RESEARCH ON MEDIA IMITATION

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INTRODUCTION

As part of my work-term at the British Columbia Film Classification Office (FCO), I was asked to draft a research report pertaining to “Media Imitation.”

What follows is a summary of the most prominent and influential readings I could find relating to the subject.

I have included seven summaries from a variety of American academic journals.

The topic requires that I examine a number of sectors within the mass media.

The media I have chosen in order of presentation include: film & television, video games, music, and pornography.

Finally, it is of crucial importance to note that I have included direct excerpts and paraphrases from the various articles throughout the research paper. This was done primarily to ensure that the authors’ work was presented in an impartial manner.

My personal voice is offered at the end of each article summary; it can be distinguished from the author’s work by the surrounding box and the use of italics. Also, the Discussions section at the end of the paper and parts of the Executive Summary are in my own voice.

It is hoped that this research, in combination with previous FCO examinations of media violence, will serve as a foundation for assisting and informing parents with regards to depictions of violence in film, video games, and pornography.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

All articles reviewed state that media violence can affect real-life behaviour (i.e. violence); however, disagreement over the extent of this effect is evident. Several factors other than the media are cited as contributing to real-life behaviour. For example, substance use, family background, and mental state are listed.

Arguably, Albert Bandura is the foremost expert in social learning and imitative behaviour. Bandura (1963) describes conditions necessary for observational learning as follows:

1. observation of particular behaviour that serves as the stimulus;
2. symbolic rehearsal of observed events;
3. storage of the information for future use; and
4. acceptance of the message invoked.

An imitative action, then, requires an opportunity for retrieval and application of the initial stimulus.

In reviewing the literature on media effects, Comstock (1977) concluded that violent stories with the following characteristics were most likely to elicit aggression when the violence in the story is presented as:

1. rewarded,
2. exciting,
3. real, and
4. justified; when the perpetrator of the violence is
5. not criticized for his behavior and is presented as
6. intending to injure his victim (Phillips, 1983).

Exposure to screen violence makes people less concerned about others and leads to them becoming more aroused so they are more likely to behave aggressively (Thomas, Horton, Lippencott, & Drabman, 1977).

Recent exposure to violent media can cause short-term increases in aggression through its impact on a person’s present internal state represented by cognitive, affective, and arousal variables (Bushman & Anderson, 2002).

Imitation was demonstrated in experiments inviting children to recall aggressive acts; all experimental children could perform the aggressive acts they had witnessed if the circumstances were right (Pennell & Browne, 1999).

It is not merely the presence of sexually explicit material that supports sexual aggression but the unique combination of sex and violence in pornography that is most potent (Demaré et al, 1988; Donnerstein, 1984; Malamuth & Briere, 1986).
SELF-REPORTED COPYCAT CRIME AMONG A POPULATION OF SERIOUS AND VIOLENT JUVENILE OFFENDERS (2002)
Ray Surette

ABSTRACT: A unique population of serious and violent juvenile offenders (SVJOs) has emerged as a public concern. A primary concern is the effect of the mass media on juveniles. Addressing both issues, a study of the media’s role in copycat crime’s generation among a sample of SVJOs is conducted. The study’s goals include measuring the prevalence of self-reported copycat criminal behaviours. One fourth of the juveniles reported that they have attempted a copycat crime. The correlates of copycat behaviour include a set of media and peer-related attitudes. Academic and demographic characteristics are not found to relate significantly to copycat crime.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the anecdotal case histories, most of the individuals who mimic media crimes have prior criminal records or histories of violence suggesting that the effect of the media is more likely qualitative (affecting criminal behaviour) rather than quantitative (affecting the number of criminals). Based on the current available research, the current popular speculation is that media influence how people commit crimes to a greater extent than why they commit crimes.

- Heller and Polsky (1976) interviewed 100 young male offenders between the ages of 16 to 27 and found that 22% reported trying criminal techniques that they had seen on television. Another 22% further disclosed that they had contemplated committing crimes they had seen on television.

