that
some of the shooters had an interest in Gothic culture,

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[42]Erica Goode, "When Violent Fantasy Emerges As Reality," *New York Times* (25 April 1999): 30.

video games such as Doom, and violent movies.[43] With this
discovery of similarities amongst the previous perpetrators,
focus has been shifted from the shooters to their daily
activities. Some believe that their daily activities and
interests had some influence on their actions.

Some U.S. Senators are deeply disturbed with youth
violence and mass media. These Senators and the National
Institute on Media and the Family have established a grading
system for video games. The U.S. Senators and the National
Institute on Media and the Family receive support and
discouragement. There are different views and controversial
issues in terms of the video game industry, grading system,
and accessibility.

The video game industry contends that their product
does little harm if any to children and argue that there is
not any research that states that it does.[44] It has been
argued that the video game industry does not see any
relationship between their animation and behavior largely
because they are harboring a $6 billion product which is
consistently profiting. Video game supporters say that
parents should instead pay better attention.[45]

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[43]Ibid.

[44]Carey Goldberg, "Children and Violent Video Games: A
Warning," *New York Times* (15 December 1998): 16.

[45]Ibid.

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In light of the controversy, Microsoft has developed a "game blocker" to be installed on Windows applications to restrict certain games. The feature begins with decreasing images of violence which may lead to aggressiveness. Microsoft has established this feature so that parents can monitor nudity, violent contents, and offensive language on computer games.[46] Microsoft appears to be taking a stand in relation to aggressive behavior and exposure to mass media products. They are indirectly suggesting that media products have some influence on behavior.

Several suggestions and positive solutions have been discussed to reduce harmful behavior; they all involve the First Amendment. In reference to regulations, more research is needed to determine specifically when, if ever, media violence produces not just compassion fatigue but callousness in real life situations.[47] The repeated exposure to media violence can desensitize the viewer to the point of the disturbing images becoming enjoyable. Through this repetitiveness, the viewer's empathy and sympathy become lessened.

[46]Sharon King, "Game Blocker to Be Installed on Windows," *New York Times* (25 June 1999): 1.

[47]Bok, 69.

Substance Use

Substance use is another concern that is linked to harming others. It has been associated with violent behavior for many decades; however, research has rarely documented statistically significant causal linkages.[48] Other variables tend to be present in studies investigating illegal substances and disturbing behavior including lack of parental guidance and bullying.

Children use illegal substances for a number of reasons, such as alleviating problems, mimicking a family member, and/or peer pressure. Children may witness their family members using substances as a tool for relaxing, escape after a challenging day at work, or relieving a stressful situation. Gullotta, Adams, and Montemayor express that family drug use may influence adolescent substance abuse; consequently, drug use by family members significantly increases the use by adolescents.[49] In actuality, adolescents take on the behavior of their role models. When children observe substance use as a means of alleviating problems, their probability of substance use is

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[48]Elaine M. Johnson and Myron Belfer, "Substance Abuse and Violence: Cause and Consequence," *Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved* 6 (1995): 113.

[49]Thomas P. Gullotta, R. Adams, and Raymond Montemayor, eds., *Delinquent Violent Youth: Theory and Interventions* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc., 1998), 101.

increased which may lead to delinquent acts. Children of alcohol abusers are at an increased risk for delinquent behavior, learning disorders, hyperactivity, psychosomatic complaints, and problem drinking or alcoholism as adults.[50] Adolescents under the influence of alcohol or who frequently drink alcohol exhibit disturbing behavior which would not be under normal circumstances.[51]

Hawkins et al. also note that substance use and crimes committed by family members increase the probability of the adolescent exhibiting similar behavior. Parent and family modeling of drug use positively influences children's expectations to use drugs.[52]

There is also argument over substance use, delinquency, and the precedence of the two. Some researchers contend that youth offenders tend to have experimented with illegal substances prior to delinquency. Others argue that once a child becomes a youth offender, the lifestyle leads him/her to substance use.

It is not unusual for teenagers to experiment with substances during the adolescent stage. The peer group is a

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[50]American Academy of Pediatrics: Committee on Adolescence, "Alcohol Use and Abuse: A Pediatric Concern," *Pediatrics* 79 (March 1987): 451.

[51]Van Hasselt et al., 494.

[52]J. David Hawkins, and others, "Delinquency and Drug Abuse: Implications for Social Services," *Social Service Review* (June 1988): 261.

key factor in both drug use and violent behavior, both of which tend to be highly peer focused. Often, drug use and violence are ways of gaining acceptance among peers.[53] Inevitably, discrepancies arise when the commonality among peers has been compromised due to substance use; therefore, other relationships develop while others are severed. Realistically, drug behaviors may conflict with peer groups, and friendships may dissolve, leaving an adolescent to find others with similar drug-use habits.[54] With friendships developing on the premise of substance use, the probability of the commission of harmful violent acts increases. Consequently, another new trend for excitement is sought.

Nuclear families can have a powerful influence on a child becoming a substance user and delinquent. Children may possess all their desires, but lack support and love from the parents. Adolescents may become delinquent and/or substance users out of boredom. There is also a possibility of parents showing support and love, and children still straying from positive reinforcement. Kelleher provides examples of nuclear families that have experienced a relationship between substance use and violent acts including wealthy teenagers and adopted children.

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[53]Robert L. Hampton, Pamela Jenkins, and Thomas P. Gullotta, eds. *Preventing Violence in America* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc., 1996), 165.

