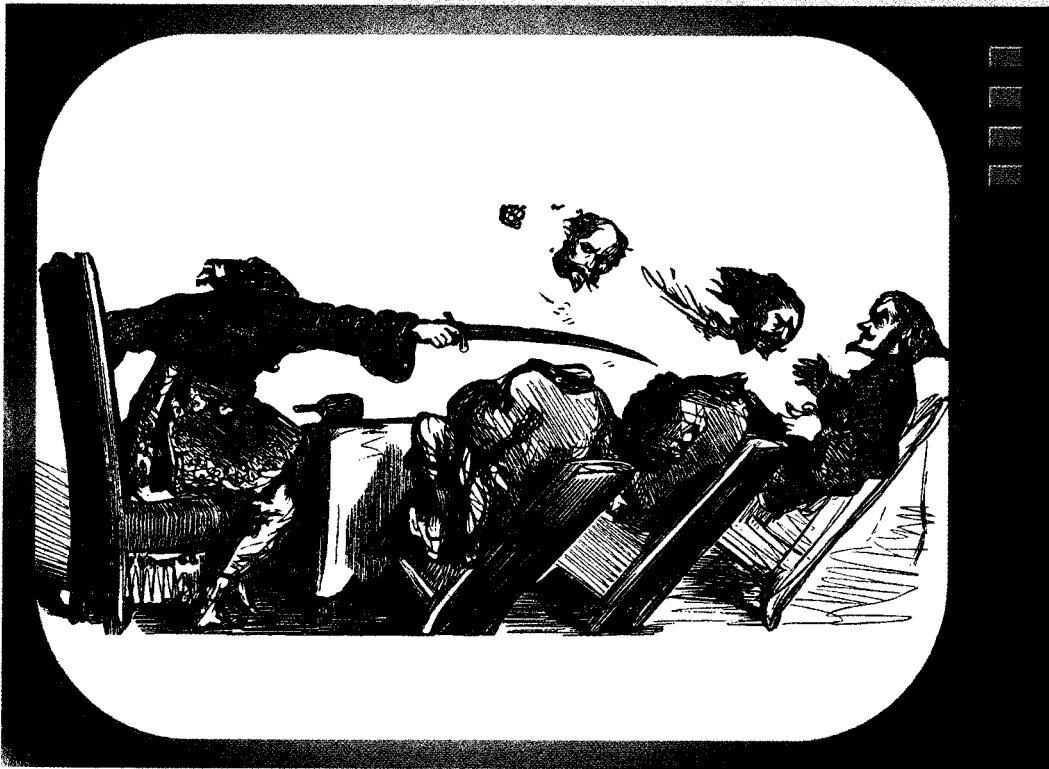


ANU MUSTONEN

MEDIA VIOLENCE AND ITS AUDIENCE



UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ

JYVÄSKYLÄ LONGITUDINAL STUDY OF PERSONALITY AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Anu Mustonen

Media Violence and Its Audience

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Anu Mustonen

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ABSTRACT

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This study was designed to specify the variation in violent media content, and the dispositional and motivational basis of the media content choices of different individuals. The study reports first, the development of a comprehensive coding scheme for documenting the variation in television violence and the results of two content analyses based on this scheme and second, an audience analysis of individual differences in the consumption of violent content. Two, one-week samples of the program analyses represented all TV genres broadcast on Finnish network television (n's = 287 and 259). Program analyses showed the context-specific variation in the amount and nature of filmed violence, and the lack of a relationship between the amount of violence and the popularity of a program. The audience analysis of adults (121 men, 126 women) from the Jyväskylä Longitudinal Study of Personality and Social Development showed that personality type was helpful in predicting media use patterns. LISREL analyses revealed connections between personality traits, i.e., low Neuroticism, Openness to Experiences and Conscientiousness for men and Extraversion for women and the viewing of unattractive (documentary) violence, with cognitive viewing motives serving as mediator. Neuroticism for men and Introversion and Excitement-seeking for women predicted the viewing of attractive violence (action films), with emotional motives serving as mediator. Additionally, Introversion for men and women, and Excitement-seeking and low Agreeableness for men were directly predictive of viewing action films. Violent entertainment was viewed mainly for its arousal-inducing attributes and diversion it offer, and to lesser degree, for its reassurance-producing attributes. Unlike former studies that tested younger cohorts, this study failed to show that violence viewing is a strong predictor of later aggression in adult viewers. The final path analyses suggested that among adults, the causal determination goes from aggression toward the viewing of violence. Additionally, a connection between violence viewing and anxiety was identified.

Keywords: Media violence, content analysis, personality, media uses and gratifications, aggression, LISREL analysis.

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- I Mustonen, A. & Pulkkinen, L. (1993) Aggression in television programs in Finland. *Aggressive Behavior*, 19, 175 - 183.
- II Mustonen, A. & Pulkkinen, L. (1997) Television violence: The development of a coding scheme. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, 41, 168 - 189.
- III Mustonen, A. (1997) Nature of screen violence and its relation to program popularity. *Aggressive Behavior*, 23, 281 - 292)
- IV Mustonen, A. & Pulkkinen, L. (submitted). Personality and Television Use: Some Roots of Media Choices. *Human Communication Research*.
- V Mustonen, A. & Pulkkinen, L. (submitted) Adults as viewers of media violence.

1 INTRODUCTION

A majority of previous studies on media psychology has examined how exposure to media violence influences viewers, with little research having been directed toward the psychological antecedents of media use. In addition, traditional studies of effects have treated (1) violent media content and (2) its audience as a uniform entity. Recent research developments suggest that the nature of media violence differs in different contexts (Cumberbatch, Lee, Hardy, & Jones, 1987; Gunter, 1985; Williams, Zabrack & Joy, 1982) and that individuals differ in their viewing patterns and motives for media use (Rubin, 1983, 1984; Zuckerman & Litle, 1986). Therefore, this study was designed to further specify the variation in violent media content, and to analyze the dispositional and motivational base of various media content choices of individuals. Finally, it tested the causal links between the viewing of violence and behavioral characteristics. The ultimate aim of my work was directed toward understanding why adult persons view media violence. Because television is the most general audiovisual medium worldwide, this investigation dealt mainly with television violence and its viewers.

1.1 Analyzing the content of media violence

The first step in developing a comprehensive view of the functions of media violence was to analyze the content of filmed violence in varying program contexts. Doubts have been raised over the validity and efficacy of traditional content analyses, e.g., the cultivation analysis established by George Gerbner and his colleagues (Gerbner, Gross, Signorielli, Morgan, & Jackson-Beeck, 1979; Gerbner, Gross, Morgan & Signorielli, 1980, 1994), because they are seldom able to express the phenomenal and semantic elements of media violence (Cumberbatch, Jones, & Lee, 1988; Gunter, 1981, 1988; Potter & Ware, 1987). Most previous content analyses have failed to (1) take the program context of the portrayal (genre, temporal and cultural settings) into consideration, (2) include all physical and psychological modes of media violence in the analysis, and (3) to

analyze variation in the nature and means of presentation of violent constructions. For example, the National Television Study (NTVS) conducted in 1994-1995, (e.g. Kunkel et al., 1995) is the most extensive effort to assess violence on television. Although the NTVS project addressed many of the limitations found in previous studies, it was restricted to only some modes of violence, i.e., physical violence targeted towards animate objects and some TV genres, e.g., several program types such as news, sports, and game shows were excluded.

The coding scheme established in the present study outlined ways of producing more exhaustive and valid analyses of the nature of TV violence and of the messages it conveys. The notion that violence is not the same in different program contexts (Cumberbatch et al., 1987) and in the schemes of different viewers (Gunter, 1985, 1988) led me to produce a wide framework within which to analyze the various modes of screen violence. Like Kunkel et al. (1995), and Potter and Ware (1987), I extended the analysis to include the context of violent portrayals and to link the content analysis categories to the research evidence documenting viewer reactions to TV violence. Following Cumberbatch et al. (1987), I designed an analytical scheme that would be applicable to TV violence across all genres of network television. Consistent with the Gerbner et al. (1979, 1980) I undertook an analysis of the amounts of violence inasmuch as the prevalence of violence is important in *desensitization to media violence* i.e., undermining of feelings of concern toward victims of actual violence (Griffiths & Shuckford, 1989; Thomas, Horton, Lippincott, & Drabman, 1977).

As an audiovisual medium, television is effective in creating affects and manipulating moods (Helregel & Weaver, 1989; Zillmann, 1988). The nature of affective media codes are important regarding viewers' media experience and interpretation. Affects can be seen as having two dimensions: arousal, which reflects the intensity of the affective experience, and pleasantness-unpleasantness, which involves differences in the degree of positive vs. negative feeling (e.g., Russell, 1978; Watson, 1988). Therefore, in addition to analyzing the journalistic variation in amount of TV violence, I also sought to classify media violence according to the elements relevant to viewers' affective experiences, i.e., intensity (arousal), and attractiveness (pleasantness) of violence. Intensity and attractiveness of the portrayal are also relevant to the attitudinal interpretations and the possible behavioral effects of filmed violence.

