

Media Representations and Responsibilities: Psychological Perspectives

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March 2013

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Executive Summary

This paper is a response to community concern about the impact of the media on individuals and society. It takes as a premise that media representations are not simply a mirror of society but rather that they are highly selective and constructed portrayals. It is the capacity of these portrayals to shape and frame our perception of the world which is under consideration here. While acknowledging that the media can have many positive roles, our focus here is on five aspects of media that have raised concern:

- the portrayal of violence in children's media;
- advertising, especially when it is directed at children;
- the portrayal of crime;
- portrayals of mental illness; and
- representations of ethnic diversity and conflict between ethnic groups.

Historically a vast majority of psychological research on the media has concerned television. More recently there has been a surge of research in response to concerns regarding the effects of violent video games, and exposure to the internet. We focus on each of these areas of research, although all forms of media are mentioned. The paper attempts to summarise the research evidence, and then offers a series of recommendations about ways of responding to the issues raised.

To provide a framework for interpreting the research, the paper starts with a review of psychological theories that attempt to explain how exposure to television might lead to changes in values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviours. These include:

- Cultivation theory: the theory that media tend to cultivate acceptance of the beliefs, values and perspectives it portrays, at a broad cultural level
- Social learning theory and social-cognitive models: these address how individuals come to imitate behaviour observed in the media, and to develop mental 'primes' and 'scripts' from material that is viewed on

television, which can then guide their later behaviour. These models also address the ways in which exposure to violent material can lead to people becoming desensitised to violence and disinhibited from behaving aggressively

- Models of persuasion: these describe the processes by which viewers can be 'persuaded' by media advertising
- Impersonal impact hypothesis and third-person effect: these theories are aimed at explaining why many people believe that they themselves are immune from the influence of media, while others are susceptible
- The General Learning Model was developed to account for the effects of diverse forms of media including violent video games and music. It is based on earlier models of learning and association.

The first two issues which are reviewed concern the media's effects on children. The first of these is *violence in the media*. By far the greatest amount of psychological research on the media has concerned the impact of televised violence and violence contained within video games on children. Since literally thousands of studies have been conducted, we attempt to make sense of this vast literature by drawing together the conclusions made by existing authoritative reviews of the literature. The complexity of the questions involved in this area make it difficult to reach clear-cut conclusions, but there is reasonable consensus on some central issues. For instance, it is generally agreed that prolonged exposure to media violence is one of the many interacting factors which lead to children being more likely to display aggressive behaviour in the long term. It is also agreed that the social context is important in determining the effects of exposure to violent media; e.g., if an adult helps the child interpret and critique the viewed material, the negative effects are lessened. Later research on violent video games has largely supported these effects of violent media, showing that exposure to video game violence leads to increased aggression, an effect that has been demonstrated both as a short-term consequence and longer-term effect

of excessive exposure.

The second area reviewed concerns *advertising*. Parents commonly express concern over advertising directed at children, perceiving it as a source of conflict with their children who demand advertised products that parents may feel are inappropriate, and also fearing that it may lead them to adopt overly materialistic values. We review the literature on whether and when children can distinguish advertising from other forms of programming, and the extent to which it affects their desire for products and their buying behaviour. It appears that, although very young children can discriminate advertisements from programs, it is not until school age that children are aware of the specifically persuasive intent of advertising. It also appears that advertisements can affect product choices, although as with most media effects, there is a range of moderating factors. The research on other concerns, such as the potential of advertising of unhealthy food products to contribute to obesity, is also reviewed. It is concluded that, despite gaps in the research literature, there is evidence that children are affected by advertisements and that regulation of the nature and timing of advertisements directed at children is warranted.

The concerns in the last two areas reviewed are not limited to effects on children but refer to effects on people of any age and on society at large. Research on *media portrayals of crime* has shown that in general people overestimate the level of crime in their community, and media representations of crime are often thought to be partly responsible for this. Analyses clearly document that the media over-represent both the level of some sorts of crime, and the level of involvement in crime of particular groups in society. For example, crimes by youth and people with a mental illness are over-reported. There has been less high-quality research on how this misrepresentation of crime affects people's attitudes and behaviour, but there is some evidence that exposure to media crime reports is related to general fearfulness and an

overestimation of the dangerousness of society. Further, the selectivity of media reports, with a tendency for sensationalist reporting and little coverage of underlying causes for crime, tends to promote acceptance of police-focused and law-and-order responses to crime, rather than a broader, more comprehensive approach that incorporates a preventative, public health perspective.

The final area reviewed is *representations of ethnic groups* in the media. While analysis of the representation of minority and disadvantaged groups in the media covers a range of groups, such as people with disabilities, and particular religious groups, here we focus on the portrayal of ethnic groups, since issues of racism, discrimination, and asylum seeking are currently high-profile issues in Australia. Early television portrayed largely a white middle-class world. Since the 1990s there has been some shift towards inclusion of appearances by members of other groups, although these are still rarely at rates which are proportional to the population. What is more, the roles in which minority group members are portrayed tend to reinforce stereotypes about them. There has been surprisingly little research on the effect of such biased representations on members of either minority groups or the majority group. However, there is evidence that programs which intentionally attempt an unbiased portrayal of ethnic diversity (e.g., *Sesame Street*) succeed in reducing prejudices about other groups.

Another facet of representations of ethnic diversity is how conflict between ethnic groups is presented. It is common for the media to present simplistic uni-dimensional analyses of conflict, where ethnic difference is in itself given as a cause of conflict. More even-handed analyses that consider underlying issues such as the fears and concerns of both sides, and explore a range of possible solutions, are rare.

All of us are media consumers. On the basis of the evidence reviewed here, we present a series of recommendations directed to groups with

different roles in society. These are designed to promote more active efforts to address the problems that have been identified with current media representations. Even though some recommendations may appear obvious, and some have been raised by others, the extent of continuing concerns renders it important to articulate and reiterate them.

Recommendations

Consumers – In order to take an active role in affecting the media diet they are offered, we recommend that media consumers:

- monitor and audit programs (e.g., for the level of violence portrayed, how crime is presented, the portrayal of different ethnic groups, and the timing and nature of advertisements);
- make their views known to regulating bodies and the media industry by complaining about material or policies they disapprove of, and praising those they like;
- boycott certain programs or media outlets (and inform the outlets of their actions); and
- join or support lobby groups.

Parents – Children may be particularly susceptible to negative influences from the media. We therefore recommend that parents:

- assume responsibility for controlling their children's television viewing, video gaming, and internet usage habits;
- ensure that they know what their children are watching, downloading or playing, and set and enforce clear rules about the amount and nature of TV programming they watch, internet sites they visit, and the amount of time playing video games;
- when their children are watching TV or other media, attempt to watch with them as much as possible, and encourage them to evaluate critically what they watch; and
- help their children to find attractive, exciting and non-violent

alternative activities to TV-watching, internet use, or gaming, including activities with parents and other family members.

Education policy-makers and educators – Since research shows that the effects of the media on attitudes and behaviour are mediated by the way viewers interpret and construct what they view, we recommend that:

- all children receive media education as part of their primary and secondary school curricula. Key elements of such curricula should be provision of skills in monitoring and analysing media content, and in communicating opinions effectively to media regulators and the media industry;
- professional development courses on media education be widely available for teachers;
- teachers use media as a teaching tool, and model and promote critical reflective viewing;
- teachers draw the attention of children and parents to exciting, non-violent, non-stereotyping media, and express their own enthusiasm for them; and
- media education be widely available for parents as well as for children.

Psychologists - Since exposure to media affects attitudes and behaviour, psychologists in research settings, clinical practice, and with public advocacy roles have key contributions to make. We therefore recommend that psychologists:

- identify areas of research that have been neglected, and conduct research to address them;
- alert psychologists in training to the research potential of the area;
- be alert to recognising the influence of the media in the ideation and emotionality of clients, particularly the young;
- stay abreast of the research; and
- recognising the complexity of the issues, avoid simplistic global assertions when asked to make authoritative comment on media effects.

Journalists and journalism educators - This review highlights ways in which the media's presentation of issues such as violence, crime, and ethnic diversity has the potential for detrimental effects, and suggests that more sophisticated and complex presentation of issues is needed to avoid this. We therefore recommend that:

- as a step towards improved education of journalists, a collection of best-practice examples of coverage of important social issues be made and used in journalism education;
- training courses for journalists should include components on minority groups and cultural issues, particularly regarding Indigenous issues; and
- professional development courses addressing the issues raised above should be available and promoted for currently practising journalists.

Media policy makers and regulatory bodies - We recommend that policy makers and regulatory bodies:

- keep up to date with the research literature, and use it to frame policy;
- in evaluating calls for regulatory controls on programming and development, acknowledge that freedom of speech is not an absolute value but must be balanced against other community values;
- ensure there is consumer input into the content of children's television and video games, particularly in terms of the values and attitudes it presents to children;
- develop and police effective regulations to apply to advertising directed to children; and
- ensure that classification systems are based on the research evidence, and are effectively applied, monitored and enforced.

Media producers and media industry - In terms of news reporting and current affairs, probably the most salient set of policies are those adopted by media producers and proprietors. We recommend that producers and the industry:

- encourage a shift in emphasis from simplistic ideas of 'newsworthiness' (focusing on speed, visual appeal, simplicity, etc.) to a commitment to increased coverage of social contextual factors so that viewers can more accurately 'make sense' of news stories;
- ensure that portrayals of ethnic and cultural groups reflect their diversity and strengths, and avoid stereotyped or demeaning depictions;
- study examples of the use of the media to elicit positive changes in social attitudes and use these as guides for their own future programming and development; and
- respond to the community's concern about media violence, hear the preferences actually expressed by children, and use their resources to produce exciting media material that does not rely on violence.

1. Introduction

It is now widely acknowledged that the media are not a simple mirror of society, reflecting 'the world out there.' If this were so, journalists would simply need to point their camera or recorder in a random direction and let it roll. Rather, active decisions are taken at every stage of the process of producing and transmitting media material, regarding what should be included and what should be omitted, and how and when the content should be presented. It can therefore be argued that the media have the potential to play an active part in shaping and framing our perception of the world, and indeed in affecting the nature of that world.

In more recent times, the influence of media on society has expanded exponentially and into ever diversified forms. The internet has represented a giant leap forward in the accessibility of media and the ability for people to actively engage in media. Entertainment media has literally leaped off the big screen and out of the television producers' hands into video games, YouTube, and applications for mobile phones, to name a few. This increasing diversification and access to media has also resulted in less regulation of media content. Media, in all their various forms, are today shaping our world in more ways than ever.

The role of media in modern life is indispensable, providing information, education and entertainment. It is not our intention to review the nature or extent of these positive influences. Rather, the focus of this paper is on potential negative impacts. Debate has raged about the nature and the extent of the negative impact of some aspects of the media on individuals' values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviours, and on society in general. Further, there is increasing concern over the role of the media in affecting the course of public events, such as international disputes and criminal court cases. At the same time, debate reflects the ongoing struggle to find the appropriate balance between control of media (with censorship as the extreme form of control) and rights to freedom of expression and of choice.

Research into effects of the media is multidisciplinary, with contributions from diverse disciplines such as communications studies, semiotics, sociology, and politics. However, many of the core questions about media effects are psychological in nature.

Despite the wealth of psychological and other research on various facets of media effects, no single clear picture has yet emerged about how and when the media does impact on the individual or society. Nevertheless, in view of the continuing debate about appropriate responses to the 'media problem', it appears timely to review the psychological research literature with a view to providing research-based recommendations to the various parties involved. These parties include consumers (parents and others), educators, regulatory bodies, producers and broadcasters. There are also implications of the existing research for psychological research and practice.

The term 'the media' covers both print (newspaper, magazine) and electronic (TV, film and radio) media and variants such as video/DVD, videogames, the Internet, smart phones etc. There is a large body of research relating to most of these forms of media. In the past debate has focused on TV, however more recently there has been increased public concern over issues relating to violent video games and unrestricted internet content with increasing access to all manner of digital media. In many ways TV was the first medium which 'entered our living rooms' with great immediacy and impact. Now we are faced with increasing access that is penetrating many more aspects of our daily lives. Therefore in this paper we focus on previous research on TV, but extend this with a review of other forms of media such as video games and the internet. Although the field has been dominated by US research, we review relevant recent research from Australia and elsewhere wherever possible.

Newer forms of media, involving videogames and the Internet, are becoming more and more interactive. They elicit the active engagement of

the viewer (who, for example, uses a handheld electronic 'gun' to 'kill' characters on the screen and may be praised by the program for doing so). Increasingly there is evidence that identification with characters within violent interactive media has greater effects than simply observing violence on the television screen. We review and highlight the importance of exploring the effects of these increasingly interactive new forms of media.

In this paper, we start by reviewing theoretical frameworks that have been used to predict and explain media effects in general, in order to orient the reader to ways of interpreting the research data. Here we rely principally on theoretical explanations for how media violence might impact on aggressive behaviour, since this is the area that has received most research attention. We then move to an examination of the actual research on the effects of violence in the media, with a particular emphasis on its effects on children; this is the aspect of media effects which has also raised the greatest fears about detrimental long-term consequences, as well as the most heated debate. The next section also focuses on children, but here we review evidence of the effects of advertising on children's values, attitudes and behaviour, another commonly raised area of concern. The next two sections cover facets of media reporting which are often suspected of distorting perceptions of society, strengthening unjustified prejudices, fears and biases. Here the focus moves from children to people of all ages, and emphasises the effects of the media on social values, beliefs and attitudes in general. We discuss how criminal acts are represented in the media, and review the evidence of the impact of these representations. This is followed by a discussion of how ethnic minority groups are represented. These review sections lead to a concluding section that provides a series of recommendations directed to various sections of the community, with the goals of minimising the negative effects that have been identified, and maximising the positive potential of the media. A list of organisations and further resources is appended to the paper for those who want to explore these issues further.