- Hendrick (1977) surveyed inmates regarding their use of television as a source of crime techniques. He reported that many prisoners took notes while watching crime shows; nine out of ten inmates said they learned new tricks and increased their criminal expertise by watching crime programs. Four out of ten inmates stated they had attempted specific crimes seen on television.

- Pease and Love (1984) questioned inmates regarding the media as a motivation to commit a crime. The media was not acknowledged by these inmates as particularly influential, but a small yet substantial minority group of about 20% credited media as motivational influences. Pease and Love concluded that entertainment programs depicting crimes were more important as sources of crime techniques than as motivators to commit crimes.
Prior research does lead to the possibility that copycat crimes are largely limited to existing offender populations. Media criminogenic influence will concentrate in pre-existing criminal populations.

**FINDINGS**

- The typical juvenile participant in this study is a 16.5-year-old Black youth who has not performed well at academics and has an extensive and violent criminal history.

- One out of three juveniles reports having considered a copycat crime and about one out of four reports actually having attempted one. In addition, about one out of five reports having been induced by the media to seek out fights. One out of three credits visual media as having encouraged them to seek out a gun. All of these results fall within the prevalence levels suggested by the prior research on adult offenders.

- Most of the juveniles reported little or no copycat activity with about three out of five scoring one or zero.

In general, many external influences, including media, peers and drugs, are listed by these juveniles.

**CONCLUSION**

The findings support the existence of a significant relationship between perceptions of the media as socially and personally influential and self-reported copycat behaviours. Juveniles in this study with greater levels of media consumption do not display greater likelihood to commit copycat crimes.

The results follow from the prior research literature, which suggests that there is a small population of people at risk for harmful media influences (Surette, 1998).

The findings indicate that copycat juveniles look beyond themselves for help with crime information and suggest they seek numerous social role models and are influenced by either live models available in their neighbourhoods or ones provided by the media.

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**Surette’s study of SVJOs provides some evidence that the media affects only a predisposed population subject to delinquency.**

*However, since no control group was incorporated into his research, the findings cannot be considered conclusive.*

*Also, his research relies on self-reports of serious and violent juvenile offenders; whether or not their testimony is reliable is up for debate.*
An encouraging fact is that Surette’s findings correspond to prior research with juvenile delinquents.

It further supports the notion that young people are more impressionable by the media than their elders.

Although this article suggests that SVJOs are likely to imitate criminal behaviour they had viewed, there is no discussion of whether it is the media that influences the youth or if delinquent youths prefer crime-related programs in the first place.

Surette has focussed on visual media and largely ignored the influence of music even though the average participant reported listening to 14 hours of music a day compared to 5.5 hours of television per day.

Music and its influence will be explored later in this paper.

Surette argues that the media does not motivate juveniles to commit crime; rather, it equips those with pre-existing criminal impulses with methods of committing crimes.

Another key theme in the article is that the media is just one of the many push-and-pull factors that play a role in criminal behaviour.

Others include, but are not limited to, demographics, family background, peers, and substance abuse.
FILM VIOLENCE AND YOUNG OFFENDERS (1999)
Amanda E. Pennell and Kevin D. Browne

ABSTRACT: Recent assertions have been made that viewing violent material on film and video may influence children and adolescents whom commit violent acts. It has been proposed that heavy exposure to television violence in childhood is associated with violent crime as an adult although others have emphasized that experiencing "real" violence as a child has a much greater effect on aggressive predispositions. Ways in which screen violence can affect behavior includes: imitation of violent roles and acts of aggression, triggering aggressive impulses in predisposed individuals, desensitizing feelings of sympathy towards victims, creating an indifference to the use of violence, and creating a frame of mind that sees violent acts as a socially acceptable response to stress and frustration. It is argued that young offenders may like violent videos because of their aggressive background and behavioural tendencies. Whether such tastes reinforce violent behavior and increase the frequency of aggressive acts and antisocial behavior is open to question.

DESENSITIZATION

- Desensitization has been said to occur through repeated exposure to violent images as people become more acceptable of real-life violence and demand more extreme forms of violence on the screen (Gunter, 1990). The problem then becomes cyclical; the audience demands more explicit violence, the film-makers respond by making their films more graphic, which in turn desensitizes the audience and a vicious circle is established. The problem is that exposure to screen violence makes people less concerned about others, and also leads to them becoming more aroused so they are more likely to behave aggressively (Thomas, Horton, Lippencott, & Drabman, 1977).