The *intensity of screen violence* reflects the strength or intensity of the experience, i.e., the degree to which violence is obtrusive. Intense violence is likely to shock or frighten viewers and create a lasting impression (Cantor & Sparks, 1984). Intensity of violence thus contributes to the fear reactions of the viewers. The seriousness of the physical consequences (Gunter, 1985, 1988; Lagerspetz, Wahlroos, & Wendelin, 1978), as well as the realism (Björkqvist, 1985; van der Voort, 1986) or the form in which an act is presented (Comstock, 1981) determine the impressions of the intensity of violence and consequent affective and emotional reactions to violence.

Attractiveness of screen violence involves differences in the degree of positive vs. negative feeling. It refers to the extent to which violence is depicted as pleasant, i.e., justified, glamorized, and effective as a means of resolving conflicts. Therefore, I supposed that attractive violence is likely to contribute to the

attitudinal effects of media violence. Support for this view is provided by media studies based on social learning theory (Bandura, 1977, 1986; Huesmann, 1986). Typically, violence by attractive, admirable, or comic models may produce pro-violent attitudes, and as a consequence be accepted and imitated more easily than the behaviour of unattractive models (Bandura, 1977, 1986; Berkowitz, 1984; Comstock, 1981; Huesmann, 1986; Huesmann, Lagerspetz, & Eron, 1984; Jablonski, & Zillmann, 1995).

The world of media does not "mirror" the world as such, but is a dramatized world: scripted, directed, and acted (Condry, 1989). Even documentary media contents are a product of selection and dramatization process by producers. Consonance can be described as uniform or similar tendencies in reporting by different media (Noelle-Neumann & Mathes, 1987, p. 405). According to Noelle-Neumann and Mathes, consonance in media content may be established on several levels. On the level of *agenda setting*, a decision is made as to which topics are reported and which are not. On the level of *focusing*, the perspectives to be adopted in reporting are determined, and on the level of *evaluation*, a decision is made as to how journalists are to report and evaluate events. As uniformity in media content promotes consensus among viewer attitudes (Atwater, 1986; Noelle-Neumann & Mathes, 1987), consonance in television content may be critical when determining the interpretations and effects of media violence. Therefore, I became interested in analyzing the uniform, conventional, and stereotypical elements of violent constructions on TV, and the possible variation in depictions of violence.

Previous studies on consonance (i.e. Halloran, Elliott, & Murdock, 1970; Noelle-Neumann & Mathes, 1987) have focused on specific events (demonstrations, war events), or a specific genre, e.g., news (Hudson, 1992). In the present study I aimed at extending the consonance analysis toward an examination of the media constructions of violence across different TV programs. The bulk of the available evidence indicates that violence is exaggerated in the world of television (for review, see Condry, 1989; Cumberbatch et al., 1988) suggesting that consonance may occur on the agenda setting level. However, recent developments indicate that considerable journalistic variation exists in the nature of violent constructions (Cumberbatch, et.al., 1987; National Television Violence Study 1994-1995; Potter & Ware, 1987; Williams, et al., 1982) and suggest that consonance might be less obvious on the levels of focusing and evaluation.

1.2 Violence and program popularity

Notwithstanding its presence in program contents, violence also seems to be overemphasized in TV ads (Rajecki et al., 1994), in lead-ins and previews, i.e., program advertizing ploys. Lead-in strategies (see Tiedge, & Ksobiech, 1986) and previews are used to arouse the viewers' interest in a program in order to increase the audience share. Taken together, the exaggerated role of violence in TV programs and in program advertizing may reflect producers' intuitions that

violence and program popularity are related.

Previous studies have not produced sound evidence to support the view that violence is an effective technique for increasing the audience flow. Rather, Diener and DeFour (1978) demonstrated that the amount of violence in programs did not correlate with audience size. Furthermore, an uncut version of an adventure program was no more popular than a film from which violence was deleted. Diener and Woody (1981) showed that there was no greater popularity for a highly violent program than for one low in violence, when the programs were matched for realism, humor, romance, predictability and conflict. On this basis we can conclude that it is not the audience in general, but a sub-group of viewers who are likely attracted by violent portrayals (Goldstein, in press).

Studies indicate a high degree of viewer selectivity (eg., Ganz & Wenner, 1991; Heeter, 1985; Helregel & Weaver, 1989; Perse, 1992; Rubin & Perse, 1987) suggesting that some viewers may be more interested in violent materials than others. Viewer selectivity is a significant aspect of the communication process and as such is a cornerstone in determining the effects of media exposure. If people have different TV diets, they are possibly influenced by TV in different ways. Therefore, the next step in my study was to replicate the former findings concerning the selectivity of viewing, and the media violence - program popularity relationship.

1.3 Motivational basis of media choices

Selectivity in media use, may in part, be due to the varying viewing motives that direct media use. Varying media contents may interact with the varying viewing motives of an individual in producing media effects. *Media uses and gratifications* is a cognitively oriented path-goal approach that has found empirical support in substantiating the mediating role of viewing motives in the communication process (Rosengren, 1974; Swanson, 1987). Selective exposure to television is therefore, the result of linking perceived needs and communication choices (Katz, Blumer, & Gurevitch, 1974). Scholars have specified *emotional* functions such as excitement, relaxation, pastime, or escape (Palmgreen, Wenner, & Rosengren, 1985; Perse & Rubin, 1990) as well as *social* or parasocial functions (Lull, 1980; Rosengren & Windahl, 1972) as possible motives for viewing choices. Rubin (1983) has shown that social viewing was negatively related to viewing both news programs and talk-interview shows, whereas emotional viewing and comedy programs were positively related. According to Conway and Rubin (1991), viewing television for excitement and for companionship was associated with watching action and comedy. Furthermore, the role of *cognitive* motivation as a predictor of informational media use is well documented (e.g., Perse, 1990, 1992; Rubin, 1981, 1983). In sum, the uses and gratifications paradigm maintains that media choices may have both social and psychological (dispositional) roots.

Among *consistency and balance theories* people are seen as internally oriented, active seekers of stability. People strive to achieve a sort of internal balance by

avoiding cognitive and affective imbalances (Heider, 1946; McGuire, 1974). From this viewpoint, selective TV use can also be interpreted as an adaptive psychological mechanism that allows individuals to regulate their emotional states. Empirical findings, too, have shown the selective use of media as a coping strategy toward achieving desirable *mood-management* ends (Blumer 1979; Finn & Gorr, 1988; Helregel, & Weaver, 1989; Kubey, 1986; Wakshlag, et al., 1983; Zillmann, Hezel, & Medoff, 1980; Zillmann, 1988).

Research support for the greater role played by activation and arousal in communication has been provided by a number of investigators (Bryant & Zillmann, 1984; Donohew, Palmgreen, & Duncan, 1980; Zuckerman, 1988; Zuckerman & Litle, 1986). Those studies also suggest that biologically based needs for stimulation appear to guide the media selection process. According to this *activation model of media use* (Bryant & Zillmann, 1984; Donohew et al., 1980), media use plays a complementary role in the individual's attempt to gain an optimal level of physiological arousal. Well-documented data support the activation model of media use (Christ, 1985; Donohew, Palmgreen, & Rayburn, 1987; Finn & Gorr, 1988; Zillmann, 1982). For instance, stressed individuals tend to seek relaxing fare, whereas bored viewers likely seek arousing media content.

Although previous studies have classified media use motives across media categories, these general classifications seldom consider how individuals differ in those motives. In particular, the reasons why adults seek violent films are inadequately explored. Therefore, this study was aimed at addressing those themes in order to extend the analysis of the motivational basis of media use. The existing research literature of the psychological motives for the viewing of fictional violence suggests several diversionary, self-regulation and stimulation-seeking motivations.

First, fantasy violence produces experiences of joy easier than realistic films (Lagerspetz, Wahlroos, & Wendelin, 1978) and is hence likely to be consumed for satisfying *diversionary* needs such as relaxation, pastime and escape (e.g., Rosengren, 1974). Given that violent films offer strong sensations, they may be helpful in forgetting everyday troubles and tasks.

Also violent films may serve *self-regulation needs*. Violent media contents offer a safe setting in which to confront life-threatening conditions, learn to master fears, and control anxieties (Bryant & Zillmann, 1984; Zillmann & Bryant, 1986). Exciting films have been shown to be helpful in overcoming acute grievances and problems (McIlwraith & Schallow, 1983). This may be because the conflicts depicted in the films may make viewers' own problems seem less important (Zillmann & Bryant, 1986). Roe (1993) has shown that vicariously experienced feelings of power may be sought in order to compensate for low self-esteem. Enjoyment of exciting films depends partly on the happy resolution of the conflicts (Tamborini & Stiff, 1987; Zillmann & Bryant, 1986). Zillmann (1980) proposes that although suspenseful films cause initial distress among viewers, justice restoration at the end of the film may result in positive affective reactions. In this sense, the viewing of violence may have cathartic functions in releasing anxious or aggressive states.