2. Theoretical explanations for the impact of the media on violence

Media are clearly not the only, nor the most important, contributors to human social behaviour, but are unquestionably an important source of social influence. Although the relationship between exposure and effects is neither simple nor direct, more than 40 years of research has indicated that television, video games, and internet content can and do influence our feelings, attitudes and behaviours (e.g., Anderson et al., 2010; Anderson & Bushman, 2002; Johnson, et al., 2002; Wartella, Olivarez, & Jennings, 1998). In both the long- and the short-term, our experience of media images contributes in significant ways to how we think, act, and feel, and to our broader beliefs about the world and social reality.

A number of theoretical models and approaches help to explain the complex links between media exposure and its effects. Historically, many of these have been concerned principally with the impact of TV violence on children. However more recently, generalised theories of the ways in which media influence cognition, affect, and behaviour have begun to emerge.

Theoretical explanations have increasingly emphasised a range of contextual factors including features of the message, the viewer, and the broader social setting that influence audience reactions. In particular, contemporary theories have argued for a more 'receiver-centred' approach in which the viewer is seen as an active participant who constructs meaning from viewing. Increasingly, such accounts accept that selectivity and intentional choice, attention and involvement are forms of activity that facilitate media effects (Kim & Rubin, 1997). Thus, psychological models of media influence predict variability between individuals in their effects, whilst still allowing for common patterns to emerge .

2.1. Cultivation theory

One major theoretical approach, cultivation theory (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli 1994; Signorielli & Morgan, 1990), is an attempt to understand

and explain the influence of television as a source of broadly shared images and messages about the world and its people. It concentrates on the enduring and common consequences of growing up and living with television. Gerbner and his colleagues argue that, to the extent that television dominates children's sources of entertainment and information, continued cumulative exposure to its messages is likely to reiterate, confirm and nourish--that is, cultivate--the beliefs, agenda, values, and perspectives that it portrays (Signorielli & Morgan, 1990). From this standpoint, television is a powerful cultural force that produces stable, resistant-to-change and widely shared assumptions, images, values and concepts. It cultivates a mainstream view of what issues are important (e.g., crime, the environment, body image) and what the world is like (e.g., dangerous). Moreover, it cultivates specific value systems, ideologies, and perspectives (e.g., materialism, consumerism, ethnocentrism, individualism, capitalism, social responsibility).

The importance of media cultivation is underlined by the fact that there are many critical discrepancies between the "real" world and the world as portrayed on television, in film, on the internet, etc.. For instance, because there is more crime on television than in real life, television can cultivate a view of the world as a mean and scary place (see Section 5). This is especially likely among those who live in high crime urban areas and among those minorities whose fictional counterparts are frequently victimised on television and in movies and video games. The portrayed message is thought to resonate most strongly with such viewers.

Television also provides a major source of information about racial, ethnic and gender groups (Greenberg & Brand, 1994; see Section 6). If, for instance, women, the elderly and racial minorities are underrepresented in television and/or portrayed in a relatively narrow and stereotyped range of roles and activities, exposure to television is likely to cultivate gender, minority and age-role stereotypes. According to cultivation theory, television, games and so on even cultivate the 'meanings' of social, personal

and cultural contexts (Gerbner et al., 1994). For instance, a viewer's age, gender and class make a difference to their perspective, but media viewing may also help define what it means to be a particular age, gender and class (for example, an adolescent middle class girl). In short, media information about social groups is argued to shape viewers' conceptions of their own as well as others' identities.

Some (e.g., Comstock & Paik, 1991; Potter, 1993; Wilson, 1995) have argued that cultivation theory is simplistic and that not enough emphasis is given to the mediating factors that affect cultivation. Further, Gunter (1994) argues that the cultivation effect may be program- or content-specific rather than the result of total media viewing, and may be dependent on selective attention to programs that reinforce one's view of the world. Particularly in accessing social media, one perspective is that viewers have the option to consolidate their own worldview and retreat from exposure to dominant content. However, revisions of the theory (e.g., Gerbner et al., 1994) have sought to redress such criticisms and to place an increasing emphasis on the interaction between the viewer and the medium.

2.2. Social learning theory and social-cognitive accounts

While cultivation theory tries to explain media effects on society in general, other psychological theories have been concerned with understanding the long- and short-term effects of media exposure, especially televised violence, on the attitudes and behaviours of individuals, particularly children.

Perhaps the most widely accepted account of the way in which televised content affects the attitudes and behaviours of the developing child is Bandura's social learning theory (1971, 1986). Bandura argued that people learn behavioural responses such as aggression either by direct experience in which their own aggressive behaviour is reinforced, or by observing that such behaviour brings rewards to others (that is, through vicarious reinforcement). Further, media characters are -along with parents, peers

and others - the sources that provide the text for modelling specific attitudes and behaviour, and attitudes and behaviours that are learned at a young age through habitual exposure to such models are argued to be relatively resistant to change. For instance, through observing the behaviour of televised models, children come to learn which attitudes and behaviours are accepted and rewarded and which are punished, and they will be motivated to imitate media models whose behaviour is rewarded.

In this way, social learning theory emphasises both the imitative and disinhibitive effects of media violence. Repeated exposure to aggression in television, videogames, or online can teach children novel aggressive behaviours that become part of their cognitive structure and behavioural repertoire. It can also reduce viewers' inhibitions against aggression. For instance, children may imitate specific aggressive behaviours that are effective in achieving desired outcomes for others (Bandura, Ross, & Ross, 1961). They may also learn that if others can behave aggressively without being caught and punished, then it is all right for them to behave aggressively too. That is, they may learn that aggression is a typical and permissible way of solving problems or attaining goals (Bandura, 1973; see Section 3).

Moreover, in its later revisions (Bandura, 1986, 1994), social learning theory argues that a viewer's interpretation of a televised message mediates imitation and learning. For instance, Bandura argues that interpretations are a function of contextual cues like the type of model who engages in violence and the consequences delivered to the model.

Later models also draw on cognitive priming (e.g., Berkowitz, 1990; Jo & Berkowitz, 1994; also see Bushman, 1998). These augment social learning theory by emphasising the immediate and short-term effects of media exposure. They focus on the way in which televised content activates or 'primes' related thoughts and behavioural responses. For instance, watching televised aggression may trigger negative feelings (such as anger

or fear) which, in turn, prime other aggressive feelings, thoughts, memories and behavioural tendencies. Once this cognitive associative network is triggered or activated, how the individual perceives the situation (cognitive appraisals), what they say to themselves (self-statements), and other higher-order cognitions determine whether or not aggression occurs. That is, these variables affect the link between media-activated thoughts and actual behaviour (see Jo & Berkowitz, 1994).

One important factor affecting the relationship between media events and the viewer's subsequent behaviour is the communication's meaning for the audience. Aggression-related thoughts will not be activated unless the depicted scenes, are considered aggressive by the viewers - for example, many viewers may not consider rough play in contact sports such as football to be aggressive. Aggressive thoughts and inclinations activated by the portrayal might also be restrained if the viewer thinks that the observed aggression is unjustified and risky behaviour that is likely to have negative consequences. Finally, viewers who identify with the perpetrator of the aggression or who see the aggression as realistic are especially likely to have aggression-related thoughts activated by viewing it.

Thus, cognitive priming accounts locate the effects of televised violence in information processing and the priming of semantically-related thoughts. Moreover, although they focus on the immediate or short-term effects of exposure, cognitive priming accounts also assume that repeated exposure to media violence leads to a greater probability that aggressive ideas and inclinations will be activated because of the effects of prior learning.

2.3. Social-developmental model

Both modelling and cognitive priming accounts are essentially one-directional. Media content is believed to influence audience members. The more integrative social developmental model (Huesmann & Miller, 1994) describes the cognitive basis of learned patterns of social behaviour and places greater emphasis on the reciprocal relationship between the viewer

and the medium.

Similar to social learning theory, Huesmann argued that social behaviour is controlled by mental “programs” or “scripts” that are acquired in childhood, stored in memory, and used at some later time as a guide for behaviour. He also assumed that television content has an important impact on the formation, development and maintenance of cognitive scripts for how to behave in a variety of circumstances (for example, in response to a violent event, or when trying to resolve an interpersonal conflict). A script is essentially a sequence of vignettes - it might be one person hitting another in anger over something the other person has done. A script suggests what events are likely to happen in the environment, how the person should behave in response to these events, and what the likely outcome of those behaviours will be (Huesmann & Miller, 1994). When confronted with a social situation, the person may select a script from memory to represent the situation and then assume a role in the script. Moreover, a script is more likely to be retrieved as a guide for behaviour if the current situation closely resembles the encoded situation. For instance, acts of aggression that are seen as realistic may also be seen as more relevant to the solving of future conflicts than less realistic ones.

Huesmann further emphasised the importance of personal and interpersonal factors as intervening variables that link media exposure and subsequent behaviour of the viewer and his or her interests in particular media content. For instance, he proposed that a heavy diet of viewing violence sets in motion a sequence of processes based on these personal and interpersonal factors that results in many viewers not only becoming more aggressive but also developing an increased appetite for more violent content. Factors such as poor academic skills, low social popularity, identification with characters, belief in the realism of the content shown on TV, and rehearsal of or fantasising about content may be important to maintaining the violence viewing-aggression relationship in children. Thus, aggressive viewers are more likely to watch more violent programs, to have a large network of

aggressive associations that are primed by viewing, and to retrieve aggressive scripts when confronted with real-life situations that involve conflict.

Implicit in this account is the assumption that young children, especially those under the age of 7 or 8 years, may be particularly susceptible to learning from TV because of the way in which they make sense of televised scripts. Based on their level of development and maturity, younger children can be expected to interpret these scripts in a somewhat different way than will older children or adults. Although children vary considerably in how and when they develop various skills marked differences between younger and older children have been found in the strategies they use to make sense of new information and in memory limits that constrain the amount of information that they can take in (Kail, 1990; Siegler, 1991). Thus, young children may have more difficulty connecting scenes and drawing conclusions about whether behaviour was rewarded or punished (Wilson, et al., 1996). Young children may also have more difficulty distinguishing reality from fantasy and may have a greater tendency to identify with and imitate television characters.

Children may also be more susceptible to imitation of media portrayals if the material viewed is consistent with experiences that they encounter in their home or social environment and if parental or sibling co-viewing provides tacit approval of the content as important, useful and worthy of attention (see Nathanson, 1999). By contrast, active input from parents or others who provide a negative commentary on violent content and set rules about viewing violent content can communicate the idea that such content is unrealistic, morally dubious, unimportant and/or not worthy of sustained attention and, in turn, reduce TV-induced aggressive inclinations (see Desmond, Singer, & Singer, 1990; Nathanson, 1999;). Media education which teaches children critical viewing skills such as the ability to recognise that incidents are fabricated, and that programs are broadcast to make

money, also allows children to better evaluate better the content that they view (Dorr, Graves, & Phelps, 1980).

2.4. Desensitisation

In understanding the effects of media content on attitudes and behaviour- and particularly portrayals of violence and aggression-an additional theoretical approach has drawn attention to the potential role of emotion. According to the desensitisation hypothesis, repeated viewing of violence leads to a reduction in emotional responsiveness to violence on the screen and to an increased acceptance of violence in real life. For instance, although young children may initially exhibit intense fright and fear reactions to violent program content (e.g., Cantor, 1994), they may become increasingly accustomed to violence in programs and may desire increasingly violent content as they become habituated or desensitised (Drabman & Thomas, 1974). Prolonged viewing of violence by children and adults alike may lead to a reduction in emotional responsiveness to real world violence, to an increased acceptance of violence in everyday life, and to the development of callous attitudes toward victims of violence.

2.5. Models of persuasion

The theoretical models above seek to explain the effects of entertainment and current affairs programming on viewers' feelings, thoughts and behaviours. Some literature has also concentrated on the effects of televised messages or media campaigns that are explicitly intended to alter attitudes and behaviour. In some cases, the intentions of television commercials can be regarded as socially desirable, such as those promoting healthy lifestyles. However, the intentions and likely outcomes of others, like much product advertising, are more debatable.

Classic models of persuasion (e.g., Hovland, Janis, & Kelley, 1953) combine characteristics of the source (e.g., attractiveness and credibility), incentives of the message appeal (e.g., fear, social acceptance, correct knowledge), and repetition and placement of the message to explain likely changes in

attitudes and behaviour. Social learning theory (e.g., Bandura, 1973) also predicts that viewers are likely to exhibit behaviour similar to role models who are credible, who explicitly model intended behaviour and who receive appropriate reinforcement. Other models of persuasion (e.g., the elaboration-likelihood model, Petty & Cacioppo, 1986) have also been used to predict the long-term effects of persuasive messages according to variations in the motivation to process the message content.