SOCIAL LEARNING THEORY

- Bandura, Ross, and Ross (1963), carried out a series of laboratory experiments to investigate under what circumstances children would imitate aggressive behavior. First, the children were mildly frustrated (by not being allowed to play with toys); then, they watched a film where an adult starts hitting and kicking a "Bobo doll" (plastic punching bag with a red nose). They were divided into three groups: those who saw the aggressor being rewarded, those who saw the aggressor being punished, and a neutral group who saw no consequences for the behavior. The model-rewarded group and the control group showed a considerable number of aggressive behaviours with the model-punished group only showing limited imitation. This showed that despite having acquired aggressive acts in their repertoire, they would be acted out only in favourable circumstances.
Imitation was demonstrated in these and a subsequent experiment inviting the children to recall the aggressive acts that all the experimental children could perform the aggressive acts they had witnessed if the circumstances were right. This is consistent with the social learning theory developed by Bandura (1973). In support of Bandura's work, Hicks (1965) found that children could reproduce the aggressive acts that they had been exposed to up to 8 months later.

**COGNITIVE ASSOCIATION**

- Berkowitz's (1984) "cognitive neo-association" theory works on the principle that cognitions and thoughts are interconnected by means of association. The connecting pathways are strengthened by "similarity and semantic relatedness." Therefore, he suggests that television and film violence might prime other aggressive ideas, feelings, and actions after viewing through "semantically strengthened associative pathways." This leads to the priming of aggression with viewers being more likely to have aggressive ideas and actions after watching film violence (Josephson, 1987).

**SUSCEPTIBILITY TO VIOLENT FILM**

Consequently, there may be "vulnerable" individuals who are particularly susceptible to what they see on the screen (Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology, 1993).

- Browne (1995) states that not everyone who watches violence on the screen will become violent. However, for the 3 to 10% of the population who are predisposed to being violent when frustrated, possibly as a result of growing up with violent parents, these films are unhealthy.

- Vine (1994) points out that if individuals are susceptible to external triggers, such as violence on the screen, surely they will be influenced by triggers away from the screen. "The real culprit is not what they see on the screen, but the deficiencies in how they have learned to interpret and evaluate media imagery" (Vine, 1994, p. 54).

**MEDIA VIOLENCE, DELINQUENCY, AND CRIME**

- Bailey (1993) investigated 40 adolescent murderers and 200 young sex offenders and claimed that repeated exposure to violent and pornographic videos was a significant factor in these crimes including in some cases actual imitation of the screen image. Bailey (1993) proposes that these individuals are lacking internal boundaries, driven by distorted ideas and have unstable and violent feelings as well as deviant role models from real or fictional sources.
CONCLUSION

It is important to determine what importance each scene has to an individual and the meaning they ascribe to it. Only then can we begin to understand how violent film and television influences violent behavior and who is most susceptible to such an influence.

An agenda for future research is to use a multimethod approach combining direct observation, indirect reports, and self-reports on the way people watch film, how they watch it, and what they understand and conclude from it.

Pennell and Browne provide a thorough examination of the prior research in the field of media effects on aggression.

In addition, they efficiently critique the various research methods utilized by prior research studies.

Pennell and Browne effectively summarize the main theories in support of media influence: desensitization, social learning, and cognitive association.

Each of these theories play a significant role in explaining why and how media violence contribute to imitation. They do not propose one theory as superior to another.

The authors acknowledge that juvenile aggression is due to several factors in addition to the media such as family background and peers.

In addition, they stress that it is not the viewing, in itself, that results in delinquency but the interpretation of the material.