[54]Gullotta et al., 104.

Brook, Whiteman, and Finch support the argument that there is a correlation between substance use/abuse and delinquency. The effects of substance abuse tend to cause a person to commit acts in which under normal circumstances they would not.[55] Adolescents become more concerned about the substance effects rather than their impulsive, destructive behavior.

The U.S. Department of Justice reports that 54 percent of people convicted of violent crimes in state prisons had used alcohol just before the offense. Ten percent of youth convicted of homicide are estimated to have used alcohol and other drugs at the time of the offense.[56]

According to Van Hasselt and Hersen, although previous data indicate a high prevalence of drug and alcohol use among perpetrators of violent crime, similar or even higher rates have been found for nonviolent offenders.[57] These findings suggest that there is not a unique association between habitual substance use and violent offending.

Van Hasselt and Hersen note a further difficulty in interpreting the relationship between offenders' alcohol and

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[55]Brook et al., 370.

[56]Johnson, 114.

[57]Vincent Van Hasselt, and Michael Hersen, eds., *Handbook of Psychological Approaches with Violent Offenders: Contemporary Strategies and Issues* (New York: Academic/Plenum Publishers, 1999): 496.

drug use, and violent acts. Individuals that are arrested or incarcerated may not be representative of the universe of violent actors, and the violent behaviors that result in arrest or incarceration may not be of all violent acts.[58]

Substance use does play a part in the commission of some harmful acts, but exactly what part is unclear. There is not a blue print for successful and law-abiding children. But there is a probability of specific determinants that increase the risk of substance use and delinquency. It has been shown that family background is the most critical influence of all factors related to violent acts. Posner states that young people tend to gravitate toward drug use, violence or a combination of the two in the absence of clear goals, positive role models, and hope for the future.[59] Adolescents have a tendency or need to replace a deficiency with mischievousness or a more exciting behavior which may include lawbreaking.

Ellickson, Saner, and McGuigan support Posner through showing that violent adolescents are substantially more likely than their nonviolent peers to suffer from

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[58]Ibid.

[59]M. Posner, "Assaultive Injuries," In National Committee for Injury Prevention and Control (Ed.), *Injury Prevention: Meeting the Challenge* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), quoted in Robert L. Hampton, Pamela Jenkins, and Thomas Gullotta, eds. *Preventing Violence in America* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications,Inc., 1996), 165.

various other problems: different forms of substance abuse,

nonviolent delinquency, and poor mental health.[60]

Self-Evaluation

Individuals tend to evaluate themselves in

comparison to others who are similar. Festinger indicated

in his social comparison theory that persons are motivated

to positively evaluate themselves.[61] Mecca, Smelser, and

Vasconcellos describe self-evaluation as comparing ourselves

favorably with others, having a positive attitude toward our

own qualities, and appreciating ourselves and our inherent

worth.[62] Self-evaluation is the innermost core of our soul,

and if ruptured or ridiculed can be detrimental to ourselves

and others. Consequently, self-evaluation is a factor in

adolescents potential to harm others.

Self-evaluation in relation to youth violence has

been shown to have a weak correlation according to Mecca,

Smelser and Vasconcellos.[63] Children who are labeled

deviant and/or who commit violent acts have been linked to

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[60]Phyllis Ellickson, Hilary Saner, and Kimberly McGuigan, "Profiles of Violent Youth: Substance Use and Other Concurrent Problems," *American Journal of Public Health* 87 (June 1997): 987.

[61]L. Festinger, "A Theory of Social Comparison Processes," *Human Relations* 7 (1954): 117-140.

[62]Andrew M. Mecca, Neil J. Smelser, and John Vasconcellos, eds. *The Social Importance of Self-Esteem* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989): 6.

[63]Ibid., 170.

levels of low self-esteem. Mecca, Smelser and Vasconcellos make reference to Kaplan's study (1975, 1980) that delinquent children are in fact delinquent for reasons of low self-esteem. Kaplan contends that delinquent behavior serves to enhance self-esteem for individuals who have experienced failure and lowered self-esteem.

Upon investigating suspects of recent school shootings, almost half of the perpetrators were found to have low self-esteem or received treatment for depression.[64] The perpetrators had experienced rejection from parents and classmates which sparked the rage. Children are not equipped to cope with adult issues and rejection is more easily triggered. The commission of harmful acts is used as a tool to uplift one's self-esteem.

Mecca, Smelser, and Vasconcellos also acknowledge McCord, McCord and Howard's reanalysis of data from the 1930 Cambridge-Somerville Youth Study.[65] McCord et al. studied and interviewed 690 nine-year-old boys over a five-year period who were judged to be maladjusted, potentially delinquent, and aggressive.[66] The study showed that parental attacks, deficient parental controls and low

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[64]John Cloud and Harriet Barorick, "Just A Routine School Shooting," *Time* 153 (31 March 1999): 37.

[65]Mecca et al., 169.

[66]Ibid.

self-esteem were experienced by the boys who were classified as being aggressive. Furthermore, the aggressive boys were more likely to choose a reference group similar to a gang of delinquents for companionship.

Mruk also discusses the basic idea that people, especially adolescents, strive to achieve some sense of self-esteem.[67] They do so through peer acceptance. When society denies or limits socially acceptable avenues that lead to positive ends, the need does not go away. Rather the individual becomes more open to alternative routes. Adolescents can choose daring means to become accepted by peers with little concern for the outcome.

