

The Effects of Family Cohesion and Tension on Icelandic Adolescents' Motivations and Viewing of Television Programs¹

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In the early morning hours of October 2nd, 1993, a 15-year-old girl was enjoying herself in downtown Reykjavík, a popular gathering place for Icelandic teenagers. All of a sudden she found herself on the ground, her head and torso being kicked repeatedly by three other girls, ages 14 through 16. The reason? A co-worker of hers was a friend of her attackers and simply didn't like her (DV, 15.10. '93).

In the weeks and months following the incident, there was a heated debate in society about the increased violence among juveniles. More often than not people looked to television for answers. Some claimed that since television was introduced in Iceland in 1966, there had been a jump in physical assaults, and injuries after such assaults were more serious than in the good-old days when guys got into a fistfight over a girl at a country dance.

Helgi Gunnlaugsson, an associate professor at the University of Iceland, has studied the changes in the crime rate in Iceland, and his findings indicate, that if anything, the rate of physical assaults has been stable over the years and is now far from being as high as it was in the late '80s. Moreover, if one looks at the number of people who have sought emergency care because of assaults, the increase is consistent with the population growth since 1975.

Gunnlaugsson points out that those juveniles who get involved in crimes usually come from highly dysfunctional families where violence is rampant (Gunnlaugsson, 1994). Closer investigation of the case which was presented in the first paragraph of this paper supports this well-known theory. It turned out that the 16-year-old main attacker had previously been involved in a physical assault case. She had also been the victim of sexual abuse a few years back when a 43-year-old man got her and other girls drunk and then had sex with them. If that wasn't enough, her whole family through three generations had been more or less in and out of jail or penitentiaries for various crimes (DV 15.10. '93).

Although one cannot claim based on her family's criminal convictions that violence was the way of life at home, it is not unlikely. Thus, one has to ask oneself, was the 16-year-old girl damaged from watching violence on television or by being raised in an extremely dysfunctional family? It is only logical to pick the second option.

It should be noted, however, that family factors and television viewing may work together; lack of supervision and maltreatment may cause greater violence viewing, which in turn may only confirm and support the behavior patterns and problem solving options which are used within the home. Thus, the adolescent adopts behavior that is learnt within the four walls of the home, and which is confirmed on television. Albert Bandura claimed that even though a child observed negative behaviors, several factors could inhibit the imitation process. He argued that "people refrain from transgressing because they anticipate that such conduct will bring them social censure and other adverse consequences" (Bandura, 1994: 71). Furthermore, most people have internalized standards that serve as guides and deterrents to conduct. In the case of children and adolescents who are raised in homes where violence is the norm, the wrongness of violence is not internalized and consequently it is stored in memory and acted out when the opportunity presents itself.

For some reason or another, some children and adolescents may be more vulnerable to what they see on television while most well-adjusted kids are not affected in a negative manner. It may be possible to say that children and adolescents from close-knit families, for example, do not become aggressive or delinquent from watching television.

Furthermore, effects are to some degree dependent on the individual's motives for viewing television. Children who live with violence may be more attracted to violence on television because televised violence provides them with information on how to protect themselves. This was supported by the findings of the study by Bruce (1995). And when adolescents watch violence to learn how to protect themselves, one can only assume that they will store the information in order to retrieve it at a later date, and be more likely to resort to using what they have learnt.

It is the purpose of this paper to present some preliminary findings of a research project that was conducted in early 1998. It will not concern itself with the effects of viewing violence on television, but rather the relationship between such family factors as family cohesiveness and domestic abuse and motives for viewing violence and non-violent material on television. It is expected that certain children, more specifically children who are either observers or victims of violence, will be more likely to watch violence because it makes them feel good when the bad guy gets caught, for example.

On the other hand, it is expected that children who are raised in cohesive families will have lower scores on motives for viewing violence and be more likely to report watching non-violent television to learn about the world, be with their family etc.

Literature review

Parental factors

Being physically abused or neglected has been shown to affect children's social development and behavior among peers. A study of 40 university students showed that those who had been abused as children reported more yelling and shouting at peers and classmates. They were more likely to have physical fights with family members or being verbally rude (Graybill et al., 1985). A follow-up study of physically abused children has even found that half of them have criminal records as adults (Lamphear, 1985). After interviewing 100 juvenile delinquents, Weston found that 82 of them could recall being abused as children.

The main element of Hirschi's social control theory is the idea of a social bond. The individual develops a social bond when he internalizes the norms of society and becomes sensitive to the needs of others. "The norms of society are by definition shared by members of society. To violate a norm, is therefore, to act contrary to the wishes and expectations of other people - that is, if he is insensitive to the opinion of others - then he is to that extent not bound by the norms. He is free to deviate" (Hirschi, 1969: 18).