This supports the notion that interactive co-viewing and accompaniment is important for parents to consider.
SMOKING SCENES IN MOVIES AND ANTISMOKING ADVERTISEMENTS BEFORE MOVIES: EFFECTS ON YOUTH (1999)
Cornelia Pechmann and Chuan-Fong Shih

ABSTRACT: Eight hundred 9th graders watched either original movie footage with smoking or control footage with the smoking edited out. Emotional reactions were recorded during viewing, and smoking-related thoughts, beliefs, and intent were assessed afterward. The findings support the Forbidden Fruit thesis, in that smoking (versus non-smoking) scenes positively aroused the young viewers, enhanced their perceptions of smokers’ social stature, and increased their intent to smoke. However, youths’ opinions were malleable, and showing them an anti-smoking ad before the film effectively repositioned the smoking from forbidden to tainted thereby nullifying the aforementioned effects.

- Content analyses suggest that smoking occurs in as many as 80% of new film releases and that "smoking in movies is associated with youthful vigor, good health, good looks and personal/professional acceptance" (Hazan, Lipton, and Glantz 1994, p. 999).

- Researchers have compiled statistics suggesting that movies falsely portray the realities of smoking. For example, 57% of movie characters of high socioeconomic status smoke, whereas only 19% of these people smoke in real life (Hazan, Lipton, and Glantz 1994).

- Films rarely depict the negative health consequences of smoking or public concern about secondhand smoke (Shogren 1997). The positive depictions of smoking in films seem particularly likely to affect youths who tend to be impressionable and are three times more likely than adults to be frequent moviegoers (Terre, Drabman, and Speer 1991).

EXCITATION TRANSFER THESIS

Movie viewing is first and foremost a positively arousing experience. Most viewers seek, and thus most filmmakers attempt to provide, an experience that is characterized by "high energy, full concentration and pleasurable engagement" (Watson, Clark, and Tellegen 1988, p. 1063).

- When smoking occurs in movie scenes that elicit high positive arousal, subjects will attain more favourable beliefs about smokers and report a higher intent to smoke. When the smoking occurs in scenes that elicit low positive arousal, these effects should be weaker and possibly non-significant.

- Even if an anti-smoking advertisement is shown prior to a movie, smoking scenes (versus non-smoking control scenes) may enhance subjects’ beliefs about smokers and intent to smoke.
FORBIDDEN FRUIT THESIS

Due to the increased prohibitions against tobacco use in U.S. society, cigarettes and cigars have attained the status of forbidden fruits. Specifically, similar to other forbidden fruits (illicit drugs, pornography, and so forth), cigarettes and cigars can evoke feelings of positive arousal—excitement and pleasure.

- Youths who see movie scenes with smoking (versus non-smoking control scenes) will experience more positive arousal while watching those scenes, attain more favourable beliefs about smokers' social stature, and report a higher intent to smoke.

- If a suitable anti-smoking advertisement is shown prior to a movie, smoking scenes (versus non-smoking control scenes) will no longer evoke positive arousal, enhance beliefs about smokers' social stature, or increase intent to smoke; instead, the smoking scenes should elicit negative thoughts about smoking.

DISCUSSION

- The findings substantiate the Forbidden Fruit thesis. Consistent with the notion that youths view cigarettes as forbidden fruit, the movie scenes with smoking (versus non-smoking control scenes) produced elevated levels of positive arousal. As predicted, the scenes also enhanced viewers' perceptions of a smoker's stature and increased their intent to smoke.

- Youths' views about smoking are malleable and anti-smoking advertising can have a discernible impact. Subjects shown an advertisement implying that teenagers view smokers as unwise, unattractive, and misguided had more negative thoughts about smoking.

- Showing an anti-smoking (versus control) advertisement before the movie had no adverse impact on subjects' ratings of the movie's action or storyline or their willingness to recommend the movie to friends. Completely editing out the smoking likewise had no significant impact on subjects' movie ratings.

The research method utilized by the researchers contained control groups and controlled settings lending support for their findings.

However, the authors decided to test only two theses: Excitation Transfer Thesis and Forbidden Fruit Thesis ruling out any other alternatives.

Since there is a favourable effect of screening anti-smoking ads prior to a film according to this article, it would be interesting to look into ads for other forms of contentious movie depictions such as violence or street racing.
If anti-smoking ads illicit negative thoughts about smoking, commonsense would assume that potential imitation of violence or street-racing could be mitigated with anti-violence and anti-street-racing ads.

