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Parent and Teacher Perspectives of Children's Access to Violent Media

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Abstract

Parent and Teacher Perspectives of Children's Access to Violent Media

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Abstract

Researchers indicate repeated participation in violent video games increases the likelihood of aggressive and hurtful behavior toward others. Media violence is one of the most studied phenomena affecting children over the age of 8. Media violence has become accessible for very young children through various sources. The purpose of this study was to explore perspectives of parents and teachers of children 5 to 8 years old regarding children's exposure to violent media, their definitions of violent media, and parental monitoring practices. Questionnaires were completed by 35 parents, and 6 agreed to participate in face-to-face or telephonic interviews. Four teachers from kindergarten through second grade participated in face-to-face interviews. Bronfenbrenner's model of human ecology was the conceptual framework. A combination of a priori and open coding was used to support thematic analyses. Participants indicated they need to be more informed about the possible effects that exposure to violent media, specifically video games, has on children. Both parents and teachers noted that often it was the younger children, specifically of kindergarten age, who were exposed to the most amount of time with violent media. Implications for positive social change included ways to properly monitor children's access, such as more restrictions on time and content of the media. This research could provide support to advocacy groups to provide parents, educators, and policymakers with reliable data on children's media use and the impact it has on children.

Dedication

      This study is dedicated to all children who have been affected by violent media exposure and their families. It is my hope that the findings from this study can impact the lives of future generations by giving parents and teachers more knowledge about the effects of violent media exposure and the knowledge about monitoring practices.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Research involving very young children under the age of 8 years old and the time they spend each day involved in screens (television, video games, and computer activities) is limited (Gentile, Nathanson, Rasmussen, Reimer, & Walsh, 2012). In one study, researchers found that 8- to 10-year-old children spend nearly 4 hours each day watching television and over an hour each day playing video games (Rideout, Foehr, & Roberts, 2010). While some of these activities may be inconsequential, the access to violent media is not excluded from these activities. Video gaming defined by Rideout et al. (2010) "includes time spent playing on either a console or handheld gaming device (including a cell phone)" (p. 7). Defining what constitutes violent media is not always clear, however, and parental monitoring is inconsistent (Gentile et al., 2012; Zimmerman & Pogarsky, 2011).

Inconsistencies found in parental monitoring efforts addressing children under the age of 8 years are vague due to the dearth of research in this area. D. Gentile (personal communication, January 21, 2015) shared that little research has been conducted regarding media violence and its effects on children under the age of 8. Media violence is one of the most studied phenomena affecting children over the age of 8 (Gentile, 2014). However, the research gap addressing the impact of technology on children under the age of 8 still exists (Gentile, 2014). Gentile (2014) also noted that research conducted on the topic of parental monitoring has addressed older elementary school and middle school children but has rarely addressed children under the age of 8. The differences in perspectives on the part of the children and the parents (the main sources for such

information) become increasingly challenging with very young children, and it is often difficult to determine exactly the short and long-term impact (Fraser, Padilla-Walker, Coyne, Nelson, & Stockdale, 2012).

According to Piaget's (1976) stages of cognitive development, children ages 2 to 6 are in the preoperational stage, which means they still lack logical thinking. Children ages 7 to 11 are in the concrete operational stage, which means they think logically about concrete events. Using Piaget's stages when examining the topic of video game exposure to young children shows that children under the age of 7 are unable to logically understand and process what they see in the video game. Children become different types of thinkers after age 8; they are then able to interrupt screen media.

Another early childhood theorist, Vygotsky (1978), developed a social theory about the zone of proximal development, which is "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers" (as cited in McLeod, 2012, p. 86). Young children under the age of 8 may not be developmentally ready to think independently and problem solve while they are engaging with video games (McLeod, 2012). In turn, they may need adult guidance or parental monitoring measures to protect them when engaging with violent video games.

While issues surrounding technology and violent media have been addressed, the limitations of such research appear to have underestimated the role of parental monitoring of video gaming. Rideout et al. (2010) discovered that a little over 50% of 8 to 10-year

olds claimed they did have to follow rules when playing video games. A little over half of the children claimed they had a time restriction from their parents when playing video games. Zimmerman and Pogarsky (2011) discovered that most parents misjudge how much exposure their child has to screen violence. A further complication of monitoring has to do with the wide range of perspectives, education, and experiences of parents in general about screens and young children.

What is clear, however, is that even limited exposure to media has a profound impact on young children (Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood, Alliance for Childhood, and Teachers Resisting Unhealthy Children's Entertainment, 2012). The Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood, Alliance for Childhood, and Teachers Resisting Unhealthy Children's Entertainment (2012) claimed that "for preschoolers, watching just 20 minutes of a fast-paced cartoon show has been shown to have a negative impact on executive function skills, including attention, the ability to delay gratification self-regulation, and problem solving" (p. 5). Gentile (2014) and Zimmerman and Pogarsky (2011) found that the more young children are exposed to violent media acts, the more likely they are to have poor cognitive skills, depression, violent behaviors, lower IQs, and deficiencies in their executive function skills.

For children who consume an excessive amount of violence through any type of media source there is some risk involved. Beresin (n.d.) stated that "while it is difficult to determine which children who have experienced televised violence are at greatest risk, there appears to be a strong correlation between media violence and aggressive behavior within vulnerable at-risk segments of youth" (para. 1). The need for advocacy is

necessary to reach families about the risks their children may face when viewing violent media. On average, young children spend about 30 hours watching television each week (Beresin, n.d.). The acts of violence children are exposed to, including murders, exceed 200,000 (Beresin, n.d.). Cartoons targeting children are particularly concerning (Beresin, n.d.).

In this section, I include the background of the problem, the problem statement, the purpose of the study, conceptual framework, research questions, and nature of the study designed to address limitations, delimitations, ethical considerations, and social change implications.

Background of the Problem

The praise and condemnation of technology is not a new phenomenon. McLuhan (1964) wrote a book that focused on the media theory in its early days and suggested how the content of the medium is shared is a large factor in society. McLuhan coined the word *media* and the phrase *the medium is the message*. He said, "medium is any extension of ourselves or more broadly any new technology" (McLuhan, 1964, p. 39). This was all at a time when television was still in its infancy. He recognized the research being done on the unsuspecting consumer for the purpose of manipulation, exploitation, and control of what people will come to want. McLuhan used the terms *hot* and *cold* when discussing different mediums: "*Hot* medium was anything that allowed less participation and only used one sense such as listening to a lecture" (p. 22), and "*cold* medium required the user to participate in a more engaged way and involved multiple senses such as watching television" (p. 22). Relating McLuhan's theories to technologies children engage with

today, there are many cold technologies that involve active participation and use multiple

senses. During the 1960s when McLuhan's theories were being developed seems to be

when media started to seep into society. However, the research gap addressing the

impact of technology on children under the age of 8 still exists (Gentile, 2014).

Problem Statement

The lack of research on children under the age of 8 can have an impact on how

parents perceive and monitor their child's access to violence through video gaming.

Researchers have indicated that repeated participation in violent video games provides

examples of aggressive and hurtful behavior, which can influence viewers (Saleem,

Anderson, & Gentile, 2012; Zimmerman & Pogarsky, 2011). Media violence has become

accessible for very young children through television, video games, and popular toys

(Erwin & Morton, 2008). Contributing to this problem is the lack of clarity provided

about the appropriate rating of what children have access to in the media sector. For

example, an examination of the rating of prime-time television commercials revealed that

rating information is often incomplete and fails to meet the Federal Trade Commission's

Clear and Conspicuous Standard (Hoy & Andrews, 2006).

Many children are engaged with screen technology daily. Seaman found (2014)

that children spend more of their waking hours with screens than any other activity.

Gentile (2014) asserted that "overall, the researchers found that parents restricting how

much screen time children watch, restricting what they watch, and talking about the

shows was linked to more sleep, better school performance and less aggression among

kids" (p. 470). Gentile also noted that research conducted on the topic of parental

monitoring addressed older elementary school and middle school children but rarely addressed children under the age of eight.

A study by the American Psychological Association revealed young children's exposure to violence influences aggressive behavior in adulthood (as cited in Huesmann, Moise-Titus, Podolski, & Eron, 2003). Additionally, Fraser et al. (2012) found that increased aggressive behavior could stem from the access to media violence as well as having a desensitizing effect on viewers. Recent research in relational aggression (Linder & Werner, 2012; Gentile, Mathieson, & Crick, 2010) revealed that implicit social aggression embedded in television programs and movies can encourage the learning and acceptance of such behaviors in real life situations.

The lack of research on very young children has an impact on how teachers and parents understand behavior issues in the children's environments that may stem from inappropriate media that a child views (Ferguson & Olson, 2014). The gap in the literature creates a further problem of how to appropriately address the issue of access to inappropriate games by children under the age of 8.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore perspectives of parents and teachers of children 5 to 8 years old regarding children's exposure to violent media in addition to parental monitoring practices in place. Video gaming was a specific focus through my study and could be accessed through a variety of media that is available for children. Media violence is one of the most studied phenomena affecting children over the age of 8. There was a convincing agreement between researchers in the psychology

field as well as health and medical professionals that exposure to media that contains violent images is an important risk factor to examine that is negatively affecting young children (Gentile, 2014; Glackin & Gray, 2016). Parental monitoring of children's screen habits is reflected in academic, social, and physical activities (Seaman, 2014). Teachers can provide parents with suggested types of parental monitoring and research data to show the dangers of violent media exposure. This information can then help inform parents how they should monitor their child's video gaming practices and their access to violent media (Seaman, 2014).

This chapter includes the research design and the rationale for the selection. A discussion of participant selection, measures for ethical protection, and the role of the researcher are also included. In addition, this chapter consists of data collection and analysis procedures, along with methods to address trustworthiness.

Research Questions

A broad research question was presented, describing the overall focus of the study, but the research question was then broken down into five subquestions, adding more specificity to the goal of the study. The broad question driving this study is as follows:

What are the perspectives of parents and teachers regarding young children's (ages 5-8) exposure to violent media?

Subquestions included the following:

1. What do parents of children (ages 5-8) perceive as violent media?

2. What are the perspectives of parents about the possible effects of violent

media exposure on their child?

3. How do parents monitor their child's access to violent media?

4. What do teachers who teach children (ages 5-8) perceive as violent media?

5. What are the perspectives of teachers about the possible effects of violent media exposure on children (ages 5-8)?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was Bronfenbrenner's (1979) model of human ecology. The ecological systems theory supports the idea that the different types of environmental systems influence human development. The model provided a framework to analyze a person within his or her various environmental systems and is the lens through which this study was viewed (Bronfenbrenner, 2001). In this study, I answered the research questions that specifically addressed the two environmental systems that could have a major impact on the children's development.

The two systems that applied to this study were the microsystem and the mesosystem. In the microsystem, the immediate environment that influences the child's development is addressed (Bronfenbrenner, 2001). This is the setting in which the child has direct social interactions with family, friends, neighbors, or a classroom. The mesosystem is the linkage between two microsystems interacting together--for example, the child's home and school (Bronfenbrenner, 2001). In this study, the microsystems of the developing child's immediate environment at home and school comprised the mesosystem. To interpret participant perspectives of the child(ren) 5 to 8 years old surrounding the issue of violent media, Bronfenbrenner's systems model and case

methodology was used to understand responses and analyze data. In Chapter 2, I provide a more detailed description of the conceptual framework.

Nature of the Study

The nature of this study was a qualitative case study design. Lodico, Spaulding, and Voegtle (2010) stated that "case study research is a form of qualitative research that endeavors to discover meaning, to investigate processes, and to gain insight into and in-depth understanding of an individual, group, or situation" (p. 269). The aim of this study was to gain an understanding of the perspectives from parents and teachers within a rural area on the East Coast. I looked at what parents and teachers perceive as violent media, specifically regarding video games, the impact these have on young children 5 to 8 years old, and how access is monitored.

A case study can include an in-depth exploration, and for this study I used an instrumental case study. An instrumental case study "serves the purpose of illuminating a particular issue" (Creswell, 2012, p. 465). In this study, the concern was parents' and teachers' perspectives of what violent media is, how they monitor child's access, and the potential impact such media has on their child. By surveying and interviewing parents and teachers, I have developed a better understanding of what their perspectives are about violent media exposure for their children and what types of parental monitoring procedures are being used.

A questionnaire designed to access perspectives of parents about what constitutes violent video games and the possible effects was used to answer the research questions. In addition, ways parents monitor their child's access was investigated. Based on the

results, six parents were selected for interviews that were conducted to expand on ideas and gaps that surfaced in the questionnaires. In addition, I interviewed four early childhood teachers to record their perspectives about the possible effects of violent media exposure on children 5 to 8 years old. By surveying parents and interviewing both parents and teachers, data analysis of the results helped to answer the research questions. Snowball sampling was used to gather information and develop an understanding of the central phenomenon (Creswell, 2012). Creswell (2012) claimed that "describing and developing themes from the data consists of answering the major research questions and forming an in-depth understanding of the central phenomenon through description and thematic development" (p. 247). More specific information relating to the methodology, participants, and data collection is provided in Chapter 3.

Definitions

The following terms and definitions are used throughout this study:

Exposure: When someone sees violence, but is not a victim of violence (Howard, Kimonis, Munoz, & Frick, 2012).

Media consumption: The amount of time a child engages with any type of media such as television, video games, movies, and the Internet (Fritz, 2012).

Media literacy intervention: After a child is exposed to violent media, a parent can provide mediation that can help decrease possible aggressive behavior (Gentile, 2014).

Media violence: Any physical threat or actual physical altercation intended to harm someone or a group of people (Gentile, 2014).

Parental mediation: Parents talking with their children about the media they are engaging with and explaining what the content is about (Gentile, 2014).

Screens. The viewing screen on any electronic device (Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood, Alliance for Childhood, & Teachers Resisting Unhealthy Children's Entertainment, 2012, p. 4).

Video games: Games that are played on game consoles, computers, hand-held devices, or cell phones (Gentile, 2014).

Assumptions

In this qualitative case study, I identified three assumptions. It was assumed that the participants chosen for the study would be representative of all parents with children 5 to 8 years old within the small rural area. To address this assumption, questionnaires were sent to parents in the area who had children 5 to 8 years old. Participants were chosen from the volunteers, so representatives from each age level, kindergarten through second grade, were a part of the interview process. The nature of the snowball process used in this study supported the selection of a representative sample of parents within the area who had children 5 to 8 years old. Varying perspectives were solicited as the participant pool expanded.

There was an assumption that truthful answers would be given for all interview questions by participants. This assumption was addressed by letting participants know that they could withdraw from the study at any time without consequence and that their identity and responses would be kept confidential. Another assumption was that all research questions would be answered by using the data that were collected and would

add to the research already linked with the exposure to violent media. The questionnaires and interviews provided background information about technology availability and use in the home.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of this study involved the perspectives of parents and teachers regarding what constitutes violent media and the effects it has on children 5 to 8 years old, and how they monitor their child's access to such media. The study population included parents with children in grades kindergarten through second in a rural East Coast area and teachers from those same grade levels. The study involved both teachers' and parents' perspectives on what constitutes violent media. The reason that the teachers and parents were chosen was because their children or the children they teach were 5-8 years old, which was the focus of the study.

Limitations of the Study

One limitation of this study was the small sample size chosen from one rural East Coast area. The participants returning the questionnaires may not have reflected the perspectives of all the parents with children 5-8 years old in the area. While I aimed to reach all eligible participants in the target population, the rate of return is rarely 100%. The response rate of 40% in a population of approximately 150 is an acceptable return (University of Texas, 2010).

When determining sample size for a qualitative study, there are no hard or fast rules, but saturation or redundancy should be considered (Patton, 2001). Patton (2001) recommended approximately five interviewees for a qualitative case study and a large

and representative sample size for questionnaires to be used. For my study, I used 10 interviewees and 35 parents for completion of the questionnaires. I sent a reminder email to all participants if I did not get a response from them within 1 to 2 weeks. Generalizing the results of this study to a larger population was limited due to the small rural area involved.

This study was also limited by my own bias as a former kindergarten teacher. Listening to students talk about the violent media they watched and the violent video games they played led me to believe parental monitoring may be inconsistent. I attempted to minimize my biases by thinking of myself as a member of the parent group (Creswell, 2012) who would not want to be judged by my child's teacher based upon what my child said at school.