In line with the activation model of media use, the viewing of violence may be motivated by *stimulation-seeking needs*. Violent and exciting films may be

helpful when a viewer is bored or understimulated (Zillmann, 1982; Zuckerman, 1988). Individuals differ in their sensation seeking levels. Sensation seekers are "stimulus hungry" and thus motivated to seek arousing activities such as exciting films to achieve optimal arousal levels. Conversely, those low in sensation seeking may avoid stimulation that could push them beyond their optimal levels of arousal (Tamborini & Stiff, 1987; Zuckerman & Litle, 1986). Power and destruction typically present in violent films can also satisfy viewers' morbid curiosity (Cantor & Sparks, 1984; Tamborini & Stiff, 1987) and desire to see social taboos violated without guilt or fear of reprisal (Tamborini, Stiff, & Zillmann, 1987). Interestingly, Tamborini (1991) and Tamborini, Stiff, and Heidel (1990) have shown the connection between unempathy and the appeal for horror films.

1.4 The Dispositional Basis of Media Choices

Besides selectivity of television use, empirical studies have shown remarkable *continuity* in viewing selections (Brosius, Wober, & Weimall, 1992; Gertner, 1985; Wober, 1989). Stability in media use is easily interpreted as an outcome of the stability of individual characteristics that affect the formulation of viewing habits. For instance, as suggested by the activation theory of media use, media preferences of different individuals might be related to individual differences in stimulation and sensation seeking needs. Consequently, we can assume that personality factors may provide motivational impetus for viewing choices. Since personality variables have been shown to be important determinants of emotions and moods (Allik & Realo, in press; Costa & McCrae, 1980; Hepburn & Eysenck, 1989; Williams, 1989), I considered a dispositional perspective to media use as complementary both to the mood management approach and to the uses and gratifications theory of media use. Evidence of the assumed personality - media use links are available for many personality characters, e.g., Neuroticism, Extraversion, Sensation Seeking, Authoritarianism, Locus of control, as predictors of media choices (Weaver, 1991; Wober, 1986; Zuckerman & Litle, 1986). Hence in line with Wober (1986), I assumed that an adequate understanding of how individuals interact with mass media will not be reached without taking into account individuals' fundamental attributes.

Due to the use of a multitude of traits studied in different investigations, there has been a general lack of theoretical and analytical coherence throughout personality - media use studies (Wober, 1986). In order to address this incoherence I aimed toward a more exhaustive framework. There is increasing evidence that the *five factor personality model* unifies the major dimensions of different conceptualizations and accounts for most personality traits (McCrae & Costa, 1991; Ostendorf & Angleitner, 1994). The five factors of personality, as measured by NEO-Personality Inventory (Costa & McCrae, 1985), provide empirically useful information for classification and prediction of basic individual differences in behavior (Epstein, 1994). Therefore, I tested the utility of the five factor personality model (Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness to experiences, Conscientiousness,

Agreeableness) in the context of media research.

Moods and feelings have been established as relevant characteristics for the definition of all basic personality traits in the NEO-PI (Allik & Realo, in press). Because moods and feelings are relevant components of media use by different individuals, I conjectured that the five factor model would increase analytic clarity in formulating an interpretable personality - media use model. On the basis of previous studies (Kubey, 1986; McIlwraith & Schallow, 1983) we can assume that the overall valence of the mood state, labeled as Positive and Negative Affect (Watson & Clark, 1994; Watson & Tellegen, 1985), might facilitate prediction and explanation of television use. Most studies have shown that Positive and Negative affects are largely independent (e.g. Bradburn, 1969; Costa & McCrae, 1980; Watson & Tellegen, 1985). These two components are subjectively balanced by the individual to arrive at a sense of subjective well-being.

The majority of empirical studies has produced evidence supporting the notion by Costa & McCrae (1980) that Positive and Negative affects are direct outcomes of Extraversion and Neuroticism. Negative feelings are generally correlated with Neuroticism and positive feelings with Extraversion (Allik & Realo, in press; Costa & McCrae, 1980; Emmons & Diener, 1985; Tellegen, 1985). According to Church (1994), negative emotionality encompassed Agreeableness (inversely) and Neuroticism, positive emotionality encompassed Extraversion and the achieving of surgent aspects of Conscientiousness. Openness to Experience appeared to be a trait that is only weakly related to affective states (Allik & Realo, in press; Church, 1994).

Studies have shown that personality is linked to people's viewing motives (Conway & Rubin, 1991) and media choices (Weaver, 1991, Zillmann, 1988; Zuckerman & Litle, 1986), while other studies have produced data of different viewing motives as predictors of media choices (Rubin, 1983, 1984; Ganz & Wenner, 1991). No studies have thus far investigated all these basic measures in the same model. All together, the findings suggest that an overarching study relating viewers' dispositional traits, media use motives and content preferences at the same time would provide important information about the psychological roots of media use. Thus, the present study sought to test a model covering personality traits, viewing motives, and media content choices in order to determine if viewing motives serve as mediators between personality and viewing choices.

1.5 Media effects on behavioral characteristics

Finally, psychologically oriented media researchers are expected to address the questions of media effects on the welfare of individuals. The longitudinal design of the project made it possible to test the causal direction in the media violence - behavioral characteristics relationship. Much of the research on media effects have started from social-environmental hypotheses which assumes that media shape

attitudes, personality and behavior. Typically, three different hypotheses have been presented: (1) media violence dissipates aggression, (2) media violence increases aggression, and (3) media violence increases fears and anxiety among its viewers.

First, *the catharsis notion* supposes that one's own aggressive feelings are dissipated when watching drama heroes act out hostilities. However, evidence supporting the cathartic prediction has not been forthcoming (for review, see Gunter, 1994). Interestingly, some studies have demonstrated the capacity of filmed materials - but not exclusively violent films - to improve depressed mood states (Helregel & Weaver, 1989; Wakshlag, Vial, & Tamborini, 1983; Zillmann, 1980).

An alternative, *social learning* point of view (Bandura, 1986; Tan, 1986) emphasizes imitative and disinhibitory effects. *Disinhibition hypothesis* on media effects maintains that violent media are able to instigate aggression by releasing pent-up aggressive behavior (Berkowitz & Rawlings, 1963). Berkowitz (1984, 1986) has later expanded disinhibition theory to include the stimulation of associative networks of thoughts and ideas suggesting that violence has an *priming effect* on aggressive thoughts and emotions. Similarly, an information-processing perspective by Huesmann (1982; 1986; 1988) emphasizes the role of social scripts acquired through exposure to TV violence in cued imitation. The bulk of evidence from correlational studies has shown mild or moderate correlations between TV violence viewing and aggression in children (for review, see Paik & Comstock, 1994; Freedman, 1984; for meta-analysis, see Wood, Wang, & Chachere, 1991). Longitudinal studies have further documented the causal connection between viewer's aggression and the viewing of violence from childhood to adulthood (for review, see Gunter, 1994; Huesmann & Miller, 1994). Long-term media effects have been shown to occur through changes in cognitive processes, i.e., normative beliefs, violent schemata (Huesmann, 1986, 1994). Lagerspetz and Viemerö (1986), Viemerö (1986; 1996) and Huesmann et al. (1984) have demonstrated that the impact of television depends on how much viewers identify with media characters.

A third, complementary view of media effects suggests that filmed violence may increase fears and anxiety among viewers. *Cultivation analysis* (Gerbner & Gross, 1976; Gerbner, et al. 1986; 1994) has proven to be an especially influential approach being based on the notion that the media effects can be derived from the analysis of media contents. This model maintains that media use is relatively nonselective, and that media content biases the social perceptions of viewers toward the world as it appears on television (Shrum, 1996). The cultivation model proposes that the exaggerated role of violence on TV gives viewers exaggerated impressions of the extent of threat and danger in society, cultivating fear, anxiety and distrust among viewers. Some U.S. studies designed to test the cultivation hypothesis (Gerbner & Gross, 1976; Gerbner et al. 1994; Wakshlag, Vial, & Tamborini, 1983) have shown that exposure to violent drama may increase fearfulness among viewers. Other studies have provided empirical evidence supporting the violence-anxiety link particularly among children (Björkqvist, 1985; von Feilitzen, Forsman, & Roe, 1993; Toivonen, 1991, 1992).

The connection between media depictions of violence and viewer personality

has generally been interpreted as demonstrating that mass media alter personality traits. However, Kubey (1986) has shown that personality and internal states are more likely to dictate media use than media are likely to alter moods and features of one's personality. Similarly, some studies have shown that aggressive people tend to seek out programs containing violence, or that there is bidirectional causal relationship between viewing violence and viewer aggression (Fenigstein, 1979; Gunter, 1983; Huesmann et al., 1984).

The present study also aimed at testing the direction of the causal links between exposure to media violence and behavioral characteristics in a longitudinal design. Unlike earlier media violence-aggression studies, the present design allowed the measurement of causal connections in adulthood inasmuch as the subjects represented a cohort that had not been exposed to filmed violence in childhood. The participants were born in 1959 and were able to see filmed violence infrequently during their first 10 years because TV program hours were limited and violent films were only occasionally shown during the "Informational programming policy time" of the Finnish Broadcasting Company (Salokangas, 1996).

To sum up, this study aimed at specifying the variation in violent television content and examining whether personality traits of viewers are predictive of various viewing motives, and through motives, different TV program choices. I hypothesized that the features of violent films interact with the features of an individual in producing motives for media choices. Finally, this study tested the causal links between the viewing of violence and behavioral characteristics, i.e., aggression and anxiety in adult viewers.