As mentioned, anti-smoking ads had no negative impact on the viewers’ enjoyment of the film so filmmakers, distributors, and theatres need not worry about negative public feedback.

In any case, under the authority of the Motion Picture Act, FCO should continue to waive classification fees for public service announcements that benefit society wherever possible.

As noted in the article, smoking occurs in roughly 80% of new releases, thus, many of these films likely fall within the G and PG categories.

It would be reasonable to conclude, then, that children are exposed to numerous film scenes depicting smoking before they enter the 9\textsuperscript{th} grade.

According to the article, there has been a recent push in the U.S. to make films containing smoking Restricted due to effects on children.

Such a policy would not be in accordance with the BC Motion Picture Act.

A Restricted rating in the U.S. is comparable to BC’s 18A category.

18A films in BC will contain horror, explicit violence, frequent coarse language, and/or more sexually suggestive scenes; the legislation does smoking depictions as determinative to this category.
Lillian Bensley and Juliet Van Eenwyk

J.L Sherry (1999) identifies six theories used to predict either increased or decreased aggression after violent video game play.

1) Social Learning Theory
Social learning theory suggests that at least some aggression is learned by observing, and then by imitating, a model who acts aggressively. Aggressive video game characters might serve as models for aggressive behaviour. Further, rewards such as higher points and longer playing time within the game and increased status accorded by peers for success at the game could provide a motivation for increased aggression by reinforcing the behaviour.

2) Arousal Theory
An arousal theory predicts that, if the video game player has an aggressive disposition or is angered, playing an arousing video game might cause increased aggression. According to this theory, violent video games would be expected to increase aggression only in the presence of anger from some other cause.

3) Cognitive Priming Theory
A cognitive priming theory suggests that violent video games will activate related cognitive structures making it more likely that other incoming information would be processed in an "aggression" framework and possibly increase aggressive behaviour.

4) Catharsis Theory
The catharsis theory suggests that violent video games can provide a safe outlet for aggressive thoughts and feelings.

5) Drive-Reduction Theory
Drive-reduction theory suggests, similar to catharsis theory, that violent video games may be useful in managing aggression. According to this theory, highly stressed or frustrated individuals may play violent video games to re-establish emotional equilibrium through arousal or relaxation.

6) General Affective Aggression Model
The general affective aggression model integrates social learning, arousal, and cognitive processing theories and includes individual variables (such as aggressive personality) as well as situational variables (such as video game play). According to this model, whenever exposure to violent media primes aggressive thoughts, increases hostile feelings, or increases arousal, short-term increases in aggression would be expected. Long-term increases in aggression might result if video game-playing led to changes in aggression-related knowledge structures or scripts.
PRESCHOOL CHILDREN AND ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

Three of the four studies using behavioural observations of aggression during free-play found that video game play causes increased aggression or aggressive play immediately after the video game. This finding included two studies showing more aggression after an aggressive video game compared with a nonaggressive video game.

MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

Results of six correlational studies and one descriptive study of the possible link between self-reported video game play and aggressive behaviours or moods provided mixed results. Two of those studies found either no association with antisocial behaviour or heightened delinquency in boys who preferred less (not more) violent games. Four other studies found associations between the amount of time spent playing video games and at least one measure of self-reported aggression but specific patterns varied.

COLLEGE STUDENTS AND YOUNG ADULTS

Studies examining the possible effects of video games on hostile mood and other measures of aggression and hostility yielded mixed results. Of six experimental studies examining hostile mood, two showed increased hostility after violent video game play and four did not.

Only one of four studies examining other self-reported measures of aggression and hostility revealed more aggression and hostility after violent video game play. The other studies did not show an association between aggression/hostility and video game play.

DISCUSSION

Among young children (4–8 years), playing an aggressive video game caused increased aggression or aggressive play during free-play immediately after the video game in 3 of the 4 studies. For teenagers, because of the nonexperimental designs and mixed results of these studies, it was not possible to determine whether video game violence affects aggressive behavior. Among college students, there is not consistent evidence that video game play affects aggression or hostility.