In understanding the potential effects of commercial advertising on children, special concerns arise because of cognitive developmental issues that affect message comprehension. For instance, young children up to kindergarten age are likely to have little or no appreciation of the self-serving and selling intent of product commercials (see Section 4).

2.6. The impersonal impact hypothesis and third-person effect

Finally, in understanding the effects of the media, attention has been drawn to the so-called impersonal impact hypothesis (Tyler & Cook, 1994) which argues that the links between television viewing and perceptions are generally clearer for societal level judgements (such as estimates of the crime rate) than for personal level judgements (such as estimates of the personal risk of victimisation). In a related vein, it has been argued that people assume and act on the premise that others will be influenced by mass media messages while they themselves will remain immune or relatively untouched (the third-person effect, Duck & Mullin, 1995; Perloff, 1993). This may stem from a tendency for individuals to both overestimate message effects on others and underestimate message impact on themselves-tendencies that result from a combination of cognitive and motivational biases (see Perloff, 1993). For instance, people like to feel that they are in control of their own attitudes and behaviour although they may believe in the gullibility of the mass audience.

Accordingly, it has been suggested that a significant part of the apprehension about the effects of 'harmful' media content such as violence

and commercial advertising results from beliefs about media influence on others (Lasorsa, 1992; Rojas, Shah, & Faber, 1996). In forming policy, this needs to be recognised. An emphasis must be put on measuring and reporting actual media effects and not perceived media effects, and on considering the implications of 'third-person' perceptions on calls for media censorship to protect others as well as for personal media use.

2.7. The General Learning Model

The currently dominant model for explaining the effects of violent media on cognition and behaviour is the General Learning Model (GLM, formerly General Aggression Model). This has been developed on the basis of several earlier models of learning and association, including the script component of social learning theory, cognitive neo-association, and priming theory (Anderson & Bushman, 2002; Anderson et al., 2004; Anderson, Gentile, & Buckley, 2007; Anderson & Huesmann, 2003). According to the GLM a person's behaviour is driven by properties of their internal state, which are influenced by external variables in at least one of three primary ways: by priming current cognitions, affective states, and physiological arousal. Thus, the GLM would explain violent media effects through its impact on a person's thoughts, feelings, and/or arousal level. A number of meta-analyses from the last decade have confirmed that exposure to violent video games does increase aggressive cognitions, aggressive affect, and arousal in the short term (Anderson, 2004; Anderson & Bushman, 2001; Anderson et al., 2010; Sherry, 2001). The GLM accounts for both short- and long-term increases in aggression by positing that 'scripts', or 'programs', influence social behaviours (as described by earlier social-cognitive accounts). Scripts are acquired through learning, such as learning how to perceive, interpret, judge, and respond to events in the physical and social environment. Scripts can influence behaviour once they are encoded and rehearsed, then are recalled and utilised given a contextually congruent event. A long-term increase in aggression is explained as a cumulative learning process in which a person's observations of violence eventually lead that person to employ more aggressive scripts for behaviour.

2.8 Summary

A range of explanations has been put forward for how the media impact upon individuals and society at large. These all involve aspects of the message, the viewer, and the context in which the message is viewed. The theoretical understanding which is gained from these accounts helps to interpret the research evidence on the effects of the media, which is reviewed below.

3. Research on the effects of violent media on children

3.1 What are the concerns?

Research consistently reports very high levels of exposure to violence through electronic media. Concerns about violent media exposure have traditionally focused on television violence (Brown & Hamilton-Giachritsis, 2005; Dietz & Strasburger, 1991; Johnson, Cohen, Smailes, Kasen, & Brook, 2002; Mediascope, 1995, 1997), but more recently consumption of violent media in the format of video games has become increasingly prominent (Anderson et al., 2003; 2010; Anderson & Bushman, 2001; Bushman, & Anderson, 2009; Bastian, Jetten, & Radke, 2012; Bushman, & Huesmann, 2006; Carnagey, Anderson, & Bushman, 2007; Greitemeyer, & McLatchie, 2011). There has also been some limited attention paid to the effects of violent song lyrics (Anderson, Carnagey, & Eubanks, 2003). It is therefore not surprising that there is widespread concern about the effects of violent media on individual and societal attitudes, values, and behaviour. The concern has centred on the effects on children, for whom a range of undesirable consequences are feared. These encompass increased levels of aggressive behaviour, increased acceptance of violence as a normal part of life and as an effective way to achieve one's ends, and at the other extreme, the induction of fear and anxiety and the belief that the world is a 'mean and scary place'. The following quotes, given by children in a study by Cupit (1986), illustrate some of these reactions. 'I really hated it when the guys were out in the boat and all of a sudden the shark comes out of the water. I hate it and can't get it out of my mind.' 'I can't

forget the Part where a man is laying on a bed and a long knife came through the bed and goes through the man's neck I always look under my bed now'.

3.2 What is the evidence?

Research aiming to document whether such concerns are warranted is fraught with difficulties. Researchers must decide what 'effects' to talk about: e.g., aggressive play; psychopathic violence; anxiety; disturbing memories; desensitisation; or enjoyment of violence. In what context should these effects be measured? Is it sufficient to look at short-term outcomes or longer term effects? Which media should be examined: broadcast television; videos; computer games; particular genres; specific programs, single episodes or events? What counts as 'media violence': only physical attack or also verbal abuse; accidental injury or only intentional acts? What factors should be studied because they might strengthen or weaken the influence of the material?

Because researchers have come to different decisions on these and related questions, it is no surprise that findings vary from study to study. This creates a healthy academic debate about the interpretation of the research (Anderson et al., 2010; 2003; Freedman, 1994; Ferguson 2007; Ferguson & Kilburn, 2009; Murray, 1994). For instance, Hodge (1992) concludes: '...since an international research effort on a massive scale for more than a decade has been unable to demonstrate consistent and precise effects of television violence, it is unlikely that these effects exist' (p.73). Brown and Hamilton-Giachritsis (2005) have noted similar divergences in evidence for the negative impact of violent media on children. Even recent meta-analyses have drawn inconsistent conclusions, with some concluding that violent video games affect aggression, empathy, and pro-social behaviour across both Eastern and Western cultures (Anderson et al., 2010). Others have instead questioned the causality and magnitude of these effects (Ferguson 2007; Ferguson & Kilburn, 2009; Sherry, 2001; 2007). Still, many would argue that failure to find 'consistent and precise' effects does not mean that they do not exist, only that they are complex. The argument is similar to that about whether the wealth of

studies demonstrating higher rates of cancer among smokers does or does not demonstrate a 'causal' relationship.

Given that many studies consider only some aspects of television or video game violence, in relation to a specific set of effects, amongst a particular sub-group of children, and in a particular context, variability in findings is almost guaranteed. While many existing studies can be criticised on methodological grounds, there is also a wealth of well-conducted research, from many countries and disciplines, which tends to reveal convergent trends which are described below.

Overview of reviews of research studies: There have been literally thousands of studies on the effects of media violence on children. It is therefore unrealistic for us to attempt to review individual studies. Instead we attempt to draw out the conclusions emerging from the many competent evaluative summaries of the research. None of these is fully comprehensive in itself, but together they do allow us to identify what have emerged as important findings and trends. These conclusions are based on 57 review papers; 11 predate 1980, 19 were published in the 1980s, 14 come from the 1990s, and 13 have been published since 2000 (see Appendix A). While the reviews predominantly cover U.S. research, they also draw from research in many parts of Europe as well as Japan and New Zealand. Australian studies also featured in these reviews (e.g., Cupit, 1987; Knowles & Nixon, 1990; Palmer, 1986; Sanson & DiMuccio, 1993; Sheehan, 1986). Most research emphasis prior to 2000 has been on television (e.g., Barlow & Hill, 1985; Cupit, 1986), but since that time research on video games has become increasingly prominent (e.g., Anderson et al., 2001; 2010; Ledingham, Ledingham, & Richardson, 1993; Sneed & Runco, 1992).

Though differing in focus, most reviews are fairly consistent in their interpretation of the disparate studies they consider. The following conclusions are endorsed universally by these reviews:

- most children are exposed to significant levels of viewing of violent media over long durations, and some children's level of exposure is

extreme;

- the issues are very complex, and we do not yet understand them clearly enough to support dogmatic simplistic assertions;
- children differ in how they are affected by violence on television or in video games;
- different types of violent and aggressive materials have different effects; and
- all effects are strongly context dependent and affected by mediating factors such as parental attitudes and media education.

Despite these complexities, most reviewers also conclude that convergent generalisations do emerge with sufficient consistency to justify attention by parents, educators, legislators and the industry. Such effects can be summarised as follows:

- children who watch violence on television or are exposed to violence within video games have a higher likelihood of behaving aggressively in the short term;
- persistent consumption of violent media is related to an increased likelihood of behaving aggressively in the long term and in some cases this may include serious criminal violence;
- consumption of violent media is only one of a number of factors which contribute to the tendency to violence and aggression, and its contribution is small to moderate (as is the case for all other measured antecedents of violence);
- some children enjoy, and develop an appetite for, viewing violent material;
- viewing violence on television leads to immediate distress and fear in many children;
- many children retain longer-term recurrent disturbing memories from viewed violence;
- high levels of violence viewing are associated with heightened general fearfulness about life;
- these effects are consistent across Western and Eastern cultures;

- beside increased aggression and fearfulness effects include decreased empathy, and reduced pro-sociality,
- continual exposure to media violence increases the likelihood that children will be desensitised to real violence;
- age and gender are important influences on the nature of the effects;
- boys tend to be more directly affected than girls;
- negative effects of violent media are more consistently observed in younger than older children;
- most children's preferences are for exciting and humorous media, and violence is generally unwelcome except for its association with high levels of action; and
- there is widespread community concern, particularly amongst parents and teachers, based in part on direct experience of the effects of violent media on with children.

A small number of discordant findings contradict particular trends.

Freedman (1994) disputes whether research findings of an association between TV violence viewing and later aggressive behaviour demonstrate causal effects, and also emphasises the difficulty of controlling the many other influential variables, which is undeniable. More recent meta-analyses, such as those by Ferguson (2007), Ferguson and Kilburn (2009), and Sherry (2001), also question the links between violent media and negative cognitive and behavioural outcomes. Hodge and Tripp (1986) suggested children may be little affected by media violence because they have a sophisticated understanding of the 'reality' of television. However, most general theories of cognitive development, and many specific research studies, suggest that children find it quite difficult to separate televised fantasy from life reality (e.g., Flavell, 1986; Wright, Huston, Reitz, & Piemyat, 1994).

There is no general agreement on the psychological processes that underlie these influences though all of the frameworks described in Section 2 are commonly adopted. Over time emphasis has slowly shifted from more mechanistic explanations, with the child as passive learner, to more

cognitive formulations, with the child seen as playing an active part in drawing meaning and values from media.

Violent videogames: Newer forms of media, including those involving videogames and the Internet, give the child an increasingly active role. Many of these have violence as a central theme, and the child often needs to perform violent acts to achieve the end goal of the game (e.g., use a handheld electronic 'gun' to 'kill' characters on the screen). Since the child is actively encouraged to identify with the aggressive 'hero', and to rehearse aggressive acts, and is rewarded for doing so, it seems likely the processes identified in social learning theory and in models involving 'priming' and 'scripts' (such as GLM) will be even more salient. Indeed, research has documented that play with violent videogames does result in higher levels of aggressive behaviour (Anderson & Bushman, 2001; Irwin & Gross, 1995), physiological arousal (Segal & Dietz, 1991), aggressive mood (Fleming & Rickwood, 1999), desensitisation (Bushman & Anderson, 2009) and changes in self-perception (Bastian, Jetten, & Radke, 2012). It has been argued that engagement with violent video games may have more detrimental effects compared to other media that require less personal engagement (Anderson, Gentile, & Buckley, 2007; Polman, Orobio de Castro, & Van Aken, 2008).

Do the documented effects of media violence matter in real terms? As noted, any relationship found between media exposure and attitudes or behaviours is bound to be small because of the number of other variables involved. This has led some reviewers to suggest that they are of little practical consequence. This issue was directly addressed by Rosenthal (1986) who clarified the relationship between small statistical effects and the actual numbers of people affected. Rosenthal reworked the small effects found by Huesmann, Eron, Lefkowitz, and Walder (1984) to demonstrate that their measured relationships between child aggression and adult criminality (centring about a correlation of 0.12) meant that 'For every 100 children below average in childhood aggression, only 44 will be above the median in adult criminality compared to the 56 we would find among the 100 children above average in childhood aggression' (p.148). He commented: 'That

difference of 12 per 100 can translate into enormous social, economic, and human differences' (p.148). He then applied the same analysis to relationships between exposure to media violence and aggressive behaviour in 32 samples of children from four countries to conclude '...we can increase the accuracy of selection of high- vs low-aggressive children from a knowledge of high vs low exposure to media violence, most of the time from 16 to 30%' (p.149). More recently a 17-year longitudinal study examined television viewing and aggressive behaviour in a community sample of 707 individuals (Johnson, et al., 2002). There was a significant association between the amount of time spent watching television during adolescence and early adulthood and the likelihood of subsequent aggressive acts against others. This association remained significant after previous aggressive behaviour, childhood neglect, family income, neighbourhood violence, parental education, and psychiatric disorders were controlled statistically. This study demonstrates that the consumption of television per se may have a range of long-term negative outcomes.