Hirschi's social bond consists of four components, i.e. attachment, commitment, involvement and belief. The first element refers to ties of affection and respect between children and their parents, teachers and friends. Attachment to parents is seen as being crucial. Hirschi believed that "if children are strongly attached to their parents, they are much more likely to internalize the norms of society and develop feelings of respect for people in authority and for friends" (Empey & Stafford, 1991: 260).

What Hirschi did with his theory was to direct our attention towards the family as the main source of delinquency. He tested his own theory by studying stratified probability sample of 5,545 students. Attachment to parents was seen as being particularly important. By using two indices of communication and supervision, Hirschi found that only 5% of boys who had shared their thoughts and feelings, and discussed their future plans, with their fathers had committed two or more delinquent acts in the year prior to the study compared to 43% of those who never communicated with their fathers (Hirschi, 1969).

Findings from a study by Cernkovich and Giordano are consistent with Hirschi's claim. Delinquents had lower levels of caring and trust, control and supervision and instrumental communication (Cernkovich & Giordano, 1987).

Moreover, Van Voorhis et al. got the same results in their study. The factors that were most strongly related to delinquency were affection, supervision and overall home quality. There was a weak but significant relationship between violent behavior and child maltreatment (Van Voorhis et al., 1988).

Finally, it should be noted that an analysis of longitudinal data by Loeber and Stouthamer-Loeber showed that "socialization variables, such as lack of

parental supervision, parental rejection, and parent-child involvement, are among the most powerful predictors of juvenile conduct problems and delinquency" (Loeber & Stouthamer-Loeber, 1986: 29).

It has now been firmly established that physical abuse, lack of supervision and lack of affection are strong predictors of juvenile delinquency. This paper will investigate how those same factors may affect adolescents' violence viewing and their motives for viewing violence. It is quite likely that general lack of supervision may both encourage delinquent behavior and violence viewing. Roe has claimed that delinquency and use of socially disvalued media should be perceived as one dimension (Roe, 1995). Although the present study will not be equipped to establish it, it's highly likely that lack of parental supervision allows violence viewing and delinquency to have cyclical effects, i.e. violence viewing leads to increased delinquency and increased delinquent behavior may in turn lead to more violence viewing.

Uses and gratifications

"Ask not what media do to people, but ask what people do with media" is at the core of the uses and gratifications theory.

The uses and gratifications theory emerged just over a quarter of a century ago when Sears and Freedman put the research on selective exposure under the microscope. Up to that point it had been assumed by most like Berelson and Steiner that "people tend to see and hear communications that are favorable or congenial to their predispositions; they are more likely to see and hear congenial communications than neutral or hostile ones" (Berelson & Steiner, 1964: 529 as cited in Sears & Freedman, 1971: 211).

The review by Sears and Freedman revealed that findings in the area of selective exposure were inconclusive, i.e. some showed preference for supportive information, others for counterarguments and a few studies showed no preference. It turned out, however, that Sears and Freedman were able to reconcile these different findings by their conception of the idea of utility. They argued that "the perceived utility of the information is .. a factor likely to have a major effect on exposure preferences" (Sears & Freedman, 1971: 229). People prefer to be exposed to material that is useful to them or serves their purposes.

Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch took this a step further and defined research in the area of uses and gratifications theory as being concerned with "the social and psychological origins needs, which generate expectations of the mass media or other sources, which lead to differential patterns of media exposure (or engagement in other activities), resulting in need gratifications and other consequences, perhaps mostly unintended ones" (Katz et al., 1974: 21).

Importantly, Katz et al. argued that "social situation produces tensions and conflicts, leading to pressure for their easement via mass media consumption" (Katz et al., 1974: 27). In the case of adolescents who are victims of abuse, the

mass media may provide them with an escape route – a way to forget their problems, or catharsis, by watching others get hurt.

"Social situation offers impoverished real-life opportunities to satisfy certain needs, which are then directed to the mass media for complementary, supplementary, or substitute servicing" (Katz et al., 1974: 27). In simple terms, this might for example mean that emotionally neglected children look to television characters to satisfy their needs for companionship.

Finally, "social situation gives rise to certain values, the affirmation and reinforcement of which is facilitated by the consumption of congruent media materials" (Katz et al., 1974: 27). By watching violence, for example, aggressive individuals can reinforce their belief that violence is the way to go in human interactions.

Although the uses and gratifications theory wasn't defined till in the early '70s, in 1959, Pearlin had found that there was a relationship between an individual's stressful experiences and his/her use of television for escape. Moreover, Pearlin rightly maintains that "the escape viewing pattern cannot accurately be determined from the content of programs that people watch. Two persons watching the same program can perceive it within different frameworks and attach to it different meaning" (Pearlin, 1959: 256).

Greenberg's study on children and adolescents revealed eight main reasons for watching television, i.e. to pass time, to forget, to learn about things, to learn about oneself, for arousal, for relaxation, for companionship and as a habit. The findings of his study also indicated that children who have aggressive tendencies tend to watch television for arousal and not surprisingly, they tend to prefer watching violence (Greenberg, 1974). A few years later, Rubin reported that those who watched television for arousal were also more likely to prefer to watch adventure drama (Rubin, 1979).