Griffiths concluded that "the one consistent finding is that the majority of the studies on very young children, as opposed to those in their teens upwards, tend to show that children do become more aggressive after either playing or watching a violent video game. However, all of these come from the use of one particular research methodology (i.e., observation of children's free play)" (p. 203).
CONCLUSION

In conclusion, current research evidence is not supportive of a major concern that violent video games lead to real-life violence. However, well-controlled studies of adolescents are lacking. Also, this conclusion might change as more research is conducted on more recent and increasingly realistic games.

Bensley and Van Eenwyk’s examination of the six primary theories of aggression and relating it to video games gives the reader an insight into possible reasons why the media might affect viewers.

A meta-analysis of the existing literature on the topic indicates that the younger the consumer of video game violence, the more likely aggression is to occur.

However, there are several problems with the methods selected by various researchers.

First, the study of preschool children and elementary school students relied solely on behavioural observations during children’s free play.

The problems of identifying what are to be considered ‘violence’ and ‘aggression’ is very subjective.

In addition, not all the studies in this category rely on trained researchers to make the distinction; some rely on the testimony of parents and teachers to measure the ‘aggression level’ of these children.

The meta-analysis of prior research on video games partially support all of the six theories on aggression particularly if one is exposed to violent video games at an early age.

As violent video games become increasingly realistic with advancing technology, additional research into the field will be required.
DIFFERENTIAL GENDER EFFECTS OF EXPOSURE TO RAP MUSIC ON AFRICAN AMERICAN ADOLESCENTS’ ACCEPTANCE OF TEEN DATING VIOLENCE (1995)
James D. Johnson, Mike S. Adams, and Leslie Ashburn

ABSTRACT: The purpose of the present study was to assess the effects of exposure to non-violent rap music on African American adolescents’ perceptions of teen dating violence. African American male and female subjects were exposed to nonviolent rap videos (which contained images of women in sexually subordinate roles) or they saw no videos. The results indicated that there was a significant interaction between gender and video exposure. More specifically, acceptance of the use of violence did not vary as a function of exposure for male subjects. Conversely, female subjects who were exposed to the videos showed greater acceptance of the violence than females who were not exposed. Possible basis and implications for these findings are discussed.

DISCUSSION

The results of the present study clearly show that exposure to non-violent rap videos affects perceptions of the acceptability of teen dating violence. The most interesting finding indicated that the effects of exposure to the rap videos were moderated by gender. Female subjects who were exposed to the videos reported greater acceptance of teen dating violence than females who were not exposed to the videos. On the other hand, male acceptance of such violence did not vary as a function of exposure to the videos. Indeed, the results indicate that exposure to the videos actually brought the females’ acceptance of teen dating violence up to the level of the males’ acceptance.

It is possible that males in the present study had relatively strong prior attitudes which condoned teen dating violence, thus their perceptions were not affected by exposure to the images of female inferiority in the videos. To support this contention, there is some evidence that males do tend to accept the use of violence against women (Ageton, 1991; Malamuth & Check, 1981).

The present findings clearly indicate that the concerns about the harmful effects of exposure to rap music are not totally unfounded and/or unwarranted.

A main criticism of this study is the sample used.

The sample size is rather small with only 60 participants.

In addition, all participants are African-American from an inner city youth club and of the lower socioeconomic class.
The reason the researchers chose this sample is because “this group is more likely to use physical tactics to resolve dating conflicts” according to prior research.

Since only African-American inner-city youths are included in this study, can the findings be generalized?

Another problem with this study is that Johnson et al. seem to attribute the acceptance of dating violence more towards the role of the music rather than the videos.