In contrast to the perspective of Kaplan and Mruk, Huesmann contends that bullies either have unusually little anxiety and insecurity or are roughly average on such dimensions.[68] His argument that bullies do not suffer from poor self-esteem stands in contradiction to many findings. Bullying can also be viewed as a factor of a more general conduct -- a disordered, antisocial, and rule-breaking behavior pattern. From this perspective, one might argue that youngsters who are aggressive and who bully others in

[67]Chris Mruk, *Self-Esteem: Research, Theory and Practice* (New York: Springer Publishing Company, Inc., 1995), 80.

[68]L. Rowell Huesmann, ed. *Aggressive Behavior: Current Perspectives* (New York: Plenum Press, 1994), 100.

school run an increased risk of later engaging in other problem behaviors such as criminality and alcohol abuse.[69]

In corroborating Huesmann's thoughts on the subject of self-esteem and harmful behavior, Dumas concludes there is not much evidence to support the hypothesis that poor self-esteem causes aggressive behavior.[70] Huesmann's critics indicate that he is contradictory in his argument on delinquency and the relation to self-esteem. He states that bullies do not exhibit low self-esteem but may also be antisocial in behavior. Expressing antisocial behavior is generally associated with being withdrawn and having low self-esteem. Bullies are generally unhappy with themselves and tend to subscribe to the cliché "misery loves company." Wells and Marwell note self-esteem is a predisposition for subsequent behaviors, and an essential behavioral construct for interpreting human conduct.[71] For them, self-esteem is the root of all actions.

The emotional barriers of youth are most frequently established at a young age. If this stage is abruptly halted or otherwise dysfunctional, the behavior becomes undesirable. According to Charles Davenport, a psychiatrist at the Medical College of Ohio, children learn during their

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[69]Ibid., 100.

[70]Ibid., 124.

[71]Mruk, 2.

formative years how to care for others and the difference between right and wrong. He states that if the process is halted within a dysfunctional environment, the morals and value of life are not developed. Defiant and stubborn behavior precedes aggression which in turn progresses into annoying and bullying others. Lying and shoplifting are also practiced during the preadolescent years. Finally, it grows into full-blown and relentless violence.[72] Delinquent acts become uncontrollable and dangerous throughout the years of adolescence if this behavior is not immediately stopped. If self-esteem and positive self-evaluation are not developed during very early years of the life-cycle, violent acts and disruptive behavior could later occur.

Conceptual Framework

Symbolic interactionism is the primary premise on which this paper is based. Violent acts are committed or not committed based on our individual social interactions. No one knows the exact factors associated with youth violence; however, symbolic interactionism provides a framework for better understanding certain relationships.

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[72]Scott Minerbrook, "A Generation of Stone Killers," *U.S. News and World Report* (17 January 1994): 36.

Symbolic interactionism is the basis of our existence. It recognizes social interaction to be of vital importance in its own right. Blumer states that George Herbert Mead (a foremost theorist of symbolic interactionism) sees it as a presentation of gestures and a response to the meaning of those gestures.[73] Humans exist socially because of their daily interactions with people. People learn from their social interactions whether or not they are acceptable.

The act of role playing as it relates to the commission of violent acts is associated with social learning theory. Albert Bandura established the social learning theory which emphasizes that the environment, cognitions, and behaviors are all key variables in the functioning of human beings.[74] The social learning theory states that people learn from their initial surroundings and/or day to day interactions.

Violent acts are committed to obtain specific desires which under "normal" circumstances would not be obtained.[75] Children who witness violence on a regular

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[73]Herbert Blumer, *Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1969), 65.

[74]Duane Brown and David J. Srealus, *Introduction to the Counseling Profession*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1996), 199.

[75]Goode, 30.

basis develop the perception that the use of violence produces desired results. This type of obscured perception can become a way of life.

There are three models of the social learning theory, including familial influences, subculture influences, and the symbolic model.[76] These models share commonalities with variables associated with youth violence.

The familial influence focuses on aggression and/or abuse present in the home environment. If aggression or abuse is present in the home, it will have an enormous impact on the child's development and personality. Some children may become abusers or aggressive themselves in order to solve or rectify disagreements. Their self-esteem may be compromised in order to cope with the dilemma that confronts them.

Subculture influences focus on aggression being an attribute or becoming a product of one's environment.[77] Acceptance of aggressiveness and violence becomes a way of life. Substance use has been discussed as part of a subculture influence in that it is a part of the norms for certain groups. Subculture theories are based on the notion

[76]Van Hasselt et al., 44.

[77]Ibid.

that violent traditions, norms, and skills are present among
certain groups within society.[78]

The symbolic model of the social learning theory can
be related to the exposure to mass media. The model
supports data showing that the mass media affects human
behavior. The argument that TV violence does increase
aggression for children and adolescents is tempered by
research suggesting television violence might have a larger
impact on children who are initially more aggressive.[79]

The social learning theory seems to support exposure
to mass media, substance use, and self-evaluation as
antecedents to the commission of violent acts. Because
social interactions define and guide our existence, youth
behavior is not exempt from the influences of the variables
analyzed for this thesis.

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[78]Ibid., 24.

[79]Ibid., 44.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Hypotheses

This study focused on three controversial factors and adolescents having the potential to harm others. The conceptual framework suggests the following hypotheses: 1) adolescents who are exposed to violence in the mass media are likely to harm others, 2) adolescents who use illegal substances are likely to harm others, and 3) adolescents who have a low self-evaluation are likely to harm others.