More recently, Finn and Gorr found that these eight motives can be split into two dimensions. Pass time, habit, escape and companionship represent a social compensation dimension while relaxation, entertainment, arousal and information represent mood management (Finn & Gorr, 1988). Also, they concluded that individuals with high social support are more likely to use television for mood management reasons than for social compensation.

Thus, previous studies lend support to the argument that viewers who are looking for arousal prefer violence/action packed programs. These same viewers may also have more aggressive tendencies that more than likely are stimulated during viewing.

Attractions to violence

The literature on the effects of television violence is quite extensive. To cut a long story short, Paik and Comstock reported, after conducting a meta-analysis, that the overall correlation between viewing violence and antisocial

behavior is moderate and significant at .31, i.e. there is clear evidence that people who engage in antisocial behavior are more likely than others to watch violence in high doses. However, it should be noted that when the survey design has been used to investigate the relationship between criminal violence and violence viewing, the correlation is quite small or only .004 (Paik & Comstock, 1994).

A number of studies has found that although we have a correlation between violence viewing and aggressive/antisocial behavior, aggressive people may actually be seeking out violent material. Since this area of the literature is relevant to the present study, some of these findings will now be discussed.

Bryant looked at males' enjoyment of sports and found that more aggressive prone males were more likely to enjoy rough and tough football plays, but this group was also more likely to enjoy contact sports. Furthermore, findings from this study indicated that "under the right conditions, certain viewers will enjoy and even rejoice in the death of an athlete.." (Bryant, 1989: 285).

In their study of liking/disliking of violent movies, Diener & Woody failed to find any relationship between personality measures and liking for violence. However, the authors warned that this might have been due to the fact that their sample was too homogeneous (all college students). Overall, they found that the average viewer dislikes violence, but conflict was quite popular (Diener & Woody, 1981). In spite of those findings, it should be mentioned that another study by Diener and colleagues found that aggressive males tended to like violence, and moreover, they disliked nonviolent television episodes. The authors claimed, in agreement with Bryant, that violent fare may appeal to some individuals. Overall, most "normal" people express less liking of a show when they perceive it to be violent (Diener & DeFour, 1978).

In Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Bruce found that adolescents who had high exposure to real-life violence were significantly more likely to watch violent shows. They were also more likely to report being attracted to violent television drama. Those findings may be explained in terms of other results from this same study, namely that those who had been exposed to real-life violence were more likely to identify with the assailant when watching violent programs. There was also a significant relationship between exposure to real-life violence and finding violent TV shows exciting and watching those shows to protect oneself. Finally, one can mention that these same individuals liked the characters in violent drama (Bruce, 1995).

One natural experiment was conducted to try to decide once and for all the direction of the relationship between exposure to violence and aggression. Black and Bevan asked people going into, and coming out of, movie theaters, either after seeing *Passage to India* or *Missing in Action*, to fill out subscales of the Buss-Durkee hostility inventory. The results indicated that aggression scores of those who chose to see the violent movie *Missing in Action* were significantly higher than of those watching *Passage to India*, both before and after seeing the movie. Moreover, there was a significant increase in aggression for those

watching the violent movie but not for those who saw the non-violent movie. Black and Bevan said that "the results suggest not only that films featuring violence attract an audience with a propensity for aggression, but that viewing the [violent] film further heightens this tendency" (Black & Bevan, 1992: 42-43).

A study by Cantor et al. had found that boys in particular between the ages of 10 and 14 seemed attracted to violence since they were significantly more likely to chose programs that had the label "parental discretion advised" (Cantor et al., 1997). Again one finds gender differences because young girls were significantly less likely to pick material that had labels that indicated that it might be objectionable to young children.

The studies that have been reviewed above all seem to indicate that certain individuals, mostly males, seek out violent material. They also seem to point at certain personality dispositions as the driving force behind this selective exposure.

Research questions

The family plays a major role in the development of an individual, and whether it's because of one's genetic make-up or pure environmental influences, or the combination of both, the family shapes and molds one's behavioral and cognitive experiences, including daily habits like television viewing. Furthermore, what adolescents take away from their daily interactions with other family members is bound to affect to what extent they look for substitutes in fulfilling needs that the family generally fulfills.

Consequently, one can claim that a teenager who can't get his need for companionship fulfilled in interactions with the family, may look to TV for friendship and human voices. It will be argued here that the family plays a vital part in affecting how and why young people watch television. For example, adolescents who grow up in closely knit families and are firmly established in their family relationships, may simply watch TV to learn about the world because all of the other needs, that television fulfills in some people's cases, are fulfilled in their daily interactions with other family members. When the family does not meet the individual's needs for companionship and excitement, he/she may look to TV and establish "pseudo" relationships with the characters on TV. Hence, people's motivations for watching television may to some degree reflect the situation within the home.