It could be argued that the videos are more influential since they directly depict female subordination, the videos depicted scantily clad dancers seemingly smitten with the rappers who were the center of attention.
SEXUALLY VIOLENT PORNOGRAPHY, ANTI-WOMEN ATTITUDES, AND SEXUAL AGGRESSION: A STRUCTURAL EQUATION MODEL (1993)
Dano Demaré, Hilary M. Lips, and John Briere

ABSTRACT: Data provided by male university students were used to assess the interrelationship of pornography use, anti-women attitudes, and tendency for sexual violence. Consistent with previous research, use of nonviolent pornography was not uniquely associated with potential or actual sexual aggression. The findings suggest the potential roles of both attitudes and sexually violent pornography in the occurrence of sexual aggression. Further, they support other research findings that suggest it is not merely exposure to sexually explicit materials, per se, but the combination of sex and violence in pornographic materials that encourages or facilitates sexual aggression.

LITERATURE REVIEW

- Malamuth (1989) noted that violent pornography might contain themes that normalize rape and other sexually violent acts, minimize the perception of harm to the victim, place responsibility for the act on the victim by virtue of her seductiveness or supposed deservingness of aggression, or perhaps elevate “the positive value of sexual aggression by associating it with sexual pleasure and a sense of conquest” (p.165).

- Demaré et al. (1988) noted that it is not clear whether sexually violent pornography stimulates the development of rape-supportive attitudes as hypothesized by Malamuth and his colleagues (e.g., Malamuth, 1989; Malamuth & Briere, 1986), or whether, in fact, possession of rape-supportive attitudes motivates both consumption of sexually violent pornography and involvement in sexual violence.

METHOD

Four hundred and twenty-two male undergraduate students were randomly selected from an Introductory Psychology subject pool and administered an “Attitudes Survey.” This questionnaire consisted of items tapping sexual and social attitudes, beliefs, perceptions, and behaviours.

RESULTS

1. Pornography Use: Nonviolent pornography was used to some extent during the last year by 86% of participants. Thirty-six percent had used materials that depicted forced sexual acts against women and 25% had used materials depicting rape of women.
2. **Likelihood of Sexual Aggression:** Twenty-eight percent of subjects reported some hypothetical likelihood of using sexual force against a woman and 11% reported some likelihood of raping.

3. **Actual Sexual Aggression:** Sixteen percent of subjects reported that they had used some form of coercion to achieve sexual intercourse with a woman and 12% reported that they used some form of force.

**DISCUSSION**

The notion that sexually violent pornography, but not non-violent pornography, is associated with potential and actual sexual aggression suggests further that, as hypothesized by Demaré et al. (1988), Donnerstein (1984), Malamuth and Briere (1986), and others, it is not merely the presence of sexually explicit material that supports sexual aggression, but instead the unique combination of sex and violence in pornography that is most potent. As noted by Malamuth (1984) in this regard, “coupling of sex and aggression in these portrayals may result in conditioning processes whereby aggressive acts become associated with sexual arousal, a powerful unconditioned stimulus and reinforcer” (p.31).

The relationship between pornography and sexual aggression might be a function of previously held anti-women attitudes. Specifically, it was thought possible that individuals with such attitudes might use pornography and report higher rates of hypothetical and actual sexual aggression. Thus, the connection between pornography and sexually violent behaviour could be spurious.

**CONCLUSION**

Results from the present study suggest that use of sexually violent pornography and possession of anti-women attitudes are correlated phenomena that have direct and indirect impacts on sexually aggressive behaviour.

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*I believe this study contains several methodological problems.*

*First of all, definitions of the different kinds of pornography such as “force” and “rape” are left for the participants to define which is rather subjective.*

*Secondly, the sample consists solely of male introductory psychology undergraduates.*

*This is not a random sample reflecting the general population as a whole.*

*Another flaw in the study is the measure for likelihood of force and rape (LF and LR).*
Demaré et al. define the likelihood for sexual aggression as though the participants “could be assured of not being caught.”

This ‘assurance’ is hardly available in the real world.

Demaré et al. were able to find a correlation between those who consume violent pornography and those who report a greater actual and likelihood of sexual aggression.

However, this relationship could be spurious as prior sexual aggression may lead to violent pornography use instead of the other way around.

This article is particularly significant to FCO because of adult material classification.