The research questions of this study were as follows:

1 *How do media portray violence?*

1.1 *How to measure the nature of media violence? (Studies I - II)*

Literature on the effects of media violence were utilized in developing ways to operationalize relevant themes of TV violence. Consequently, this analysis focused on analyzing (1) *the frequency of violence* that contributes to desensitization (Griffiths & Shuckford, 1989; Thomas, et al., 1977) or priming effect (Berkowitz, 1984; 1986), (2) *intensity of violence* that contributes to fear (Cantor & Sparks, 1984) and anxiety (von Feilizen et al., 1993; Wakshlag et al., 1983), and (3) *attractiveness* that contributes to aggressive scripts, or pro-violence attitudes (Huesmann, 1986; 1988), which in turn lead to disinhibition (Berkowitz, 1984, 1986) and learning of aggression (Bandura, 1977, 1986). It was hypothesized that the analysis of intensity and attractiveness of violence produce important information regarding the affective and attitudinal content of media violence.

1.2 *Is media violence characterized by consonance or diversity of presentation? (Studies I - III)*

Consonance can be described as uniform or similar tendencies in reporting by different media (Noelle-Neumann & Mathes, 1987). Previous studies suggested that consonance may be identified at the level of agenda setting in that violent themes are exaggerated in TV programs. However, I hypothesized that content analysis might reveal context-specific variation in the depiction of violence at the

level of focusing and evaluation. In particular, diversity was expected to be found in the manner of portraying the elements of intensity and attractiveness of violence in varying cultural and temporal settings.

2 *Who watches media violence?*

2.1 *Does violence enhance program popularity? (Studies I - III)*

Previous studies have not produced sound evidence to support the view that violence is an effective technique for increasing the audience flow (Diener & De Four, 1978; Diener & Woody, 1981; Wober, 1988). I hypothesized that the prevalence of violence will not enhance program popularity among large audiences.

2.2 *How do personality traits predict media content choices? Which motives mediate personality and the choices of violent media content? (Study IV)*

In line with uses and gratifications theory (Katz et al., 1974; Rubin, 1983) I expected that viewers are at least to some degree selective users of mass media and that personality characteristics provide motivational impetus for media content choices. I hypothesized that Extraversion and Conscientiousness (linked to Positive Affects) would be predictive of cognitive motives and seeking of informative media contents, but negatively related to the viewing of violent entertainment. Neuroticism and low Agreeableness (linked to Negative Affects) were expected to predict an emotional viewing pattern consisting of a program diet of sensational and violent films. I also predicted that Excitement-seeking would be associated with the seeking of violent entertainment.

2.3 *Why do adults seek violent entertainment? (Study V)*

Social identity formation is an important motive for viewing violence among young people (Tamborini, 1991). I expected that an adult audience is more exclusive, and that its viewing of violence is more likely to be motivated by internal needs such as diversionary and stimulation seeking motives, or emotional self-regulation needs (e.g., Bryant & Zillmann, 1984; Donohew et al., 1980), Wober, 1986; Goldstein, in press).

2.4 *What is the direction of the causal determination between violence viewing and behavioral characteristics among adults? (Study V)*

On the basis of previous analyses (e.g., Freedman, 1984; Huesmann, et al. 1984;) I hypothesized that support would be forthcoming for the bidirectional violence viewing - aggression, and violence viewing - anxiety relationships. The viewing of violent films may enhance both aggressive scripts and feelings of social mistrust and fearfulness among viewers which may mediate the long-term effects of media exposure.

2 METHOD

2.1 Toward a comprehensive content analysis

In order to develop a valid content analysis scheme that links the coding categories to themes shown to be theoretically and empirically relevant for viewers I carried out extensive pilot work that included several program analyses and a viewer interview. The process consisted of reflexive movement between concept development, sampling, data coding, and interpretation. In order to increase the reliability and comparability of a new coding instrument, I attempted to maximize the number of variables that have been tested and used in former analysis schemes, mainly in the BBC content analysis project of Cumberbatch et al. (1987). In addition, some new concepts and categories were discovered as a result of the analysis process. The pilot study is reported in the Study I. The final coding scheme and the content analysis methodology are reported in Study II.

Contrary to traditional content analyses I adopted ideas from *ethnographic content analysis* (Altheide, 1987). It involves a circular and reflexive progression of analysis and emphasizes the central role of a researcher. Accordingly, one expert coder participated in all phases of the study. The data used in the explorative analysis process included numerical variables as well as narrative descriptions of violent acts. The narratives were utilized in discovering new sub-classes, i.e., various modes of format and other nuances, and in specifying elements that were absent in the programs. The pilot work resulted in the formulation of the final scheme that included the categories of TV violence that were found to be relevant to TV discourse and viewer interpretation. They proved to be reliably measured according to tests of inter-coder reliability (Studies I and II). The preliminary 66-item coding scheme (Study I) was reduced to the final 37-item coding scheme (Study II, see Appendix).

Initially (Study I) I used a concept of aggression, and later on, violence that accorded with the conventions of research on TV violence. I defined TV violence as *actions causing or designed to cause harm to oneself or to another person, either physically or psychologically, including implicit threats, nonverbal behavior, and outbursts of anger directed towards animals and/or inanimate objects*. Portrayals of

victims of violence were also included in the definition if the connection between violent behavior and a victim's injuries was reliably cued. Antisocial activities with no aggressive connotations, e.g., deceit and theft, mere negative affective or hostile reactions unaccompanied by physical injury or damage, and verbal reports of violence were excluded from the analysis. A broad definition of TV violence was adopted in order to gather data on all forms of TV violence. Nevertheless, all violence was not treated as equal. Rather, violent acts were further classified across the salience (intensity, arousal), and messages (attractiveness, pleasantness) of violent acts portrayed in different program contexts.

Following the practice of Gerbner et al. (1979; 1980) -- and contrary to that of Kunkel et al. (1995) -- a TV character's intention to harm was not used as the criterion of violence. This was because the preliminary analyses showed that intentionality is not regularly cued in the portrayals of aggressive behavior. In addition, unintentionally-caused violence is generally *deliberately written into* or retained in scripts (Signorielli, Gerbner, & Morgan, 1995). Nevertheless, purely accidental injuries such as painful medical care, traffic accidents and natural catastrophes were not included under the terms of the definition, but they were recorded separately together with indirect violence and animal aggression.

The preparatory work also included a brief viewer study to see whether there was agreement between the researchers and a general audience as to the definition of violence, and the elements perceived as contributing to the salience of TV violence. The voluntary participants (n = 37) were elementary school students (n = 10), university students, (n = 20), and students of the university for ageing people (n = 7). Samples of 1) a fantastic cartoon produced in the U.S. (Popeye), 2) Finnish realistic fiction (The Winter War), and 3) a U.S. fictional crime serial (Matlock) were shown to the participants in a communication laboratory (COMLAB). The definition of TV violence was applied to identify the violent scenes of the test material which were marked electronically in advance in the films. Altogether, the sample included 14 violent acts of varying nature, i.e. shooting, one person striking or beating another, boxing, verbal threats, the destruction of furniture, and a victim of violence without violent action (a murdered man with blood on his head). The subjects were asked to indicate the occurrences of violence in the films using the manual rating system. The subjects were later interviewed to determine what kinds of TV violence in general emerge as the most salient for them.

The findings confirmed the assumption that the salience of violence is different for each individual. Only two episodes -- physical violence (boxing), and the combination of physical and verbal assaults -- were seen as violent by all viewers. On the other hand, all episodes defined as violence in advance were identified as violent by at least some of the subjects. In addition, there were no scenes that were seen as violent by the subjects, but not by the researcher. Aggression towards inanimate objects and simple depictions of a victim were judged to be violent by half of the subjects. The realistic and culturally proximate Finnish movie received most of the responses indicating intense violence.

The pilot laboratory viewer study served as a confirmatory check on the ecological validity of the definition of violence. The results showed that each element of the definition of violence reached significance among at least some

members of the audience. The diverse viewer interpretations of the definition of violence showed the general, nonspecific definition of violence to be well grounded. In addition, the open-ended interview showed that the reactions of a Finnish TV audience follow universal patterns. The responses varied greatly across individuals, but rather than representing new aspects, these responses were in accord with the former findings of the viewer interpretations.

The analysis of the nature of TV violence focused on specifying the elements of intensity and attractiveness of portrayals. The conceptualization, operationalization, and inter-coder reliability tests are described in detail in Study II. The coding scheme also includes a suggested method of summing up the information on both the intensity and attractiveness dimensions. Intensity was assessed from mild (rated 1) to intense (rated 3). Three elements, i.e. seriousness of observable harm, authenticity, and dramatization were considered in the ratings. Also the attractiveness scale consisted of three basic themes regarded as the most relevant: justification (proactive violence), glamorization (heroic character), and efficacy (no harmful consequences shown). Typically, unattractive violent scenes showed the consequences of violence realistically.

The content analysis samples (Studies I - III) consisted of the programs of all genres presented during one week in November 1989 (Study I, N = 287 programs) and the same week (week 47) in November 1991 (Study II and III, N = 259 programs) on all three TV-channels of the Finnish Broadcasting Company. The later sample consisted of six days of programs.