The present paper tries to answer some of the questions that arise when one investigates the relationship between adolescents' television viewing and their family environment. More specifically, this paper attempts to answer the following four research questions:

1. How does the relationship between adolescents and their parents, i.e. the level of family cohesion, affect the adolescents' motives for watching television?

Hypothesis 1a:

The better the relationship between the adolescents and their parents, i.e. the higher the adolescents' scores on the family cohesion scale, the more likely they are to watch non-violent television for high-activity reasons (to learn about the world, to spend time with their families and to be able to discuss what they see with their families).

Hypothesis 1b:

The worse the relationship between the adolescents and their parents, i.e. the lower the adolescents' scores on the family cohesion scale, the more likely they are to watch non-violent television for relief reasons (to fulfill their needs for companionship, to forget own problems, to get excited and to ease loneliness).

Hypothesis 1c:

The worse the relationship between the adolescents and their parents, i.e. the lower the adolescents' scores on the family cohesion scale, the more likely they are to watch non-violent television for low-activity reasons (to escape boredom, to relax, and out of habit)

2. How does the relationship between the adolescents and their parents affect the adolescents' viewing of television, i.e. the frequency of a particular genre?

It is expected that there will be a significant association between the adolescents' relationships with their parents and their viewing choices.

Hypothesis 2a:

The higher the adolescents' scores on the family cohesion scale, the more likely they are to watch family-oriented programs.

Hypothesis 2b:

The higher the adolescents' scores on the family cohesion scale, the more likely they are to watch news-oriented programs.

Hypothesis 2c:

The higher the adolescents' scores on the family cohesion scale, the less likely they are to watch programs that contain violence.

3. How does tension/violence within the home affect the adolescents' motives for viewing violence?

Adolescents who are raised in homes where force or violence is used to solve problems may actually seek out violence on TV because their minds are scripted for violent behavior and the violence on television is congruent with their own daily life. By the same token, adolescents who are brought up in homes where levels of family tension/violence are low may be less likely to seek out violence on TV, or may simply avoid it, because they find television violence cognitively and affectively shocking, i.e. television violence has a greater physiological effect on them than on adolescents who have been desensitized to violence in their homes.

Hypothesis 3a:

The more violence/tension within the home as reported by the adolescents, the more likely they are to view violence for so-called enjoyment reasons (for example, they like seeing people fight and get hurt).

Hypothesis 3b:

The more violence/tension within the home as reported by the adolescents, the more likely they are to view violence for escape reasons (to forget own problems, to escape fighting at home, and to feel good when the bad guy gets caught).

4. How does tension/violence within the home affect the adolescents' viewing of violent television programs, and their frequency of viewing?

Again, it is expected that the more tension within the home, the more likely the adolescents are to watch violent television programs. This is expected because only violent television programs provide them with the gratifications that they seek, for example a feeling of justice. Seeing the good triumph over evil in violent television shows may give some hope for the future for adolescents who live with tension/violence at home.

Hypothesis 4:

The more tension/violence within the home as reported by the adolescents, the more likely they are to watch violent television programs.

Methodology

The sample

The sample for the present study was recruited from ten public schools in the Reykjavík-metropolitan area. Five of these schools are located in Reykjavík and the other five in the adjacent suburbs. With the exception of two schools, four classes were randomly selected from each school, i.e. one in 7th grade, one in 8th grade, one in 9th grade and finally one in 10th grade. Seventh-graders were not included in the sample from one school as that particular

school only has 8th through 10th grade. At another school only the 8th and the 10th graders participated in the study.

In addition, the researcher was permitted to administer the questionnaire in an alternative school in Reykjavík for adolescents with academic and social problems. Also, seven individuals at a rehabilitation home for delinquents participated in the study.

The total sample included 698 students, ranging in age from 11 to 16. The researcher has a good reason to suspect that quite a few students were tempted to report their age as being a year older than they were at the time of the study. This is probably especially true for students whose birthday was coming up in the next few weeks. The majority of the subjects was born 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985.

The proportion of girls in the sample was higher than was expected. For some unknown reason, it appears that more girls participated in the study, or 378 girls and 320 boys. That means that girls were 54.2% of the sample and boys 45.8%, but each year slightly more boys are born in Iceland than girls.

The population of Iceland was 272,096 on December 1st 1997. However, the majority of this number lives in the Reykjavík-metropolitan area, or 157,054. Approximately 4,000 children are born each year in Iceland and the total population for the age groups, included in the study, was 16,496. Thus, the sample was 4.2% of the population in these age groups.

Procedure

The study was conducted at the end of January and in the beginning of February 1998. Unfortunately, due to an unexpected outbreak of strep throat among school children in Iceland, and the annual flu epidemic, attendance was unusually low around this time. Some principals and teachers reported up to one-third of their students missing from school during these particular days.