Violent pornography is most associated with subsections 5(3)(a), 5(3)(f), and 5(3)(g) of the Motion Picture Act.
PORNOGRAPHY AND SEXUAL ABUSE OF WOMEN (1984)
Mimi H. Silbert and Ayala M. Pines

METHOD

Two-hundred juvenile and adult, current and former, female street prostitutes in the San Francisco Bay area participated in the study. The average age was 22. The youngest subject was 10 and the oldest was 46. Seventy percent of the current prostitutes were under 21, almost 60% were 16 or under, and many were 10, 11, 12, and 13 years old.

RESULTS

- Out of the 193 cases of rape, 24% mentioned allusions to pornographic material on the part of the rapist. This figure is even more significant when it is understood that these comments were made by respondents without any solicitation, or reference to the issues of pornography by the interviewer. The comments followed the same pattern: the assailant referred to pornographic materials he had seen or read and then insisted that the victims not only enjoyed the rape but also the extreme violence.

- Again, in unsolicited comments, 22% of the 178 cases of juvenile sexual exploitation mentioned the use of pornographic materials by the adult prior to the sexual act. The particular manner in which the adult used the pornographic materials varied. For a few, they used the materials to try to persuade the children with comments such as, “Now doesn’t that look like something that you and I would have a good time doing together?” Others used pornographic materials to attempt to legitimize their actions. Others used the pornographic materials to arouse themselves prior to abusing the child.

It is likely, given, the numbers who spontaneously described their involvement with pornography, that the cases of pornographic abuse of children would be significantly higher among the prostitute population if studied overtly.

CONCLUSIONS

While the results of the data can neither confirm nor reject the “catharsis model” of pornography, because they are based on victims’ rather than assailants’ responses, the results lend considerable support to the “imitation model” of pornography. Many of the references to pornography noted by the subjects indicated that their abusers were imitating the abusing males in pornographic materials, and believed that, as the victims in pornography, their victims must enjoy the abuse.
Silbert and Pines’ ample sample size of 200 prostitutes lends support to their findings.

However, there is an issue of whether or not the link between pornography and sexual abuse of prostitutes can be generalized to that of the female population at large.

Also, the study only consists of reports from the prostitutes themselves and excludes the alleged sexual abusers, so it may be argued that the testimonies are one-sided.

The association between pornography and sexual abuse was not considered by the authors prior to setting out the research.

The correlation evolved from unsolicited response; it would be interesting to compare findings where researchers included related questions in their questionnaire.

While the article focuses on several forms of pornography other than videos, it is still relevant to FCO.

Even though this study is somewhat dated, Silbert and Pines reported that almost 60% of the participants were 16 years of age or younger with many 10 to 13 years old.

The mere existence of so many young prostitutes indicates a demand for them.

Subsections 5(3)(d) and 5(3)(e) of the Act cover child pornography and depiction of underage performers.

A recent trend in adult submissions is the depiction of young performers which may or may not contribute to the demand for younger prostitutes (e.g. “Barely Legal” titles, etc.).
DISCUSSION

The material that I have reviewed indicates that there is a relationship between media violence and real-life violence. Whether this relationship is direct or indirect is open to question. However, there is a good deal of discrepancy among the authors on the amount of media effect.

It is difficult to evaluate the relationship between media violence and real-life violence due to the vast array of other factors that play a part. For instance, in several of the imitation cases mentioned, substance abuse was an obvious factor in the actions of the imitator.

Much of the research conducted in this field is based on laboratory findings. Such research falls prey to external invalidity; that is, experimental findings from a controlled environment may not reflect reality. In addition, participants of research are often undergraduate students and may not represent the general population.

All the studies seem to agree that only a very small percentage of viewers or consumers of media violence actually imitate. However, it must be kept in mind that for every one imitation case reported, there may be numerous others that go unreported.

It is my opinion that media violence does not directly motivate individuals to commit violent acts; instead, the media provides predisposed individuals with the techniques of committing violence. Media consumption, in itself, does not lead to real-life aggression; rather, it is how an individual interprets the material that is of most significance. Imitation cases involving very young children may be a different issue, however, since children may imitate not because they are predisposed to violence, but because they are more impressionable than adults. It is for this reason that FCO should continue its mission of providing parents with film content information so that they may make informed choices for themselves and their children.
WORKS CITED