3.3. Conclusion

For at least 30 years since 1980 there has been a consensus amongst most of the psychological research community actively involved in media research that violence on television contributes to aggressive behaviour, to anxiety about becoming a victim and to callousness with respect to the impact of violence on others. Studies have predominantly, but not exclusively, focused on children as consumers and on television as a medium. The evidence for these links is as strong as that for the contribution of any other studied contributor to community violence. The task of psychologists is no longer to demonstrate an effect, but to tease out its complexities and develop processes of amelioration and remediation.

4. Television advertising and children

4.1. What are the concerns?

Children in the US are estimated to account for up to \$30 billion in direct spending annually (Calvert, 2008). It might not be surprising then to find that while watching television children are exposed to approximately 40,000 advertisements each year (Kunkel, 2001) and that the number of toy advertisements aimed at children has more than doubled in the past 25 years (Larson, 2001). This level of exposure creates concerns since children are thought to be particularly vulnerable to being deceived and exploited by advertising because they lack the cognitive skills to defend themselves against its persuasive intent. Young children have difficulty distinguishing television advertising from other program content, in recognising the persuasive intent of advertising, and in understanding the language of advertising (Dickinson, 1997). Without these abilities, children's attitudes and desires, and ultimately their behaviour, are thought to be more readily moulded by the content of media advertising. This can lead to family conflict when children pressure parents to purchase products like toys that parents may consider to be unnecessary, inappropriate or too expensive, or food products that parents may consider to be unhealthy. There is added concern, particularly for older children and adolescents, that cumulative exposure to advertising will affect children's general values by socialising them into over-materialistic ways (Gunter & McAleer, 1997) and by encouraging them to adopt values that may be in conflict with those of their parents (see Section 2.1).

More recently, serious concerns have arisen also about the effects of sexualised images in media advertising. Direct sexualisation of children occurs when children are presented in advertising in ways that are modelled on sexy adults. Children are dressed in clothing and posed in ways designed to draw attention to adult sexual features that the children do not yet possess. Less obvious sexualisation of children occurs through the ubiquitous sexualised advertising and popular culture targeted at adults.

Although there is little research evidence from Australian samples, the American Psychological Association convened a task force on the sexualisation of girls in 2007 that evaluated evidence suggesting that sexualisation has negative consequences for girls and the rest of society. According to the APA report, (APA, 2007), the cumulative exposure of children and young people to sexualised images and themes has negative effects in many areas, including self-objectification, links with eating disorders, low self-esteem, and depression or depressed mood, diminished sexual health.

4.2. What is the evidence?

Are children aware of television and other media advertising? In order to critically evaluate advertising, children must be aware of when they are being exposed to advertising messages. Research indicates that children are generally able to differentiate advertisements from programs by 5 years of age, or even earlier (Moore, 2004). For example, Dorr (1986) reported that a majority of 5-7 year olds could raise their hand or shout out when a commercial appeared during a broadcast. However being able to discriminate advertisements from program material does not necessarily mean that children are aware of the persuasive intent of advertising. For many young children, their ability to identify advertisements depends simply on an awareness of the perceptual features common to many advertisements, like shorter length, frequent repetition, louder volume, music, and fast-paced production features (Cupitt, Jenkinson, Ungerer, & Waters, 1998; Gunter & Furnham, 1998).

While the results of research to date on children's awareness of television advertising are reasonably consistent, it is likely that recent changes in the 'standard' format of advertising and program material that make the task of discriminating advertising and program content for children even harder. A genre of what have been called 'product-based programs' or 'program-length commercials' is now very common in children's media, in which objects or characters that are both central to the program content are

extensively marketed as toys. In the guise of a TV show, movie, or computer/video game children are thus exposed to a range of products, with the aim of stimulating sales of these products and maintaining the program's popularity. When advertisements for such toys are shown concurrently with the associated programs, young children have difficulty distinguishing the program and commercial material (Wilson & Weiss, 1992). Moreover, after watching product-based programs, when given access to the associated toys children play less imaginatively (Fletcher & Nielsen, 2012). In addition, there are 'host-selling' children's programs where products like toys, sports equipment, and fast foods are specifically promoted (ABA, 1996). Conversely, program formats are infiltrating advertisements, which now include elements of soap opera, documentary, and skit-based comedy (Dickinson, 1997). Thus, the task of discriminating advertising and program material is becoming more difficult, and this raises concerns about a potential increase in the impact of advertising on children.

Do children understand the intent of advertising? The most important difference between advertising and most other program content is its persuasive intent. Advertising exists to sell products, and there is a concern that children who do not understand this intent may be more vulnerable to advertising claims. Although children can distinguish advertisements from television programs using auditory and visual cues by the age of five (Moore, 2004), most do not recognise the persuasive intent of television advertising until around eight years old, and even some ten year olds do not reliably understand this (Kunkel, 2001; Oates, Blades, Gunter & Don, 2003). When children understand the persuasive intent of advertising, they are more likely to think critically about it and to question the truthfulness of advertising claims. In contrast, children who lack this understanding are likely to believe that television advertisements always tell the truth (Gunter & McAleer, 1997)

Given the limited ability of young children to evaluate the credibility of advertising claims, many commentators believe that advertisers have a

special responsibility not to include deceptive content in advertising directed at children. In this context, deceptive content should be broadly defined to include not only misinformation, but also the presentation of information in ways that can be confusing for young children, for example, using special effects that suggest products (especially toys) have characteristics they do not possess (Gunter & Furnham, 1998; Van Evra, 1998), presenting more information than a child can process in the limited time of the advertisement, or using language, for example, in disclaimers, that is too sophisticated for young children to understand (e.g., 'some assembly required', Gunter & Furnham, 1998).

How do children respond to advertising? Advertising has the potential to have a range of effects on children, like increasing their product awareness, their positive attitudes towards a product, their inclination to purchase them or actually doing so, and for younger children, their tendency to request purchase from parents (Gunter & Furnham, 1998). However, attempts to document specific effects of advertising on children have yielded mixed results.

With respect to attitudes toward products, Riecken and Yavas (1990) reported that the 8-12 year old children they surveyed generally held negative opinions about advertisements and questioned their truthfulness, but their attitudes toward specific products were more varied. Attitudes toward toy advertisements were less negative than those toward cereal or over-the-counter drug advertisements. These results suggest that children are active viewers and interpreters of television and that their own interests and motivations can lead to more discriminating responses to advertising (Gunter & Furnham, 1998).

However, it is clear that the interests of children are targeted and, thereby, exploited by advertisers. Surveys of the content of advertising directed to children consistently demonstrate that it is dominated by advertisements for foods high in sugar, fat, and salt and by advertisements for toys. There has

been considerable concern for some time among consumer watchdogs, health professionals, and parent groups in Australia about the long-term negative impact of such advertising on children's health and consumer behaviour (Parliament of Victoria, 1998; Young Media Australia, 1997). For example, the Royal Australian College of Physicians (1999) attempted to increase public awareness about the strong link between time spent viewing television and obesity in children. They noted that television viewing is associated with an increase in children's snacking behaviour and in requests for food advertised on television, and with decreased participation in sporting activities.

Since the goal of advertising is to sell products, *what evidence is there that children's actual choices or purchase behaviour are influenced by advertising?* Young children generally do not have the means to actually buy products, but they can and do act as consumers by asking parents to purchase specific products. For example, a British study (Greenberg, Fazal, & Wober, 1986) reported that 85% of a sample of 4-13 year olds acknowledged that they had asked their parents to buy advertised products, and 66% claimed that their parents had met their request. More broadly and importantly exposure to television advertising has been related to increasing materialistic values and more parent-child conflicts, resulting from children making a greater number of purchase requests (Buijzen & Valkenburg 2003).

When children have the option to choose products themselves, do advertising effects still hold? Pine and Nash (2003) asked pre-school aged children to choose a product that a child of their age and gender would like. Children were shown pictures of items with a brand that had been heavily advertised on television during the time of the study and similar items without a brand. Children chose the advertised branded product over the non-branded equivalent more than two thirds of the time.

Borzekowski and Robinson (2001) examined how advertising impacts on the

food preferences of children aged between two and six years. Using a randomised control trial, children viewed a cartoon with and without embedded food advertisements, were shown pairs of pictures of similar foods (one of which they had seen advertised) and asked to indicate which one they preferred. Children were more likely to prefer food items they had seen advertised, and this preference was amplified the more advertisements they had seen. In complementary research, the effect of food advertising was shown to be enhanced when children were exposed to reinforcing input from adults or peers concurrently with exposure to the advertisement (e.g., Stoneman & Brody, 1981). While co-viewing with adults is a potentially important mediator of advertising effects, it is important to note that some Australian research indicates that co-viewing with young children is least likely to occur when children are watching programs (and advertisements) specifically designed for young age groups (Cupitt et al., 1998). Therefore, for much of children's television viewing, the important mediating influence of adults is likely to be absent.

4.3. Methodological issues for research.

A more complete understanding of the effects of advertising will require some advances in research design. The impact of advertising has often been assessed in laboratory contexts and/or after short-term exposure. There is a need for more 'ecologically valid' research that mirrors the real-life conditions of exposure for children, which typically involve a family context and repeated viewing over long periods of time. Short-term effects of advertising may not be sustained over longer periods, while other effects may only become apparent in the longer term. Most studies to date are correlational, so it is difficult to determine whether advertisements influence children's attitudes and behaviour, or whether attitudes and behaviour determine what television programming is viewed. A further issue revolves around evaluations of the validity of research conducted and financed by financial stakeholders (e.g., toy companies) that does not go through the normal peer review process. Finally, there is some dissatisfaction with narrowly-based 'effects' research; more qualitative approaches that attempt

to understand children's experience of television and the meanings they make of it are likely to provide further insight into children's relationship with television advertising and how it impacts upon their development. However, while these methodological concerns are relevant to researchers in the field, the general findings of research on children and advertising using a variety of paradigms do appear to be more consistent than contradictory. Overall, the research literature provides evidence that children are affected by advertisements, and that regulation of the nature and timing of advertisements directed at children is warranted (Brand, 2007).

4.4 Conclusions

Television advertising is a significant influence in children's lives and has been shown to influence their attitudes and consumption behaviour. While young children may be especially vulnerable because they have difficulty discriminating advertising and program content and do not understand advertising's persuasive intent, the more discriminating and critical attitude of older children does not necessarily protect them from the persuasive influence of advertising any more than it does adults (see Section 2.5).

Further research is necessary to understand the processes of advertising influence. With new media embedding advertisements in more sophisticated ways, research on advertising in new media is critical. The establishment of appropriate standards for children's advertising and the provision of media education for children and parents will be important in reducing the potential for negative advertising effects.

We turn now from the impact of the media on children, to the role of the media in society more generally. The two issues to be analysed are how crime and ethnicity are represented in the media.

5. Media representations of crime

5.1 What are the concerns?

It is widely assumed that the media, especially television, newspapers and the internet, are primary sources of our knowledge and understanding of crime issues (Fields & Jerin, 1996; Nguyen, Ferrier, Western, & McKay, 2005). However, there is widespread concern that the level and type of crime reported in the media present a distorted view of the real level of crime in the community (Fields & Jerin, 1996; Windschuttle, 1988). Windschuttle (1988) points to the brevity of TV news reports, the focus on visual images, and the resulting high degree of selectivity in what is reported as reasons for this.

The concern is that such misrepresentations may shape public attitudes about the following questions:

- what is the extent and nature of crime and 'dangerousness' in society?
- who are the perpetrators of crime? and
- what are the necessary and effective responses to crime?

For example, if media reporting leads the public to believe that crime is 'out of control' and perpetrated largely by a particular segment of society, this may lead to negative stereotypes about that group, and to support for draconian measures against it. Further, if people wrongly believe that they are living in a high-crime, high-violence society or neighbourhood, they may respond by becoming isolated from their community, reducing personal wellbeing as well as the strength of civil society (Mazerolle, Wickes, & McBroom, 2010). Below we provide a brief overview of the evidence on whether the media accurately report real-life crime, and the possible consequences of misrepresentation of crime. Of course, crime is also prominent in fictional programs, e.g., in the host of police dramas and thrillers, as well as real-life crime produced as entertainment for 'reality television' shows (Fishman & Cavender, 1998). However, due to space constraints and the very limited research that has addressed the impact of fictional and entertainment-based portrayals of crime, we do not address

this genre of media here.

5.2 What is the evidence?

Do the media give an accurate representation of the amount and type of crime? Studies of the relationship between media coverage of crime and official crime data demonstrate that crime news coverage 'provides a map of the world of criminal events that differs in many ways from the one provided by official statistics' (Sacco, 1995, p.143). Skogan and Maxfield (1981) suggested that changes in the amount of crime news coverage seem to bear little relationship to variations in the actual volume of crime between places or over time. Whereas official crime statistics indicate that most crime is non-violent, media reports in many instances suggest the opposite (Garofalo, 1981). Some studies focusing on media treatment of crime news have documented that they tend to over-represent crimes of violence and give exaggerated assessments of risk and dangerousness.