Needless to say, this affected the study to a certain degree, i.e. in some cases the questionnaires weren't administered on their scheduled days and the sample size was smaller than had been anticipated. However, one can only hope that the absences were random and that they do not affect the validity of the study.

All of the questionnaires were administered by the students' teachers but they had written instructions from the researcher. The students had 40 minutes, i.e. one class hour, to answer all of the questions. Needless to say, the questionnaire was in Icelandic – the students' native tongue.

The questionnaire

For the purpose of this paper, it's only essential to discuss how the main concepts were measured.

Television viewing

Since so many Icelandic homes have now access to satellite television and foreign channels, it wasn't thought to be realistic to present the sample with lists of programs that were broadcast on the three Icelandic channels. Instead, it was felt that it would work better to have the subjects rate their frequency of viewing of specific genre on a nine-point scale, i.e. they rated from one to nine how often they watched, for example, comedies, science fiction and action programs.

It should be noted, that watching box was measured separately from viewing other sport programs. The rationale for this decision was that box is probably the most violent sport that is shown on Icelandic TV, and considering it is usually shown late at night – it might not have the same group of viewers as other sport programs.

Total television viewing was measured by asking the subjects two separate questions, i.e. how many hours they spent watching television on a typical weekday (Monday through Friday), assuming that the subjects watched some television almost every day, and how many hours they spent watching television on Saturdays and Sundays. Those two questions were then weighted proportionally (the score for Monday through Friday was multiplied by five and added to the score for Saturdays and Sundays which was multiplied by two) and combined to create one variable that could be a reliable measurement of total television viewing.

Motivations for watching violent and non-violent TV programs

The subjects were presented with two lists of statements. The first list measured motives for watching non-violent material and included 10 statements. The second list measured motives for watching violent material and also included 10 items. Because of the somewhat different nature of violent and non-violent programs, there was only a slight overlap between the items on each list. By factor analyzing the 20 statements, 10 for non-violent material and 10 for violent material, it was revealed that each list included four factors (four different main motivations).

It has been argued that there are eight traditional viewing motives, i.e. companionship, pass time, habit, escape, relaxation, entertainment, arousal and information (Finn & Gorr, 1988). The two motivation for viewing scales include most of these. In addition, Larson (1995) has proposed that adolescents may actually watch TV to spend time with their parents without having to talk to them. Thus, one such item was included. Most of the items on the motivation lists are also consistent with Greenberg's list of motives (1974).

Family cohesion and supervision

The 13 items that were used to measure family cohesiveness, i.e. the relationship between the adolescent and his/her parents were borrowed and adapted

from various scales, including a scale used by RUM in 1997 (The Institute for Educational Research in Iceland) and Cernkovich and Giordano (1987).

It was expected that high scores on this scale would indicate a good family atmosphere and closeness between the subject and his/her parents, while low scores were indicators of emotional neglect.

The seven items that made up the parental supervision scale are all commonly used to measure supervision. They have, for example, been used in one form or another by RUM, Haapasalo and Tremblay (1994) and Cernkovich and Giordano (1987).

Family violence/tension

To the best of the researcher's knowledge, no other study in Iceland has investigated the prevalence of child abuse, as reported by the children. The previously mentioned study by RUM asked the subjects how often in the past 12 months an adult they knew well had punched them, hit them, kicked them or headbutted them.

Two questions measured how often the subject observes verbally and physically violent acts in his/her home, while two other questions asked specifically how often the students had been subjected to various violent behaviors by their parents – verbally and physically.

Patterson's coercive cycle of violence assumes that siblings provide a training ground for aggressive behavior (Patterson, 1986). Consequently, it was essential to measure the subject's relationship with his/her siblings. Frequent sibling fighting might also be manifested in increased tension and conflict in the home.

Factor analysis

To facilitate the analysis of the data galore, factor analysis was employed to make sense of the key concepts and variables and to discover the dimensionality of the concepts. The following is a discussion of some of the main concepts that were factor analyzed:

Viewing of TV programs

Factor analysis revealed five TV viewing factors. The following genres loaded most heavily on the first factor, i.e. action programs, horror programs and box. This factor also included erotic programs, and was thus labelled the violence factor.

The second factor was more family friendly and included cartoons, comedies and other family programs. The third factor included documentaries, news programs and science fiction. The fourth factor could be considered to include more adult or mature programs, i.e. drama and crime shows, and music programs.

Finally, the sport factor included just one single item, i.e. watching sports. However, watching box, music programs and news programs also loaded on this factor.

Motivations for watching non-violent material on television

It had already been expected that statements for watching non-violent television material would split into several factors or main motivations.

As was predicted, the following statements grouped together to form the first factor, i.e. a) TV keeps me company, b) I watch TV to get excited, c) I watch TV to forget my own problems, and d) I become less lonely when I watch TV. As all of these items offer the viewer some form of a relief from his/her everyday life to escape, it will from here on be called the relief motivation factor.