Design and Sample

The data for this study included adolescents aged 11-16. Data were obtained from two southern metropolitan area schools during the Spring of 2000.

I chose to collect my data at a metropolitan institution in order to better ensure a set of diverse factors including cultural, socioeconomic, and educational backgrounds. The overall study was designed to develop a better understanding of adolescents and their actions related to violent intentions and selected variables.

The questionnaire was designed to collect data on adolescents and their potential to harm others in relation to exposure to mass media, substance use, and self-evaluation. A non-probability sample was used to collect the data. The study was carried out following guidelines of informed consent and confidentiality.

Measurements and Data Analysis

The demographic variables studied were: 1) Sex (1=male, 2=female); 2) Age (1=11 years old, 2=12 years old, 3=13 years old, 4=14 years old, 5=15 years old, 6=16 years old); 3) Ethnic Origin (1=White, 2=Black, 3=Hispanic/Latin, 4=Asian, 5=Native American, 6=Other); 4) Do you live with: (1=Both parents, 2=Mother only, 3=Father only, 4=Mother and Stepfather, 5=Father and Stepmother, 6=Other).

Two items measured self-evaluation were: "I have a low opinion of myself." Categories of this variable included: 1=True, 2=False; and "I am a failure." Categories of this variable included: 1=True, 2=False.

One item measured parental involvement: "Do your parents/guardian talk with you about the problems of alcohol/drugs?" Categories of this variable included: 1=Never, 2=Seldom, 3=Sometimes, 4=Often, 5=A lot.

Four items measured the daily activities in relation to youth violence: "Do you take part in gang activities,

Have you carried a gun to school, Have you threatened to harm a student or teacher, and Have you been in trouble with the police?" Categories for these items included: 1=Never, 2=Seldom, 3=Sometimes, 4=Often, 5=A lot.

Two items measured substance usage: "When did you first drink alcohol", and "When did you first use drugs?" Categories measured for these items included: 1=Never Used, 2=Under 10, 3=10-11, 4=12-13, 5=14-15, 6=16-17.

Two items measured discipline on behalf of the parents: "Do your parents/guardian punish you when you break the rules?" Categories of this variable included: 1=Never, 2=Seldom, 3=Sometimes, 4=Often, 5=A lot; and, "What time do you normally go to bed?" Categories of this variable included: 1=Before 9:00pm, 2=Between 9-10pm, 3=After 11pm.

One item measured the number of hours spent watching television: "How many hours on average do you spend watching television each day of the week?" Categories of this variable were indicated by the actual number of hours the respondents reported on watching television.

One item measured television programs: "Please number 1-8 the programs you view most often to least often?" Categories of this variable included: 1=Most Often, 2=Often, 3=Sometimes, 4=Seldom, 5=Hardly, 6=Hardly Ever, 7=Rarely, 8=Never/Least Often.

One item measured music preference: "What type of music do you listen to?" Categories of this variable included: 1=I listen to this often, 2=I listen to this sometimes, 3=I never listen to this.

One item measured socioeconomic status: "Do you live in a house or apartment?" Categories of this variable included: 1=House, 2=Apartment.

After reviewing operational measures, coding for certain responses was treated as follows: "How many hours on average do you spend watching television each day of the week?" was coded as "Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday." Categories of this variable include: 1=One hour, 2=Two hours, 3=Three hours, and so on. "Please number 1-8 the programs you view most often to least often" was coded as "Crime dramas, cartoons, comedies, quiz shows, westerns, news, music shows, and documentaries." Categories of this variable remain: 1=Most often, 2=Often, 3=Sometimes, 4=Seldom, 5=Hardly, 6=Hardly Ever, 7=Rarely, 8=Never/Least often. "What type of music do you listen to?" was coded as "Rap/Hip Hop, Rock, Rhythm and Blues, Classical/Jazz, New Wave, Country." Categories of this variable remain: 1=I listen to this most often, 2=I listen to this sometimes, 3=I never listen to this.

The study used analysis of variance to analyze the hypotheses tested. The research sought to determine any

relationship between the independent variables 1) exposure to mass media, 2) substance use, and 3) self-evaluation and adolescent potential to harm others, the dependent variable.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

This section shows the influence of specific
variables in relation to the potential or threat to harm a
student or teacher. The variables selected were first use
of drugs, first drink of alcohol, low opinion of self,
failure, daily average of hours watching television, most
often viewed music shows, and least often viewed westerns.
The sample consisted of 186 students.

Table 1 shows the age and gender of the students.
The age ranged from 11-16 years.

Table 1. Number of Students by Gender and Age

	11 yrs	12 yrs	13 yrs	14 yrs	15 yrs	16 yrs	Total
Male	7	30	33	7	1	1	79
Female	23	46	31	6		1	107

Table 2 shows the gender of students and with whom
they live is shown below. As shown in Table 2, the majority
of the females live with their mother only, while the
majority of the males, proportionately, live with both
parents.

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Violence has been shown to begin with family influences which can establish a foundation for dysfunctional behavior.[1] If there is disorganization and chaos within the family, significant problems can arise socially and emotionally in relation to interpersonal relationships. The parents' presence has an influence on the daily activities and behaviors of the students. Only ten students lived with someone other than a parent. Eight of the students did not answer the question of with whom they live.