This research has included an examination of local print media (e.g., Marsh, 1991; Windhauser, Seiter & Winfree, 1990), as well as analyses of television crime news reports (Surette, 1992). Weatherburn, Matka and Land (1996) reported that there is a substantial difference between the actual levels of violent crime in the community and community perceptions about the nature of this crime. For example, Schwartz (1999) noted that portrayals of violent crimes in schools in the US created the perception that schools are dangerous places, but, when considered in relation to the 114 million children in US schools, the rates of violence are actually very low (see also Kupchick & Bracy, 2009). In Australia, in the period from 1990 to 2007, the rate (per 100,000 population) of homicide incidents decreased from 1.9 in 1990-91 to 1.3, in 2006-07 (Australian Institute of Criminology, 2012) despite the public's perception of there having been an increase. In an Australian survey of 82 television news bulletins conducted by Rendell (1997), the amount and type of crime reporting presented was compared with data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics Report of Crime figures. This study found there were several discrepancies between television-

reported crime and real crime. Very serious crimes such as homicides, armed robbery, abductions and sieges were over-represented in the news bulletins. Children and the elderly were over-represented as victims of crime compared to actual statistics.

Rendell (1997) also found that youth were over-represented in the media as perpetrators of crime. Despite increasing media focus on youth crime, over the five years from January 2007 to December 2011 the number of juveniles aged 10 to 17 years proceeded against in some way (excluding warnings) by NSW Police fell for eight major categories of offence, rose for one and remained stable for the other seven categories. (NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, 2012). Findings such as these suggest that if viewers believe that television news accurately reflects the 'real world', they are highly likely to make incorrect estimates about the real level and types of crime in their community. For most of us, the media is the major information source available.

What is the role of the media in shaping public constructions of crime and criminality? There has been much debate about how the public constructs meaning from media portrayals of crime (Barlow, Barlow, & Chirocus, 1995). Research evidence indicates that the media do exert a critical influence on our perception of the level of crime in the community (Hans & Dee, 1991; Schlesinger, Tumber, & Murdoch, 1991), although knowledge and understanding of crime are also connected to personal attitudes and demographic variables such as age, sex, and ethnicity, as well as being derived from a variety of other sources including family and friends (Rountree & Land, 1996). When the experiences of individuals as victims or offenders appear to signal a larger social issue, media representations play a crucial role in the ensuing construction, translation and transformation of private concerns into public issues. Consistent with cultivation theory (see Section 2.1) which suggests that television is a primary source of values, agendas and perspectives, television and other media help construct and shape the meaning of crime and criminality for the public.

Sacco (1995) suggests that particular crime problems are often framed to imply particular needs, e.g., for increased police patrols, better investigation, more effective prosecution, or tougher sentences – and more recently, greater public surveillance via CCT cameras. Alternative frames which might imply needs such as better gun control, greater social equity, attention to less visible crimes such as family violence, or a focus on rehabilitation, are less frequently aired in the media. The consequences of this kind of framing process upon the construction of crime have been understood in the past using the notion of ‘moral panic’, and later, by the ‘superpredator’ script.

The notion of moral panic was introduced in the 1970s to describe the anger or outrage directed at certain groups in the community, largely created by negative representations and images of those groups in the media (Cohen, 1972). Simpson (1997) argued that the media continue to play a crucial role in the creation of moral panic by depicting crime in a sensationalist format and presenting news in ways that give priority to attracting viewers rather than accurate reporting of events (see also Critcher, 2003). Moral panic, in scapegoating certain groups (e.g., youth, motorcycle gangs, or ethnic groups) serves to divert attention from wider, more complex causes of social problems like crime, and narrows the scope for meaningful debate in the community where it occurs.

The notion of a ‘superpredator’ frame or script was proposed by Gilliam and Iyengar (1998) as an outcome of increasing levels of media attention on crime. In this process, reporting of crime news affects perceptions of the prevalence of crime committed by various groups in the community. In a controlled study, Gilliam and Iyengar (1998) found that the inclusion of close-up photographs of suspects of particular ethnicity increased the level of fear in viewers of crime stories. The researchers also found that the increased fear of crime translated into increased endorsement of harsher penalties among whites and decreased support for this solution among the

pictured ethnic groups. This study strongly suggests the importance of media portrayals of crime in the formation of public opinion about crime, and the impact this has upon those groups in the community that become the focus of a superpredator script.

Does media violence contribute to criminal activity? Research concerning the link between homicide and media violence is limited. Cantor and Sheehan (1996) point to the difficulty in isolating effects for homicide media reports because they are relatively common. Cantor and Sheehan (1996) noted several similarities between homicides in Clifton Hill, Melbourne and Hungerford, UK, which were proximal in time, and argued that media reports may allow a potential perpetrator to identify with a model, and that this identification may influence or trigger later similar anti-social behaviour. Similar copycat hypotheses have been formulated linking the events at Port Arthur in 1996 with the murders at Dunblane in Scotland only weeks before (Brown, 1996). Another approach is to ask offenders directly if their crimes were copycat crimes. Surette (2002) surveyed 81 youths, of whom about one quarter reported that their crimes were copycat crimes.

Research in this area is complex and it is difficult to establish to what extent exposure to media violence contributes to criminal activity in adults. So many variables can impact upon this relationship that no firm predictions about such a relationship can be made without longitudinal studies.

'*Newsworthiness*'. Sercombe (1997) argues that crime stories meet several of the criteria for economy in news production and for newsworthiness. The reporting of crime has the appeal of human drama and can usually be assimilated by viewers into pre-existing personal stereotypes. Media reporting often highlights random and unexpected crimes, with the consequence that individuals are able to identify themselves as potential victims and believe that they are exposed to a similar threat. This contributes to the perceived relevance of the crime, enhancing the appeal of crime stories. Sercombe (1997) also argues that the time-limited nature of

crime stories adds to their newsworthiness, since the material can easily be slotted into the news presentation format. Investigative reporting that involves intensive gathering and formulating of information and the seeking of authoritative discourse is less likely to be adopted than the gathering of news from institutional sources such as the police.

The attention of researchers has also turned towards developing theoretical models which explain the selective nature of the journalistic decision making process about crime reporting. Pritchard and Hughes (1997) attempted to develop such a model, defining four forms of deviance that are thought to account for much of the variation in decisions about which crimes to report. In a large-scale study of 100 homicides in one US State, they found that the most consistent predictor of newsworthiness was whether the victim was under the age of 18 or over the age of 62. Homicides that involved white suspects or victims, and those with female victims, were also found to be most newsworthy. A homicide with a female suspect diminished its newsworthiness. Pritchard and Hughes (1997) concluded that journalists evaluate a crime story using readily available information, such as race, gender and age, that is combined to determine the status and cultural deviance of the crime, and it is these forms of deviance that most clearly determine newsworthiness. Gruenewald, Pizarro and Chermak (2009) also examined the criteria news media use to evaluate the newsworthiness of homicide incidents occurring in Newark, New Jersey between the years of 1997 to 2005. Their results lend some support to the theory that cultural typification based on race and gender is a key criterion of newsworthiness.

Does media reporting affect fear of crime? Research findings regarding the strength of the relationship between exposure to media reports of crime and fear of crime are inconclusive (Sparks, 1992). Some evidence suggests that media reporting plays an important role in cultivating a fear of crime within the community (Dowler, Romer, Jamieson, & Aday, 2003), although this relationship may sometimes be weak (Dowler, 2003) and determined by contextual factors (Banks, 2005). A relationship between television viewing

and fear of crime has been reported for televised crime news but not for crime drama or total television viewing (O’Keefe & Reid-Nash, 1987). Coleman (1993) found that crime news increased viewers’ level of fear for the world at large but not for their immediate locality. Findings from other studies have failed to establish a relationship between TV crime coverage and fear of crime when various confounding variables such as age, education and income are controlled (see for example Gomme, 1986). Several studies have reported no relationship between exposure to newspaper crime coverage and fear (e.g., Chadee & Ditton, 2005), whereas others have established a significant relationship between them (e.g., Schlesinger, et al., 1991; Williams & Dickinson, 1993). Heath and Gilbert (1996) concluded that the relationship between media exposure and fear of crime is stronger when societal rather than personal or local fear is measured, and when the fear of violence is measured rather than the probability of personal victimisation.

Many factors may contribute to these equivocal research findings. Weiten (1992) suggested that fear of crime derives from individual perceptions about crime that have emotional, behavioural and cognitive components. Since consumers of media are actively engaged in constructing their own meaning from the crime coverage available to them, many individual differences in meanings are likely. Williams and Dickinson (1993) suggested that a person’s fear of victimisation is influenced by factors that include concern about personal safety, prior experience with crime or violence, the credibility of the media source and information gained from significant others. Viano (1995) notes that controlled studies are difficult to design because there are few population groups not exposed to media with which to make comparisons. Variations in research methodologies also make findings across studies difficult to compare.

How do the media represent victims of crime? In recent years there has been an increased concern for the rights of crime victims, together with the development of many victim support services and programs. One consequence of this has been an increased focus on the tension between

victims' interests, their advocates and the media. The important issue arising from this increased media attention is how to reconcile responsible and accurate journalism with the need for privacy, dignity and respect for the victims and their families (Viano, 1995). There is considerable debate between the news media and victims and their advocates about the appropriateness of media coverage of certain crimes. In reviewing and evaluating the portrayal and treatment of crime victims in the print and electronic media, Viano (1995) cites several concerns including publishing of information on victimisation prior to notification of the victim's family, providing detailed profiles of victims, interviewing victims and/or relatives at inappropriate times, presenting graphic depictions of grief and distress, inaccuracy when describing victims, reporting unconfirmed innuendoes, intimidating or misleading victims, and untimely reports on the progress of investigations. The News of the World phone-hacking scandal provides a more recent and infamous example of such concerns (see Muller, 2011).

What is missing from media coverage of crime? Most media reports of crime give little attention to the social factors that may lie behind the commission of criminal acts and the maintenance of crime, or to the possibilities for prevention that might follow a public health perspective on crime. Explanations of crime that focus on the irrationality and pathology of individual offenders, or on their membership of a particular group, distort the social reality of crime and divert attention away from the social/structural forces impacting on crime and criminality. The use of police sources as the primary informants on crime also means that the police perspective on crime is given priority and a policing solution is more likely to be offered (Fishman, 1981). Traditional law and order responses tend to be reaffirmed as the most efficient way to manage crime problems (Sacco, 1995). This police-focused coverage restricts the parameters of discussion and debate about the crime problem and alternative strategies to control it (Ericson, 1991). The growth of the entertainment value of crime reporting and the constraints placed upon investigative journalism also result in extremely limited space in news bulletins for the presentation of etiological

or social factors connected to the reported crimes.

Over the last two decades there has been increasing research attention given to violence as a public health issue, much like any other health issue such as cancer or heart disease. This approach investigates the interactions between the victim, the agent of injury or death, and the environment to help define risk factors and develop methods to prevent the behaviour (Stevens, 1998). A public health approach would thus change the emphasis from law enforcement to one that concerns itself with violent crime as predictable and preventable.

In a study by Dorfman, Woodruff, Chaver and Wallack (1997), only one of almost 1800 television news stories (from 214 hours of local television news) in the United States used an explicit public health frame. Dorfman et al. (1997) suggested that if the most popular sources of news continue to report on violence and crime primarily in isolation from their social context, then the opportunities for widespread support for public health solutions is severely reduced. Stevens (1998) also considers a shift in the manner in which journalists report crime to be crucial in shifting towards a greater emphasis on a preventative, public health perspective.

Stevens, Dorfman, Thorson and Houston (1998) proposed a U.S. Violence Reporting Project providing journalists with suggestions about how to present violent incidents in the context of a public health approach. These suggestions include data collection from several disciplines, which would allow crime reports to include the contexts of violent crime, risk factors, and follow-up reporting on the consequences of the crime, including costs to the community.

5.3. Conclusions

Despite the scarcity of Australian research on this topic, the concern that the media give a distorted view of the amount and type of crime in the community appears to be well-founded. It is clear that both the amount of

crime, and the amount of violence involved, is greatly exaggerated. The media also give a distorted picture of who are likely to be perpetrators and victims – the ‘Jill Meagher phenomenon’ in Melbourne in 2012 is a case in point (see Stephens, 2012). The media are the primary source of public information on these matters, so it is likely that these misrepresentations are responsible for the clear misperceptions in the community about the level and nature of crime, as would be predicted by cultivation theory (see Section 2.1).

It is more difficult to research the direct impact of the media on public attitudes such as fear of crime, and appropriate responses to it. However, the usual framing of crime stories tends to give priority to some interpretations over others. Adopting narrow criteria of ‘newsworthiness’ leads not only to a highly selective process of deciding on what to cover and what not to, but also to scant attention being given to causal factors in the social context or to a range of options for responding to the problem. A broader, more comprehensive approach which gave more priority to such coverage might facilitate consideration of possible preventative or public health responses to crime.

6. Media representations of mental illness

6.1 What are the concerns?

People with mentally illness have been consistently portrayed in the media as violent, unpredictable and dangerous (Mindframe 2012; Wahl, 2003; Coverdale, Nairn, & Claasen, 2002). This has been shown particularly in the case of schizophrenia, with depression the most reliably and sympathetically reported upon mental illness (Mindframe 2012). Mindframe suggested that a common frame for these portrayals is the “us versus them” dichotomy, with a minority of reports including first person stories with the illness.

A study by Thornton and Wahl (1996) suggested that negative media reports contributed to negative attitudes towards those with a mental illness.