2.2 The Audience Analysis

The popularity of a program (Studies I and III) was assessed using average audience ratings measured by a metered national panel study (Finnpanel; see Kasari, 1995). The *average audience* estimates refer to the percentage of total viewers in Finland that are viewing a program during the average minute of that program. This panel study is a continuous follow-up investigation of 460 randomly selected Finnish families (more than 1000 persons) whose TV use and channel choices are registered by a computer.

The participants of Studies IV and V consisted of adults (121 men; 126 women) from the Jyväskylä Longitudinal Study of Social and Personality Development. *At age 8*, items measuring anxiety and aggression were administered along with peer nomination (Pulkkinen, 1987). *At age 26*, an Aggression Scale was constructed on the basis of self-ratings on 10 direct questions presented in the context of the interview. In addition, a self-rating of the extent of viewing violent films was included in the interview. However, anxiety was not measured at age 26.

At age 33, viewing motives were measured via a method adopted from Rubin (1983; 1984) that consisted of a list of 14 statements of possible reasons for watching television. At age 33, we also administered the Big-Five Personality Inventory (Pulver et al., 1995) as our measure of personality traits. This inventory

is an authorized adaptation of the NEO Personality Inventory (NEO-PI; Costa & McCrae, 1985) in which about one-quarter of the items are substitutes for the original American items. Furthermore, in order to test how individual differences in the excitement or sensation seeking direct media selection process, additional attention was paid to one NEO-PI sub-scale of Extraversion, i.e. Excitement seeking. Contrary to other sub-scales of Extraversion, Excitement-seeking is strongly associated with the emotional stability and perceived as opposite to the emotions of shame and embarrassment among Fenno-Baltic people (Pulver et al. 1995). In particular, Excitement-seeking appears to be a way to get free from anxiety, depression and low self esteem (Pulver et al. 1995). Therefore, I analyzed Excitement-seeking as a separate personality dimension.

Participants' motives for violence viewing were measured at age 33 by 13 statements of possible reasons for watching violent programming. They included diversional needs (escape, pastime, relaxation, socializing), self-regulation needs (mastery of fears, overcoming problems, catharsis of anxiety, catharsis of aggression, justice restoration), and needs referring to individual characteristics (arousal seeking, excitement, morbid curiosity, unempathy). Television program choices were measured on the basis of volume questions that offer the best prediction of both active and passive selectivity processes (Van den Bulck, 1995).

Similar questions were administered again *at age 35*. The viewing of violence was operationalized and measured as a function of viewing action, crime, thriller, and horror films because they have been shown to represent the most violent fictional genres (Wober, 1988). The Aggression Scale administered *at age 36* was constructed on the basis on 12 items taken from the Buss and Perry (1992) Aggression Questionnaire and the Karolinska Scales of Personality (af Klinteberg, Schalling, & Magnusson, 1990). The anxiety scale was comprised of the Somatic Anxiety, Muscular Tension, and Psychic Anxiety items from the Karolinska Scales of Personality.

3 RESULTS

3.1 How media portray violence? (Studies I - III)

3.1.1 How to measure the nature of media violence?

A series of studies was carried out to develop a coding scheme to analyse the frequency and nature of media violence. Extensive pilot work and inter-coder reliability tests showed which of the themes that previous media studies had shown to be relevant were codable and reliably coded in TV discourse. The analytical scheme was based on the previous analyses (Gerbner et al, 1980; Cumberbatch, et al., 1987). During the ethnographic analysis process, new themes relevant to emotional and attitudinal elements were discovered. As a result, the elements of intensity (seriousness, authenticity, manner of presentation) and attractiveness (glamorization, justification, efficacy) were identified. The analysis process showed that intensity and attractiveness are independent elements of media violence which are helpful in extending the contextual analysis of TV violence. The new coding scheme which is reported in the Study II differed from most of its predecessors in that it was designed to be applicable to all modes of media violence across all program types. However, all violence was not treated equally. Rather, the coding system enabled the classification of portrayals according to frequency, intensity, and attractiveness of violence. Hence, comparisons within the conventions of violence could be made between program genres, or between varying temporal and cultural contexts.

3.1.2 Is media violence characterized by consonance or diversity of presentation?

The new coding scheme was applied to a follow-up content analysis for describing the conventions of media violence presented on Finnish public service television. The consonance (Atwater, 1986; Noelle-Neumann & Mathes, 1987) of the portrayals in different programs was of particular interest. Paradoxically, the analysis suggested both consonance and variation in violent constructions. The

content analyses of both samples (Studies I - III) showed that coverage was *consonant* with the aspect of violence appearing as a very salient theme in programs (consonance on the level of agenda setting), as well as in lead-ins and previews of forthcoming programs. The analyses of both samples showed that, on average, 3.5 violent acts per program hour were presented on Finnish network TV. Consonance also characterized the type of violence included in violent acts. The majority of TV-violence consisted of serious violence (85%), mainly physical assaults (84 %), which were attacks (80 %) more obtrusively than threats. Humorous violence constituted 15 % of the total violent acts. As for the developmental sequence of violent actions, according to the evolutionary analysis by Buss (1988) these types represent developmentally earlier modes of violence than humorous or verbal aggression, or mere threats. Additionally, male characters dominated media violence, women representing only one tenth of the persons involved in violence.

Uniformity of violent depictions was typical of non-fictional programs (news, current affairs, documentaries, sports, educational programs), whereas variety of depiction characterized fictional genres (entertainment, music, drama films). Violence in non-fiction was typically less frequent, less intense and less attractive than that in fiction. Sports was the only non-fictional genre which was likely to depict violence in an attractive way. Typically, the frequency and intensity of violent constructions varied with program type, and with cultural and temporal settings, but the attractiveness of violence varied only with program type. In the case of dramatic fare, violence was most *frequent* in cartoons, action films, and movies. Historical and action films showed, on average, more *intense* violent acts than other dramas. *Attractive* violence was most likely to characterize action films and cartoons. As regards cultural differences, U.S. fiction contained violence more often than Finnish fiction while violence in exported European films was, on average, more intense than in other productions. Attractive style of violent portrayals was represented equally in fiction regardless of the TV culture. Hence, the findings suggested partial evidence for my hypotheses that consonance is less obvious on the level of focusing and evaluation..

Variation in the attitudinal content of violent portrayals led to something of another paradox, i.e., depending on the program type, portrayals were able to convey both pro-violence and anti-violence lessons (Study III). Therefore, a selective viewer might be exposed to just one of these lessons, whereas a non-selective heavy viewer would be exposed to both. However, the elements of intensity and attractiveness were often combined in diverse ways, allowing ample room for viewers to interpret the messages conveyed by violent acts. From this perspective we can assume that media violence might inhibit but, as well, disinhibit aggressive impulses in individuals.

A further paradox was that while violent depictions include serious actions, e.g. shootings, scuffles, or hitting, they are sanitized for viewers, making them seem generally less serious (Studies I - III). This is possibly because only intense violence exceeds the news criteria (or is preferred to the less dramatic form of interaction in the drama). However, producers trivialize serious acts possibly to avoid shocking viewers with too excessive brutality. As a result, TV cameras seldom focus on victims, injuries, or pain.

3.2 Who does watch?

3.2.1 Does violence enhance program popularity? (Studies I, III, and IV)

The measures of media violence derived from the content analyses were compared to audience rates in an examination of the violence-popularity relationship. The comparisons were replicated during two sample weeks. In line with previous studies (e.g. Diener & DeFour, 1978; Wober, 1988) the present findings suggest that violence is not an indispensable strategy in fulfilling the viewers' needs. The amounts of violence and the popularity of a program were unrelated in both Study I and Study III. Additionally, Study III showed that not even violence depicted in an attractive form contributed to the size of the viewing audience. However, the intensity of violence correlated significantly with the popularity of programs, suggesting that intense violence has larger audiences than mild violence. Further analyses showed that this might be due to the news programs which are very popular and contain relatively intense violence. Furthermore, a time by violence interaction was not evident for program popularity. Neither a broadcasting time by intensity of violence, nor a broadcasting time by attractiveness of violence interaction emerged for the popularity of a program.

According to the popularity ratings among the general audience (Studies I and III), informative genres and light entertainment were the program favourites of large audiences. Moreover, further analysis among adult subjects from the longitudinal study (Study IV) showed that rather than violent films, informative programs and humorous entertainment were the program favourites among adult viewers. Only 11 % of the respondents reported watching violent genres (action, crime, adventure) "always when possible" and 31 % viewed them "often". In line with the hypotheses of the present study, those findings led me to conclude that violent entertainment is the preferred form of entertainment only for some sub-groups within a general audience.

3.2.2 Viewing motives as mediators of personality and media choices (Study IV)

Adults from the Jyvaskyla Longitudinal Study of Personality and Social Development were studied in order to further test the selectivity and stability of viewing patterns. In particular, I aimed at testing how personality characteristics and related viewing motives help predict media content choices. A LISREL design allowed the testing of the mediating role of viewing motives in the personality - media use relationship. The Study IV revealed both selectivity and stability in the media use patterns of different individuals. It also showed that personality dynamics were related to viewing the various types of media violence both directly and indirectly with emotional and cognitive viewing motives serving as mediators.