Significance of the Study

Gentile (2014) reported that to date, there are not enough studies to make it possible to draw conclusions about the degree to which different kinds of violence lead to different effects, specifically in the 2- to 11-year-old category. Gentile stated,

> In 2012 Dr. Gentile's research team conducted a content analysis study of the portrayal of social aggression in the 50 most popular television programs among 2 to 11-year olds. Results revealed that 92% of the programs in the sample contained some social aggression. On average, there were 14 different incidents of social aggression per hour in these shows, or one every four minutes. (p. 219)

To date, the reporting of the results of this study and others like it do not make it possible to draw conclusions about the degree to which different kinds of violence lead to

different effects. This contributes to the compelling nature of my study, as I examined parent and teacher perspectives on violent media.

Implications for Social Change

This study could provide insight about what is considered by parents to be violence through gaming and the impact that this could have on their children 5 to 8 years old. The findings of this study could assist parents and professionals in understanding whether this relates to student's violent or aggressive behaviors. The outcomes could also contribute to research, providing additional information from parents' and teachers' perspectives on how to put more effective parental monitoring strategies in place. The findings could also contribute to the existing gap of information about violence in gaming among children under the age of 8. Since the research is scant, positive social change can also be influenced through strategy development to support children in their healthy development as they access technology. This information provided to those involved will help to actively support appropriate viewing by young children. The education will provide them a tool and the tool will allow them to act.

Summary and Transition

In this section, I introduced the problem and identified the need to increase a greater understanding of perspectives of parents and teachers about violent media exposure and their children. Research questions were provided as well as a rationale for choosing a qualitative instrumental case study design. In the conceptual framework, I justified the study and provided cause to increase the understanding of the problem. The

possible impact for positive social change within local and professional contexts was addressed, providing relevance for conducting the study.

Chapter 2 includes a review of the literature related to the problem statement and purpose of the study. Chapter 3 provides a detailed description of the research design and methodology. Chapter 4 provides the results of the study and the data collection procedures. Chapter 5 addresses interpretation of the findings, recommendations, and conclusions.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

There is a consensus amongst researchers in the fields of psychology and medicine that exposure to media containing violent images negatively affects young children (Gentile, 2014). Gentile (2014) called the children of today "digital natives" and suggested that adults must read, learn, and make difficult decisions about how they will raise, teach, and care for them. Parents' monitoring of their children's media exposure must be a part of this raising and teaching. Their monitoring is reflected in academic, social, and physical activities (Seaman, 2014). It is evident in my review that more research is needed on parental perspectives on what constitutes violent media, the possible effects of exposure, and what parental monitoring is being done. Findings from research conducted on types of parental mediation styles suggested that parents need to be more active in their mediation and more restrictive when it comes to violent media exposure (Fikkers, Pitrowski, & Valkenburg, 2017).

Gentile reviewed several studies over the years. In 2014, Gentile reviewed studies conducted in the early 1970s showing that the more people are exposed to violent media, the more likely they will act aggressively. Gentile also discussed meta-analytical studies from the late 1980s and early 1990s in which researchers quantitatively reexamined the data and consistently found that engaging with media that contains aggressive images may lead to antisocial behavior. Current researchers have continued to confirm the link to antisocial behaviors and violent media (Kanz, 2016). What parents consider constitutes violent media is important for identifying behaviors that may be connected to violence stemming to media violence. It is also essential to identify what teachers believe is

violent media, as support for monitoring efforts in both environments must be clear and consistent.

Bronfenbrenner's (2001) model of human ecology was used as a framework for my study and addresses environments including the home and school that could be involved. Bronfenbrenner (1979) held that there are five environmental systems that directly affect individuals. These include the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem, as described in Chapter 1 of this document. Bronfenbrenner's model is relevant to my study because I worked to understand parents' and teachers' perspectives on media violence in the home and school environments. These environments relate directly to the microsystem and mesosystem in the model.

This review of literature is organized into three sections that fall under the umbrella of media violence research. The first section includes information about how much screen time children have and what types of exposure are associated with media viewing. In the second section, I discuss literature on the effects of violent media exposure and behaviors that children exhibit as a result. Here I look at both the positive and negative effects violent media exposure has on children. The third section includes information on parental monitoring and interventions that can help provide support for children who are exposed to violent media. In each of these sections, there are subsections in which I go into further detail.

I gathered the articles that comprise this literature review from current peer-reviewed sources. These articles were obtained by searching multiple databases including ERIC, ProQuest, and Google Scholar. I also reviewed book length studies including

Gentile's (2014) *Media violence and children* and information from several medical

websites. Keywords and phrases, I used in the database searches included *media violence,*

parental monitoring, violent media effects, aggressive behavior, and *children's media*

use. Additional words were used in combination with the keywords to locate resources

related to various topics within the review. These words included the following: *screen*

time, violence, exposure, academic achievement, cognitive skills, *impact*, and

perspectives.

Conceptual Framework

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) model of human ecology was the framework for this

study. Bronfenbrenner divided the model into five socially organized subsystems that he

claimed describe and guide human growth. In this study, I gave attention to two of the

subsystems: the microsystem and the mesosystem. I used Bronfenbrenner's model to look

at the link between a child's immediate home environment and the school environment.

School aged children spend a great deal of time in front of a television or game console.

Children who are 8 to10 years old spend an average of 3 hours and 41 minutes engaged

with one of these devices daily (Gentile et al., 2012). The most common times and

reasons for parents to allow their children to be engaged with a device are while they are

doing chores, at bedtime, or to keep them calm. At the young age of 2, most children are

engaged with either a television screen daily or a mobile device. Many 3 and 4-year-old

children can use devices without help, and some can even multitask between screens.

There are even a significant number of children who use a mobile device before the age

of 1 (Gentile et al., 2012). Applications such as YouTube and Netflix were popular on the

devices the children were engaging with as a form of entertainment (Kabali et al., 2015).

Human development takes place through reciprocal interactions between persons in an immediate environment such as the home. When children are exposed to violent media at home, the effects that media have on the child can carry over into the school environment. This carryover is an example of a mesosystem in which a person contained in two or more settings will allow for processes and linkages to occur (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). In the home environment, parent-to-child interactions can play a role in a child's behavior. Bronfenbrenner (1994) referred to these interactions in a child's home environment as *proximal processes*. Other examples of proximal processes are child-child, group, and solitary play activities. Proximal processes can vary depending on the person and their characteristics (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). In this study, I specifically looked at parental monitoring interactions in relation to violent media exposure on children. The interactions and types of parental monitoring that occur in the home environment can be crucial to a child's developmental competence, academic achievement, and social skills.

Environments, specifically home environments, can influence a child's development. The proximal process can cushion and lessen the environmental differences. As Bronfenbrenner (1994) noted,

Unfortunately, from the perspective of an ecological model the greater developmental impact of proximal processes in poorer environments is to be expected only for indices of developmental dysfunction, primarily during childhood. Proximal processes are posited as having greater impact in more

advantaged and stable environments throughout the life course. (p. 1)

In the case of studying parental monitoring of their child's access to violent media, the home environment is just one piece of the puzzle, albeit a large piece.

I chose Bronfenbrenner's (1979) model of human ecology for this study because Bronfenbrenner addressed both the home environment and the school environment. These two environments related to my study because I examined how both teachers and parents view violent media exposure. He looked very specifically at how multiple environments impact each other, and in the case of this study, the home environment and how it very closely related to the school environment. Bronfenbrenner's model is founded on the idea that human development occurs through processes and interactions between humans and their environments. The common threads between his theory and my study included the linkage between the home and school environments, parent-child interactions, and how the development of a child is related to these environments. In addition, researchers using Bronfenbrenner's system have focused mainly on teenagers and young adults with a lack of research relating to children in their early childhood years (birth through age 8) and their aggressive behaviors at school. Until recently, most researchers have examined and followed the developments of children older than 8 years old about their media consumption patterns. However, there has been a shift occurring to now look at very young children, including toddlers and infants and their exposure to media (Sooryamoorthy, 2014). Researchers need to move beyond the limitation of looking for effects on individuals and look for effects on more macro units, such as society and institutions (schools). As Gentile (2014) claimed, "There is reason to believe

that society has been affected by media violence. But the number of studies examining those macro effects is much smaller than the number of studies on individuals" (p. 441). Bronfenbrenner's model is useful for demonstrating a link between the home environment and other familiar environments such as a school. The model can assist in exposing the link between the home and other environments. Parent-child interactions related to violent media exposure in the home environment easily carry over into the school environment.

Literature Review Related to Key Areas and Concepts

Within the next three sections of the literature review screen time, exposure, the effects of violent media, behaviors associated with violent media, parental monitoring, and interventions will be discussed. Throughout these sections the history of media is reviewed, and the debates related to children engaging with media are covered. Media statistics and concerns for use are outlined as well as what the motivation and appeal are to engage with violent media specifically. The impacts on brain development and causes for aggression and violent actions are examined and related to possible interventions. The perspectives of parents and the types of monitoring they employ are surveyed. Lastly, what media culture looks like and the educational purposes of video games are assessed.

Screen Time and Exposure

Early research and media history. Violence on screens is not a new topic, but research has advanced over the years. A debate, which started with intense television cartoons from the 1950s and has continued with the vivid murders in contemporary video games, is ongoing. In 1954, the U.S. Senate held formal hearings to address the

connection of violence to juvenile delinquency. Advances have been made over the past decade, but gaps still exist in researchers' knowledge and conclusions about media technologies (Strasburger & Donnerstein, 2014). McLuhan got the attention of the public in 1964 when he coined the phrase "the medium is the message." He said, "medium is any extension of ourselves or more broadly any new technology" (McLuhan, 1964, p. 39). Though sometimes misunderstood, McLuhan developed theories about consumer manipulation and exploitation that are still applicable today. In his social learning theory, Bandura (1977) augmented McLuhan's research, stating that through observation, children can learn such behaviors as aggression. They then imitate the behavior they see modeled (Wager & Mandracchia, 2016). These models represent anyone in their life that they see such as a family member, friend, or people in the media. Children first mimic what they see, and then develop behaviors that later transform into lasting social behaviors. Once these children reach middle childhood and early adolescence, the behaviors are difficult to change (Wager & Mandracchia, 2016). This brings up another issue relative in the media history video game dialogue, which is an important focus.

A controversy erupted in 1976 with the publication the *Death Race*, one of the first video game debacles (Dillio, 2014). *Death Race* was an arcade video game that had players drive a vehicle through an obstacle course and kill pedestrians along the way. The players would be rewarded for hitting and then killing the pedestrians. Due to a public outcry, the game was eventually removed from stores and no longer sold.

The issue of violent games resurfaced in the 1990s when improvements in graphics made the depiction of violence more realistic. Susan Linn is a pioneer in the

movement to promote healthy choices for children that directly affect their well-being and fight off negative effects from media. In 1996, she made it a part of her mission to track the escalation of commercialism that targeted children. The Telecommunications Act, which is a federal law, was created in 1934 and revised by President Clinton in1996. It led to the creation of parental guidelines, but the guidelines were not applied to news or sports programs (Molen, 2004). Specific products such as "violent media, alcohol, tobacco, and junk food are focused on by marketers for children" (Linn, 2004, p.4). Linn explained that advertising agencies don't "advertise," they help companies "communicate" with their target audiences. Linn (2004) stated, "Comparing the advertising of two or three decades ago to the commercialism that permeates our children's world is like comparing a BB gun to a smart bomb" (p. 5). Linn claimed that advertisers do not connect the phrase "what's best for children" with what they do. The National Institute of Mental Health has not compiled an in-depth report on children, adolescents, and the media since 1982, which was well before technology expanded into the existing world of social media, tablets, and other devices, thus leaving a large gap in literature available today on possible effects of media (Strasburger & Donnerstein, 2014).

"Bronfenbrenner's ecological model of development suggests that children are affected by the economic system under which they live" (Kasser & Linn, 2016, p. 122). Marketing to children has been associated with many negative outcomes and can have implications for their development and well-being. There are environmental influences that can also play a factor that are centered on corporate capitalism (Kasser & Linn, 2016). One environment that plays a factor is the home environment, which

Bronfenbrenner refers to as the microsystem. In addition to the home environment their neighborhood or school environments can also influence children. Children who grow up in a deregulated capitalist nation will tend to be competitive and have a different ideology based on certain priorities that are based around hierarchy instead of harmony (Kasser & Linn, 2016). As marketers' target children through advertising they are now using comedic violence to entertain children. Additionally, they are attempting to normalize violence by creating humor about it. This is considered a risky strategy that could offend some viewers, but also led to more favorable ratings (Yoon & Kim, 2016).

In relation to what Linn states about advertisers targeting children so does the video game industry. A massive recession hit the video game industry in 1983, but Nintendo Entertainment Systems prompted resurgence in popularity that has only continued to grow. Due to its rapid growth, the video game industry grossed $100 million in 1985 and $4 billion in 1990. The video game market totaled $93 billion worldwide in 2013 (Dai & Fry, 2014). Since the video game world has expanded, it has divided into numerous categories including: causal, serious, and educational across the media of console, handheld, mobile, and online. Children seem to choose video games that they get to kill things or people, race vehicles, or be violent in some way. Not often do children gravitate toward playing educational video games. Age and gender do not seem to play a role in how children decide to choose to play violent video games. Thirteen hours of video games a week is the average for 8-12 years olds (Dai & Fry, 2014). Compared to children who play non-violent video games, children who engage with games containing violence have more aggressive thoughts, higher heart rates, dizziness,

and nausea (Dai & Fry, 2014). Due to their involvement in video game play, children miss out on outside play, social experiences, and extracurricular activities. Video gaming has become so influential on young children and adolescents that the word "gaming" has become a new verb.

Thinking about a typical day for a younger child under 6 it is estimated that 83% engage with some time of screen media daily and spend at least one hour a day with video games. The daily time spent with a television is two hours a day, which totals 4,000 hours of television before they enter kindergarten (Ernest et al., 2014). Within those hours they average watching 20 to 25 acts of violence during a one-hour Saturday morning program that is aimed at children (Ernest et al., 2014). In addition to video game systems and televisions children interact with tablets. Since 2013 the number of tablets in households have doubled. It is estimated that 83% of all families own a tablet that their children have access to at home. Tablets are creating a shift in the way children consume media. Most tablets contain apps that house games and interactive media that children engage with on the device. When searching the Apple app store over 5,000 apps targeting toddlers and over 1,000 apps targeting newborns were found (Ernest et al., 2014).

Video game legislation has made headlines most recently in regard to mass shootings and a rise in violence. In 2011, the Supreme Court stated that violent games could not be regulated because of the possible violation of the right to free speech that video game entertainment industry is entitled. The ruling from the Supreme Court came from the Brown v. Entertainment Merchant's Association case. Efforts from politicians were made at the state and federal levels to address the problem of violent video games

prompting school shooters (Copenhaver, 2014). On the heels of the Sandy Hook Elementary school mass shooting in 2012, Vice President Joe Biden discussed game violence with leaders in the video game industry (Dillio, 2014). Scientific research has been relied on due to its motivation to persuade legislators to put more restrictions in place regarding what types of games children can purchase (Dillio, 2014). Legislators who have used social science research on video game violence have crafted video game restriction legislation.

Concerns for video game use. Greenfield (2014) addressed the concern about playing video games regarding attention problems. She first talks about the "sounds of silence" being a dim recollection and now more like a mystery. She claims that the more stimuli that a child is surrounded by the less attention they can give to input (Greenfield, 2014). She asks the question, "So could video games, given their fast-paced and vivid content, be affecting attention in a way that is unprecedented and unique compared to all the usual, more muted distractions of real life?" (Greenfield, 2014, p. 176). A team of Iowa State University researchers recently conducted the first long-term study examining the effects of media use by elementary school children. The study involved 1,323 6 to 12-year olds who, together with their parents, recorded their television and video game exposure at four time points over a 13-month period (Greenfield, 2014). Teachers measured attention problems by reporting difficulties the participants had completing tasks keeping focused, and by how many disruptions the child had in class. Researchers found that attention problems arose if children had more than two hours of television screen time a day (Greenfield, 2014). They also found that excessive playing of video

games contributed to a higher risk of attention problems and was an even bigger factor than television viewing (Greenfield, 2014). There was a follow up study spanning over three years involving 3,000 children and adolescents that was conducted at Iowa State University by Douglas Gentile and his team. Their study concluded that children had more problems keeping focused attention if they spent excess time playing video games (Greenfield, 2014). "Interesting enough, children who were more impulsive or had more attention problems subsequently spent more time playing video games, indicating a possible bi-directional effect of video gaming on attention problems: the one enhances the other, and vice versa" (Greenfield, 2014, p. 177-178).