Interestingly, they also found that the inclusion of corrective information concerning the relative infrequency of violent crime among the mentally ill mitigated these negative effects. In contrast, Wahl and Lefkowitz (1989) found a corrective trailer preceding a film made no difference to the attitudes of viewers.

A second concern expressed around media representations of mental illness is that reports of suicides, homicides and other criminal acts will result in imitation or 'copycat' behaviour by others (Coleman, 2004). With the advent of social media it has been highlighted that "media contagion" can take effect, with items "going viral" and spreading internationally in a short space of time.

6.2 What is the evidence?

How does the media portray mental illness in relation to criminal behaviour?

Recently, the question of whether those with a mental illness are in fact more likely to commit violent crime than those without has become the focus of research (Fazel & Gran, 2006), and this has most frequently been examined in relation to those with schizophrenia. A review by Levey and Howells (1994) suggested that other, more numerous sub-groups, particularly substance and alcohol abusers, are more common perpetrators of violent crime. Mullen (1998) concluded that the offending rates of male schizophrenics who are not substance abusers is about the same as the general offending rate for young men with no history of substance abuse. More recent research confirmed these findings, with the association between schizophrenia and violent crime in part explained by increased substance abuse (Fazel, Langstrom, Hjern, Grann, Lichtenstein, 2009). The over-representation of people with schizophrenia in media crime reports may be partly due to their involvement in more unusual or bizarre crimes which are more likely to be reported by the media, hence reinforcing the public stereotype that people with schizophrenia are dangerous.

Does the media play a role in 'copycat' behaviour? Although some studies have found no significant relationship between suicide behaviour and the

reporting of suicide, others have shown that the number of recorded suicide deaths have increased after media reports of suicide, particularly where the reports detailed the *modus operandi* (Yang et al 2013, Hassan, 1996).

Joo, Kim, Ho, Yun & Lee (2012) found that peaks in suicide rates occurred after media reports of suicide and that the effect size was proportional to the publicity generated. A large meta-analysis by Stack (2003) of 42 studies found that copycat suicides were 14.3 times more likely if the reported suicide was of a celebrity, and real stories of suicide (compared to fictional stories) were 4.03 times more likely to be associated with copycat effects. Finally, they found that research based on televised stories were 82% less likely to report a copycat effect than research based on newspaper reports.

Some preliminary research has been published about media contagion in regards to suicide and self-harm sites. While it has been observed that message boards and forums can support and deter those considering self-harm, there is a clear risk that depictions and descriptions of self-harming behaviour can trigger unwanted emotional impacts on those vulnerable to harm (Luxton et al 2012).

A recent review of internet sites found 74 percent of sites to be poor in accurate content about general mental illness and affective disorders (Mindframe 2012). Fortunately other studies have shown that most people view the internet as an unreliable source of information (e.g., Lam-Po Tang & MacKay, 2010).

Researchers have encouraged public health organisations to use the internet and social media in order to outreach to those in need as well as providing alternative helpful information that does not encourage self-harm or suicide (Luxton et al 2012, Mindframe 2012). SANE Australia has developed a StigmaWatch program that reflects and acts on community concern about media stories, advertisements and other representations that stigmatise people with mental illness or may promote self-harm or suicide. An important focus of StigmaWatch is to provide positive feedback to the media

following accurate and responsible portrayals of mental illness and suicide (StigmaWatch 2012).

6.3 Conclusions

The public perception of people suffering a mental illness has been shown to be influenced by positive portrayals in narratives concerning individuals, especially of celebrities who have “come out” with mental illness (Nessler 2011, Mindframe 2012). In Australia the public awareness campaigns of *beyondblue* using examples of high profile individuals who have mental illness have made depression more widely acceptable, with states that received higher exposure showing more awareness than those with less exposure to such stories (Jorm et al 2007).

Literature reviews commissioned by Mindframe (2012) have found that mass media education campaigns about mental illness can be effective in countering stigma and misinformation in the public domain. Web-based mental health literacy resources and documentary films particularly involving first person accounts of mental illness are suggested to be particularly effective. It has been suggested that mental health professionals such as psychologists should work closely with media in stories about mental illness, and consumer groups in particular can provide the first person narratives required in combatting stigma (Mindframe 2012).

Guidelines for media reporting in Australia have been made available by Mindframe which suggest that labels be minimised by emphasising that a person “has schizophrenia” rather than being a “schizophrenic”. In Australia Patrick McGorry has recently suggested that suicide needs to be talked about openly as a public health issue in conjunction with mental illness as a contributor to suicidal ideation (McGorry 2012). This runs counter to conventional wisdom that suicide reports should minimise reporting of the means of suicide (Mindframe 2012). Following media stories of mental illness or suicide it has been suggested that the numbers of helplines be included, a guideline that seems to have been picked up by print media at least.

7. Media Representations of Diversity: The Cases of Indigenous Australians and Refugees

7.1 What are the Concerns?

Research suggests that members of dominant ethnic or racial groups tend to have limited direct contact with people from marginalised racial groups (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission [HREOC], 1991; Fowler, 1991; Meadows, 2001). As a result, much of the information that dominant group members hold regarding marginalised groups is frequently gained from the mainstream media (see Fowler, 1991; Meadows, 2001; Jakubowicz, et al., 1994). It is therefore plausible that the mainstream media play an important role in shaping public perception of marginalised groups (Blackman & Walkerdine, 2001; Fowler, 1991).

7.2 What is the Evidence?

Research has frequently found that both Indigenous Australians and refugees are represented in the mainstream news media in predominantly negative ways. For example, both Indigenous Australians and refugees or asylum seekers are frequently represented in ways that emphasize violence, threatening behaviour, unruliness, and inherent criminality (see Cunneen, 2001; Simmons & LeCouteur, 2009; Hollinsworth, 2005; Meadows, 2004; HREOC, 1991; Jakubowicz, et al., 2004; Hartley & McKee, 2000; Mickler, 1992; Mickler & McHoul 1998; Sercombe, 1995; McCallum, 2007; Windle, 2008; Marlowe, 2010; Hanson-Easey & Augoustinos, 2010; Due & Riggs, 2011; 2012 for examples of this research).

In relation to Indigenous Australians specifically, media researchers have repeatedly found that Indigenous Australians are routinely criminalised in the mainstream news media. For example, the *Royal Commission Inquiry into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody Report* (RCIADIC) (1991) found that media reports of crimes committed by Indigenous people, constructed Indigenous Australians as a “problem” and as “dissident, disruptive, or criminal”

(RCIADIC, 1991, section 12.6.7). The Report also commented on the fact that, where an Indigenous person committed a crime, media reports frequently reported the offender's race, but did not do so if they were non-indigenous.

Whilst the RCIADIC (1991) noted that racism and criminalisation in the mainstream media appeared to be lessening over the years in which the report was written, more recently Meadows (2001), Hollingsworth (2005), Jakubowicz et al. (2004) and Due and Riggs (2011) have argued that Indigenous issues are frequently only covered if they contain a criminal element. These findings are supported by Simmons and LeCouteur (2009) in research regarding two Australian riots (one involving Indigenous Australians and one non-indigenous Australians), which found that Indigenous Australians were represented as having stable attributes that caused them to behave violently, whilst non-indigenous Australians were seen as capable of 'change'. Similar issues were found by Goodall (1993) and Morris (2005) in their research on media representations of the Brewarrina 'riot', and Cunneen (2007), Budarick and King (2008) and Due and Riggs (2011) in relation to the Redfern riots.

Another example of pejorative representations of Indigenous Australians in the mainstream news media is in relation to child sexual abuse within remote Indigenous communities. Whilst any reporting of child sexual abuse is likely to be negative in its language, Langton (2007) suggests that media representations of child sexual abuse in Indigenous communities constitute a form of 'war porn', in which the suffering of Indigenous people is parodied and "played out in a vast 'reality show' through the media, parliaments, public service and the Aboriginal world" (p. 1). Langton argued that: "This obscene and pornographic spectacle shifts attention away from everyday lived crisis that many Aboriginal people endure...", a view also held by other commentators on the topic such as Stringer (2007) who has described these images as 'voyeuristic', and Cowlshaw (2004) who argued that media

coverage of the 'dysfunctional Indigenous community' leads to a moral panic which relies on stereotypes that simplify very complex issues.

In relation to asylum seekers, it has been well documented that much of the media response to asylum seekers in Australia, especially those arriving by boat, is characterised by fear and panic (see Saxton, 2003; Pickering, 2001; O'Doherty & LeCouteur, 2007; O'Doherty and Augoustinos, 2008; Klocker & Dunn, 2003). For example, Pickering (2001) argued that media coverage of asylum seekers frequently refers to such people as a 'problem', and Mares (2001) argued that asylum seekers arriving by boat in Australia are often labelled as a 'crisis'. In fact, previous research has indicated that the very terms commonly used within the media for the depiction of asylum seekers and refugees work to categorise this group of people as deviant, criminal, or sub-human, specifically by reference to their supposed illegality in terms such as 'illegal immigrants', 'illegals' or 'queue jumpers' (O'Doherty & LeCouteur, 2007; Saxton 2003). As Every (2006) and Every and Augoustinos (2007; 2008) argue, these negative terms function to mask the fact that in many instances these are people escaping from threat, and instead recasts them as a threat themselves, thereby justifying harsh and punitive interventions.

Together with the pervasive negative representation of asylum seekers, previous research has also highlighted the fact that the mainstream media rarely give a voice to asylum seekers (Due, 2008). For example, Pickering (2001) observed that the voices of asylum seekers were almost entirely absent in her analysis of news discourses in the late 1990s, and the same absence was found in Klocker and Dunn's (2003) study of the media coverage of asylum seekers and refugees in 2000-2001. Hoenig (2009) found similar results in his analysis of the mainstream media in Australia, in which even positive images of asylum seekers rarely included the voices of asylum seekers themselves.

Negative representations of asylum seekers extend even to people who have had their refugee status granted, and are now Australian citizens. Much of the research in this area has focused on the criminalisation of immigrants and refugees from the Middle East (e.g., Pugliese, 2003; Osuri, 2006; Collins, Noble, Poynting & Tabar, 2000), however Marlowe (2010) also considered the case of refugees from Sudan, arguing that there is an underlying hostility towards refugees in the mainstream media, together with a “voyeuristic fascination with trauma” (p. 9). Marlowe argued that the media provides descriptors of the lives of Sudanese refugees that are simplistically framed in terms of poverty, conflict and violence, without acknowledging the complexity and varied experiences of people who have come to Australia as refugees. These findings are echoed by Windle (2008), who argued that people from African countries are frequently represented in Australia as coming from a ‘culture of violence’, thus further drawing upon stereotypes of Africa as tribal and ‘war-torn’.

7.3 Conclusions

In sum, media analyses have found that Indigenous Australians are frequently represented as inherently violent and as alcoholic, that Indigenous Australians are frequently constructed as responsible for violence in the form of riots, and that images of sexual and other forms of abuse within Indigenous communities are used voyeuristically within the media in a manner which creates a distorted spectacle out of Indigenous communities and Indigenous lives. Similarly, previous research regarding the mainstream media’s representations of asylum seekers has found that they are de-humanised through reference to their supposed ‘non-genuineness’ and that they are represented as a ‘threat’. Very few humanizing representations have been found in this research, and asylum seekers have rarely been given a voice within the mainstream media, despite the fact that asylum seekers and refugees have spoken publically about their treatment and experiences (see, for example Mares, 2001 and Perera, 2006).

The representations outlined above have a range of implications for marginalised groups: in this instance, specifically Indigenous Australians and refugees. For example, research has linked ongoing stigma such as that seen in the mainstream news media to negative physical and mental health outcomes (Nairn, Pega, McCreanor & Rankine, 2006), to negative material implications such as poverty (Mickler, 1992), to the reproduction of racism which may in turn lead to persecution (Mickler, 1992; HREOC, 2004), and to heightened inter-community tensions (HREOC, 2004). In addition, for Indigenous Australians, such representations function to warrant further intervention into Indigenous lives on the part of white Australians.

8. Concluding comments

This analysis is not aimed at discrediting the media industry. Bone (1998) commented that 'it is curious that many people who berate the media for stereotyping groups such as the disabled, Aboriginal people or ethnic groups don't shrink at all from stereotyping the media' (p.51). With the concentration of ownership of the major media outlets in Australia in relatively few hands, such stereotyping may indeed be somewhat understandable. Nevertheless, no assumption is being made here that all media producers or journalists are the same, nor that all fail to represent issues such as violence, crime and ethnic groups in a fair and accurate way. Rather the aim has been to review existing psychological theory and research on how the media impact upon our lives.

Further, as noted at the outset, this paper has not sought to review evidence of the positive effects of the media in providing entertainment, information and education. These roles are indisputable. In choosing to review only some areas of concern regarding the media, we have been motivated to help shift the balance of media effects further towards these positive impacts, and away from the negative ones.

This review has demonstrated that, while it is relatively straightforward to document trends in media coverage which do or do not reflect 'reality',

research on how such media representations affect individuals' attitudes, values and behaviours is much more difficult. Understandably, the public (including parents) and legislators would like a simple answer on the impact of the media. Researchers cannot accommodate them because of the complexity of the issues involved. It is not reasonable to expect one single study, or even one approach, to provide a definitive answer to the questions surrounding such complexity. It is clear that effects are multiply determined. Taking TV violence as an example, it is clearly not the case that everything that might be called television violence will have a significant negative effect; that every proposed deleterious impact will occur in each case; or that effects will occur irrespective of characteristics of the viewer or the wider context.