The antecedents of viewing the three program groups were of particular interest: (1) Action, crime, thriller and horror films which Study II had showed to

contain frequent, *intense and attractive violence*, (2) Sports programs which generally contain frequent, *unintense and attractive violence*, and (3) Informative genres (news, documentaries) which were more likely to portray frequent, *intense and unattractive violence*. The viewing of cartoons which are extremely violent in content and more likely involve situational (e.g., family decisions) rather than psychological factors was not analyzed.

For men, *action films* with intense and attractive violence appealed to excitement seekers and those low in Extraversion and Agreeableness (Figure 1). Neuroticism predicted indirectly the viewing of action films for men through emotional viewing motives. For women, low Extraversion (Introversion) was predictive of viewing action films both directly and indirectly, with emotional motives mediating the preference. In addition, emotional motives mediated the connection between Excitement-seeking and action films viewing for women. *Sports* had an appeal for extraverted men and less open men and women, and in addition, for women high in Excitement-seeking and Agreeableness. Viewers of sports programs were likely to be exposed to *unintense and attractive violence*. No indirect links through viewing motives appeared between personality and the viewing of sports. For men, *informative genres* were sought by conscientious, open and less neurotic men, with cognitive motives serving as mediators. For women, Extraversion led to a similar viewing pattern.

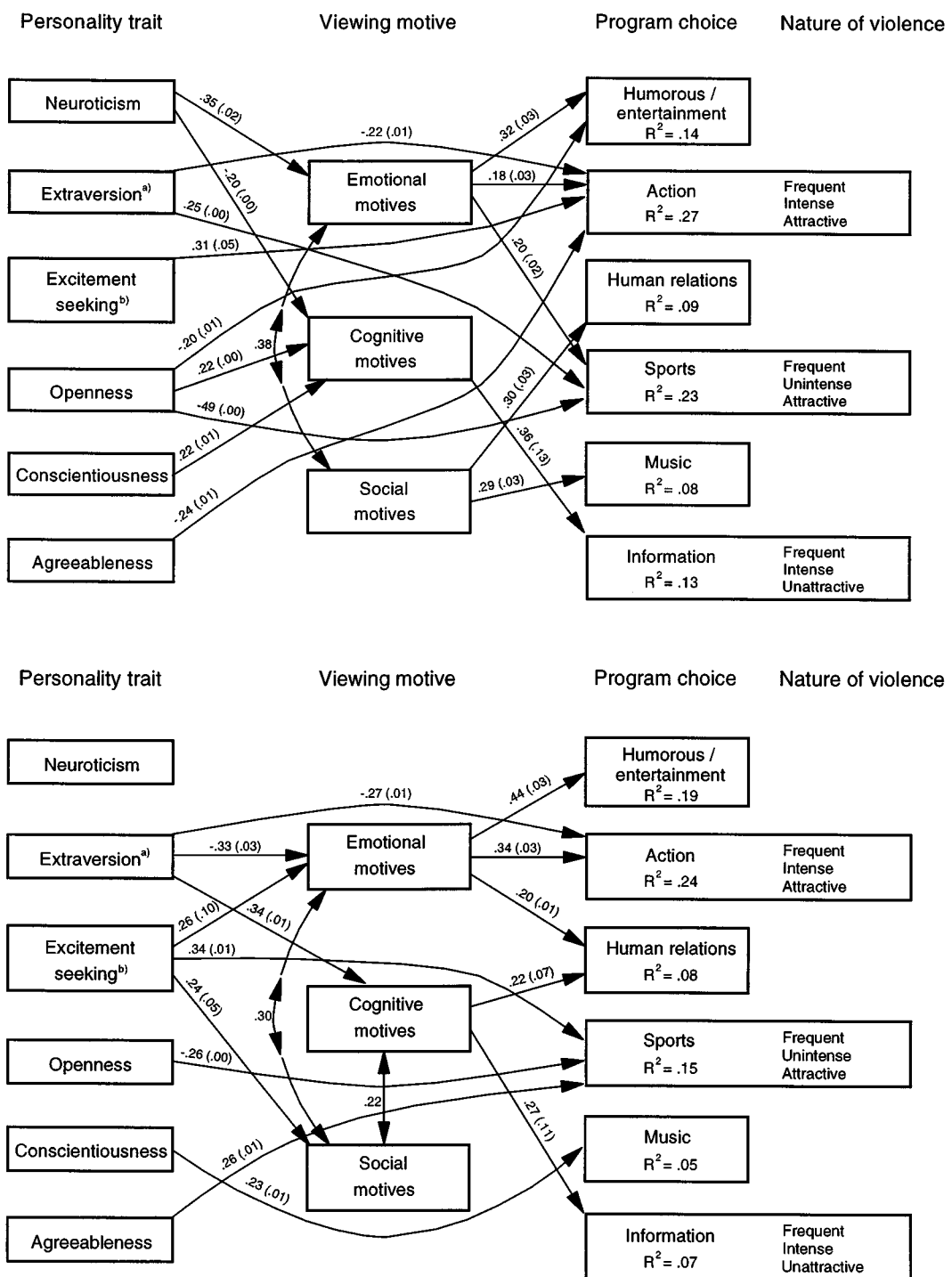


FIGURE 1 Psychological antecedents of the selections of (violent) media contents for men (above) and for women.

A Negative and Positive Affect dichotomy (Watson & Tellegen, 1985) appeared to be useful in interpreting the present path models. As hypothesized, personality traits shown to be related to positive affects (Conscientiousness for

men and Extraversion for women), or lack of negative affects (low Neuroticism for men), predicted cognitive viewing motives that lead to the viewing of documentary genres. As expected, the viewing of the intense but attractive violence seen in action films was shown to be related to negative affects (Neuroticism indirectly, via emotional motives and low Agreeableness directly), but only for men. Additionally, Extraversion was negatively predictive of viewing action films for both genders. Unexpectedly, Neuroticism showed no patterns of associations for women.

Openness to experiences was negatively related to the viewing of sports programs for both genders suggesting that conservative values conveyed by sports programs feed similar values among less open viewers. In addition, Openness was predictive of cognitive viewing motives and the viewing of informative genres for men. Previous studies have not provided a clear consensus regarding the links between Openness to experiences (anti-dogmatism) and Positive or Negative Affect. Extraversion (positive affect) was predictive of the viewing of sports for men, and Agreeableness (positive affect) was related to the viewing of sports for women. Significant paths were found from Excitement-seeking toward the emotional motives and sports viewing for women and the viewing of action films for men. The connection between Excitement-seeking and the viewing of sensational program content suggests that Excitement-seeking may express the intensity (arousal) dimension of the emotionality of an individual.

3.2.3 Why adults seek violence as their entertainment? (Study V)

The longitudinal data were used to analyze the psychological antecedents and long-term effects of viewing violence on personality from ages 26 to 36. Contrary to other relatively violent genres such as sports and informative genres, action films (action, crime, thriller, horror) are fictional. Due to their fantastic nature and the combination of intense and attractive violence they contain, action films are more likely than realistic films to be viewed for their entertainment functions. Therefore, the analysis dealing with the attractions and entertainment functions of violence focused specifically on the antecedents of viewing of action films. To this end, a Violence viewing motive scale was designed for identifying the motives that lead adult viewers to seek out violent entertainment.

Typically, men and people who were divorced were twice as likely as women, or married persons, to be heavy viewers of violent fiction. In addition, heavy violence viewers had lower education than light viewers. According to a factor analysis of participants' self-evaluations, the attraction of violent films was two-dimensional: It was partially due to the diversion it provides, and the reassurance or self-supporting functions served by violence viewing. Diversionary motives that focused on hedonistic pleasure-seeking, i.e., relaxation, escape, pastime, excitement, social interaction, arousal seeking, unempathy, were more salient than Reassurance motives for viewing violence, i.e., mastery of fears, overcoming problems, catharsis of aggression, catharsis of anxiety, morbid curiosity, just resolution. Diversionary and Reassurance factors were moderately intercorrelated.

The finding that men and women high in Excitement-seeking tended to

select violent films for Diversion suggested that excitement and the strong sensations aroused by violent fiction offer hedonistic pleasure for excitement-seekers. Consistent with Pulver et al., (1995), Excitement-seeking may be seen as a way to temporarily escape anxiety, depression and low self esteem. Further, the viewing of violence for fulfilling Diversionary motives was typical of neurotic and introverted viewers. Vicarious sensations may also be sought because they are helpful in altering negative mood states. Accordingly, Reassurance viewing motives were salient among neurotic, i.e., emotionally unstable men and women.

3.2.4 Violence viewing and personality: The direction of the causal determination (Study V)

As shown in Figures 1 and 2, both viewing violence and aggression was somewhat stable among adults. However, violence viewing by young adults was not a strong predictor of later aggressiveness. Rather, the longitudinal analysis indicated that aggressive predispositions may lead individuals to favor violent content. For men, childhood aggression predicted the later viewing of filmed violence, and for women, aggression in young adulthood (26 years) was predictive of both later violence viewing and aggression. For women, childhood personality traits were not predictive of any adulthood personality traits, nor violence viewing. Interestingly, the aggression of 26-year-old women was a stronger predictor of violence viewing than their aggression 10 years later.