Table 2. Gender by Family Status

	Male	Female
Both Parents	30	34
Mother Only	19	43
Father Only	4	2
Mother and Stepmother	20	13
Father and Stepfather	1	2
Other	2	8
Total	76	102

[1]Mark Fraser, "Aggressive Behavior in Childhood and Early Adolescence: An Ecological-Developmental Perspective on Youth Violence," *Social Work* 41 (July 1996): 348.

Tests of Hypotheses

Analysis of variance was used to examine the relationships between potential or threat to harm a student or teacher and three independent variables (substance use, self-evaluation and exposure to mass media). Numbers and percentages were analyzed in providing a descriptive account of the data. Shown in Table 3 are the responses of threat to harm a student or teacher, and "drug use". The majority of the students (n=119,65.7%) stated they had never experimented with drugs nor threatened to harm a student or teacher. Thirty-six (19.9%) students stated they never experimented with drugs, and seldom threatened to harm a student or teacher. Thirteen (7.2%) students stated they had never experimented with drugs, but sometimes threatened a student or teacher.

Table 3. Responses to Potential or Threat to Harm and
              "First Use of Drugs"
                   (Percentages)

	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	A Lot
Never Used	119 (65.7)	36 (19.9)	13 (7.2)	3 (1.7)	1 (.6)
Under 10					1 (.6)
10-11	1 (.6)				
12-13	2 (1.1)	2 (1.1)	1 (.6)		
14-15		1 (.6)			
16-17			1 (.6)		

Table 4 shows the results of ANOVA. The table
indicates a *F* Ratio of 5.910 with a significance level of
.016. This probability of <.05 shows a significant
relationship between potential or threat to harm a student
or teacher and first use of drugs.

Table 4. ANOVA Results of the Relationship Between Potential
              or Threat to Harm and "First Use of Drugs"

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Squares	F	Sig.
Regres.	3.536	1	3.536	5.910	.016
Residual	107.695	180	.598		
Total	111.231	181			

Table 5 shows responses to the variable of "first drink of alcohol" and potential or threat to harm a student or teacher. The majority (n=90,49.7%) of the students indicated that they had never experimented with alcohol nor threatened a student or teacher. Twenty-two (12.2%) students stated they had never experimented with alcohol and seldom threatened a student or teacher. Fourteen (7.7%) students under the age of 10 stated that they had experimented with alcohol, but never threatened to harm a student or teacher.

Table 5. Responses to Potential or Threat to Harm and
"First Drink of Alcohol"
(Percentages)

	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	A Lot
Never Used	90 (49.7)	22 (12.2)	5 (2.8)	1 (.6)	
Under 10	14 (7.7)	9 (5.0)	1 (.6)		2 (1.1)
10-11	12 (6.6)	3 (1.7)	3 (1.7)	1 (.6)	
12-13	6 (3.3)	6 (3.3)	3 (1.7)	1 (.6)	
14-15			1 (.6)		
16-17			1 (.6)		

Table 6 shows the results of ANOVA. The table indicates a F Ratio of 21.685 with a significance level of

.000. This probability of <.05 shows a highly significant relationship between potential or threat to harm and first drink of alcohol.

Table 6. ANOVA Results of the Relationship Between Potential or Threat to Harm and "First Drink of Alcohol"

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regres.	11.762	1	11.762	21.685	.000
Residual	97.089	179	.542		
Total	108.851	180			

Table 7 shows the responses to the item "opinion of self" and potential or threat to harm a student or teacher. The majority of the students (n=106, 57.9%) answered false to the item, "low opinion of self", and "have threatened to harm a student or teacher". Data show that thirty-seven (20.2%) students indicate that they do not have a low opinion of themselves, and have rarely threatened a student or teacher. Data further indicates that sixteen (8.7%) students have a low opinion of self, and sometimes threaten a student or teacher. The majority of the students (n=106, 57.9%) do not have a low opinion of themselves nor have they threatened to harm a student or teacher.

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Table 7. Responses to Potential or Threat to Harm and "Low Opinion of Self" (Percentages)

	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	A Lot
True	16 (8.7)	4 (2.2)	1 (.5)		1 (.5)
False	106 (57.9)	37 (20.2)	14 (7.7)	3 (1.6)	1 (.5)

Table 8 shows the analysis of variance results. The table indicates a *F* Ratio of .004 with a significance level of .950. This probability of <.05 shows that there is not a significant relationship between low opinion of self, and potential or threat to harm a student or teacher.

Table 8. ANOVA Results of the Relationship Between Potential or Threat to Harm and "Low Opinion of Self"

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regres.	2.468E-03	1	2.468E-03	.004	.950
Residual	111.517	181	.616		
Total	111.519	182			

Table 9 shows the relationship between "failure" and potential or threat to harm. Data show that a majority of the students (n=115, 63.2%) surveyed are not failures and have never threatened a student or teacher. Specifically, the data show that thirty-six (19.8%) students are not "failures," and seldom threaten a student or teacher.

Furthermore, data show seven (3.8%) students are "failures", but have never threatened a student or teacher.

Table 9. Responses to Potential or Threat to Harm and "Failure"
(Percentages)

	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	A Lot
True	7 (3.8)	4 (2.2)	2 (1.1)		1 (.5)
False	115 (63.2)	36 (19.8)	13 (7.1)	3 (1.6)	1 (.5)

Table 10 shows the analysis of variance results. The table indicates a F Ratio of 4.41 with a significance level of .037. This probability of $<.05$ shows a significant relationship between failure and potential or threat to harm a student or teacher.