The debate. For over 60 years the public and research community have been debating the effects violent media has on our children. Researchers have supplied lots of data over the years, but what really spurs the debate is that conditions in which that data are collected are still not completely compared with real world ones. Psychological research methods are used to collect the data thus creates a sometimes-inappropriate assumption about results (Gentile, 2016). One important point media researchers want to make clear is there is not one certain factor that influences aggressive behavior in humans, but exposure to media violence alone is a strong factor. Media violence has been proven to have effects on thoughts and feelings (Gentile, 2016). Gentile stated that in general people choose to engage with violent media because they want to be affected by it. If it has no effect most people call it boring and stop engaging with it. What is hard to process is that people want to be affected by media to address feelings such as loneliness

or to have a rush of adrenaline, but at the same time they also want to claim that media doesn't affect us (Gentile, 2016).

A parallel debate is occurring concerning having a universal rating system and what pros and cons accompany it. Marketers are against a universal rating system and smaller interest groups don't have the clout to gain federal government or private foundation support (Strasburger & Donnerstein, 2014). There have been excellent ideas about "advancing" this debate; however, there are challenges with sharing scientific research with the public (Strasburger & Donnerstein, 2014). This all connects to the scientific research about the topic of the effects of violent media exposure, but also connects to the money driven and legislation end as well. It proves difficult to present technical ideas to a non-technical audience such as the public. Media researchers are investigating the current media rating system and attempting to support the parental desire to have a universal one. Improved cooperation in conversations among competing groups as well as public resources is essential for individual advocates to move forward. The ideas being brought forth by researchers provided hope that the debate will change course.

Media background statistics. Media access by children under the age of 8 is literally and figuratively a growing concern as efforts are underway to find out the usage numbers and effects of all the media engagement. Current data (Common Sense Media, 2017; Bolkan, 2017) of media use among children 0 to 8 years indicated owning or access to a personal tablet has grown from 1% in 2011 to 42% in 2017, time spent with mobile devices was up from five minutes in 2011 to 48 minutes in 2017 (Common Sense

Media, 2017; Bolkan, 2017). Livingstone and Smith (2014) noted that among European children this rising use is accompanied by an increasing inability for parental oversight as usage becomes more and more private, or out of the purview of their parents. They found that 3% of 5-7-year olds have a mobile phone, which increases to 33% of 8 to 11-year olds, and 62% of 12 to 15-year olds, and a similar rate exists among children in the United States. Chassiakos, Radesky, Christakis, Moreno, and Cross (2016) found that 75% of children 0 to 8 years of age had access to mobile devices. While these figures vary somewhat from country to country, younger children to older children, and from device to device, these reflect an expanding trend that is still in progress. It is important to note that there is no longer a gap between children from lower and higher income homes and their access to a mobile device. Screen usage, on the other hand, among various income homes is higher among children from lower income homes (Bolkan, 2017).

The effects of violent media are based on many factors including age, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, household media environment, and exposure. Some researchers noted that to be affected, children acquiring aggressive behaviors must meet a variety of pre-requisites and be shown certain kinds of content. It is not automatic that just because children are exposed to violent media that they will exhibit violent behaviors. Ferguson (2011) found that it was difficult for researchers looking at the possible effects of violent media exposure to come to consensus as to whether playing a video game would result in more aggressive behavior and noted that some of the individuals studied may have already been at risk for violence due to other variables in

their lives. Strasburger and Donnerstein (2014) found that the research is not clear about direct connections between violent video game playing and criminal behavior although there have been studies that show a connection to aggressive behavior which would be considered criminal if caught. One reason for the lack of clarity is tied to the dearth of research available. Another reason is that most of the research has been carried out with normal populations rather than individuals with mental diseases – or those who may meet the pre-requisite conditions in which exposure would spark a violent reaction (Strasburger & Donnerstein, 2014).

An immense amount of attention has been placed on the fictional violence that can be seen in certain video games, but little focus has been on nonfictional television and news. Children of all ages are subjected to television news broadcasts regularly. Older children in upper elementary grade levels use the news to obtain knowledge about events happening around the world. However, children under the age of 8 years do not think in a fully intuitive sense yet and don't always distinguish fact from fiction (Piaget, 1976). A concern that arises is that news programs are not aimed at children and could be inappropriate (Knopf, 2016). These news programs are easily accessible to children because most U.S. families have at least two televisions in the home and one-fifth of those families have a television in their child's bedroom (Ernest et al., 2014). Children can stumble upon the news while channel surfing, watch it when their parents do, or be observers in the backseat of a car while their parents are listening to the news on the radio. They may also be subject to it when breaking news broadcast interrupts a program they are already watching. Images and stories that often appear on the news involve war,

violent acts, prejudicial incidents, and accidents. Whether children view fictional or nonfictional violence, it is still violence. The impact the violent images may have on children is the same in either variety. Impressions could be made that a way to solve conflicts and protect oneself is to use violence. Viewing such images could even takeaway sensitivity about violent behaviors.

The negative impact of video games surfaced due to the mass killings that occurred in recent years. The popular press indicated the Sandy Hook Elementary School mass shooting was directly tied to the excessive gaming that the gunman was involved in each day. As a result of the Sandy Hook shooting President Obama requested that Congress allocate $10 million specifically for researching the effects that video gaming involvement has on violence (Granic, Lobel, & Engels, 2014). While a large amount of research exists about the influence of violent video game play, focus has been slanted to reflect the negative effects (Granic et al., 2014). Granic et al. looked at the beneficial outcomes in the cognitive, motivational, emotional, and social domains.

On July 6, 2015, there was an article in the *New York Times* in which the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), as well as a few clinical psychologists, discussed screen time and indicated that though devices such as tablets and cellphones are starting to take over the electronic world, the television remains popular with children and acts as a babysitter for some families (Brody, 2015). The American Academy of Pediatrics announced in 2013 during a policy statement, "Children, Adolescents, and the Media," from the Kasier Family Foundation study that was conducted in 2010 "The average 8 to 10-year-old spends nearly eight hours a day with a variety of different

media, and older children and teenagers spend more than 11 hours per day" (Brody, 2015, p. 7). Lots of American youth are "plugged in" and tend to not notice the rest of the world around them for several hours a day. In many cases even toddlers are "plugged in" because a caregiver had handed the child a cell phone or tablet to play with as a form of entertainment. This certainly takes the child's focus away from the world around them (Brody, 2015). When parents participated in the Kaiser study in 2010 many said they have no rules about how much time their child spends with media (Brody, 2015). An unsettling thought is that parents seem to lack awareness about the possible harm excessive screen time can cause. The American Academy of Pediatrics stressed that a child under two years of age should not have exposure from any type of electronic device due to their rapid brain development. Young children should not interact with devices, but instead with humans. More time can be spent with screens if a child is older, but should view high- quality content (Brody, 2015). "Heavy use of electronic media can have significant negative effects on children's behavior, health, and school performance. Those who watch a lot of simulated violence, common in many popular video games, can become immune to it, more inclined to act violently themselves, and less likely to behave empathetically", said Christakis of the Seattle Children's Research Institute (Brody, 2015, p. 7). Steiner-Adair stated that "children need time to daydream, deal with anxieties, process their thoughts, and share them with parents, who can provide reassurance, not more screen time. Steiner-Adair also feels technology is a poor substitute for personal interaction" (Brody, 2015, p. 7).

Motivation, appeal, and positive effects. Motivation is an important characteristic for children as it lends itself to persistence and focused efforts tied to academic success. (Granic, et al., 2014). There are two theories related to motivational styles and achievement. First is the *entity* theory of intelligence, which supports the idea that intelligence is a native trait and is something that cannot be improved upon or altered (Granic, et al., 2014). An example of this theory is when we praise children for their traits rather than their efforts saying things such as, "Wow, you're such a smart boy!" In contrast, when we praise children for their efforts and say things such as, "You worked so hard on that puzzle!" we are demonstrating the *incremental* theory of intelligence, which supports that intelligence, is moldable; it is something that can be refined over time and with energy. Researchers suggest that video games are a perfect exercise for obtaining an incremental theory of intelligence because instant feedback is given about efforts players just gave (Granic et al., 2014). Thinking back to Vygotsky's coined phrase, "zone of proximal development" the quick and precise feedback in video games allows a rewarded and sustained effort that will keep players within the "zone." This is also referred to in research as the motivational "sweet spot" which, with appropriate scaffolding, can keep an individual at the higher level of their zone (Granic et al., 2014).

Players that are highly motivated keep returning to the game to try to keep winning and are "relentlessly optimistic" reaching the goal of winning the game. Thinking educationally players that are motivationally charged and reach their goals maybe more likely to succeed in school (Granic et al., 2014). Involvement in game playing may contribute to motivational issues and carry over into several contexts.

The most cited use for using diverse forms of media, such as video games, is to change people's moods and enhance their emotional states (Granic et al., 2014). Gaming has been found to be one of the efficient and effective ways to generate positive feelings in children and youth. Intense pride and flow or transportation are two positive emotional experiences that are described by gamers. Psychologists think that children who have positive emotional experiences are more likely to have better commitment, achievement, and higher self-esteem (Granic et al., 2014).

There has been a shift in the last 10-20 years in video games as no longer is one isolated person playing games. Video games are stimulating, create learning experiences, are a social activity, and offer people an incentive to achieve. In relation to social activity "… 60% of frequent gamers play with friends, 33% play with siblings, and 25% play with a family member…" (Dai & Fry, 2014, p. 1). Almost three quarters of gamers are involved playing on the same side or in opposition to other players. The prosocial skills garnered from these games can be translated to other settings suggesting that gaming can encourage prosocial and cooperative behaviors (Dai & Fry, 2014).

Researchers are now exploring the perks of gaming, specifically cognitive benefits. "Contrary to conventional beliefs that playing video games is intellectually lazy and sedating, it turns out that playing these games promotes a wide range of cognitive skills" (Granic et al., 2014, p. 68). A copious amount of training studies has provided persuasive evidence that naïve gamers who are randomly appointed to engage with either a video game containing violence that involves shooting have been allocated attention, better spatial awareness, quicker visual processing and heightened mental abilities

(Granic et al., 2014). Not all types of video games enhance the cognitive performance the most robust effects are generated from engaging with shooting style games not from other types of games such as puzzles. Some researchers have looked at video games as a source for enhancing problem-solving skills. (Granic et al., 2014).

Through the lens of psychology, Weaver (2011) centered his focus on the draw of entertainment media. He has taken the time to specifically look at the appeal of violent media. Under the National Television Violence Study (NTVS), the word violence has been defined as ''…any overt depiction of a credible threat of physical force or the actual use of such force intended to physically harm an animate being or group of beings'' (Weaver, 2011, p. 233). This definition is the most commonly pulled definition on the Internet for the word violence. Violence was the most predominant feature in over 60% of television shows in the mid-1990's according to a study by Weaver that examined a 3-year period over 9,000 hours of viewing time (Weaver, 2011). Media saturated with violence is appealing to certain audiences (children and high sensation seekers) because it increases physiological arousal (Weaver, 2011). Weaver focused on two popular television shows one geared toward adults and other geared toward children. The first was the television crime drama Crime Scene Investigation. Zuiker, the creator of the show, stated that his job is to push the envelope on violence until it meets resistance. He also said that he felt it was important to have sizeable amounts of violence because he is afraid that audiences might get bored. The second television show Weaver focused on was the children's show Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. The director of the show, Munroe, stated that he pushes as much as he can when it comes to violent content and he

waits to get "nailed" on it by his network then cuts it back, but doesn't jeopardize what his original intentions were. His target audience is young adolescents and he felt that this age group enjoys watching violence and would find it unenjoyably if the show didn't have an abundance of it. A show filled with violence carries intensity and has twists and turns throughout the story that creates fun. Munroe believed that removing the violence would reduce the fun. To many audiences having violence as a part of the show is necessary to make it appealing (Weaver, 2011).

Thinking about different levels of violence that children view and the vividness of those levels leads researchers to think about the graphicness of media. The level of realism and the way it is presented in the media play an important role in the reaction of the viewer (Riddle, 2014). Scholars have defined "vividness" by the degree of detail involved, by concreteness, emotional interest, and by proximity of information located near the viewer. Graphicness and vividness are both used as parallels to one another. Researchers have studied audiences that are exposed to media violence shown in more graphic ways. Their findings conclude that the audiences become more desensitized the more long-term exposure they have to the graphic media (Riddle, 2014).

Weaver discussed the "forbidden fruit hypothesis"; this is when something looks more attractive because it is being denied (Weaver, 2011). In the case of violent media viewing, this hypothesis foretells that children and adolescents who have limited access to violent content want it even more because their freedom to have it has been restricted. It has been proven repeatedly that whether children are passively watching violent media or interacting and engaging with it there is a rise in aggressive thoughts and actions.

Interactive nature. It is essential to specify that the term *video games* differ compared to types of other media. Video games are interactive, and that feature sets them apart from other media. The design of video games is to keep players actively engaged and for the system to react to players Granic et al., 2014). The term *gamer* is often used in the video game research. *Gamers* refers to anyone that engages with video games frequently which would be specified by playing one hour or more a day (Granic et al., 2014).

Due to the interactive nature of violent video games there are compelling reasons to believe they would influence aggressive behaviors more than watching media violence on television. "In video games, the process of identification with the aggressor, active participation, repetitive actions, a hostile virtual reality, and reinforcement for aggressive actions are all strong mechanisms for the learning and retention of aggressive behaviors and attitudes" (Strasburger & Donnerstein, 2014, p. 721). Few studies were found to address games that involve first person shooter or criminal behavior. Due to the lack of research, there is yet a connection to be made between playing violent video games and real-life mass shootings and violent behavior. There was a heated debated in California because of the Supreme Court hearing that under the first amendment of protected speech violent video games are covered. There was no exception made due to insufficient evidence of harm (Strasburger & Donnerstein, 2014).

In addition to being interactive by nature, which entices people to play them, they also offer an escape from the "real world." This need to escape becomes so strong for some people it leads to being addicting to playing the games. The idea of video game

addiction is comparable to pathological gambling (Gentile, Berch, Choo, Khoo, & Walsh, 2017). To get to those types of levels gamers must engage with the games for excessive amounts of time and exhibit less withdrawal symptoms while playing. Researchers have found that the addiction is not necessarily due to the amount of time that is played, but due to a clinical issue. However, Gentile felt that gaming should not be thought of as a clinical disorder because it is an inverse problem. An obsessed gamer may do poorly in school and that would be reflected in their academic performance (Gentile et al., 2017). Gentile also found that the amount of time someone plays was a risk factor for a possible video game addiction to occur. Most addictions stem from other dysfunctions in life either at school, home, or in a social environment (Gentile et al., 2017).

Gentile also found that the amount of time someone plays was a risk factor for a possible video game addiction to occur. Most addictions stem from other dysfunctions in life either at school, home, or in a social environment (Gentile et al., 2017).

Exposure. By using a variety of methods over the last 50 years significant advances have been made in psychological research about violent media exposure and children's behaviors. Researchers have been able to provide a wealth of evidence that being exposed to violent media of any type can increase aggression. What is known is there is a connection between being exposed to media and feelings, thoughts, and behaviors of hostility (Hummer, 2015).

Research conducted involving media violence usually has one goal and that is to illuminate what the long-term effects of repeated exposure may have, specifically on a young child's brain development (Hummer, 2015). Exposure to violent media is not the

only factor that can have lasting effects on the functions and structure of the brain. Stress and drugs especially in children can also negatively impact the brain. While these other factors play a role in altering brain development during adolescence media violence is prevalent and has the potential for impact.

Brain development and play. Neuroimaging is used to detect natural characteristics and signals that come from the brain. When studying the brain in relation to aggressive thoughts and behaviors researchers have discovered these thoughts and behaviors can be both short and long-term after being exposed to violence. Exposure to violent media at a young age could have lifelong effects that neuroimaging tools can address. These tools could include an EEG, MRI, and PET scans. The parts of that brain that are affected by violent media are prefrontal mechanisms that control emotions and behaviors. These mechanisms can become damaged because of increased aggression and decreased inhibitory control.

Neuroimaging has its limitations just as with any research method. In the case of the MRI patients they must lay still while enclosed in a tube, this makes it hard to create a simulated real-world experience to violent media. Due to this limitation validity is compromised (Hummer, 2015). In comparison when a patient is relaxed at a doctor's appointment it makes it more difficult for a doctor to spot possible concerns or risks, especially in relation to heart problems because the patient is not active (Hummer, 2015). To find worth in neuroimaging research we must use other methods to examine emotions, behaviors, and intellectual abilities.