The review has also identified many areas where the research base is not yet adequate, especially in relation to the Australian context. In general, there is plenty of documentation of the mismatch between reality and its portrayal in the media. This is true across portrayals of violence, crime and ethnic diversity, and is also pertinent to the misleading nature of some advertisements. However, with the partial exception of media violence, there are substantial gaps in the research on the impact of these mismatches on viewers. There are probably several reasons for the paucity of research, not least being the question of who stands to benefit from it (and is therefore likely to fund it). As already noted, the many interacting factors that determine whether and how particular media exposure will affect an individual make the research task difficult.

Further, the media change faster than the research can accommodate, so there will always be new questions to consider. Of particular concern at the moment is the impact of interactive modes of media, which typically involve a high level of violence. The burgeoning uses and impacts of social media in all its forms are yet to be adequately researched, and are beyond the scope of this paper. Also under-researched is the phenomenon of 'crazes' for programs and characters that often form the basis for lucrative marketing strategies, but also can create tensions between children and their parents,

teachers and other children. We currently have very little research insight into the seductive efficacy of such programs.

Despite the complexities of research in this area, we would argue that the media are such a central aspect of modern life that psychologists and others should not be deterred from engaging in high-quality research. Further, all media consumers should attempt to take an active interest in the product that they are consuming. Below we outline some suggestions to groups with different roles within society about the shape that such an active interest might take. Some of these recommendations may appear obvious, and few are entirely new. Nevertheless, they are not being acted at an adequate level or frequency. Since they are based upon and reflect the best of current psychological research, we believe it is important to articulate and reiterate them.

9. Recommendations

Virtually all members of society today are media consumers. Therefore the broadest set of recommendations is addressed to all of us in our role as consumers, suggesting ways in which we can take a more active role in influencing the media diet that is available to us. Some themes introduced here, such as monitoring, providing feedback, and lobbying, recur in the recommendations for specific groups. First parents, and then educators, are addressed, considering their particular concerns and responsibilities for children. Recommendations are then directed towards those with specific responsibilities or expertise regarding the media – media policy makers, regulators and psychologists. Finally we direct a series of recommendations to the media industry itself.

9.1. Consumers

There is a range of activities that media consumers can undertake – e.g., to monitor and audit programs; to complain to regulating bodies and the media

industry about material or policies they disapprove of, and praise those they admire; to boycott certain programs or media outlets; and to join or support lobby groups.

1. Monitoring. Frequently, we view TV and other media without paying close attention to recurring patterns in the material presented. We have all potentially been affected by the processes outlined in Section 2 - reduced sensitivity to media violence through the process of desensitisation, and a tendency to regard the media as impacting on others, not ourselves, as suggested by the third person hypothesis. Problematic aspects of the material can then easily escape our attention. By keeping simple checklists of selected aspects of media programming, we can raise our awareness, and collect valuable information to guide our future actions and decisions. We therefore recommend that consumers monitor all forms of programming they watch (including news, current affairs, drama, sport and advertisements) to determine:

- the number and nature of violent acts portrayed;
- how crime and criminals are portrayed, including whether a range of reasons for and solutions to crime are explored, whether particular types of crime and criminals are overrepresented or underrepresented, and whether the overall nature of portrayals accurately reflects the level of crime in the community;
- how different ethnic groups are portrayed, including the frequency with which members of the group appear, the roles they appear in, and how conflict between groups is represented; and
- the timing and nature of advertisements, especially those directed at children, attending to whether they are misleading, or promote desirable or undesirable behaviours and values.

2. Providing feedback. The media and their regulatory bodies are responsive to consumer demand. We therefore recommend that consumers make their views known by directing complaints about any of the above aspects of programming, and praise for good programming, to regulatory authorities

such as the the Australian Communications and Media Authority as well as to the media outlet involved. Contact details for some relevant organisations are provided in Section 9.

3. Boycotting. The size of the viewing audience is a potent driving force in determining program content. We therefore recommend that consumers follow through with their objections to program material by boycotting the program involved and informing the relevant outlet of their action.

4. Lobbying. Groups can often achieve more than a number of individuals working independently; this also reduces the effort required of any one individual. We therefore recommend that consumers join lobby and/or support groups working for more accurate and beneficial media programming, such as those listed in Section 9; or form their own group.

9.2. Parents

Besides the activities in Section 8.1, there are some specific activities parents can undertake to help ensure positive media experiences for their children.

1. Monitoring and setting limits. Given the evidence on the potential negative effects on children of viewing some media material, particularly material high in violence, parents need to assume responsibility for controlling their children's viewing habits, as they would for any other potentially harmful activity (e.g., riding bicycles without helmets). We therefore recommend that parents ensure that they know what their children are watching; and set and enforce clear rules about the amount and nature of TV programming they watch. They should also be aware of which video games their children play and what content they are exposed to via the internet.

2. Share and discuss. One of the most important findings in the research on the effects of media on children is that negative effects can be prevented or greatly reduced if the child has the opportunity to share their viewing with an

adult, and to critically discuss what is viewed. We recommend that, when their children are watching TV or DVDs, parents attempt to watch with them as much as possible, and encourage them to evaluate critically what they watch. Co-viewing with children is important even during children's programming, when many advertisements are directed towards children.

3. Encourage alternative activities. While there is clearly an important place for TV viewing in a child's life, there is currently a paucity of high quality programming for children, and TV viewing should not distract children from engaging in other more active and creative pursuits. Watching TV is often the 'easy option' when children cannot immediately think of something else to do. We therefore recommend that parents help their children to find attractive, exciting and non-violent alternative activities to TV-watching. Important among these will be engaging in pleasurable activities with parents and other family members. Provision of such alternatives is probably more efficacious than resorting to technological 'fixes' (such as the 'V-chip' which denies children access to internet sites). This same recommendation stands for extensive use of video games, which again can be used as a shortcut by parents to replace more creative forms of entertainment. Finally, although the internet is clearly an important source of information, it cannot replace other interpersonal or physically demanding activities that facilitate important elements of a child's development.

9.3. Educators

1. Media education. The media will clearly continue to play a prominent role in our lives. The research shows that the effects of the media on attitudes and behaviour are mediated by the way viewers interpret and construct what they view. It is therefore imperative that consumers are able to analyse and evaluate what they view. We therefore recommend that media education be an important part of every child's education. Media education curricula should be developed and widely disseminated amongst primary and secondary schools. A key element of such curricula should be provision of skills in

monitoring and analysing media content on the dimensions discussed here (i.e., recognising that the media portray a constructed rather than 'real' world, assessing the portrayal of violence, crime and ethnic diversity, and evaluating the accuracy and implicit values behind advertisements). They should also promote skills in communicating their views effectively to media regulators and the media industry. New technologies have made it possible for media education to incorporate active media-making.

2. Professional development. In order to present media education to their students (whether in formally designated media education courses or when integrated into other courses), teachers need to have good media literacy skills themselves. We therefore recommend that professional development seminars and courses be widely available for teachers, and that teachers attend these to increase their own media literacy skills.

3. Modelling. Since modelling is an effective teaching technique, we recommend that teachers use media as one of their teaching tools, and use this to model and promote critical reflective viewing.

4. Directing attention. We recommend that teachers at all levels from kindergarten to secondary school use their influence and example in drawing the attention of children and parents to exciting, non-violent, non-stereotyping media, and expressing their own enthusiasm over them.

5. Media education for parents. The importance of the social context on children's understanding of television advertising and its impact highlights the need for parents to be able to help children to critically evaluate advertising material. A similar conclusion holds for television violence. We therefore recommend that media education be widely available for parents as well as for children.

9.4. Psychologists

1. Research. Since exposure to media affects attitudes and behaviour, psychologists have a key role in researching the mechanisms by which these effects occur. As noted throughout this paper, it is already clear that the effects are complex. Because of this complexity, the political agendas involved, and the high level of public discussion of any research findings, many psychologists have tended to shy away from undertaking research in the area. Yet, as is also clear throughout this review, there are many questions for which we do not yet have answers. Therefore we recommend that psychologists in research settings:

- Alert psychologists in training to the research potential of the area
- Identify areas of research that have been neglected, and conduct research to address them. Besides those that have been identified throughout this review, others might include: What is the relationship between media violence and bullying? How does the media impact upon different age groups, e.g., the very old and very young? What kind of media education is most effective, for example, in developing critical attitudes toward TV advertising in different age groups or in changing patterns of TV viewing within families?
- Be prepared to present empirical evidence to refute non-supported assertions that the media do not have an influence.

2. Psychological practice. Theory and research suggest that the influence of the media is likely to be widespread (as suggested by cultivation theory) as well as varying considerably from one individual to the next. At times, the influence may result in non-adaptive cognitions, emotions and behaviours of individuals. We therefore recommend that psychologists are alert to recognising the influence of the media in the ideation and emotionality of clients, particularly the young.

3. Public comment. In their professional and community roles, psychologists are often asked for authoritative comment on questions such as whether TV

is harmful to children. In order to fulfil this role responsibly, we recommend that psychologists:

- stay abreast of the research; and
- recognising the complexity of the issues, avoid simplistic global assertions

9.5. Journalists and journalism educators

1. Best-practice examples. This review has highlighted ways in which the media's presentation of issues such as violence, crime, and ethnic diversity has the potential to have detrimental effects, including: desensitisation to violence, unrealistic beliefs about crime, stereotyping and prejudice, and simplistic responses to social issues or conflicts. We argue that a more sophisticated and complex presentation of issues is needed. We recognise that this often conflicts with the perceived need for short, highly visual and 'punchy' coverage of issues. However, we would argue that improved education would promote a positive shift in the typical reporting.

As a step towards such improved education, we therefore recommend that a collection of best-practice examples of coverage of important social issues be made and used in journalism education. Some of the characteristics of such examples would be: avoidance of excessive violence footage; avoidance of stereotyping of particular subgroups of society; presentation of varying viewpoints without setting one against the other; uncovering the legitimate underlying concerns of all parties involved without painting any as 'the enemy' or 'villain'; attempts at analysing causal factors; and suggesting a range of potential solutions. Besides being used in initial training, we recommend that this collection is also used in professional development courses for practising journalists.

2. Training in Indigenous issues. The avoidance of racism and promotion of understanding is a particularly important issue in media coverage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The 1991 Report of Royal Commission into

Aboriginal Deaths in Custody found that racial stereotyping in the media was institutional rather than individual and resulted from news values, editorial policies and routines of news gathering. The report presented a series of recommendations on the role of media in creating, confirming and negating public perceptions of Indigenous people. In particular, it recommended that training courses for journalists should include components on Indigenous issues. We endorse this recommendation.

9.6. Media producers and media industry

1. Coverage of social context. In terms of news reporting and current affairs, probably the most salient factor is the policy adopted towards reporting by media producers and proprietors. We recommend a shift in emphasis from simplistic ideas of 'newsworthiness' (focusing on speed, visual appeal, simplicity, etc.) to a commitment to increased coverage of social contextual factors so that viewers can more accurately 'make sense' of news stories. For instance, stories on crime might incorporate coverage of potential underlying factors such as poverty, discrimination, racism, fear, and unemployment. Multiple perspectives should be presented, acknowledging that there is no one 'truth' to be validated over other perspectives.

2. Portrayals of diversity. This review has shown that there are continuing limitations in the portrayal of various ethnic and cultural groups in the media. We recommend that media producers ensure that portrayals of ethnic and cultural groups reflect their diversity and strengths, and avoid stereotyped or demeaning depictions. Program content should reflect the cultural diversity of Australian and international society, and show members of various cultural groups in a wide range of social and occupational roles.

3. Addressing social problems. As noted, this paper has focused on sources of concern regarding the media, and has not attempted to review its known and potential positive roles. However, there are some examples of the use of the media to remediate social problems that are directly relevant to the

concerns addressed here, and that provide models of some ways forward. For example, in relation to ethnic relations, children's programs such as *Sesame Street* that are specifically designed to attack stereotypes can be successful (Gorn, et al., 1976). Another study by Donovan and Leivers (1993) reported on a mass media campaign using TV advertisements in Kalgoorlie, WA, to encourage employers to give Aboriginal people a 'fair go'. The campaign was shown to change community beliefs about the proportion of Aborigines in paid employment and remaining in work. Mares and Woodard (2007) reviewed a number of studies of children in experimental settings and in home settings who watched prosocial content on televisions or video. They found that television has the potential to foster positive social interactions and reduce aggression. Unfortunately, they also noted that studies of the effects of violence continue apace, whereas the numbers of studies of prosocial behavior dwindle each year. We recommend that media producers and the industry in general study such positive examples and use them as guides for their own future programming.

4. Responsiveness to the community. This review has documented that consumers, including children, tend to dislike the amount of violence on TV. It appears that violence is often used as an easy way to instil action and excitement in programs. We recommend that the industry, acknowledging its responsibility as a corporate citizen, should respond to the community's concern about TV violence in fictional programming as well as news and current affairs, hear the preferences actually expressed by children, and use its vast resources of skill and intelligence to produce exciting media material that does not rely on violence.

9.7. Policy makers and regulatory bodies

1. Using research evidence to frame policy. Despite the complexity of research in this field and the varying philosophical positions that are adopted, we argue that there are consistent trends within a large body of good empirical research that can provide guidance to policy makers and regulatory

bodies. We therefore recommend that policy makers and regulatory bodies become familiar with the research, and use it to frame policy.