Table 10. ANOVA Results of the Relationship Between Potential or Threat to Harm and "Failure"

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regres.	2.661	1	2.661	4.412	.037
Residual	108.570	180	.603		
Total	111.231	181			

Table 11 shows the responses to "most often viewed/music" and potential or threat to harm a student or teacher. The majority of the students (n=14,17.9%) indicate

that they view music shows often, but have never threatened

to harm a student or teacher. Nine (11.5%) students

indicate they view music shows often, and seldom threatened

to harm a student or teacher. Furthermore, data show seven

(9.0%) students sometimes view music shows and had never

threatened a student or teacher. The majority of the

students (n=14, 17.9%) who most often view music shows state

they had never threatened to harm a student or teacher.

Table 11.   Responses to Potential or Threat to Harm and
            "Most Often Viewed/Music"
                     (Percentages)

	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	A Lot
Most Often	14 (17.9)	9 (11.5)	2 (2.6)		
Often	14 (17.9)	3 (3.3)	3 (3.3)		
Sometimes	7 (9.0)	1 (1.3)	1 (1.3)		
Seldom	5 (6.4)	1 (1.3)			
Hardly	1 (1.3)	1 (1.3)	1 (1.3)	1 (1.3)	
Least Hardly	2 (2.6)	1 (1.3)			
Not Often	2 (2.6)	3 (3.8)	1 (1.3)		
Least Often	4 (5.1)	1 (1.3)			

Table 12 shows the results of ANOVA. The table indicates a *F* Ratio of .005 with a significance level of .942. This probability of <.05 shows there is not a significant relationship between "most often viewed/music shows" and potential or threat to harm.

Table 12. ANOVA Results of the Relationship Between Potential or Threat to Harm and "Most Often Viewed/Music"

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regres.	2.908E-03	1	2.907E-03	.005	.942
Residual	37.483	68	.551		
Total	37.486	69			

Table 13 shows the responses of the "least often viewed/westerns," and potential or threat to harm a student or teacher. The majority of the students (n=22,29.3%) indicated the response least often view westerns" and "never threatened to harm a student or teacher". Data show that thirteen (17.3%) students indicated that they do not often view westerns and had never threatened to harm a student or teacher. Data further indicate that seven (9.3%) students "least often viewed westerns" and had seldom threatened to harm a student or teacher.

Table 13. Responses to Potential or Threat to Harm and
"Least Often Viewed/Westerns"
(Percentages)

	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	A Lot
Most Often	2 (2.7)				
Often			2 (2.7)		
Sometimes	6 (8.0)				
Seldom	2 (2.7)	1 (1.3)			
Hardly	1 (1.3)	1 (1.3)	1 (1.3)		
Least Hardly	5 (6.7)	2 (2.7)	1 (1.3)	1 (1.3)	
Not Often	13 (17.3)	4 (5.3)	3 (4.0)		
Least Often	22 (29.3)	7 (9.3)	1 (1.3)		

Table 14 shows the results of ANOVA. The table indicates a *F* Ratio of .158 with a significance level of .692. This probability of <.05 shows there is not a significant relationship between the "least often viewed/westerns" and the potential or threat to harm a student or teacher.

Table 14. ANOVA Results of the Relationship Between Potential
or Threat to Harm and "Least Often Viewed/Westerns"

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regres.	8.756E-02	1	8.756E-02	.158	.692
Residual	37.130	67	.554		
Total	37.217	68			

Table 15 shows results of ANOVA. The table indicates a *F* Ratio of .636 with a significance level of .426. This probability of <.05 shows there is not a significant relationship between the "daily average of television hours watched" and the potential or threat to harm a student or teacher.

Table 15. ANOVA Results of the Relationship Between Potential
or Threat to Harm and "Daily Average of Hours Watching
Television"

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regres.	.393	1	.393	.636	.426
Residual	97.551	158	.617		
Total	97.944	159			

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Review of the Study

This study examined variables which may influence an adolescent's potential to harm students or teachers. The results of the study are discussed in conjunction with each of the hypotheses tested. Implications for future research are also discussed.

Hypothesis 1

Adolescents who use illegal substances have the potential to harm others.

This hypothesis was supported by the sample. The significant relationship between substance use and the threat to harm a student or teacher supports past studies. Specifically, these findings are consistent with Ellickson et al. who suggest that adolescents who are violent are more likely to have poor mental health, use drugs, drop out of school, and be delinquent.[1] Their study revealed that 54% of the respondents had been involved in at least one type of

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[1] Phyllis Ellickson, Hilary Saner, and Kimberly McGuigan, "Profiles of Violent Youth: Substance Use and Other Concurrent Problems," *American Journal of Public Health* 87 (June 1997): 987.

violence in the past year, and 23% were involved in repeated acts of violence. Violent youth were more likely than nonviolent youth to have other adverse factors associated with them. These authors found that substance abuse ignited future behavioral problems in violent youth.[2]

Hypothesis 2

Adolescents who are overly exposed to the mass media have the potential to harm others.