Rats have been recently used in neuroscientific research to look at exact brain functions that could help enlighten scientists how pretend hostility could lead to the developmental of social abilities. In laboratory studies results have shown that play fighting can release chemicals in certain areas of the brain in which social skills are contained, in turn encouraging the aggressive behaviors more (Granic, et al., 2014). Translating this information to human behavior, the opportunity that exists within the realm of play is quite powerful as children can act things out without real life consequences. The researchers suggested that similar opportunities for conflict resolution could be practiced in video gaming (Granic et al., 2014).

Authors Granic et al., looked at the functions of play in relation to playing video games. They explored the early theories of scholars who are respected in the field of developmental psychology such as Piaget (1976), Erikson (1977), and Vygotsky (1978). Their focus was on social cognition and the role of play. They noted that both Erikson (1977) and Vygotsky (1978) demonstrated the strong link between social cognition and play. The play context provides the stage where children can experiment with dilemmas often found in their real worlds.

Violent Media Effects and Behaviors

Aggression. Researchers and the public often perceive causality differently and have differing definitions. "Researchers understand causality as a probabilistic risk factor that can increase the likelihood of a particular negative outcome and the general public often perceives causality as a single 'cause' that has a consistent 'one-on-one' relationship with the outcome" (Bushman & Anderson, 2015, p. 1808). These opposing

views and definitions have caused a public debate. The debate is about how to translate the language of science through the lens of the popular press and then combine the need humans have with wanting a clear and straight forward answer to explain such unconceivable events. Two questions arise when looking at this debate, first is the question from parents and society, "Is the risk of playing or viewing virtual violence justified by the benefit of that experience?" (Bushman & Anderson, 2015, p. 1808). Second is the question from the scientific standpoint, "Is exposure to violent media content a risk factor that can contribute to unwarranted aggressive and violent behavior?" (Bushman & Anderson, 2015, p. 1808). An article was written entitled, "Understanding Causality in the Effects of Media Violence" in the journal of *American Behavioral Scientist* to attempt to answer these questions.

"Aggression as any behavior that is intended to harm another person who does not want to be harmed either psychologically or physically" (Bushman & Anderson, 2015, p. 59). The authors define a violent act of aggression when a person's goal is to inflict severe physical harm, or death (Bushman & Anderson, 2015). Examples of these acts would be a child deliberately shoving another off a bicycle this would be an example of aggression, someone intentionally attacking, shooting, or wounding another person are examples of violence. "All violent acts are aggressive acts, but not all aggressive acts are violent" (Bushman & Anderson, 2015, p. 1809).

There are three other points about aggression that are outlined by Bushman and Anderson. Aggression can be mild to severe and severe aggression would be considered violence. Second ethical considerations must be considered when conducting research on

aggression. Third, most people in society are worried about extreme forms of violence such as mass shootings not smaller violence such as physical fights or altercations.

Just as the paradox that smokers get lung cancer, but others who have never smoked get lung cancer the resolution is simple, "Smoking causes an *increase in the likelihood of* contracting lung cancer" (Bushman & Anderson, 2015, p. 1810). Similarly, when researchers who examine media violence say, "Violent media causes aggression, they mean, "violent media exposure causes an *increase in the likelihood of* aggression" (Bushman & Anderson, 2015, p. 1810).

There is a desensitization factor to be considered when people consume violent media. Some people not only become desensitized by the violence, but also become aroused by it (Bushman & Anderson, 2015). Empathy seems to be lacking in gamers after being exposed to violence through as the perspective of the killer (Bushman & Anderson, 2015).

A question that is often asked when looking at the topic of violent media exposure and children is whether aggressive behavior during pretend play carried over to actual aggressive behavior in the classroom. "The different kinds of aggression in pretend play, includes physical aggression (e.g., one doll hitting another), verbal aggression (e.g., two dolls bickering or saying ''You're not my friend''), oral aggression (e.g., one animal biting or eating another animal), and aggressive themes (e.g., reference to a knife within a play story). In contrast to aggression in play, actual aggressive behavior includes behaviors such as actually hitting another child, arguing with a peer, or destroying another child's property" (Fehr & Russ, 2013, p.332).

In 1961, a classic study, which included 72 boys and girls between the ages of 3 and 6 from Stanford University Nursery School, was conducted entitled the *Bobo Doll Study* (McLeod, 2014). The study had significant implications for research that looked at the media violence and the possible effects on children. The study assessed over 70 children that were ages 3 to 6 years olds and who attended Stanford University Nursery School. The children were spilt into three groups: one group viewed a model who was aggressive with the inflatable Bobo doll by punching, hitting, and pretending to shoot the doll, a second group viewed a model who played with the doll in a quiet and subdued manner, and the third group was the control group that did not view a model play with the doll at all. The study concluded after observing the more aggressive model the participants responded with more aggression than those who observed a non-aggressive model or were in the control group (Wager & Mandracchia, 2016). In addition to the Bobo dolls other toys were in the room for children to engage with. During the experiment children who viewed the aggressive model gravitated toward toy guns and hammers to assault Bobo with whereas the children who viewed the non-aggressive model or where a part of the control group did not. It was once believed that by seeing others vent aggressions would drain a viewer's aggressive drive. Based upon this study exposure to aggressive modeling is hardly cathartic (Wager & Mandracchia, 2016).

On the topic of aggression authors Gasser, Malti, and Gutzwiller-Helfenfinger conducted a study in 2012 that investigated seven and nine-year-old children by looking at morals, retaliation, and motiveless aggression in relation to their current aggressive status (Gasser, Malti, & Gutzwiller-Helfenfinger, 2012). Retaliation seemed to be labeled

less serious by aggressive children compared to non-aggressive children. The more aggressive children also excused retaliation if it was provoked (Gasser et al., 2012). Morals, retaliation, and motiveless aggression were all assessed through interview questions (Gasser et al., 2012).

The authors also found that aggressive children can process conflict situations if their moral development is well developed. This is something teachers see in their classrooms daily. Some children can process and problem solve when a conflict arises while others are not. There is a not a clear-cut reason as to why some children do or do not process conflict resolution, but much of it could be based on their moral development.

In thinking about moral development and more specifically moral identity and personality researchers have tried to capture how individuals think, experience, and perceive their moral self-concepts (Teng, Nie, Guo, & Liu, 2017). When playing violent video games people tend to feel violent sensations and become a part of a virtual society. The violent video game characters affect how people process, store, and apply the information they are receiving from the game to social situations. Through an automatic process, users start to perceive things in the game as real this happens because the video games are designed to hinder awareness about reality. Many past media researchers indicated that violent video games produce aggressive behaviors and decrease empathy in players. Additionally, former research outlined that gamers who had greater empathy felt guilty about hurting characters within the game. New research however shows that violent video game content could influence the brain's role in moral judgment and decision –making (Teng et al., 2017). Bandura outlines eight factors that are relevant

because they explain how objectionable things could be understood as suitable behavior. People rationalize doing undesirable things there by skewing in a sense the moral integrity of what they are doing. For example, one factor, which is labeled as "advantageous comparison" happens when people relate their behavior to more destructive behaviors making it in comparison to look better than the alternative (Teng et al., 2017)

In children, the predictors of aggression are often examined as well as the forms and purposes for engagement of aggression in children. "Identifying mediators of media violence effects across multiple media (TV, video games, and movies/videos) and across multiple subtypes of aggression is something that is not often examined in media violence research" (Gentile et al., 2010, p. 216). There are two subtypes of aggression: proactive and reactive aggression. The definition of reactive aggression will often focus on a model of frustration-aggression where there is an outburst due to retaliation or defense as a response to being provoked or frustrated that can trigger levels of emotion and arousal (Gentile et al., 2010). Proactive aggression defined behavior more as being on purpose and often with a goal in mind and often connected to lessening emotion or arousal (Gentile et al., 2010). Exposure to media violence has been intensely studied as a correlation to engagement in proactive aggression. Several hundred studies have concluded that being exposed to violence that contains media raises the potential for physically violent behavior, in both the short term as well as in the long term. It has been shown that media violence leads to an increase in behaviors that contain aggression as well as thoughts. These effects have been highlighted throughout field experiments,

experimental studies, correlational studies, and several long-term longitudinal studies (Gentile et al., 2010). Even though the connection from media violence to proactive aggression has already been a study focus, consideration needs to be given to the link that binds media violence exposure with reactive aggression.

The "So what?" factor comes into play when we think about exposure to media violence as a risk factor for aggression. It is one of the many risk factors documented by scientific researchers (Gentile, 2016). Some researchers interested in crime statistics focus on aggression that is physical and can relate as a risk factor to violent media exposure. In contrast though researchers who are more focused on children look at playground and school behaviors that involve aggression that are less physical. These could include teasing, being excluded from a group, spreading rumors, or other bullying behaviors (Gentile, 2016). Looking through this lens these behaviors may seem less significant. These types of behaviors may not show up in all the statistics surrounding the topic, but for a parent whose child experiences one of these it is "serious" aggression.

Looking broadly at multiple types of media and broadly at the various subtypes of aggression and at whether age-linked changes shown in children's hostile actions could be evident within a short-term longitudinal context is in the lens of a study that was conducted. The specific goals of this study all were to assess a link between demonstrating the possibility of prosocial behavior diminishing while at the same time showing an increase in other types of aggression (Gentile, Coyne, & Walsh, 2011). To accomplish these goals, a longitudinal study looking closely at the affects of media violence usage among young children was used. Four hundred and thirty students in

grades third through fifth took part in the study. Students were specifically enlisted from five schools in Minnesota, which included one suburban private school, and three suburban public schools (Gentile et al., 2011). The study yielded the results that exposure to media that is filled with aggressive acts predicted more aggressive behavior in comparison to exposure to general media not containing aggressive acts (Gentile et al., 2011).

The unanswered question that the public still wants answered is whether viewing violent media contributes to acts of aggression and violent behavior (Bushman & Anderson, 2015). A general aggression model illustrates three routes people can take from violence and aggression: thinking aggressively, feeling angry, and bring physiologically aroused (Bushman & Anderson, 2015). "Numerous studies have shown that exposure to violent media can increase aggression through each of these routes" (Bushman & Anderson, 2015, p. 1815). Specifically, experimental studies have shown that more aggressive behaviors present themselves after someone plays a violent video game (Bushman & Anderson, 2015). Though immediate effects are concerning, the cumulative long-term effects are even more concerning. More evidence has been offered through longitudinal studies that show that the more children consume violent media the greater the chance that later in life they will act aggressively. Evidence has been found worldwide through various research groups that conclude exposure to violent media increases aggression in most cases (Bushman & Anderson, 2015).

In 2014, the USA Today published a study piece from the journal *Psychology of Popular Media Culture,* researchers, parents, and pediatricians concur that exposure to

video games violence could create aggressive behaviors in children (Barrett, 2014). The lead author of the study Bushman stated, "Some people claim there is no consensus about whether violent media can increase aggression in children, but this study shows that there is consensus," He also noted that 80% of researchers agree that playing violent games creates a rise in aggression. Bushman said he felt, "That's hardly a controversy" However, there is substantial disagreement regarding how much exposure to violent media plays a role in actual real-life violence. Bushman explained, "With the general consensus about the harmful effects of media violence, it may seem surprising that some people still question the effects of violent media on aggression. One important reason is that people do not distinguish between aggression and violence" (Barrett, 2014, p. 6). In addition to Bushman's article media violence researchers as well as law makers and the popular press frequently tie violent video game use to extreme acts of violent. "Murder simulators" is a term some media violence researchers use in reference to violent video games (Markey, Markey, & French, 2015).

   Violent crimes and violent actions. In much of the literature on the topic of violent media exposure there is an agreement about the indication that other factors can be partly responsible in possible behaviors that stem from violent media exposure in children. One of those factors is witnessed violence. In research conducted on 88 detained, mostly ethnic minorities, adolescent boys, a long-established connection between callous-unemotional behaviors and violence could be credited to very elevated rates of violence the boys had witnessed (Howard et al., 2012). Lacking in the research is whether these patterns are a result of other violence exposure and victimization. Social

learning theory points to the idea that violence exposure is certainly a strong connection between the mixing and diffusion of violent behavior in young adults (Howard et al., 2012). This idea purported that if a teen sees or experiences violent acts, then the youth is more highly likely to also take part in violence. In conjunction with this theory, studies if a child has a strong history in violence whether it be personal abuse or witnessed violence they have a better chance of being violent themselves (Howard et al., 2012).

Throughout many studies, exposure to media violence has been consistently confirmed as a casual risk factor with long-term harmful outcomes that relate to destructive cognitions, destructive behavior, lessened empathy, as well as desensitization to violence. Even more specifically, desensitization to virtual violence causes various levels of desensitization to real life violence. Some longitudinal research has indicated various people who have low aggression in the first place have a significant rise in aggression after they view media violence as compared to people who have higher levels of aggression initially (Wager & Mandracchia, 2016). Historically criminogenic thinking was discussed principally in regard to criminals because it occurs consistently, and it suggests that criminogenic thinking, at some level, occurs in everyone. Researchers exclusively focus on thinking patterns; consequently, they illustrate their findings in various conceptualized ways of what constitutes criminogenic thinking. Showing that engaging with video games is the most significant and has the greatest effect on criminogenic thinking than other types of media was a main takeaway from the study. This is due in part because video games are interactive and allow for a first-person experience. There is a rewarding feeling when winning a video game, which only helps to

reinforce the violence (Wager & Mandracchia, 2016). There is a sense of rehearsal when a player continuously plays a violent video game over and over. Cognitive scripts could easily be developed through playing violent video games excessively and can end up in aggressive acts. These scripts can then be used and relied on during situations of confrontation.

According to the results of the Wager and Mandracchia's research there are some proposed solutions and interventions. First considering an intervention or even thinking about early prevention should happen before traits of aggression become firmly made in our youth. Awareness needs to be raised to adolescents about how to identify violent content before becoming exposed to it. Educating adolescents could be the first line of defense in this growing problem. In addition to the interventions and education for adolescents it would also be beneficial to also offer the same information to parents. If parents are educated, then they can begin to reprimand their children who mimic aggressive behaviors they watch and block certain media types. By enlightening parents about the potential risk of violent media exposure they can be "media mentors" for their children and help them establish a "sensible media diet" (Wager & Mandracchia, 2016). Hopefully these types of interventions can help promote open conversations in households, which in turn could make monitoring easier. In addition, future programs that offer prevention to help reduce exposure to violent media as well as programs to help change thinking patterns of people who have aggression could be vital in preventing future violence.

Embedded in first person shooter games is often moral disengagement. Some

gamers enjoy these games more than others because of this fact (Hartmann, Krakowiak, & Tsay-Vogel, 2014) "Experiments and in-depth interviews revealed that their presence in violent video games effectively reduces feelings of guilt" (Hartmann et al., p. 310). There is a sense of dehumanization and loss of reality about consequences when playing these types of games. Shooting virtual characters makes users feel less guilty if there is a justified reason as a part of the game. (Hartmann et al., 2014). Research has been shown recently that excessive exposure to violent video games raises the moral disengagement in our youth. In addition, a rise in dehumanization happens which both in turn can lead to more aggressive behaviors (Hartmann et al., 2014).

An unanswered question is why do most users find violence in a video game fun? Scholars to attempt to explain why by using Bandura's moral disengagement method. Bandura classified eight distinctive moral disengagement features that could influence how people view violent acts. The eight factors are "moral justification, euphemistic labeling, advantageous comparison, displacement of responsibility, diffusing responsibility, disregard or distortion of consequences, dehumanization, and attribution of blame" (Hartmann et al., 2014, p. 312). "Recent experimental and survey studies have provided compelling evidence that the presence (or absence) of these moral disengagement cues in violent video games effectively influences users' enjoyment, guilt, disgust, and subsequent aggressive states" (Hartmann et al., 2014, p. 312).

Many people believe that gamers that play violent video games develop desensitization to the violence and even think they are living in a fantasy world. There can be decreased empathic concern associated with playing and viewing violent media.

"Desensitization theory speculates that repeated exposure to violence in the media can lead to an attitude of 'numbness' toward real-life violence, which is based upon the assumption that humans have innately negative physiological and psychological reactions to observed violence" (Fraser et al., 2012, p. 641).

With so many shooting rampages happening in our world today the connection between viewing violent media and youth acting violently is especially concerning. The news media likes to conclude that there is only one single factor that contributes to a person going a shooting rampage, but, research shows us that the violent act is almost never the result of a single cause, but a combination of several (Bushman & Anderson, 2015). There are usually two types of factors involved first *Motivating Factors* which involve situations occurring in a person's life or their perceived ideas about something. Second are *Inherent Factors* these involve a person's personality traits such as genetic and brain chemistry, life events, and habitual exposure to media violence (Bushman & Anderson, 2015).