2. Acknowledging community concerns. The evidence reviewed in this paper suggests that it is appropriate for there to be controls on some aspects of the media, including media violence. There is always a tension between freedom of speech and of choice, on the one hand, and regulation in the community's best interests on the other. We recommend that policy makers and regulatory bodies acknowledge that freedom of speech is not an absolute value but must be balanced against other community values. There is a particular responsibility to protect children, who are still in the process of forming their world-view, from potentially harmful media.

3. Consumer input. As noted in this review, parents express considerable concerns over the TV diet to which their children are exposed. We therefore recommend that there is consumer input into the content of television widely viewed by children, particularly in terms of the values and attitudes it presents to children. Concerns over violence in video games and the addictive nature of these games are also on the increase and we recommend that these be considered in regulating the availability of certain games, especially those with violent content.

4. Advertising policy regarding children. We recommend that effective regulations applying to advertising directed to children are developed and policed. Children's advertising should not include deceptive content, content which is too complex for young children to understand, or content that is detrimental to the health and well-being of children.

5. Classification and labelling. Policies guiding classification and labelling of media programs and video games are an integral part of consumer protection. We recommend that these policies, as with others, are based upon research evidence and are effectively applied, monitored and enforced.

Further resources and relevant organisations

Organisations:

The Australian Communications and Media Authority

Purple Building, Benjamin Offices, Chan Street, Belconnen ACT 2617
PO Box 78, Belconnen ACT 2616
Tel: 02 6219 5555; Fax: 02 6219 5353

Level 44 Melbourne Central Tower,
360 Elizabeth Street, Melbourne Vic. 3000
PO Box 13112 Law Courts, Melbourne Vic 8010
Tel: 03 9963 6800; Fax: 03 9963 6899; TTY: 03 9963 6948

Level 5 The Bay Centre, 65 Pirrama Road, Pyrmont NSW 2009
PO Box Q500, Queen Victoria Building NSW 1230
Tel: 02 9334 7700; Fax 02 9334 7799

Free TV Australia

First Floor, 44 Avenue Road
Mosman NSW 2088 Australia
Tel: 61 2 8968 7100; Fax: 61 2 9969 3520
contact@freetv.com.au; engineering@freetv.com.au

Commercials Advice
Ground Floor, 44 Avenue Road
Mosman NSW 2088
Tel: 61 2 8968 7200; Fax: 61 2 9969 8147
cad@freetv.com.au

Australian Council on Children and the Media (incorporating Young Media Australia) is committed to promoting healthy choices and stronger voices in children's media. It has a variety of services available such as reviews of children's films, to help guide parental choices.
E-mail: info@childrenandmedia.org.au

Children and Media Helpline **for parents and caregivers**
1800 700 357
All other inquiries including media calls
Phone: +61 8 8376 2111; Fax: +61 8 8376 2122
Mail: PO Box 447 Glenelg SA 5045
Website: <http://childrenandmedia.org.au>

Mindframe – National Media Initiative

The Australian Government's National Media Initiative (*Mindframe*) aims to encourage responsible, accurate and sensitive representation of mental illness and suicide in the Australian mass media. The initiative involves building a collaborative relationship with the media and other sectors that influence the media (such as key sources for news stories).
Website: <http://himh.clients.squiz.net/mindframe>

Appendix A: Reviews of the effects of media violence on children, by year and nation

Ferracuti, F. & Lazzari, R. La violenza nei mezzi di comunicazione di massa. Rome: Quaderni del Servizio Opinioni.	1968	Italy
Baker, R.K.& Ball, S.J. Mass media and violence. A staff report to the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence. Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office.	1969	United States
Halloran, J.D. (Ed) The effects of television. London: Panther.	1970	Great Britain
Glucksman, A. Violence on the screen: A report on research into the effects on young people of scenes of violence in films and television. London: The British Film Institute Education Department.	1971	France
Gerbner, G. Violence in television drama: Trends and symbolic functions. In G.A. Comstock & E.A. Rubinstein (Eds.) Television and social behaviour, Vol 1. Media content and control. Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office.	1972	United States
Surgeon General's Scientific Advisory Committee on Television and Social Behaviour. Television and growing up: The impact of televised violence. Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office.	1972	United States
Stein, A H. & Friedrich, L.K. Impact of television on children and youth. In E.M. Hetherington (Ed.) Review of child development research (Vol 5). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.	1975	United States
Royal Commission on Violence in the Communications Industry. Violence in television films and news. (Vol. 3) Toronto: Author.	1976	Canada
Greagg, L. Children and television violence – A survey of the literature. Unicorn, 3(1), 62-68.	1977	Australia
Andison, F.S. TV violence and viewer aggression: A cumulation of study results 1956-1976. Public Opinion Quarterly, 41, 314-331.	1977	United States
Eysenck, H.J. & Nias, D.K.B. Sex, violence and the media. London: Maurice Temple Smith.	1978	Great Britain
Dorr, A. & Kovaric, P. Some of the people some of the time- but which people? In E. Palmer & A. Dorr (Eds.) Children and the faces of television. New York: Academic Press.	1980	United States

Lefkowitz, M.M. & Huesmann, L.R. Concomitants of television violence viewing in children. In E. Palmer & A Dorr (Eds). Children and the faces of television. New York: Academic Press.	1980	United States
Busby, L.J. Research questions, methods and theoretical perspectives represented in television content research. Paper presented to the Annual Meeting of the Speech Communication Association, Anaheim.	1981	United States
Pearl, D., Bouthilet, L. & Lazar, J. Television and behaviour: Ten years of scientific progress and implications for the eighties, Vol 2: Technical reviews (National Institute of Mental Health). Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office.	1982	United States
Honig, A.S. Research in review: Television and young children. <i>Young Children</i> , 38(4), 63-76.	1983	United States
Freedman, J.L. Effect of television violence on aggressiveness. <i>Psychological Bulletin</i> , 96, 227-246.	1984	United States
Murray, J.P. A soft response to hard attacks on research. <i>Media Information Australia</i> , 33, 11-16.	1984	United States
American Psychological Association. Violence on TV: A social issue release from the Board of Social and Ethical Responsibility for Psychology. Washington: Author.	1985	United States
Barlow, G. & Hill, A. Video violence and children. London: Hodder & Stoughton.	1985	United States
Chaffee, S.H., Gerbner, G., Hamburg, B.A., Pierce, C.M., Rubinstein, E.A., Siegel, A.E. & Singer, J.L. Defending the indefensible. <i>Social Science and Modern Society</i> , 21, 30-35.	1986	United States
Friedrich-Cofer L. & Huston, A.C. Television violence and aggression: The debate continues. <i>Psychological Bulletin</i> , 100, 364-371.	1986	United States
Groebel, J. International research on television violence: Synopsis and critique. In L.R. Huesmann & L.D. Eron (Eds.) <i>Television and the aggressive child: A cross- national comparison</i> . Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum.	1986	United States
Hearold, S. A synthesis of 1043 effects of television on social behaviour. In G.L. Comstock (Ed.) <i>Public communication and behaviour</i> . Vol 1. Orlando: Academic Press.	1986	United States
Huesmann, L.R. & Eron, L.D. (Eds.) <i>Television and the aggressive child: A cross-national comparison</i> . Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum.	1986	United States

Huesmann, L. R. Psychological processes promoting the relation between exposure to media violence and aggressive behaviour by the viewer. <i>Journal of Social Issues</i> , 42, 125-140.	1986	United States
Report of the Joint Select Committee on Video Material. (Vols. 1&2). Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service.	1988	Australia
Singer, J.L. & Singer, D.G. Some hazards of growing up in a television environment. In S. Oskamp (Ed.) <i>Television as a social issue</i> . California Sage.	1988	United States
Gerbner, G. Violence and terror in the mass media. (Reports and Papers on Mass communication No 102) Paris: UNESCO.	1988	International
Australian Broadcasting Tribunal. TV violence in Australia: Report to the Minister for Transport and Communication (Vols 1-4). Sydney: Author.	1990	Australia
Barwick, H. Research into the effects of television violence: An overview. Paper prepared for the Broadcasting Standards Authority, New Zealand.	1990	New Zealand
Wilson, B.J., Linz, D. & Randall, B. Applying social science research to film ratings: A shift from offensiveness to harmful effects. <i>Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media</i> , 34(4), 443-468.	1990	United States
Van Evra, J. Television and child development. Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum.	1990	United States
Atkinson, D. & Gordeau, M. Summary and analysis of various studies on violence and television. Canada: Canadian Radio, Television and Telecommunication Commission.	1991	Canada
Huston, A.C., Donnerstein, E., Fairchild, H., Feshbach, N.D., Katz, P.A., Murray, J.P., Rubinstein, E.A., Wilcox, B. & Zuckerman, D. <i>Big World, Small Screen: The Role of Television in American Society</i> . Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.	1992	United States
Martinez, A. Scientific knowledge about television violence. Ottawa: Canadian Radio Television and Telecommunications Commission.	1992	Canada
Television violence: Fraying the social fabric. Hull: Canadian House of Commons Standing Committee on Communications and Culture, House of Commons, Canada.	1993	Canada

Freedman, J. Viewing television violence does not make people more aggressive. <i>Hofstra Law Review</i> , 22, 833-854.	1994	United States
Murray, J. The impact of televised violence. <i>Hofstra Law Review</i> , 22, 809-825	1994	United States
Paik, H. & Comstock, G. The effects of television violence on antisocial behaviour: A meta-analysis. <i>Communication Research</i> , 21(4), 516-546.	1994	United States
Paik, H., & Comstock, G. The effects of television violence on antisocial behavior: A meta-analysis. <i>Communication Research</i> , 21, 516-539.	1994	
Josephson, W.L. Television violence: A review of the effects on children of different ages. Ottawa: National Clearinghouse on Family Violence.	1995	Canada
Brown, M. The portrayal of violence in the media: Impacts and implications for policy. <i>Trends and Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice</i> , 55. Australian Institute of Criminology.	1996	Australia
Anderson, C. A., & Bushman, B. J. Effects of violent video games on aggressive behavior, aggressive cognition, aggressive affect, physiological arousal, and prosocial behavior: A meta-analytic review of the scientific literature. <i>Psychological Science</i> , 12, 353-359.	2001	International
Anderson, C. A., & Bushman, B. Human aggression. <i>Annual Review of Psychology</i> , 53, 27-51.	2002	International
Anderson, C. A., Berkowitz, L., Donnerstein, E., Huesmann, L. R., Johnson, J., Linz, D., & Wartella, E. The influence of media violence on youth. <i>Psychological Science in the Public Interest</i> , 4, 81-110.	2003	International
Anderson, C. A., & Huesmann, L. R. Human aggression: A social-cognitive view (pp. 296-323). In M. A. Hogg & J. Cooper (Eds.), <i>The Sage Handbook of Social Psychology</i> . London: Sage Publications.	2003	International
*Anderson, C. A. An update on the effect of playing violent video games. <i>Journal of Adolescence</i> , 27, 113-122.	2004	International
Anderson, C. A., & Carnegey, N. L., Flanagan, M. Benjamin, A. J., Eubanks, J., & Valentine, J. Violent video games: Specific effects of violent content on aggressive thoughts and behavior. <i>Advances in Experimental Social Psychology</i> , 36, 199-249.	2004	International

Brown, K. D., & Hamilton-Giachritsis, C. The influence of violent and nonviolent games on implicit measures of aggressiveness. <i>Aggressive Behavior</i> , 36, 702-710.	2005	International
Anderson, C. A., Gentile, D. A., & Buckley, K. E. <i>Violent video game effects on children and adolescents: Theory, research, and public policy</i> . New York, NY: Oxford University Press.	2007	International
Ferguson, C. J. The good, the bad and the ugly: A meta-analytic review of positive and negative effects of violent video games. <i>Psychiatric Quarterly</i> , 78, 309–316.	2007	International
Sherry, J. Violent video games and aggression: Why can't we find links? In R. Preiss, B. Gayle, N. Burrell, M. Allen, & J. Bryant (Eds.), <i>Mass media effects research: Advances through meta-analysis</i> (pp. 231–248). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.	2007	International
Savage, J., & Yancey, C. The effects of media violence exposure on criminal aggression: A meta-analysis. <i>Criminal Justice and Behavior</i> , 35, 1123–1136.	2008	International
Savage, J., & Yancey, C. The effects of media violence exposure on criminal aggression: A meta-analysis. <i>Criminal Justice and Behavior</i> , 35, 1123–1136.	2008	International
Ferguson, C. J., & Kilburn, J. The public health risks of media violence: A meta-analytic review. <i>Journal of Pediatrics</i> , 154, 759–763.	2009	International
Anderson, C. A., Shibuya, A., Ihori, N., Swing, E. L., Bushman, B. J., Sakamoto, A., & Saleem, M. Violent video game effects on aggression, empathy, and prosocial behavior in Eastern and Western countries. <i>Psychological Bulletin</i> , 136, 151–173.	2010	International

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- Anderson, C. A., & Bushman, B. J. (2001). Effects of violent video games on aggressive behavior, aggressive cognition, aggressive affect, physiological arousal, and prosocial behavior: A meta-analytic review of the scientific literature. *Psychological Science*, 12, 353-359.
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