

EM9303: The Toronto Star, January 16, 1993, pages G1 and G8

Studies show TV violence begets real violence

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Typical of relatively recent research is a 1977 experiment cited in *The Early Window*, involving 30 male, American, adolescent delinquents living in a minimum security institution.

The boys were randomly divided into two groups. Over a one-week period, one group was shown "aggressive" movies (such as *The Chase*, *The Champion* and *Corruption*), while the other viewed "neutral" films (*Beach Blanket Bingo* and *A Countess From HongKong*).

After observing the boys for three weeks before and after the movie week, researchers concluded that those who saw the aggressive movies behaved more aggressively in general terms (including such acts as verbal threats) and in a physical sense (actual attacks).

These kinds of findings recur when more precise techniques are used on children in common-place situations. In one such case

in 1971, as reported in *The Early Window*, 10 preschoolers – boys and girls in a racially and socioeconomically mixed group – were matched into pairs based on the amount of time they spent watching TV at home.

Next, each child was observed during 10 playtime sessions to determine his or her normal level of aggressiveness. Researchers noted everything from simple hitting and pushing to squeezing, choking and holding down another child.

To gauge the effects of TV, one child in each pair was shown an aggressive program taken directly from the Saturday morning schedule, while the other viewed a nonaggressive program. This was done a total of 11 times.

"By the end of the 11 sessions, the two groups had departed significantly from one another in terms of the frequency of interpersonal aggression. In fact, for every pair, the child who observed aggressive television

programming had become more aggressive than his or her partner who watched neutral fare."

Investigators have also looked at everyday behaviour over a longer period. For instance, *The Early Window* describes a 1984 report on 758 American and 220 Finnish first- to fifth-graders whose activities were measured for three years.

"The results showed that for boys in both countries and for girls in the United States, the more TV violence youngsters watched, the more aggressive they were in dealings with their peers."

"Equally important were the cumulative effects over time. The more TV violence a youngster watched in any given year, the more likely he or she was to display an increased aggression during the subsequent years."

REFERENCE: Liebert, R.M.: *The Early Window: Effects of Television on Children and Youth*. Pergamon Press, 3rd edition (1988). [Arts Library call number: HQ784.T4L48 1988]

The article EM9303 reprinted above is used in Chapter 10 of the STAT 231 Course Materials and in Figure 2.19a of the STAT 332 Course Materials.