Parental Monitoring and Intervention

Since 1999 the total daily screen time for children ages 8 to18 has grown from five hours per day to seven and a half. The AAP (2018), recommends limited daily screen time of less than two hours for that age group (Sanders, Parent, Forehand, Sullivan, & Jones, 2016). With so much screen time children decrease exercise time, creative play, and engaging with their peers. It has been studied that as a child's age goes up so does the hours of screen time they have each day, which far exceeds what is recommended by the AAP (2018).

Today parents are thought of as "digital immigrants" and children are considered "digital natives." The challenge is very much presenting itself for parents to consistently monitor their children's media use, but it remains vital for them to stay involved. Parents need to serve as a mediators and buffer children against possible negative influences surrounding technologies. It is suggested that parents actively stay engaged with the technologies their children are using and ask their children to share what they are doing with the technologies. This will help parents with being able to precisely gauge the appropriateness of the technologies for their children.

The "digital divide" is becoming less differentiated as many parents today were raised in this digital age. Sophistication and complexity are entering into the equation, requiring parents to keep up with the new technologies that are marketed for use with young children in the promise of making them smarter. This can add complications for parents in understanding the appropriateness of the range and content of media available to children (Vittrup, Snider, Rose, & Rippy, 2016). There is a popular perspective that using a gadget such as a smartphone or a tablet prepares children for the adult life, when using technology will be mandatory. Psychologists disagreed with this perspective, parents were unsure, and children who are considered *gamers* agreed with it.

Gentile, a leading expert on media violence was cited by Bakan as stating it is perplexing that the same parents that go to great lengths to shield their children from home and neighborhood violence, knowing it is bad for them, chose to ignore the amount of violence their children see on any screen (Bakan, 2012). Gentile believes part of the reason for this is that the industry does such a good job of stifling concern. Gentile says,

"The minute I release a study showing that violent video games do in fact increase aggression I get threatened to be sued by the video game industry" (Bakan, 2012, p.43). Gentile feels that it is a knee-jerk reaction by an industry concerned with any danger to its profits (Bakan, 2012).

A cavity that presents itself within the current literature in reference to parental monitoring of media use is looking at children younger than eight and how their media use is restricted. Some parents have reported through research studies that they find it harder when there are older children in the house to limit younger children's time with technologies (Sanders et al., 2016). A regular conclusion amongst studies is that media restriction occurs less often when children get older.

Parental perspectives. As discussed earlier children can easily stumble onto violent media without parents even knowing. Primary research has emphasized the need for parental awareness and the necessity for parental guidance with their children's media use and screen time (Vittrup et al., 2016). Researchers found that parents are not aware of the access, the amount of time, or the content of what their children are exposed to through electronic media. Much of children's media use is unsupervised, and researchers suggest that this is because of parents having less energy and time to dedicate to controlling their children's media use (Vittrup et al., 2016).

Young children have cognitive limitations keeping them from understanding the purpose and practice of screen media and technologies in the same manner as adults. Due to these limitations, young children cannot fully evaluate the meaning of the technologies they are engaging with. Children under the age of 6 tend to view the media they watch as

the real world. Children at this young age lack cognitive growth, which limits them in the areas of comprehension and perception (Vittrup et al., 2016).

Through answering some parents illustrated their perspectives about their knowledge and the use of technology by their children. It became clear that more than two-third of parents felt that media was a useful way for their children to spend their time. (Vittrup et al., 2016, p. 45). The quantity of time parents spent with media positively correlated with the quantity of time their children spend with media (Vittrup et al., 2016). Many parents thought that technology use was important for early brain development and preventing children's access would cause them to fall behind academically. Almost all parents use media for entertainment purposes for their children at one time or another (Vittrup et al., 2016).

However, parents who have rules for media use in their home and restrict screen time see less problem behaviors from their children (Sanders et al., 2016).

Sanders, et al., (2016) conducted a study to examine parental perceptions as well as parents' technological knowledge tied to screen time. They found that while some parents connected future academic and job success to media use other parents feared there would be a negative impact on their children. Each group had quite different ideas about regulating their child's use of technology.

Sanders et al. examined two types of parental perceptions. First, *perceived parental efficacy,* which means the effort parents put forth and sustain despite difficultly (Sanders et al., 2016). This is often associated with parental involvement, monitoring, and management of screen time. Second, *parental negative attitudes towards technology*,

these attitudes could affect the types of programs and technology children engage with (Sanders et al., 2016). Both components of parental perceptions contribute to parenting strategies.

Monitoring strategies and recommendations for parents. Parents face the challenge of eliminating the playing of video games entirely from their children's lives because the games have become so prominent. It becomes vital for parents to monitor the types of games their children are interacting with and having exposure to. Parents should use ratings to help make more informed choices for their children. "The line between a healthy amount of gaming and an excessive amount is easily blurred and crossed" (Dai & Fry, 2014, para. 11).

Though parents try to limit their child's media use through setting rules and monitoring it still proves difficult. Researchers recommend that parents control children's behaviors and become involved in their media choices. It was noted in research that some parents who were from higher socio-economic status were focused more on restricting time of use rather than content (Sanders et al., 2016).

Many parents are not aware or don't agree with the idea that actual interaction with real people and objects is more effective in supporting optimal brain development in the early childhood years. The AAP as well as early childhood professionals are in favor of media restriction for young children (Vittrup et al., 2016). Findings also suggested that parents should focus early on interventions and attempt to reduce their child's screen time which will help during the adolescent years when children have increasing independence and more availability to technological devices (Sanders et al., 2016).

Sanders et al. suggested that before parenting strategies can be implement the parents' self-efficacy with technology should be considered.

The AAP has suggestions for parents in regard to monitoring of screen time and content. They suggest no screen time for children fewer than 18 months of age and only one hour a day for children ages 2-5. Parents should refrain from using any digital media as a "soothing tool" for children. They also recommend parents to encourage their children to be creative and "unplug" during playtime, this is especially important for infants and toddlers. Parents should be watching their children and talking with them about the media that is in front of them (Thompson, 2016). Parents act as a mentor for their children as well as a role model for them to show the best way to interact with the media around them. Dr. Megan Moreno associate professor of pediatrics at Seattle Children's Hospital said, "It's kind of like driving a car," she said. "You don't just give a kid a set of keys and say hey, go for it. You sit there the first years they're driving, right next to them" (Thompson, 2016, para. 19).

The AAP also recommended families have a media-free family time together during dinner or a specific night of the week and have designated media-free locations in the home. It is vital for parents to talk about online safety with their children and how to treat others respectfully online and offline (Thompson, 2016). Being a role model for acceptable media use for children is an especially important role for parents. Parents should adhere to similar restraints as their children to ensure expected media consumption and behaviors are clear (Thompson, 2016).

Despite the concerns parents may have about how much time their children engage with media, there was still growth and the amount of time children engage with screen media over the last decade. Parental monitoring needs to have a key role in children's interactions with media, especially violent media. Media researcher Dr. Gentile shared in a personal conversation (January 21, 2015) that there are 19 scientific effects recorded related to media violence and the four types of parental monitoring that can be done to reduce these effects. The four types of parental monitoring include active mediation, restrictive mediation (time), restrictive mediation (content), and co-viewing/co-playing. When parental monitoring is in place regarding children's media use there can be a reduction in the negative effects. Children who are elementary school age spend a large amount of time during the day in front of a screen whether it is playing video game or watching TV. Under the umbrella of parental monitoring three specific areas have been studied. These areas are: active mediation, restrictive mediation, as well as coviewing. Active mediation is the most often researched of the three. Active mediation is used to educate children by initiating conversations between the parent and the child directly concerning media content (Gentile et al., 2012). By using any or all the three forms of parental mediation, parents should see a reduced number of negative effects on their children.

Parental influence and role. Parents have a huge influence on their children and what the parents say about a specific technology device is how their child perceives the device. It has been found that if parents enjoy media usage, then they are reluctant to restrict their children from it. To enact change in a family's technology social

environment, parents must first be educated as to what strategies they can and should use when it comes to their child's technology use (Sanders et al., 2016).

It is expected that parents are accountable for their children's behavior and gaming behavior is no exception. Some parents are unaware regarding computer use and video games. There are times when no restriction is placed regarding video games and kids play for hours through the week and it doubles on weekends. Some parents adopt a passive role, hoping their children's obsession will go away. The parents' role is to control the content of video games and the amount of game time in which their children are engaged. A resource that parents can use is the *Entertainment Software Ratings Board* rating system. This system provides guidance to parents that will help them select the video games their children wish to play (Drugas, 2014). Psychologists advise parents to co-play games, thereby maximizing the educational content and tasks (Drugas, 2014).

Media culture: Benefits and risks. Media culture is a part of most children's lives growing up today. There are many ways media effects children. Children can be affected by the harmful content, which often includes violent behavior, which children can imitate. Media use also undermines play, active learning, and social development. Many marketers and media producers aim to transform childhood for many children. Children learn lessons from media early on that can contribute to what is characterized as *remote-control childhood* (Levin, 2013). In the mid 1980's President Reagan deregulated marketing and thus the remote-control childhood era began. Children need help from parents and teachers in reclaiming the learning process. This includes more active and creative learning as well as screen-free time with adults (The Campaign for a

Commercial-Free Childhood and the Alliance for Childhood, Alliance for Childhood, &

Teachers Resisting Unhealthy Children's Entertainment, 2012).

Risks and benefits have been identified with playing video games. The following

risks were identified: addiction, social isolation, health problems, not playing outside,

missing other opportunities, wasting time, getting lost in the virtual world, and chronic

tiredness (Drugas, 2014). The following benefits of playing educational video games

included: development of attention and cognitive processes, general educational value

and observational skills, pleasure of playing and evading from reality, distracting the

attention from dangerous games, and development of IT skills (Drugas, 2014).

Educational purposes. Educational video games are traditionally defined with

the primary purpose of being educational, not entertaining. Though the discussion about

media violence and its effects has been going on for many decades, it has only been in the

last few years that in the field of psychology that serious research on the topic of video

games started. Researchers feel that for more children to want to play educational and

instructional video games there needs to be an increase in attractiveness (Drugas, 2014).

The creators of educational video games need to think about not only the gaming

experience of the players, but also their attitudes toward the opportunity to learn

something through playing (Drugas, 2014). From an international perspective, in

Romania there is a goal to identify whether playing educational video games is beneficial

for children as they are learning through entertainment.

The discussion in the education world has started to become about using

technologies to teach and using tools such as educational video games in place of

traditional teaching methods. The idea behind using educational video games in the classroom is that playing requires the participants to pay greater attention to the content. Though controversies arise around the use of video games in the classroom. Video games are accused of being the source of a large number negative of phenomena, but on the other hand society fully uses references to violence in advertising, entertainment, education and recruitment, thus being contradictory. Games are accused for provoking violent and aggressive behavior in children, while violence is tolerated in movies and television (Drugas, 2014). Though some researchers have found negative effects and outcomes with exposure to violent video games they remain completely unsure. The following are expressions that can be found in research studies on the topic: "There is a risk…, We discovered the possible existence of cause and effect relationship…, "Under certain conditions, video games can have negative effects…, Not all games are dangerous…" (Drugas, 2014). There is also a certain "dose of bias" both in studies aimed to identify negative or positive effects of video games. Researchers that try to emphasize the positive effects of video games generally avoided violent games and preferred to focus on educational software. The researchers that try to emphasize the negatives effects were more focused on violent games (Drugas, 2014).

Summary and Conclusions

I presented themes in the literature review that reflect the possible effects of violent media as well as screen time exposure and types of parental mediations and interventions. Although a few articles contained information that contradicted major findings, much of the literature clearly established links between exposure to violent

media and aggressive behaviors and negative outcomes. Much of the research used quantitative measures, without rigorous exploration of the results.

Most researchers focused on adolescent age children and young adults. In addition, I was unable to find literature regarding children under the age of 8 and the parental and teacher perspectives on violent media exposure and outcomes. Therefore, exploring the perspectives of parents and teachers addresses a gap in literature, as well as provides a greater understanding of the central phenomena. Chapter 3 includes a comprehensive review of the methodology used in this research. Chapter 4 contains the results and Chapter 5 concludes with a discussion and recommendations as a result of this research as well as implications for positive social change.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore perspectives of parents and teachers of children 5 to 8 years old regarding children's exposure to violent media in addition to parental monitoring practices in place. Media violence is one of the most studied phenomena effecting children over the age of 8 (Gentile, 2014). However, little is known about exposure to violent media on children under the age of 8 (Gentile, 2014). There was a convincing agreement between researchers in the psychology field as well as health and medical professionals that exposure to media that contains violent images is an important risk factor to examine that is negatively affecting young children (Gentile, 2014). Directly tied to children's video and television consumption is their health, school performance, and social relationships (Seaman, 2014). Teachers can provide parents with suggested types of parental monitoring and research data to show the dangers of violent media exposure; however, how parents monitor the video gaming practices and their child's access to violence in these games is not known (Seaman, 2014).

This chapter includes the research design and the rationale for the selection. A discussion of participant selection, measures for ethical protection, and the role of the researcher are also included. In addition, this section consists of data collection and analysis procedures, along with methods to address trustworthiness.

Research Design and Rationale

The nature of this study was a qualitative case study design. A case study allows for an in-depth understanding of a situation, bound by limited subjects, time, or space (Lodico et al., 2010). The goal of this study was to gain an understanding of a group

(primary grade level parents and teachers) within a bounded system (a rural area on the East Coast). In addition, it was an instrumental case study in that it was designed to gain insight into and illuminate a specific issue (Creswell, 2012). Thus, the focus was to understand the clarity parents and teachers have about children viewing and engaging with violent video games and the consequent impact (problem). I also wanted to explore the perspectives of parents and teachers about the possible effects that violent media has on children 5 to 8 years old. Because aggression in primary age children has increased and executive and cognitive functions have decreased (Gentile, 2014) even though rating and parental controls are available, conducting a case study with a focus on teacher and parental perspectives and parental monitoring associated with violent video games can help to identify what contributes to this problem.

Longitudinal studies as well as survey designs are methods of data collection used to address the issue of violent media exposure in children. However, longitudinal studies are conducted over long periods of time and usually focus on one population. Survey designs help to answer the *what* questions, but do not lend to open-ended *why* questions. Case studies, on the other hand, investigate the *whys* and *hows* of an occurrence (Creswell, 2012). The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore perspectives of parents and teachers of children 5 to 8 years old regarding children's exposure to violent media in addition to parental monitoring practices in place. Although questionnaires were used in this study to gain information from parents about their perspectives involving violent media exposure, it is not possible to probe for clarification or elaboration without interviewing participants. Therefore, a case study was more

appropriate, as this design aligned with my research questions and the purpose of this study.

I also considered other methods. Although a case study does fall under the realm of ethnographies (Creswell, 2012), the goal of this study was to gain a deeper understanding into an issue, rather than a cultural perspective. A narrative research design was not appropriate, as this type of design explores individual stories describing the lives of people based on their experiences (Creswell, 2012). In addition, because the goal of the study was not to produce or discover a theory, a grounded theory design would not have been an appropriate method (Creswell, 2012). After examining each method, I selected a case study design, as it most closely aligned with the goals of the study.

Research Questions

A broad research question was addressed, describing the overall focus of the study, but I then broke down this research question into five subquestions, adding more specificity to the goal of the study. Although these questions are specific, they are still aligned with the broad research question (Lodico et al., 2010). The broad question driving this study is as follows:

What are the perspectives of parents and teachers regarding young children's (ages 5-8) exposure to violent media?

The subquestions included the following:

1. What do parents of children (ages 5-8) perceive as violent media?

2. What are the perspectives of parents about the possible effects of violent media exposure on their child?

3. How do parents monitor their child's access to violent media?

4. What do teachers who teach children (ages 5-8) perceive as violent media?

5. What are the perspectives of teachers about the possible effects of violent media exposure on children (ages 5-8)?

Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher is to be ethical throughout the research process. For my study, I asked participants about their home environment and parental monitoring strategies. Creswell (2012) stated that "this process requires a sufficient level of trust based on high level of participant disclosure" (p. 18). I implemented guidelines for ethical practices. I disclosed the purpose of the study and shared information with the participants. I also used ethical interview practices and was not deceptive with my information as well as maintained confidentiality (Creswell, 2012). I used the institutional review board (IRB) guidelines referring to ethical procedures and made sure those were followed. To ensure confidentiality of the participants after completing the parent and teacher interviews, I assigned participant numbers such as PI-1 (Parent Interviewee 1) and TK, TG1, and TG2 to ensure confidentiality as a I reported the data. Many of the participants who were involved in the study may have known me personally from working in the local area; however, I had no supervisory role nor am I currently working in the school system. Prior to each interview, I explained to the participants my role as a researcher, which included how I am removed from any direct and indirect influence with their child or themselves. Even though a familiarity may have existed, efforts were made to ensure interactions were normal, professional, and nonthreatening

so that the participants felt comfortable in my presence (Creswell, 2012). I conducted

face-to-face and telephonic semistructured interviews that resembled more of a natural

conversation rather than a formal interview. I wanted to develop trust and security with

my participants.