This hypothesis was not supported by the sample. Results show that there is not a significant relationship between youth's exposure to mass media and the threat to harm a student or teacher. These findings are inconsistent with Gullotta et al. and Somers. Gullotta et al. explain that aggressive behavior is the result of exposure to mass media.[3] Children become desensitized to repeated exposure to media and learn to enjoy it. A repeated contention suggested by Somers is that the violent images are not limited to television, but can also be found in books, movies and magazines. A large body of research on observational learning by preschool children confirms children can and do learn aggressive behavior from what they

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[2]Ibid., 990.

[3]Thomas P. Gullota, R. Adams, and Raymond Montemayor, eds., Delinquent Violent Youth: Theory and Interventions (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publication, Inc., 1998): 129.

see in a film or on a television screen.[4] Gullotta et al.
and Somers both conclude that aggressive behavior can be
learned from exposure to the mass media.

Hypothesis 3

Adolescents who have low self-evaluation have the
potential to harm others.

This hypothesis was supported by the sample. Results
show a significant relationship between self-evaluation and
youth's potential to harm a student or teacher. The
findings are consistent with Mruk who makes reference to
Mecca et al. in relation to self-esteem and delinquency.[5]
Mecca et al. explain that low self-esteem is the root of
most problems with society.[6] Accordingly, one's self-esteem
is the prerequisite of their behavior. Kaplan also states
that delinquent behavior serves to enhance self-esteem for
individuals who have experienced failure and lowered self-
esteem.[7] He continues by mentioning that delinquent
children are in fact delinquent for reasons of low self-

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[4]Anne R. Somers, "Violence, Television and the Health of
American Youth," *New England Journal of Medicine* 294 (April 1976): 814.

[5]Chris Mruk, *Self-Esteem: Research, Theory and Practice* (New
York: Springer Publishing Company, Inc., 1995), 3.

[6]Ibid.

[7]Andrew M. Mecca, Neil J. Smelser, and John Vasconcellos,
eds., *The Social Importance of Self-Esteem* (Los Angeles: University of
California Press, 1989), 170.

esteem. Mecca et al. and Kaplan both conclude that self-evaluation influences behavior.

Limitations

One major limitation of this study is that some students were required to take the questionnaire home to obtain permission from parents to participate in the survey. Middle school adolescents were originally sought for the study. The school administrator suggested that I provide a letter including the questionnaire to the parents requesting permission for their children to participate in the questionnaire. By allowing the questionnaire to be taken home, and thereby following guidelines on research regulations, approximately 13% of the questionnaires were returned. With a minimal number of questionnaires returned, another location had to be sought. The second location was an elementary school. The school administrator allowed the upper grade students to participate in the survey with the permission of the Board of Education. Although, the original location for the study became a limitation, the data eventually obtained allowed for a usable sample.

Implications and Conclusion

There are many underlying factors related to adolescents' potential to harm others in addition to those

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tested in this study. Youth violence has become an intricate part of U.S. society in general and the African American community in particular; moreover, it has dramatically increased within the last several years.[8] In order to reverse this increase, more research studies are needed that focus on practical solutions. Additionally, the issue of parents taking more responsibility for their children and their actions is a phenomenon that bears further investigation.

In summary, the findings of this study indicate that there is a statistically significant relationship between the potential to harm and two of the three variables selected for the study. Although the exposure to mass media was not statistically significant, the sample revealed that adolescents watch double the number of television hours suggested by the American Academy of Pediatrics. Given research showing thirty-two percent of the students having threatened to harm a student or teacher, it is clear that this figure needs to be reduced. More research is needed on the preference of television programs, music, number of hours spent on both, and their impact on behavior before definitive statements can be made on this controversial topic.

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[8]Ray Surette, "Media, Violence, Youth, and Society," *World and I* 9 (July 1994): 1.

APPENDIX A

LETTER TO GREEN PASTURES ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Green Pastures Elementary School*
Mrs. Mankind, Principal
1070 Nicholas Avenue
Petersburg, Georgia

Dear Mrs. Mankind,

I am currently a graduate student at Clark Atlanta University and presently researching youth violence as it relates to mass media, substance use and self-valuation.

Youth violence is a significant and pressing social issue in today's society and needs to be addressed, and ideally prevented. With a great interest in this matter, I would like to administer a questionnaire to determine a relationship between violence and its potential factors.

I am requesting your permission to randomly select 50 students as participants in the questionnaire. The questionnaire contains 19 questions and the participants shall remain anonymous. The questionnaire will measure the student's activities socially and emotionally as it relates to violence. The survey will take approximately 30 minutes.

The information gathered will be solely for the use of Clark Atlanta University and myself. After completion and acceptance of this study from the School of Arts and Sciences, I would be delighted to provide you with a copy of the research project.

I appreciate your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

Kendra Vann
M.A. Candidate

*This name represents a pseudonym for the schools that participated in the study.

APPENDIX B

LETTER OF PERMISSION TO PARENTS

Dear Parents,

I am a graduate student at Clark Atlanta University. I am writing this letter requesting permission for your child to participate anonymously in a study on youth violence. In order for me to successfully complete my degree work, submission of statistical data concerning youth violence as it relates to the mass media (television, music, video games), substance use and self-evaluation is required. As presented by the media, youth violence has become an intricate part of our community/society that needs to be addressed, and ideally prevented.

The students will be asked to express their position about popular music, television programs and daily activities. The questionnaire will measure the student's activities socially and emotionally as regards their perception of violence. There are 19 questions and the participants shall remain anonymous. It will take approximately 30 minutes for the students to complete the questionnaire.

Thank you for your consideration, and I will look forward to hearing from you. Please sign and return.