The viewing of violence was positively related to viewer anxiety particularly for women. Violence viewing and aggression in 26-year-old women predicted anxiety and violence viewing after 10 years. The viewing of violence was associated with anxiety for 36-year-old men.

4 DISCUSSION

4.1 Major findings

The present study reports the development of a comprehensive coding scheme for documenting the variation in filmed violence and the results of two content analyses based on this scheme. In addition, it reports an audience analysis focusing on the motivational and dispositional basis of viewing violent contents. Unlike previous analyses, the new coding scheme is applicable to all modes of media violence across all program types. Two content analyses of television violence showed the validity of intensity and attractiveness as analysis themes of media violence, and context-specific variation in the way in which those themes are presented in TV discourse. The audience analysis showed that presence of violence did not increase the popularity of a program among viewers. Violent films were viewed mainly for their arousal-inducing attributes and diversion they offer, and to lesser degree, for their reassurance-producing attributes, i.e., as a remedy for negative feelings. The final path analysis suggested that among adults, the causal determination goes from aggression toward the viewing of violence.

The results presented here dispel several myths concerning media violence. First, contrary to the cultivation hypothesis (Gerbner & Gross, 1976; Gerbner et al. 1979, 1980, 1986, 1994), the present findings showed that neither violent content, nor audience members can be treated as a homogenous entity. Different program diets of individuals viewing varying combinations of intensity and attractiveness in a violent portrayal may produce diverse affects with varying intensity, as well as diverse (pro-violent/antiviolent) attitudes toward violence. Similarly, desensitization effects depend both on the program diet of a viewer and amount of time devoted to media use. Because individuals vary in their selective use of those contents for satisfying various needs, the question "How does media violence influence on viewers?" is oversimplified and should be restated as "How do different types of media content influence different individuals with various viewing motives?".

Second, violence is not an effective strategy for increasing audience size. On the basis of the program popularity and viewing motive analyses we can conclude

that rather than violence per se, excitement, humor and strong sensations are more likely to attract a larger audience. Violent films apparently appeal to a subgroup within a general audience. This study showed that males, divorced persons and those with lower education tended to be heavier viewers of violence than women, married persons, or those who had acquired higher education. Additionally, the viewing of violent drama appears to be linked to unstable, or negative emotionality of a viewer.

Third, in line with Gunter (1983) and Fenigstein (1979), this study showed that aggression of an individual is more likely to determine violence viewing than media contents are to determine viewer aggression. Unlike former studies that tested younger cohorts, this study failed to show that violence viewing is a strong predictor of later aggression in adult viewers. The present results with adults born in 1959 who were not exposed to high amounts of violence until their adolescence did not provide support for a TV violence - aggression link. With cohorts born in the 70's in Finland, the effects of TV violence on boys' aggressive behavior have been proven in an international comparative study (e.g., Lagerspetz & Viemerö, 1986; Viemerö, 1986, 1996). Because both personality traits and cognitive systems relating to those traits are relatively stable in adulthood, it is reasonable to suggest that media contents might not have dramatic effects on aggression in adulthood. In line with Wober (1986) I conclude that media may be one determinant of aggression among the young, but a factor that interacts with aggressive dispositions among older people.

Both the self-evaluations of viewing motives and the path analysis of long-term effects of viewing violence failed to support a catharsis model that predicts viewer aggression after exposure to violent drama. Moreover, the observation of filmed violence did not decrease viewers' anxiety. Rather, consistent with the findings of Björkqvist (1985), von Feilzen et al., (1993) violence viewing was positively related to viewer anxiety thus providing additional evidence for a violence viewing-anxiety relationship among adults. A bidirectional determination between anxiety and the viewing of violence in adulthood remains to be established since our data did not include a measurement of anxiety at age 26. It must also be noted that the present longitudinal design did not allow the measurement of temporary cathartic effects of media exposure.

Unlike earlier studies, this study simultaneously analyzed dispositional traits, media use motives and media choices. As hypothesized, Emotional and Cognitive motives were shown to mediate several of the links between personality and selective media use. Two diverse lines of television use were evident; one relating to emotional self-regulation or mood management, and the other to cognitive stimulation-seeking. The emotional viewing pattern had its roots in Neuroticism for men and Excitement-seeking and Intraversion for women and it led to the viewing of action (for men and women) and sports programs (for men), both of which are likely to present attractive violence. The cognitive media orientation had its roots in personality traits related to Positive Affects (Openness and Conscientiousness for men and Extraversion for women), or lack of Negative Affect (low Neuroticism for men) and led to the viewing of informative genres that contain realistic, intense and unattractive violence with Cognitive motives serving as mediators. The role of social motives as a mediator between personality

and selective media use remains to be established.

Consistent with the *uses and gratifications approach* (Katz et al., 1974, Rosengren, 1974) this study showed that in addition to situational and social factors, media selections are also based on the fundamental personality traits of individuals. Homeostatic tendencies and *mood management* motivation (Zillmann, 1988) proved to be helpful concepts in describing the psychological roots of media use, thus suggesting support for balance or mood management theories. In line with an *activation model of media use* (Bryant & Zillmann, 1984; Donohew et al., 1980), diversion or stimulation-seeking needs were also shown to motivate the viewing of violence. Although stimulation seeking and balance seeking can be seen as contradictory motives, I suggest that they are both targeted toward similar self-regulating goals. In line with both *consistency theory* and *activation theory of media use*, stimulation seeking is also related to the tendency toward emotional homeostasis, particularly among excitement-seekers with high optimal levels of arousal.

The cognitive media use pattern may be interpreted as an activity relating to personal self-enhancement. Alternatively, we can assume that similar to emotional motives, cognitive motivations may also feed basic *security needs* in individuals. Emotional balance, as well as information about the world around us help us in gaining security and personal mastery. It is evident that emotional balance is a more acute need among those with unstable or negative emotionality and that curiosity and informative needs are stronger motives among those high in positive emotionality or those open to experiences.

The dominance of the developmentally earlier and more primitive modes of violence in TV discourse may reflect general TV conventions which prefer physical action and dramatic events to static, dramaturgically unattractive everyday affairs. It may also reflect the producers' intuition that the attraction of media content lies in its pleasurable aspects, and regression it offers. It is likely that primitive portrayals of fictional violence fulfill pleasure seeking motives generally related to television than realistic depictions of human aggression. Correspondingly, the analysis of motives for viewing violent *fiction* showed that violent films are chosen for fulfilling the diversionary needs of individuals, i.e., relaxation, escape from negative feelings, demands of reality. Additionally, violent films were viewed for their reassurance-producing attributes, i.e., as a distraction from psychological conflicts and anxieties. Similar to traditional fairy tales, violent films typically result in justice restoration at the end of the story which may produce positive affective reactions in viewers. These films offer safe circumstances for learning to master one's fears and vicariously experience taboo behaviors. According to adult viewers' self-evaluations however, Diversionary motives for viewing violent genres appear to be more salient than Reassurance motives.

Although this study provided new data on the motivational basis of media use, the results presented here did not produce evidence that the expected gratifications could be obtained through mediated communication. The analysis of the long-term effects of viewing violence suggest however, that if gratifications such as amelioration of anxiety or altering of negative moods are obtained, the preferred effects are mainly temporary. The present path analysis suggests that

the viewing of violence does not reduce but rather, may increase the anxiety of a viewer in a long-term perspective. Possibly both media violence viewing and underlying personality dispositions produce a fearful view of the world that may feed anxiety in an individual.

4.2 Methodological conclusions

The follow-up content analysis showed the coding instrument developed in the present study to be remarkably reliable in the context of network television. Compared to the methodology developed by the authors of cultivation analysis (e.g., Gerbner et al. 1986, 1994) the present coding system was more sensitive to the varying nature of violent portrayals. In relation to the National Television Violence Study (NTVS, 1994-1995), the broad definition of violence enabled a more exhaustive study because it also covered psychological aggression and violent outburst toward inanimate objects. Unlike previous studies the analytical scheme developed in this study could also be applied to media content analysis across various genres. Consistent with the NTVS project, this investigation discovered ways to operationalize themes that have been identified in the scientific literature as contributing to effects of concern, i.e., frequency (desensitization, priming effect), intensity (fear, anxiety), and attractiveness (violent schemes, learning aggression). Intensity and attractiveness were shown to be independent elements of filmed violence that are helpful in extending the semantic and contextual analysis of TV violence. The analyses of two program samples (Studies I - III) yielding highly similar results in showing the consistency and stability of TV conventions showed the present coding scheme to be relatively reliable in the context of network TV.

Because the present ethnographic content analysis process aimed at the development of coding methods, the analysis was based on the codings of a single coder. Therefore, the results of the content analyses should be interpreted cautiously. The use of diverse group of coders would have provided a more representative viewpoint for interpreting television content. On the other hand, the present analysis process showed the significant role of an expert coder in a content analysis. A comprehensive program analysis cannot be accomplished mechanistically, but requires a coder who is sensitive to qualitative information. For instance, a commentator's glorified style should be considered when rating the attractiveness of violence in sports events, as well as the type of humor, e.g. irony, that must be identified in fictional programs. Therefore, a coder should be familiar with media production and manipulation techniques, as well as the psychology of aggression.