Context

A rural area on the East Coast was used as the site for this study. The participants

were chosen from this area that contained over 600 elementary age children pre-K

through fifth grade. From this area of 600 elementary age children, only 150 children

were 5 to 8 years old in the grade levels kindergarten through second, which met the

criteria for this study. Only parents and teachers of those children who met the criteria

were eligible to participate. This area was a small blue-collar area that began as a farming

settlement. The ethnic make-up of the town was mainly White with less than 2% of

African American, Asian, and other races.

Methodology

Participant Access and Selection

In this study, I explored the perspectives of parents and teachers of children 5 to 8

years old and their views of violence contained in video games, access that children may

have to this, and any monitoring provided. Participants of this study included parents and

teachers within this rural area who have or who work with age 5-8 years old children. My

first contact with participants, once approval was granted from Walden's IRB (IRB

Approval No. 12-13-17-0379589) was through email. I contacted by email approximately

10 parents, who had children 5-8 years old, who I personally knew from the small rural

area. The snowball strategy for recruiting participants was used to identify individuals based on their qualifications in relation to the research questions being asked (Lodico et al., 2010). As a part of the snowballing process, from the 10 parents I initially contacted, I asked each of them for approximately five more parents' names and email addresses who may meet the criteria for the study. I continued this process until I reached my target population. There were 51 questionnaires distributed from the snowball sampling method. This strategy was used specifically with parents for the completion of the questionnaires. The procedure was repeated until the required number of participants was recruited for the study. It was hoped that the return rate for the questionnaires would be at least 40%, which was reached because 35 questionnaires were completed and returned. When determining sample size for a qualitative study there are no hard or fast rules, but saturation or redundancy should be considered (Patton, 2001). Patton recommended approximately five interviewees for a qualitative case study and a large and representative sample size for questionnaires to be used. For my study, I used 10 interviewees and targeted approximately 50-60 parents for completion of the questionnaires.

Following the completion and collection of the questionnaires I conducted face-to-face and telephonic interviews with selected parents. These interviews helped to garner more in-depth information to answer my research questions. To select which parents would be interviewed I printed hard copies of the completed questionnaires and sorted them into three piles based on which grade level the participant indicated their child was in, kindergarten through second grades. I randomly pulled two questionnaires from each

grade level pile and contacted those participants via the telephone to ask for their participation in face-to-face or telephonic semistructured interviews.

In addition to parent interviews I also conducted interviews with early childhood grade level teachers. In the small rural area in which my study was conducted there were only three elementary schools within five miles so in turn there were a limited number of kindergarten, first, and second grade teachers, I selected four to participate in the interviews. These teachers were purposefully selected, and I contacted them via telephone to ask for their participation in the interviews. This type of sampling was considered convenience sampling because as the researcher I selected teachers that were available to be studied (Creswell, 2012). In this process, potential participants were informed of the voluntary nature of this study and advised that they could withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences (National Science Foundation, 2017).

Instrumentation

Data Collection

I used three types of data collection: emailed questionnaires, parent interviews, and teacher interviews. First, I personally identified and contacted parents I knew that had children 5-8 years old. When I have found 10 parents that were willing to participate I emailed the questionnaire, letter of explanation, and consent form to them. I then asked this original group of participants to provide me with any names of people they knew that had children 5-8 years old as a part of the snowballing process. I continued this process until I got to my target sample size. According to Fusch and Ness to saturate the data the researcher should pick a sample size that has the best chance of reaching that goal. "Data

saturation is reached when there is enough information to replicate the study when the ability to obtain additional new information has been attained, and when further coding is no longer feasible" (Fusch & Ness, 2015, p. 1). As I received additional names and email addresses I emailed the questionnaires to those parents along with letter of explanation and consent form. I asked all participants who were completing questionnaires to email completed questionnaire back to me at a provided email address. By returning the completed questionnaire that was an indication of the parent giving consent for me to use the information they provided in my study. As I received responses I sorted the questionnaires by grade level of their children as indicated on the questionnaire. From these responses, I randomly selected six parents to be interviewed, two parents from to represent each grade level. All parents who were asked agreed, so I did not have to pull additional questionnaires from the piles.

Next, I personally called by telephone four teachers, representing grades kindergarten through second. All four teachers I called agreed so I did not have to call additional teachers. Once the target population was identified I arranged individual meetings in a public place of the participant's choosing to conduct the interviews. Those who are unable to meet for face-to-face interviews had the option for a telephone interview (Creswell, 2012). The face-to-face interviews were recorded on a password-protected iPad and then the transcription of those interviews was stored on my personal computer that is password protected and that I only have access to. During any telephone interview, I took handwritten notes, which I reviewed with the participant at the end of the conversation. I typed these handwritten notes into an electronic format and I saved

them in my password-protected personal computer. The hardcopies of the handwritten notes were kept in a locked file cabinet, in a locked office. I will have sole access to the locked file cabinet and locked office.

By collecting data from multiple sources, I was able to establish accurate conclusions, create convincing evidence, and corroborate the findings through triangulation. Triangulation of the data allowed me to identify themes. Triangulation refers to the collection and use of data from multiple sources and contributes to the validity of the research (Creswell, 2012). I used evidence to support an identified theme(s). This ensured the study was credible because the information draws on multiple sources of information. If additional information would have been necessary to answer the research questions, the participants would have been contacted for a follow up interview.

Member checking occurred after all interviews; I emailed each participant a typed transcript of his or her interview to review. This helped to create a report that was both accurate and credible (Creswell, 2012) and contributed to the triangulation process.

Questionnaires

I identified 10 individuals who had children 5-8 years old to start the snowball process as described above. I asked these 10 individuals to send me the contact information of those they identified who also meet the criteria for participation so that I could forward a copy of the questionnaire, consent form, and the letter of explanation to these individuals. The questionnaires consisted of 15 questionnaire questions (Appendix A). Questionnaire questions were developed to allow me to gather information to answer

the parent focused research questions. However, interview questions were used to uncover any information that was not fully addressed by the questionnaire responses. Interviews

I conducted both parent and teacher face-to-face interviews in a public yet private, quiet room that was free from distractions and at a time convenient for each participant. Those who were unable to meet for face-to-face interviews had the option for a telephone interview. This process was used because some of the participants were unable to come to a central location for an interview (Creswell, 2012). Interview questions that were used can be found in Appendices B &C.

I used an interview protocol that allowed me to remain focused, ensure the interviews remained similar, and provided a formal note-taking plan (Creswell, 2012). Interview questions were created that allowed for a different direction to be taken depending on the participant responses to the questions. During the interviews, I reintroduced the purpose of my study and reviewed the consent form with each participant. After receiving the participants' consent forms for the face-to-face interviews, I audiotaped, with participant permission, the interview using an iPad and took hand written notes. The interviews lasted approximately one hour. I used an interview guide, listened for answers, and recorded responses (Creswell, 2012). A similar procedure was followed for the telephonic interviews, but the process for obtaining consent forms and the recordings were different. Consent forms were obtained by having the participant email me a scanned and signed copy of their consent form. During these interviews in place of the audio recording I took handwritten notes, which I then typed

up, in electronic copies. The interview guide contained open-ended questions without response options. The use of open-ended questions gave the freedom to participants to answer in a way that reflected their own personal experience as researchers, while they can guide the direction, they must refrain from directly influencing their responses (Creswell, 2012). After the interviews were completed I transcribed my notes and then categorized the responses into themes.

After each face to face interview, the digital recording was uploaded to my home password protected computer. I transcribed each audiotaped interview and saved the electronic copy to my password-protected computer. The transcripts were sent to each participant electronically for review of reflection of plausibility or validity through a qualitative process called member checking. Member checking is a process that required me to ask the participants to check the data for accuracy or plausibility and to check if the interpretations and analysis were representative of the information shared (Creswell, 2012). Handwritten notes were typed and saved on my home computer's hard drive. The parent interviews focused on information not provided by the questionnaires to fully answer the research questions (Main question, 1, 2, and 3). The teachers' interviews were designed to seek teacher perspectives of violent media and the impact it has on the children 5-8 years old (Main question, 4, and 5).

After the interviews were completed, member checking occurred, and no follow-up interviews were needed for additional information or for clarification. Member checking is a process that required me to ask the participants to check the data for accuracy or plausibility and to check if the interpretations and analysis are representative

of the information shared (Creswell, 2012). All participants were provided an opportunity to ask any questions or provide comments and thanked for their involvement. Upon completion of my study I will provide all participants a typed information paper with a summary of results via email. Any participant that is interested in reading my full dissertation I will provide a link to ProQuest for them to download the document. To reach the early childhood community I will write an article for potential publication in a variety of professional journals such as: *Earlychildhood News* or *Young Children.*

Data Analysis

All data were organized and analyzed by hand. "The hand analysis of qualitative data means that researchers read the data, mark it by hand, and divide it into parts" (Creswell, 2012, p. 239). As I began to receive the questionnaires I sorted them by grade level of the child as indicated on the questionnaires. I conducted a preliminary exploratory analysis that consisted of exploring the data to obtain a general sense of the data. While exploring the data I took notes, thought how to organize the data, and considered whether I needed more data (Creswell, 2012). I created a matrix that was used to help organize the material and create a visual image of the information, such as a bar graph. I identified any trends or themes from the matrix as well. After getting a general sense for the data I coded descriptions and themes about the central phenomenon (Creswell, 2012). Though there are no set guidelines for coding data I followed general procedures that existed (Creswell, 2012). The objective of the coding process was to make sense out of text data, so I divided the text into segments labeled with codes and examined the segments to see if the codes overlapped or redundancy occurred. I broke

down the codes into broad themes.

Upon completion of the interviews I transcribed the participant's responses myself and then categorized the responses into themes. I was able to listen to the recordings of the face-to-face interviews on the iPad and pause the recordings as needed to transcribe the information. The process followed for the telephonic interviews which included the taking detailed handwritten notes and typing them in an electronically. I followed the transcription guidelines in accordance with Creswell (2012) to ensure I was being consistent across transcribing all interviews. I developed a matrix to help organize the information from the interviews. I used color-coding to mark parts of the transcription and divide the transcription into parts.

"Describing and developing themes from the data consists of answering the major research questions and forming an in-depth understanding of the central phenomenon through description and thematic development" (Creswell, 2012, p. 247). The idea was to reduce codes to develop themes within the data collected. The themes that emerged helped to form a major idea in the database, which became the core element in the qualitative data analysis. Different types of themes may emerge such as ordinary themes, unexpected themes, hard-to-classify themes, or major/minor themes. A layering analysis may be needed if there are interconnected levels of themes within the data (Creswell, 2012). Interconnecting themes refers to the process of identifying ideas within the research that supports a sequence of events (Creswell, 2012).

Qualitative research is interpretive research (Creswell, 2012). An interpretation of the research was conducted after all data were reviewed, organized, and analyzed.

Lessons learned were described and I formed a larger meaning about the phenomenon compared to past studies and other research.

Issues of Trustworthiness

During the process, I took the necessary steps to ensure the credibility of this study. All interviews were transcribed, which helped to preserve the integrity of the data. Member checking was used to ensure the interviewee's responses were interpreted accurately. A narrative discussion was used as a written passage to summarize in detail the findings from the interviews and questionnaire data (Creswell, 2012).

Confirmability and control of researcher bias was addressed by using triangulation of multiple data sources, participant review of the transcripts, and member checking (Lodico et al., 2010). Transferability, while limited because of the qualitative nature of this research, was enhanced through rich and thick descriptions provided by the participants by the interviews and the parent questionnaires. All procedures and processes were used to collect and interpret data and could be tracked through the use of detailed explanations that provided how the data were collected and analyzed to ensure dependability (Lodico et al., 2010).

Ethical Procedures

I acquired a certificate of completion from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) office of extramural research offered by Walden University. When the IRB at Walden University granted permission, I identified 10 individuals to start the snowball process as described above. This study was designed to minimize any risk to the participant.

The protection of human subjects participating in research was a high priority for

me. A cover letter describing the nature of the study, confidentially issues, ability to withdraw from the study at any time, along with my contact information was provided to each questionnaire recipient (Appendix A). All the personal information obtained was kept confidential and in secure location that only I have access to. No participant names were identified. I ensured that all information gathered from participants was gained confidentially and reassured all participants about their privacy.

A cover letter describing the nature of the study, confidentially issues, and ability to withdraw from the study at any time, along with my contact information was provided to each interview recipient (Appendices C &E). After all data are published and five years have elapsed, the paper copies of the questionnaires and interview notes will be shredded and destroyed, and all electronic data will be deleted from the password-protected computer along with any flash drives that contain data from the study.

Summary

This chapter included an explanation of the chosen qualitative design, with a rationale for the selection of a case study approach to explore parental and teacher perspectives of violent media and the possible effects violent media exposure could have on children. In addition, the chapter included an overview of the participant selection, ethical considerations, and the role of the researcher, data collection, data analysis, and ways to address trustworthiness.

In the following chapters results of the study are discussed as well as data collection procedures and analysis. Additionally, evidence of trustworthiness is

addressed, and limitations of the study are stated. Finally, interpretations of the findings were reviewed as well as recommendations made and conclusions drawn.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore perspectives of parents and teachers of children 5 to 8 years old regarding children's exposure to violent media in addition to parental monitoring practices in place. Due to the lack of research that exists on children 5 to 8 years old regarding violent media exposure and monitoring, an objective of this study was to fill the gap in research by exploring the perspectives of parents and teachers who have or work with children 5 to 8 years old. Additional insights were gained by asking participants several questions related to the following research question and subquestions:

What are the perspectives of parents and teachers regarding young children's (ages 5-8) exposure to violent media?

Subquestions included the following:

1. What do parents of children (ages 5-8) perceive as violent media?

2. What are the perspectives of parents about the possible effects of violent media exposure on their child?

3. How do parents monitor their child's access to violent media?

4. What do teachers who teach children (ages 5-8) perceive as violent media?

5. What are the perspectives of teachers about the possible effects of violent media exposure on children (ages 5-8)?

In this chapter, I cover the following topics: participant demographics relevant to the study and the details of data collection. In addition, the process of data analysis is presented, along with the results section that contains each research question, with

quotations from the interview transcripts and information gathered from the parent questionnaires. This chapter also includes strategies that I used in the study to establish and maintain reliability, validity, and credibility. Finally, I provide a summary of this chapter. In addition, the chapter included an overview of the participant selection, ethical considerations, and the role of the researcher, data collection, data analysis, and ways to address trustworthiness.

In Chapter 5, I present the results of the study as well as data collection procedures and analysis. Additionally, evidence of trustworthiness is addressed, and limitations of the study are stated. Finally, interpretations of the findings were reviewed as well as recommendations made and conclusions drawn.