Again, as predicted, three items loaded on the same factor, i.e. a) I watch TV to spend more time with my family, b) I talk about what I see with my family, and c) TV provides me with information about what is happening in the world. All of these motives require some conscious effort on the part of the viewer and thus, this factor was called the high-activity factor.

Three items loaded on the third factor and they seem to have in common low energy on the part of the viewer. This low-activity factor included a) I watch TV when I'm bored, b) I watch TV out of habit, and c) I watch TV to relax.

Motivations for watching violence on TV

Again, three factors emerged when one looked at the statements for watching violence on television. The first factor was obviously an enjoyment of violence factor since the following items loaded most heavily on it: a) I think the characters in violent programs are interesting, b) Violent programs make me aroused and excited, c) I like watching people fight and hurt each other, d) I like violent movies, and e) I talk about violent programs with my friends.

The second factor was an escape factor, i.e. a) I forget my own problems when I watch violent programs, b) I watch violent programs to escape fights and scolding, and c) I feel good when the bad guy gets caught or killed. This last item is obviously a restoration-of-justice item.

Finally, the third factor included a) I learn how to protect myself, and b) I learn about real violence in the world.

Scales

Family cohesion and supervision

Originally it was expected that family cohesion, i.e. the adolescents' relationship with their parents, and parental supervision were two separate dimen-

sions. However, although factor analysis revealed that they load separately on two factors, the reliability alpha for a combined scale of these items is .9256 and removing any one of them would lower the alpha. Hence, the measurement instrument appears to be quite reliable when all of the items are included in one scale, and it also appears that the family cohesion items and the supervision items are in fact to a large degree measuring the same concept. Also, the correlation between the cohesion items and the parental supervision items is .6426 ($p > .05$). This simply means that the better the relationship between the adolescents and their parents, the more likely the parents are to monitor their adolescents' behavior and their comings and goings. Or one could argue that this is actually the other way around, i.e. because parents supervise their adolescents, it may improve the relationship between the parents and their adolescents.

Family violence/tension

It was originally expected that items measuring family violence/tension might load on three separate factors (fights with siblings, observing violence and being the victim of violence), and they did, but combining them into one scale also seemed to work since the reliability alpha was .7385 and removing any item would have lowered it – made the scale less reliable as a measurement instrument.

Results

Family cohesion and motivations for watching TV

Although only preliminary findings will be presented in this section, it is believed that they are good indicators of the effects of the family environment, i.e. family cohesion and tension, on adolescents' viewing habits and their motivations for watching TV. One is assuming, of course, that the family environment precedes in time any television viewing behavior – and thus, one is implying a causal relationship. However, it should be noted that correlational analyses can only tell us about associations between variables, but do not establish causal relationships. Hence, it is quite possible that in some cases television viewing may somehow affect (and precede in time) the family environment, i.e. lack of family cohesion may be due to but not the cause of heavy television viewing, for example.

Unless otherwise noted, age and gender were always controlled for simultaneously by using partial correlations. Using parental education as a control variable as well, did not seem to affect the relationships greatly. In addition, total viewing of television was also controlled for where it was appropriate to control for it.

Hypothesis 1a:

First of all, and maybe not surprisingly, age and gender both correlated with family cohesion (zero-order correlations). Younger adolescents reported better relationships with their parents than older adolescents. The correlation between family cohesion and age was significant at $-.1945$ ($p < .001$). Also, the correlation between gender and cohesion was $.2202$ ($p < .001$), i.e. girls are more supervised by their parents and seem to have a better relationship with them.

The first hypothesis stated that there would be a positive relationship between the degree of cohesion between the adolescents and their parents and the adolescents' use of high-activity motivations for watching non-violent television. This was supported as the correlation between family cohesion and high-activity motivations (watching TV to spend time with one's parents, discussing with others what one sees on TV and to learn from television) was significant at $.4203$ ($p < .001$). No gender difference was found in this respect, i.e. this relationship was significant both for girls and boys (controlling for age), although the correlation was slightly stronger for girls. Age and gender were not related to high-activity motivations.

Hypothesis 1b:

Hypothesis 1b assumed that there would be a negative relationship between the level of family cohesion and watching non-violent television programs to get some relief (to fulfill needs for companionship, to forget own problems, to ease loneliness and to get excited). The correlation between the two was $-.0952$ ($p < .05$). This correlation is quite low, but it is still statistically significant. However, this relationship is not significant for boys, but it is significant for girls as the correlation for girls was $-.1213$ ($p < .05$). Thus, it seems that girls do in fact look toward TV to fulfill their needs for companionship and for excitement when their relationship with their parents isn't as good as it could be. There was no association between the relief motivations and gender, but the correlation for age was significant, but low, or $-.0855$ ($p < .05$). Younger adolescents are more likely to watch non-violent television programs to find some relief from their loneliness, for example.