The methodology developed in this project could be utilized in further content analyses of media violence, as well as in media effects studies. For instance, the program policy planning of TV companies would be more effective if decision makers were more aware of the possible effects of varying sorts of TV violence. Although this study dealt mainly with television use, the methodology

and the findings presented here might also be applied to other audiovisual media, e.g., videos, computer games, multimedia.

The results presented herein highlight the potential utility of the five factor model of personality in increasing analytic clarity in mass media research. An exhaustive model in which all basic dimensions of personality were represented provided a more comprehensive understanding of the dispositional basis of media use than former studies in which only some of the dimensions were represented. On a reciprocal note, theoretically valid connections between personality and media use also adds to the construct validity of the NEO-Personality Inventory. For instance, Excitement-seeking was positively related to the viewing of action films whereas Extraversion was negatively related. Hence, the use of Excitement-seeking as a separate factor -- rather than a sub-scale of Extraversion -- was shown to be justified in the context of media psychology. The five factor model of personality does not include an aggression factor, but we have evidence suggesting that Agreeableness might be inversely related to aggression and hostility (Zuckerman, Kuhlman, Joireman, & Kraft, 1993; Lago & Richardson, 1994).

The audience analysis provided new information on individual differences in communication process. Using a representative sample of one cohort the results are more generalizable than those of previous studies that have typically used student samples in investigating the psychological roots of media use. This study further highlighted the emotional elements of violent media contents as well as the emotional functions of violent entertainment of different individuals, both of which have been explored in less detail than cognitive aspects of media use. Both emotional components in communication process and individual differences in emotional experiences should be more adequately considered when developing media education projects. The ultimate aim of media education is to train active, selective and critical viewers who are familiar with media production techniques. Those with adequate media literacy skills are resistant to harmful effects of media and at the same time, are better able to utilize media in order to promote their psychological well-being.

YHTEENVETO

Aiempi tv-väkivallan tutkimus on yksipuolisesti selvitelty, vaikuttaako väkivallan katselu katsojien aggressiivisuuteen. Halusin siksi asettaa uudenlaisia tutkimuskysymyksiä: Miten voidaan analysoida erilaisia tv-väkivallan muotoja ja esittämistapoja (tutkimukset I ja II)? Lisääkö väkivalta tv-ohjelmien katsojalukuja (tutkimus III)? Millaiset persoonallisuudenpiirteet ja motiivit suuntaavat katsojien ohjelmavalintoja (tutkimus IV) ja erityisesti väkivaltaviihteen katsomista (tutkimus 5)? Lisääkö väkivallan katselu aggressiota vai houkutteleeko tv-väkivalta aggressiivisia ihmisiä? Onko väkivallan katselu yhteydessä ahdistuneisuuteen (Tutkimus 5)? Tarkoitukseni oli näin kehittää uusia analyysimenetelmiä sekä mediaväkivallan erilaisten esittämistapojen että tv-yleisön erilaisten katselumotiivien ja mediavalintojen ymmärtämiseksi.

Etnografisen analyysiprosessin tuloksena syntyi uudenlainen luokitusjärjestelmä, joka soveltui väkivallan analysoimiseen riippumatta ohjelmatyypistä, huomioi sekä psykologisen että fyysisen väkivallan ja tarjosi kehikon eritellä erilaisia väkivallan intensiteetin ja vetovoimaisuuden osa-alueita, jotka ovat tärkeitä katsojien tunne- ja asennereaktioiden kannalta. Kehittelemääni koodausrunkoa sovelsin kahden ohjelmaotoksen sisällön analysointiin.

Televisio-ohjelmien ensimmäinen analyysi (Tutkimus I) sisälsi Yleisradion ja MTV:n kanavilla esitetyn ohjelmiston viikon ajalta marraskuulta 1989 (287 ohjelmaa) ja seurantatutkimus (Tutkimukset II ja III) kuuden päivän ohjelmaotoksen (259 ohjelmaa) marraskuulta 1991. Suomalaisen television väkivalta oli yhdenmukaista aihevalinnan tasolla: väkivaltaa näkyi ohjelmissa 3 - 4 kertaa tunnissa sekä yleisesti myös ohjelmien ennakkomainonnassa. Tv-väkivalta oli muodoltaan useimmiten miesten keskeistä ja alkukantaista eli kuvasi fyysisiä, vakavia väkivaltaisia tekoja enemmän kuin kehittyneempiä muotoja (humoristista tai sanallista aggressiota tai pelkkää uhkailua; vrt. Buss, 1988). Toisaalta väkivallan intensiteetti (vakavuus, autenttisuus, mässäilevyys) ja vetovoimaisuus (kaunistelu, oikeutus, tehokkuus) vaihtelivat paljon ohjelmatyypeittäin sekä erilaisissa ajallisissa ja kulttuurisissa yhteyksissä. Toisin kuin useat tv-tuottajat luulevat, ohjelmien sisältämä väkivallan määrä tai sen vetovoimainen esittämistapa ei lisännyt ohjelman yleisösuosiota.

Yleisön yksilöllisiä tv:n katselumotiiveja ja -valintoja tutkin osana Lapsesta aikuiseksi -pitkittäistutkimusta, jossa selvittelin kyselylomakkein aikuisten (121 miestä ja 126 naista) katsojien persoonallisuudenpiirteitä sekä median käyttöä. Viiden persoonallisuusfaktorin (NEO-PI, Costa & McCrae, 1985; Pulver et al., 1995) avulla oli mahdollista luoda teoreettisesti johdonmukainen malli median yksilöllisistä käyttötarpeista ja osoittaa, miten persoonallisuuden piirteet auttavat ennustamaan yksilöiden kiinnostusta erityyppistä tv-väkivaltaa kohtaan.

LISREL-analyysi osoitti, että persoonallisuuden piirteistä erityisesti tunneelämän epävakaisuus eli neuroottisuus ja vähäinen mukautuvaisuus (miehillä), sekä introversio ja jännityshakuisuus (naisilla ja miehillä) ennustivat vetovoimaisessa valossa väkivaltaa kuvaavien toimintafilmiä katsomista. Emotionaaliset motiivit toimivat persoonallisuuden piirteiden - introversion ja jännityshakuisuuden (naisilla) ja neuroottisuuden (miehillä) - sekä väkivaltaviihteen katsomisen

välillä. Avoimuus, tunnollisuus ja vähäinen neuroottisuus (miehillä) ja ekstraversio (naisilla) ennustivat tiedollisia katselumotiiveja sekä epäattraktiivista, kriittisessä valossa väkivaltaa esittävien dokumentaaristen lajityyppien katselua. Väkivaltaviihteen suurkuluttajia olivat todennäköisemmin miehet, eronneet ja vähemmän koulutetut, kuin naiset, parisuhteessa olevat tai korkeammin koulutetut katsojat.

Tuottaakseni uutta tietoa väkivaltaviihteen katsomisen syistä kehittelin motiivikyselyn väkivaltaviihteen eli kuvitteellisten toiminta-, jännitys- ja rikosfilmien käyttötärpeistä (uses & gratifications). Aikuisten katsojien itsearviointiin mukaan sekä viihteelliset, stimulaation etsimiseen tähtäävät motiivit että rauhoittumiseen ja negatiivisten tunteiden vähentämiseen liittyvät motiivit suuntasivat väkivaltaisten filmien katselua. Ensiksi mainittu, vauhtia ja elämyksiä hakeva katselu oli yleisempää kuin jälkimmäinen, tunteiden tasaamiseen ja pelkojen hallintaan tähtäävä katselu.

Näin sekä tutkimus IV että tutkimus V tukivat balanssi- ja konsistenssiteorioita (Heider, 1946; McGuire, 1974), mielialan säätely -hypoteesia (Zillmann, 1988), median käyttösyyteoriaa (uses and gratifications, esim. Rosengren 1974; Katz, Blumer, & Gurevitch, 1974) sekä median käytön aktivaatioteoriaa (Bryant & Zillmann, 1984), joissa oletetaan yksilöiden hyödyntävän mediasisältöjä ylläpitääkseen psykologista tasapainoaan.

Väkivallan katselun vaikutusta katsojan aggressioon tarkastelin polku-analyysin (LISREL) avulla, joka mahdollisti kausaaliyhteyksien testaamisen. Kehityksellinen analyysi näytti, ettei tv-väkivallan katselu ainakaan vähennä katsojan aggressiivisuutta. Tässä tutkimusjoukossa, joka ei ollut lapsena nähnyt suuria määriä tv-väkivaltaa, aggressiivisuus ennusti kiinnostusta tv-väkivaltaan todennäköisemmin kuin väkivallan katselu ennusti aikuisen katsojan aggressiivisuutta. Tämä tutkimus ei oikeuta päätelmiä tv-väkivallan vaikutuksista lapsiin. Tulokset osoittivat aikuistenkin osalta, että väkivaltaisten ohjelmien katselulla on psyykkisiä vaikutuksia. Ne näkyivät kohonneena ahdistuneisuutena erityisesti naisilla. Vaikka katsojat hakivatkin väkivaltaviihdettä mielialan kohentamiseksi, ei siis voitu huomata, että katselulla olisi ainakaan pitkäkestoisia ahdistusta vähentäviä vaikutuksia.

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