Demographics

In this study, I explored the perspectives of parents and teachers of children, 5 to 8 years, on children's exposure to violent media and monitoring practices. I specifically chose participants who either worked with children 5 to 8 years old or who have their own children in that age range. I used the snowball strategy for recruiting participants by identifying individuals based on their qualifications in relation to the research questions being asked (Lodico et al., 2010). Obtaining participants for the interviews from multiple early childhood grade levels as well as from parents of children in those grade levels helped to ensure that the data reflected different perspectives (Creswell, 2012) and thus allowed for a more comprehensive picture of the central phenomenon. This type of sampling is considered convenience sampling because, as the researcher, I selected teachers and parents who were available to participate (Creswell, 2012). Table 1 gives a

breakdown of the individuals who participated in the semistructured interviews, which

included four teachers and six parents representing kindergarten through second grade

children who were between 5 and 8 years old.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Name	Grade level
Teacher Interviewee 1 –TK	Kindergarten
Teacher Interviewee 2 –TG1-1	1st
Teacher Interviewee 3 –TG1-2	1st
Teacher Interviewee 4 –TG2	2nd
Parent Interviewee 1 – PKI-1	Kindergarten
Parent Interviewee 2 – PKI-2	Kindergarten
Parent Interviewee 3 – PG1I-1	1st
Parent Interviewee 4 – PG1I-2	1st
Parent Interviewee 5 – PG2I-1	2nd
Parent Interviewee 6 – PG2I-2	2nd

Data Collection

By collecting data from multiple sources, I was able to arrive at accurate

conclusions, create convincing evidence, and corroborate the findings through

triangulation, which demonstrated that the themes intersected and thus helped validate the

findings (Creswell, 2012). This study was based on face-to-face semistructured

interviews of both teachers and parents as well as parent questionnaires. Most parents and teachers preferred to be interviewed over the telephone. Only one parent and one teacher agreed to a face-to-face interview. Interviews were conducted with four early childhood teachers and six parents, representing kindergarten through second grade. The parent questionnaires were e-mailed to parents with children 5 to 8 years old. I e-mailed 51 questionnaires to qualified parents and received 35 completed questionnaires in return. Of the 35 completed questionnaires, 10 were from kindergarten parents, 15 were from first grade parents, and 10 were from second grade parents.

Questionnaires

I used potential participant e-mail addresses (which I had in my personal files) to contact the first 10 parents and thus started the snowball process of obtaining more names and e-mail addresses. I sent invitations to participate (Appendix A) in the study for participants review. I asked the potential participants to forward any names and e-mail addresses of people they knew in the community who had children 5 to 8 years old. As I received more names and addresses, I forwarded the invitation to participate, the consent form, and the questionnaire. As the completed questionnaires were returned via e-mail, I put them in a digital folder and then printed each one. I sorted them by current grade level of the child, as indicated by the parent.

Interviews

I purposefully selected four early childhood teachers from grade levels kindergarten through second grade in the small rural area where I conducted my study. I made telephone contact to ask for participation in face-to-face semistructured interviews.

If they were unable to meet face-to-face, I offered to interview them over the telephone. Interview schedules were established based on convenient days and times for each participant.

Following the completion and collection of the parent questionnaires, I conducted face-to-face interviews and telephone interviews with selected parents. To select which parents were interviewed, I printed hard copies of the completed questionnaires and sorted them into three piles according to the grade level of the child, kindergarten through second grades. I randomly pulled two questionnaires from each grade level pile and contacted those participants by telephone to ask for their participation in face-to-face, semistructured interviews. If they were unable to meet face-to-face, I offered to interview them over the telephone. All participants who were offered the invitation to be interviewed consented, so I did not have to pull additional names. Interview schedules were established based on convenient days and times for each participant.

I conducted all interviews for parents and teachers in a place of their choosing, allowing for a quiet, distraction-free atmosphere. At the beginning of each interview, I engaged in a friendly conversation to ensure the participant felt comfortable in my presence. In addition, I reiterated the purpose of the study, significance of the interview, methods to ensure confidentiality, and the participant's ability to withdraw at any time (Creswell, 2012).

I transcribed all responses within two days of each interview and emailed the transcriptions to each interviewee for their review and confirmation or correction for accuracy. Individual transcriptions were kept in a single digital file folder on a personal

computer, which was password protected. Using member checking, I ensured that I
interpreted the interviewee's responses accurately (Creswell, 2012). All participants
confirmed the information for accuracy and no one modified any information. Upon
receiving the member checking information from all participants, I then sent an email
back to all participants to thank them for participating in the study.

Variations in Data Collection

There was no variation in data collection from the plan that I presented in Chapter
3. The only unusual circumstance I encountered that was contrary to my expectation was
that many of the interviewees wanted to conduct their interview over the telephone rather
than in person. Several stated illnesses that prevented them from meeting in person or
busy family schedules.

<div align="center">

Data Analysis

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As I collected data, I organized each source into a password-protected computer
file, as well as printed each source to allow for tallies to be made and notes recorded
about themes. The printed documents were kept in a locked file cabinet. I conducted a
preliminary analysis, reflecting on the broad research question and the five subquestions
to gain a general sense of the data. In addition, I reviewed each source several times,
continuing to write comments in the margins of the data sources. This preliminary
analysis provided me an opportunity to get an overall sense of the information and
allowed me to develop initial themes for further analysis.

After getting a general sense for the data, I coded, by hand, descriptions and
themes about the central phenomenon (Creswell, 2012). Though there are no set

guidelines for coding data, I followed general procedures that exist (Creswell, 2012). The objective of the coding process was to make sense out of text data, so I divided the text into segments labeled with codes and examined the segments to see if codes overlapped or redundancy occurred. I broke these codes into categories and then found themes. I used color-coding to mark parts of the transcriptions from the interviews and divided the transcription into parts. I created two bar graphs to show two strong themes from the questionnaire data (figures 1 and 2). These themes are discussed in the next section under the data for research question 1.

The codes I used to label the text data consisted of the letters T= Technology, V=Violence, C=Connections, E=Exposure, S=Safety, and A=Additional Comments. After coding the data, I then made categories for each code by looking for key words in the transcriptions. For example, under E, I made categories about impact and actions parents and teachers see in the children after engaging with violent media. After the categories were established I looked for big themes and common threads in the data. Some themes that emerged were that parents know it is extremely important to monitor children's media use, especially violent media; however, many of the parents indicated that they don't always check ratings, reviews, or titles of the games their child plays. Another theme was that parents in kindergarten allow their children more time with violent recreational media than parents of first and second grade children.

An essential part of assuring validity is looking for and attempting to understand data that may be contradictory to interpretations supported by the theoretical foundation of the study. Such findings are referred to as discrepant data and must be reported.

Considering Bronfenbrenner's framework of the linkage within the child's mesosystem, I looked for but was not able to identify any discrepant data.

Study Results

Data for Research Question 1

Research Question 1 was as follows: What are the perspectives of parents and teachers regarding young children's (ages 5- 8) exposure to violent media? Interview questions from parents and teachers, as well as answers from the parent questionnaire, yielded data to answer this question.

Engaging with technology. I first looked at what types of technology children were personally engaged with in the home and school environments. I found consistent responses from the participants stating that they all engage with some type of technology daily. Most children engage with three to four types of technology. The most frequent answer given was that parents and teachers observed children using desktop computers daily. A common theme from the four teachers was that they all use a SMART Board in their classroom daily and also take their students to a computer lab at least once a week. As for the parents, all of them explained that their children use a smartphone every day for at least one hour and five out of six parents said their children use a tablet at least 30 minutes a day. All participants involved indicated that access to technology is a normal part of the children's day at home and at school. While this doesn't answer the question as to whether or not they had exposure to violence, it does confirm that children are engaged with technology daily.

To answer the question of whether or not children are exposed to violence as they

use technology a parent of a 1st grader stated,

> It seems that exposure to violent media for young children is being widely
> accepted. Even if you try to monitor at home they are still exposed through
> friends and other outlets. There is no way you can say kids are not
> influenced by it. It is disturbing all the way around.

According to the parent questionnaires most children in grade levels K-2 spent at least 1-5 hours with recreational media each week. With kindergarten students spending up to 10 hours a week with recreational media. As the grade levels increase the amount of time spent with violent media decreases. Specifically, 70% of kindergarteners, 40% of 1st graders, and 20% of 2nd grade students spend 1-5 hours per week with media that includes violence. In addition, parents don't always stop their child from playing violent video games. Precisely 60% of kindergarten parents allow their child to play violent video games, 40% of first grade parents, and 20% of second grade parents. The takeaway here is that the younger children are exposed to more violent video games than older children.

PG2I-2 had a clear perspective on the effects of violent media exposure on her child:

> After seeing the immediate negative impact playing a violent video game
> had on my son he was only allowed to play it once a month for almost 4
> years until he turned 8 years old. Now to in order to earn time on any
> electronic device he must read a book first. Thirty minutes of reading

earns 30 minutes of device time. In society, it seems there is such a social acceptance about electronic media for young children ().

Perspectives of parents and teachers. When asked what they would like to add to the conversation about the topic of violent media exposure for young children, the common thread from parents and teachers was that parents need to be more informed and more involved. One parent had a lot to add and stated the following:

Parents need to be more informed. It is extremely easy to give a tablet or video game to a child in order to get something done. When my own son was 4 years old pressure was felt to buy a game system for him.

In addition, PGK-2 stated,

Technology today is far advanced from recent generations. These games are almost like being there in real life. I personally do not think children are educated by their parents about the difference between real life and video games. Even with the advancement of virtual reality, these two worlds are coming together. Children need to be monitored more than ever, and should not be bought another game, just to keep them occupied. Parents are becoming lazy!

Other parents expressed that violent video games have twisted and mature ideas that are not for young children and that it seems that society as a whole is becoming more violent.

Data for Research Subquestion 1

Research Subquestion 1 was, What do parents of children ages 5-8 perceive as violent media? Interview questions from the parents as well as answers from the parent questionnaire yielded data to answer this question.

Definition of violence. When reviewing the parent responses to how they distinguish if something is violent or not, it was apparent that they all felt that if there was shooting, fighting, blood, strong language, use of weapons, or war games, then the game was violent. PG2I-2 expressed that they look at the rating of the game first to determine if there is violent content within the game. PG1I-2 said that violence in a game is heightened if it is a human hurting or injuring another human. They felt that when a human is involved it is more violent than if it were a monster or another type of character.

Types of games. There was an overwhelming consensus among parents in all three-grade levels represented in the study when it came to which types/rated games they allowed their child to play. The consensus was "E-Everyone" rated games. There were a few outliers in each grade level group. One parent in kindergarten allowed their child to play "T-teen" rated games, one first grade parent allowed their child to play "T-teen" rated games and five first grade parents allowed their children to play "E-10" rated games for children 10 years old or older. In second grade, three outliers were represented in that one parent allowed their child to play "T-teen" rated games, one parent allowed their child to play "E-10" rated games, and one parent allowed their child to play "M-Mature" rated games.

The knowledge of the rating system, the consistencies in how they defined violence in technology, and selection by all of the E category suggested that there is an understanding of common characteristics of violent media. However, the "outliers" at each grade level indicated flexibility of the boundaries with their own children suggesting that violent content is not always avoided or clear cut. One parent noted,

> We can control the use of video games, and this is one variable we have control over. I'm not sure where the problem starts and ends. Knowing what we know about kids, we know they are invested in gaming. I find it disturbing that some first graders went to see the movie *American Sniper.*

Data for Research Subquestion 2

Research Subquestion 2 was, What are the perspectives of parents about the possible effects of violent media exposure on their child? Interview questions from the parents as well as answers from the parent questionnaire yielded data to answer this question.

Parents seemed to feel that there could be possible effects from their child being exposed to violent media. Though some parents felt the effects could be different for each child, they all indicated the common themes that exposure could lead to violent acts, language, or negative physical reactions. For example, TG1-1 stated,

> At a time where their young minds are so impressionable we are allowing them to be molded by violent acts. These young children are not emotionally or mentally mature enough to process the images they are

seeing. Whose job is it to protect the kids? I wonder do people want their

kids protected? Parents all define violence differently.

Their specific statements and stories supported the agreement about impact and all

parents.

Exposure and influence. One theme that emerged from the various responses of

the parents was that there is a connection between when a child views something violent

and how they may act. Three of the six parents that were interviewed said that they

believe the connection can vary depending on the child and how much the child's parents

talk to them about the media with which they are engaging. One parent stated, "There is a

huge connection, the content is more competitive and there is mainly fighting in many of

the games."

In addition, PG1I-1 stated, "There is an extremely high connection. When my

own child co-played a wrestling game with his father he immediately started making the

wrestling moves on his brother." Similarly, another parent indicated, "For children with

no monitoring or intervention it is highly likely they will act out what they see" (PKI-1).

Furthermore, parents expressed that the impact that exposure to violent media may carry

over to school and hurting others. As one parent stated, "No child should be exposed to

any kind of violence towards other people; it could cause nightmares or even jade their

sense of reality" (PKI-2). Similarly, another parent said,

The reality for them is they may not interact with people well and only

live in a virtual world. They may have trouble connecting to real world. It

is a 'walking reality' for many kids. They may only able to talk about adventures in the game world (PG1I-2).

One second grade parent discussed an actual physical reaction her son had after playing:

My son turned beat red in the face after playing a video game for only 30 minutes. He had an instant reaction to the excitement of the game and directly after had a difficult time completing independent activities. He became impatient, angry, and snippy directly after playing the video game, it was like he was a different kid. The focus of any conversation he had after playing the game was about the content of the game (PG2I-2).

Devices and use. It was the same across all three grade levels that every household has some type of technology device that their child has access to, with many having multiple types. Tablets were the most popular choice in all three grade levels represented. Some parents indicated that in addition to the types of devices listed on the questionnaire, they also have TVs, CD players, Echoes and Echo dots in their home with which their child engages. See Figure 1 for the number of hours students in each grade level spend with recreational media in an average week. It is important to note that one child in first grade does not engage with any recreational media. The bar graphs below represent the amount of the recreational media children 5–8-years old engage with and how much of that use that includes violence. The general finding was that, as the child's age increases, the violent media exposure decreases. It seems that kindergarten children are engaging in more violent media use than first or second grade children. Figure 1

outlines how much recreational media use children ages 5-8 have per week.

Figure 1

Recreational Media Use
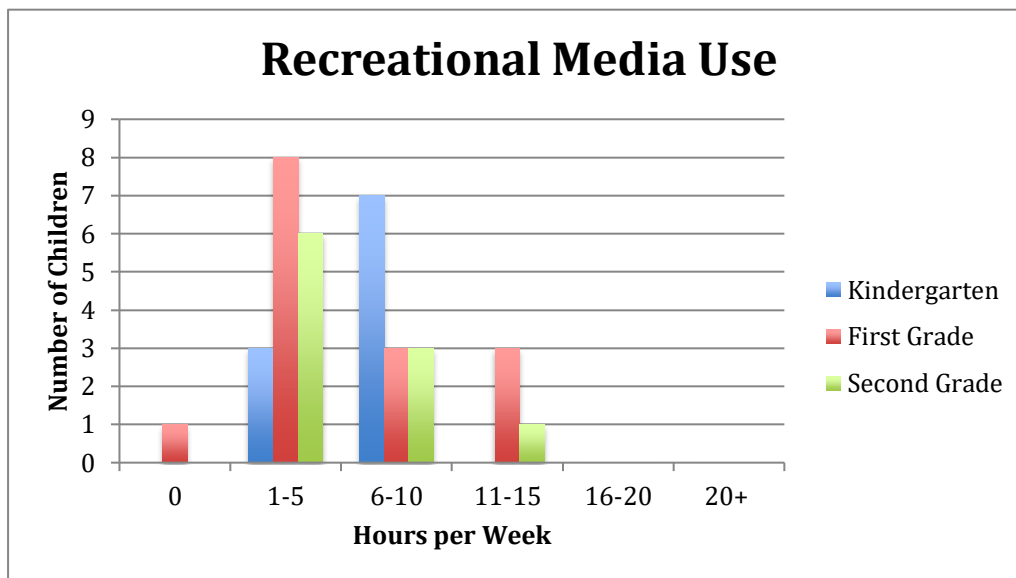
Note. How much time children spend engaged with recreational media each week is shown. The grade levels that are represented are kindergarten, first, and second grades.

Figure 2

Recreational Media Use Including Violence

Recreational Media Use Including Violence
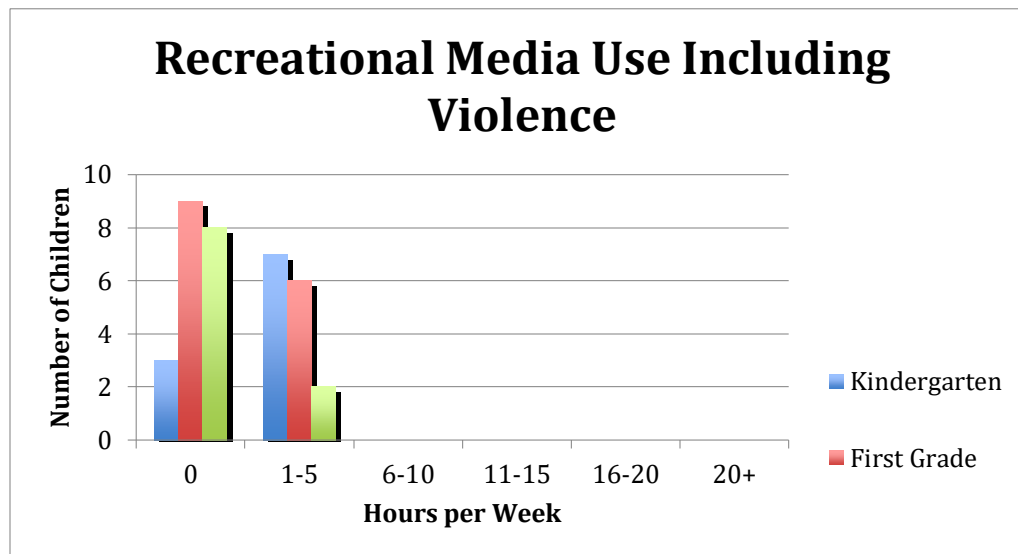
Note. How much recreational media that includes violence that is consumed each week by children in kindergarten, first, and second grades is shown. Kindergarten students spent more time with media that included violence than the other grade levels of children.