Hypothesis 1c:

There was a significant negative relationship between the level of family cohesion and low-activity motivations, which supports hypothesis 1c. The correlation between family cohesion and low-activity motivations was $-.1883$ ($p < .001$). Again, adolescents who report having a good relationship with their families are less likely than other adolescents to watch non-violent television programs mindlessly (simply out of habit, to relax or to escape boredom). This relationship held true for both girls and boys (controlling for age), but was stronger for boys ($-.2657$ ($p < .001$) for boys and $-.1281$ for girls

($p < .05$). Both age and gender were correlated to low-activity motivations (zero-order correlations). The correlation for gender was low or $-.074$ ($p < .05$), but moderate for age or $.2098$, i.e. boys are more likely to watch TV for low-activity reasons and older adolescents more so than younger ones.

To summarize the results of the first research question: It has become quite evident that the family is a strong factor in affecting adolescents' motivations for viewing non-violent television programs. Simply stated, when adolescents report being close to their parents and when the parents monitor and supervise their adolescents, the adolescents are more likely to be active television viewers, i.e. watch television to learn and talk about the programs with others, and less likely to use television as a substitute for human contact.

One gender difference emerged, nevertheless, as no relationship was found between family cohesion and watching television to gratify relief motivations among boys.

Family cohesion and viewing of genres

Hypothesis 2a:

When it came to viewing of family-oriented material, the expected relationship was supported as the correlation between family cohesion and watching family-oriented TV programs was $.1688$ ($p < .001$) (controlling for age, gender and total television viewing). This relationship was true for both girls and boys. The zero-order correlation between age and watching family-oriented material was lower than one might expect or $-.0844$ ($p < .05$), and the correlation between gender and watching family-oriented material was also significant or $.2397$ ($p < .001$). Hence, as expected, the better the relationship between the adolescents and their parents, the more likely they are to watch family-oriented programs. Moreover, girls report watching this type of programs more often than boys, and younger adolescents watch family-oriented programs more than older adolescents.

Hypothesis 2b:

The correlation between watching news-related programs and documentaries and family cohesion was $.1674$ ($p < .001$). This relationship was found for both boys and girls (controlling for age and total television viewing), thus supporting hypothesis 2b. Again, the degree of the relationship between the adolescents and their parents seems to affect the adolescents' viewing choices, and the better the relationship, the more likely the adolescents are to watch news-related material.

Hypothesis 2c:

Adolescents who scored low on the family cohesion scale, had also higher scores on the TV violence factor. The correlation between cohesion and watching violence was $-.1363$ ($p < .001$) when age, gender and total viewing of

television were simultaneously controlled for. However, looking separately at the relationship for girls and boys (and controlling for age and total television viewing through partial correlations), it turned out that the correlation between family cohesion and violence viewing among boys only approached significance. The correlation for boys was $-.1068$ ($p < .10$) while it was $-.1652$ ($p < .01$) for girls. Consequently, it seems that the relationship between violence viewing among boys and how they scored on the family cohesion scale is not significant but in the expected direction. On the other hand, there is a significant relationship between violence viewing among girls and their families' cohesiveness, i.e. lack of family cohesion is associated with more violence viewing among girls when age and total television viewing are simultaneously controlled for.

It is hard to come up with any single explanation for this gender difference. The difference may be due to both social and parental factors. It is probably more socially acceptable for boys to watch violence and thus, parents may in general be less strict when it comes to boys watching violence and the boys' violence viewing may not reflect the degree of family cohesion as they are probably allowed anyway to watch violence. And if the boys are not allowed to watch violence at home, they may be more likely than girls to watch violence at a friend's house. On the other hand, parents may be more likely to monitor what their daughters watch, and hence, lack of cohesion may to a large extent reflect lack of monitoring of their television viewing as well.

Watching violence also correlated significantly with age and gender, especially gender as boys reported watching violence more than girls, i.e. the zero-order correlation was $-.4343$ ($p < .001$), and the correlation for age was $.1174$ ($p < .01$), i.e. older adolescents are more likely to watch violence than younger adolescents.

Again, two of the three hypothesized relationships between family cohesion and genre-viewing were fully supported. Moreover, the hypothesized relationship between violence viewing and cohesion was supported for girls and in the expected direction for boys.

In addition to affecting the adolescents' motivations for watching television programs, the quality of the adolescents' relationship with their parents, and probably other family members as well, actually affects what the adolescents watch on TV. Not surprisingly, when the relationship is bad, adolescents are more likely to watch violence, and less likely to watch what may be considered higher quality TV programs like family-oriented programs and news-related programs.

Family tension/violence and motivations for watching TV

Let's turn our attention then to how family tension/violence affects adolescents' motivations and their viewing, but first it should be mentioned that age and gender did not correlate with family tension.