Sincerely,

Kendra Vann

_____Parent Signature

( )   Yes, my child may participate in the survey.

( )   No, my child may not participate in the survey.

APPENDIX C

STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

QUESTIONNAIRE #_____

GRADE _____th

The **STUDENT SURVEY** is a part of a study that includes issues
of self-esteem, exposure to mass media and aggressive
behavior. Your answers are extremely important and will
assist others with understanding youth and what they are
exposed to. The survey will take approximately 30 minutes.

DO NOT WRITE YOUR NAME on the survey.   Your answers will be
CONFIDENTIAL. Please answer each question **TRUTHFULLY.**

This questionnaire was adapted from Patricia Edgar, *Children and Screen
Violence,* (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1977), 244; Sonny
E. Oyathelemi, "The Risk Factors of Alcohol and Illegal Substance Abuse
Involving Middle School African-American Students in Rural Setting:
Implication for Counseling" (Ph.D. diss., Clark Atlanta University,
1998), 144; and Kelly Pernell Lampkin, "A Descriptive Study of
Aggression, Fighting Behavior, and Attitudes Among African-American:
Middle School Age Students" (MSW thesis, Clark Atlanta University,
1996), 53.

APPENDIX C (CONTINUED)

Answer each question by **PLACING AN (X) IN THE BLANK, CIRCLING YOUR ANSWER or FILLING IN THE BLANK.**

1. Sex:

    ___Male   ___Female

2. Age:

    ___11 years old   ___14 years old
    ___12 years old   ___15 years old
    ___13 years old   ___16 years old

3. Ethnic Origin:

    ___White   ___Asian
    ___Black   ___Native American
    ___Hispanic/Latino   ___Other (Please specify _____)

4. Do you live with:

    ___Both parents   ___Mother and Stepfather
    ___Mother only   ___Father and Stepmother
    ___Father only   ___Other (grandmother/father,
                            foster parents...please
                            specify _____)

5. I have a low opinion of myself:

    ___True   ___False

6. Do your parents/guardian punish you when you break the rules?

    ___Never   ___Often
    ___Seldom   ___A lot
    ___Sometimes

7. Do you take part in gang activities?

    ___Never   ___Often
    ___Seldom   ___A lot
    ___Sometimes

APPENDIX C (CONTINUED)

8. Have you carried a gun to school?

   ___Never   ___Often
   ___Seldom   ___A lot
   ___Sometimes

9. Have you threatened to harm a student or teacher?

   ___Never   ___Often
   ___Seldom   ___A lot
   ___Sometimes

10. Do your parents/guardian talk with you about the problems of alcohol/drugs?

    ___Never   ___Often
    ___Seldom   ___A lot
    ___Sometimes

11. When did you first drink alcohol (beer, wine coolers, wine, etc.)?

    ___Never used   ___12-13
    ___Under 10   ___14-15
    ___10-11   ___16-17

12. When did you first use drugs (marijuana, cocaine, LSD, etc.)?

    ___Never used   ___12-13
    ___Under 10   ___14-15
    ___10-11   ___16-17

13. What time do you normally go to bed?

    before 9:00 p.m.   between 9-10 p.m.   after 11:00 p.m.

14. I am a failure.

    ___True   ___False

APPENDIX C (CONTINUED)

15. How many hours on average do you spend watching television each day of the week? Write number of hours.

    ___Monday   ___Tuesday   ___Wednesday

    ___Thursday   ___Friday   ___Saturday
    ___Sunday

16. Please number 1-8 the programs you view most often to least often? (1=most often 8=least often)

    ___Crime dramas   ___Comedies   ___Westerns
    ___Music shows   ___Cartoons   ___Quiz shows
    ___News   ___Documentaries

17. Have you been in trouble with the police?

    ___Never   ___Often
    ___Seldom   ___A lot
    ___Sometimes

18. What type of music do you listen to? Mark an X for your answer.

	I listen to this most often.	I listen to this sometimes.	I never listen to this.
Rap/Hip Hop			
Rock			
Rhythm and Blues			
Classical/Jazz			
New Wave			
Country			

19. Do you live in a house or apartment?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ASSISTANCE IN THIS MATTER.

GLOSSARY

Adolescent - Specifically for the purpose of this study, individuals who are between the ages of 11 and 16.

Aggression - Behavior that is intended to injure or irritate another person.[1]

Mass Media - The various impersonal techniques whereby identical communication content is transmitted directly and swiftly to the participants in a public. Such techniques include radio, television, and general interest newspapers, movies, books and magazines.[2]

Potential to Harm - Individuals having the ability to injure another.

Self-Evaluation(self-esteem) - The level of positive or negative regard we have for ourselves.[3] Discussed in the context of self-esteem.

Substance Use - The experimental and/or continuous use of alcohol and drug related substances.

Violence - Actions that involve the use of physical force or the threatened physical force to injure another person.[4]

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[1]Vincent B. Van Hasselt, and Michael Hersen, eds., *Handbook of Psychological Approaches with Violent Offenders: Contemporary Strategies and Issues* (New York: Academic/Plenum Publishers, 1999), 40.

[2]Thomas Ford Hoult, *Dictionary of Modern Sociology* (Totowa: Littlefield, Adams, and Co., 1969), 194.

[3]Allan G. Johnson, *The Blackwell Dictionary of Sociology* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1995), 250.

[4]Vincent B. Van Hasselt and Michael Hersen, 40.

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