Hypothesis 3a:

The correlation between family tension and watching violence for enjoyment motivations was .2532 ($p < .001$), thus supporting hypothesis 3a. No gender difference was found for this relationship as it was found to be significant for both girls and boys. Moreover, age and gender were both related to enjoyment of violence, and gender quite strongly. The zero-order correlation between gender and watching violence for enjoyment reasons was $-.5325$ ($p < .001$), and for age it was much lower or $.0829$ ($p < .05$). As expected, adolescents who report high levels of family tension in their homes, are more likely to enjoy watching violence and they watch violent programs because they like watching people fight and hurt each other and they find characters in such programs highly interesting.

The strength of the gender difference that emerged is quite interesting. It is quite apparent that boys in general enjoy violence much more than girls. This difference between girls and boys in their enjoyment of violence won't be explained in this paper, but one could claim that the reasons could be both biological and social.

Hypothesis 3b:

Family tension was significantly correlated with the need to escape factor, i.e. the correlation was $.1472$ ($p < .001$). However, as with the relief factor, gender difference emerged. The relationship between family tension and viewing violence for escape reasons was not significant for boys, but the correlation for girls was moderate and significant at $.2366$ ($p < .001$) (controlling simultaneously for age and total television viewing). Age was not correlated to the need to watch violence to escape, but gender was slightly associated with it, i.e. the zero-order correlation for gender was $.0912$ ($p < .05$), which is a bit surprising. It seems that girls are more likely than boys to watch violence to escape, for example to forget their own problems and to escape the fighting of other family members.

To sum up, the first hypothesis of the third research question was supported and the second hypothesis was supported for girls. When the level of tension/violence is high in the family, adolescents are more likely to watch violent programs because they simply enjoy watching violence, and girls watch violence because they need an outlet to escape their own problems.

*Family tension/violence and viewing of television violence***Hypothesis 4:**

Finally, adolescents who reported high family tension/violence, were more likely to score higher on the violence viewing factor. The correlation between watching violence and family tension was $.1056$ ($p < .01$) when total TV viewing is controlled for simultaneously with age and gender. Again, looking

separately at boys and girls (and controlling for age and total television viewing through partial correlations), it turns out that the relationship between family tension and violence viewing is not significant for boys, but as in the case of family cohesion, the relationship between family tension and violence viewing is significant for girls. The correlation for girls was .1296 ($p < .05$). Thus, it appears that the more tension or violence in homes where girls are, the more likely the girls are to watch violence. It is difficult to come up with any correct explanation for this gender difference, but if one keeps in mind that girls are also more likely to watch violence to gratify their escape motivations, it may be logical to think that girls use television violence for pacification and as an outlet for frustration and irritation. And talking about total television viewing, this study also revealed that there is a negative relationship of $-.1404$ between total viewing of television and family cohesion (controlling for age and gender). Not surprisingly, there is also a significant positive association between family tension/violence and total television viewing, the correlation being .1676 ($p < .001$). To cut a long story short, the worse the quality of the relationship between the adolescents and their parents and the more tension within the four walls of the home, the more likely the adolescents are to spend a lot of their time watching television.

Discussion

In a nutshell, all of the hypothesized relationships were either supported fully or partially. Evidently, adolescents in close-knit families are more likely to watch non-violent programs for high-activity reasons, i.e. to talk to others about what they see, to learn about the world and to simply spend time with their family. These same adolescents are also less likely to watch television (non-violent material) for low-activity reasons, i.e. because they are bored or out of habit, or to relax. One might speculate that this group of teenagers was probably more likely to relief their boredom in different ways, possibly by listening to music, or even by calling friends. Adolescents from cohesive families are also less likely to watch television for companionship or because they are lonely. On the other hand, that also means that teenagers who do not have a good relationship with their families or parents are more likely to look to television to fulfill their needs for excitement in their lives. This paper doesn't deal with the consequences of adolescents using television as a substitute for their families, but it is quite well-known that motivations for viewing television affect the effects, or what one gets out of the viewing experience – whether the effects are intentional or unintentional.

Not surprisingly, this paper also found a relationship between family cohesion and what adolescents watch on television. Adolescents high on family cohesion are more likely to watch news-related and family-oriented television programs, while adolescents (only true for females) who are lacking in family

cohesion seem more likely to look to violent material for excitement and to fulfill their emotional needs.

It was also made clear by the findings presented in this paper that family tension/domestic violence affects adolescents' viewing of television. Teens who reported high tension within their homes were also more likely to enjoy watching violence. This is consistent with other studies that show that people who live with violence seek out violent programs and movies. It can be argued here that they are seeking material that is congruent with their everyday life and which is consistent with the violence or tension they experience within the home.

Moreover, teenage girls watch violent material to forget their own problems and to escape fighting and scolding at home. Thus, it is quite clear that the family environment plays a major part in adolescents' viewing habits and their uses and gratifications.

Since this paper only presents some of the preliminary findings of the present study, and the questionnaire which was used measured both aggression and delinquency among Icelandic adolescents, it will be possible to further investigate the relationship between family environment, adolescents' use of television and their anti-social behavior.

Notes

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