Risk. A theme that emerged from all grade levels of parents represented in the study regarding the risk of exposure to violent video games. About half of the parents felt there was a high risk of the violent video game having a negative impact on their child. The other half of the parents felt there was no risk or minimal risk involved. One first grade parent and two second grade parents felt there would be an extremely high risk.

Hidden curriculum. All six parents that were interviewed said they did feel that there is a "hidden curriculum (message)" for children in the media and this directly affected the children. Two of the parents, however, felt it was not hidden at all, but quite clear and intentional. They stated:

It seems the message is to add violence and humor about violence. It seems like it is presented directly. There are also a lot of winner vs. loser messages. My own son after playing says if he isn't first in a game then he is the loser (PKI-1).

"The message seems intentional. It seems like the messages are meant to shock children. The bar of appropriateness becomes lower all the time. The messages seem more violent, more inappropriate, and more "adult" than ever" (PG2I-1). Additionally, PG1I-1 said, "Yes, violence is okay and glorified."

Marketing was another impact, surfaced by the parents, which the media has on children, as messages to buy certain things were embedded within various programs. The purchasing power of children is in the billions of dollars (Linn, 2004). PKI-2 stated, "Any hidden message for children as far as media would be an advertisement. It is always about the latest and greatest new item out that every kid *must* have because all other kids have one." Dr. Linn said it best:

> Most parents struggle in one way or another to keep corporate culture at
>
> bay. The most common complaints about marketing to children center on
>
> specific products such as violent media, alcohol, tobacco, and most
>
> recently, junk food. Of equal concern are the sheer volume of advertising
>
> to which children are exposed, the values embedded in the marketing
>
> messages, and the behaviors those messages inspire (Linn, 2004, p. 4).

Parents felt that the impact the messages had on their children whether intentional or hidden were all the same. They expressed that the message that violence was acceptable and glorified, almost encouraged was disturbing to them in many ways. One parent

discussed how she wished the messages would focus more on character education concepts such as making friends instead of making enemies through the use of violence.

Data for Research Subquestion 3

Research Subquestion 3 was: How do parents monitor their child's access to violent media? Interview questions from the parents as well as answers from the parent questionnaire yielded data to answer this question.

Perspectives on monitoring. All parents reported that their child plays video games; some indicated educational games are played more often than recreational games. When parents answered the questions about how often they check ratings and titles of their child's video games, there was an obvious correlation. If the parent checked the rating, they also read title of the game. First and second grade parents checked the ratings and titles more frequently with the majority of the parents choosing "Always" for how frequently they checked. In second grade 60% of the parents checked both the ratings and the title and in first grade 73% of the parents checked both. Only 40% of the kindergarten parents said they "Always" check the ratings and the titles of the game their children play. When asked how often they read reviews about the games their children play, only 20% of kindergarten parents chose "Frequently" or "Always" while 60% of first grade parents and 40% of second grade parents chose to read reviews frequently or always. When asked if they would stop their child from playing a violent video game, the answer of "Always" was given by 40% of kindergarten parents, 60% of first grade parents, and 80% of second grade parents. When thinking about how important it is to be a part of the choosing of the media their children engage with as well as monitoring their media use,

there was an overwhelming majority across all three grade levels of parents that they felt it was very important or extremely important to do both. Considering all the answers to the questions on the parent questionnaire, it seems that parents know it is important to have an active role in their child's media use, however they don't always check ratings, titles, reviews, or stop their child from playing violent video games.

When parents in all three grade levels were given the different types of monitoring choices: Active Mediation, Restrictive Mediation (Amount of Playing Time), Restrictive Mediation (Content of the Game), Co-Viewing, or Co-Playing, the one chosen most often was Restrictive Mediation (Content of the Game). First and second grade parents chose Restrictive Mediation (Amount of Playing Time) as their second choice for type of monitoring they use most often. In kindergarten, the second choice was Co-Viewing. It seems more kindergarten parents' watch as their child play the video game as compared to first and second grade parents. When asked the question, "Do you feel that selling video games should be guided by the age of the player?" 100% of the parents in all grade levels said, "Yes!" Two parents said they set timers for their children when they are playing video games, so they know when to stop playing. One parent stated: I always use active mediation when monitoring my child's video game use. My husband or myself always play the video game first before our child plays it to make sure it is appropriate. (PGI1-1) Additionally PKI-1 said "I am constantly monitoring my child's video game use and if they are engaging with technology, then there is always a parent present in the room or in the car."

Parents also expressed the importance of having a monitored environment in their home and that producers of the video games will not stop making them, so it is up to parents and teachers to monitor. Teachers were also quick to express the importance of monitoring, one teacher said that, "Young children shouldn't be left alone with technology" (TK).

Setting rules and guidelines. Most parents in all grade levels felt it was either very important or extremely important to set rules or guidelines for video game use in their home. Specifically, 70% of kindergarten parents, 80% of first grade parents and 90% of second grade parents felt this way. When asked how important they felt talking with their child about their media use and video games they play, most parents felt it was very important or extremely important. In kindergarten 100% of the parents felt this way, first grade 87% of parents, and 90% in second grade. It seemed like there was a direct correlation between the importance of setting rules and guidelines and talking to their children about media use.

Game choices. The theme that emerged among parents was that they all monitor their child's video game use in some way. They also all have criteria they look for when purchasing or downloading a game. All of them indicated they look for "age appropriateness" when selecting a game for their child to play. Three of the six parents said they look for free games to download for their child. In addition, they also look at ratings, educational purpose in the games, familiar titles, and game families such as "Mario Brothers". One parent stated, "If it interests them and is around their intelligence level and can educate them in spelling or mathematics, I will allow them to have the

game. I also look for games that are fun for the sake of being fun" (PKI-2). Additionally, PKI-1 stated, "I look for free games first and only purchase subscriptions to games if they have an educational purpose and will be played for a long time." Similarly, another parent indicated that they look for free games that require a parent password to be downloaded. They check the content of the game as soon as it is downloaded to make sure it is appropriate before their child plays it. (PG2I-2)

Data for Research Subquestion 4

Research Subquestion 4 was: What do teachers that teach children (ages 5-8) perceive as violent media? Interview questions from the teachers yielded data to answer this question.

Defining violence. There were many common themes among teachers about what defines media violence. The common themes were that something is violent if there are violent actions such as fighting or using weapons, violent language, if there are humans hurting or killing other humans, and if there is blood. One teacher stated, "Something is violent if there are aggressive acts, fighting, weapons, crime, inappropriate images, and bullying." (TK) Similarly, another teacher said,

Something is violent if it contains shooting, simulation of cops and

robbers, getting bad guys, war games including tanks and airplanes,

demolishing a city, beating another team, shooting zombies, or if the goal

is to kill something to end the game or survive all the violence to win

(TG1-1).

The teachers also mentioned specific video games, a television show, and a movie that they have heard their student's talk about playing at home. The video games include *Grand Theft Auto*, *Call of Duty*, and *Halo*. These games are also all sold in series so there are several variations of each game that contain different levels to conquer in different environments. All these games carry a mature rating and are not intended for children 5-8 years old.

Grand Theft Auto is a very controversial game that several lawsuits have been filed over due to the violent and illegal actions the game portrays that people have carried out in real life. The game is an action adventure video game set in large cities where the characters attempt to rise through the ranks of the criminal underworld. The characters in the game earn rewards by running people over with cars, shooting police officers and military personnel, dealing drugs, drinking and driving, engaging in interactive sex scenes, and engaging in gang wars. The game glamorizes violence, corrupt actions, and real-life crimes. Many groups, including Mothers Against Drunk Driving have lobbied for the Entertainment Software Rating Board to change the rating on the game from "M" for mature to "AO" for adults only.

Call of Duty is a first-person shooter video game that simulates the infantry and combined arms warfare. The game contains extreme violence, which includes: executions, torture scenes, knife attacks, severed limbs, shooting, explosions, and lots of bloodshed. In addition, there are sexual slurs used and sex, drugs, drinking, and smoking portrayed. In a parallel comparison is the game *Halo* is also a first-person shooter game that focuses on military science fiction. In the game, many of the characters are aliens,

but they commit violent acts against one another. They use super weapons to fight each other and shoot until they see blood and the other character dies. They also violently beat their opponents to death. Gunplay and weaponry are glorified in the game as well as sexualization of the characters.

The television show that was referenced by teachers that they heard their young students talk about was *The Walking Dead*. In the show there is frequent shooting, slashing, impaling, extreme weapon use such as machine guns, dismembering of limbs and organs, and running over people with vehicles. The show is very bloody and gory and often includes sexual situations, even rape is depicted in one episode. The show carries a rating of TV-14, which means it is meant for children 14 and older.

The movie *American Sniper* that is rated R for ages 17 and up depicts a character that is a sniper in the armed forces and has the most kills on record. Throughout the movie there is very intense violence that includes shooting, blood, mangled bodies, and explosions as well as heavy drinking, and extremely strong language.

Teachers all felt that these games, TV show, and movies were not appropriate for children 5-8 years old. All these forms of media involved elements that teachers described as violent. Teachers discussed that what they perceive as violence included the use of weapons, bloodshed, fighting, strong language, or killing all of which are depicted in these examples of violent media. In addition to the teachers' perspectives of violent media, teachers also discussed how they use non-violent video games in their classroom. They talked about technology devices that are available in their classroom, how they monitor children's use, and what rules and guidelines are set for children.

Reviews and safety. The responses of the teachers to the interview question about whether or not they use video games to reach curriculum goals were consistent with all of them stating they do use them. Two of the teachers use the website abcya.com, which includes educational video games that are actually certified through the kidSAFE Seal Program. The kidSafe Seal Program ensures safety for children and reassures teachers and parents they are having their children visit safe websites and virtual worlds. The program provides a safety certification service and provides a list of safe websites, apps, and other technologies that are appropriate for children. Other websites that include educational video games, that the teachers referenced in their responses, were pbskids.org, starfall.com, and mobymax.com. They also explained that all of these websites contain games that reinforce math or ELA skills tied to either state or national standards. They use digital media to support curriculum and in many cases teachers evaluate media based upon educational value, recommendations of other teachers, and quality through educational technology accolades. For example the mobymax website that the teacher discusses below is educationally based and contains no violent media. The website has won thirteen awards for helping students learn. Two notable awards are the 2017 CODiE Award for *Best PreK/Early Childhood Learning Solution* and the 2018 *Teacher's Choice Award for the Classroom*. One teacher stated:

I use mobymax.com because it uses dual-purpose lessons and assessments to find gaps in students learning and reteaches the needed skills. They can earn extra game time and avatar characters that they can personalize by dressing them up. The kids love the game (TG2)!

Only one out of four teachers said they read reviews about video games or stay current about electronic media. The one teacher who does read reviews and stays current had the following to say, "I read parent reviews that I find on different websites by using a Google search or listening to other parents or teachers talk about the video games their kids play or use" (TG2). Regarding how much these teachers think any teacher should play a role in talking about safe media use, three out of four of them felt it was the teacher's role to inform students. The three teachers responded: "Anytime technology is used the rules and directions are reviewed and reminders of the rules are frequent so that technology time is not taken away for misuse" (TK). It seems it is now the teacher's job to teach media safety as well as morals and manners. "I teach students to never give out personal information, no last name on the Internet, I encourage them to make up a fake one. I teach them not to use profile pictures of themselves instead use a cartoon picture. There are 'bad' people out there" (TK2). "In the classroom, we talk about personal information and what is 'classified information.' I want to make sure the students understand that their parents should know when they are on a device and know what they are playing" (TG1-1).

The one teacher who felt differently and indicated that they did not feel it was the teacher's role to talk about safe media use stated the following, "The librarian usually talks to the kids about Internet safety. I have had no problems in my class this year and if I did I would handle it on a case by case basis" (TG1-2).

Rules and guidelines. Another theme that emerged pertained to rules and guidelines that are in place in teacher's classrooms about media use. The theme was that

children must be supervised by a teacher at all times when engaging with any electronic media. The teachers were also in agreement that children must stay on the preselected website or game their teacher assigns them to be on and cannot go "exploring" to other websites or games. One teacher stated:

> If they accidently click on a pop-up ad they must raise their hand for an adult to come over to their device and get them back to the preselected site or game. They use technology for skill building. They can't go to websites they play on at home. Kindergarten students get one warning if they go to a site or game they are not supposed to and if a second offense happens they lose their technology time. (TK)

The following were responses from the teachers about why these rules and guidelines are important. "The rules and guidelines are important to keep them focused on a task and to not stray and play other video games, especially when in the computer lab" (TG1-1). Similarly, another teacher said that, "I have heard other teachers say too many times that they thought the site they provided for students was a safe or an appropriate one but, somehow the students go to the wrong site with inappropriate content" (TG2). Additionally, TK stated, "It is important because we use technology and we have to show we are using it for educational purposes. The technology with which students are learning must be tied to common core standards."

In regard to whether the school requires the teachers to have rules and guidelines, the consensus was yes. All four teachers reported that the school has an acceptable use policy that must be signed by students, teachers, and parents at the beginning of the

school year. This policy explains the rules and guidelines set forth by the school and school district about media use. Every time a student or teacher logs onto a device at school, they must click "Yes, I acknowledge the policy" button. Teachers can set additional rules and guidelines for their own classrooms.

In addition, all four teachers said that the students never have open access to devices and that the teacher guides all interactions with any technology device. The teachers also explained that all devices contain filtering controls that are set by the board of education. One teacher added, "Each desktop computer in the computer lab has an icon shortcut on the home screen for students to follow to a preapproved site" (TG1-2).

Data for Research Subquestion 5

Research Subquestion 5 was, What are the perspectives of teachers about the possible effects of violent media exposure on children (ages 5-8)? Interview questions from the teachers yielded data to answer this question.

When asked about the possible effects of violent media, there seemed to be an agreement among all teachers who were interviewed. All four teachers stated that they see role-playing from their students, especially on the playground and at centers in kindergarten. The role-playing that they see is often children imitating what they saw in a violent video game. One teacher stated, "Students pretend to have weapons in their hands and use them against each other and also call each other inappropriate names" (TK). Another teacher added, "My students' actions manifest into anger, aggression, no patience, and short fuses" (TG2). Two other teachers talked about how desensitized their

students seem to violent actions and how they seem to accept violent actions as "normal" and how these same students seem to have lost their innocence.

Actions of children. The impact exposure of violent video games has on children as well as what teachers hear young children talking about and acting out at school was addressed in the interviews with the four teachers. Two themes that emerged were that all the teachers felt exposure to violent video games could lead to violent role playing at school and they also hear students talk about mature rated video games that they play at home. Three different teachers made statements about the same mature rated game, *Call of Duty*. "Boys, more than girls, talk about the game *Call of Duty* they pretend play and role-play with weapons. More incidents recently linked to the pretend play of this game have had to be reported to administration" (TK). "I have seen student role-playing from the *Call of Duty* video game and acting out shooting each other and pretending to do karate moves on each other" (TG1-2). "I am shocked about the types of games second grade students are discussing such as *GTA (Grand Theft Auto)* and *Call of Duty* both which carry a mature rating. The TV show that is talked about often by second grade students is *The Walking Dead* also not intended for young children" (TG2).

In addition, TK referenced hearing children talk about the different weapons they use in the games and TG1-1 heard children say, "oh it's only a game", "I'm only killing zombies", "these are not real people", "this is cool and fun" in reference to the violent video games they are playing. Furthermore, one teacher expressed concern about the obsession some of the first-grade students have with gangs and being gangsters. The teacher stated,

I have recently heard kids make up little songs that go along with the

violent games about being gangsters. The game that students talk about

often in first grade *is GTA (Grand Theft Auto)*, which carries a mature

rating. When first graders say it's cool and that they want to be a gangster,

it only fosters the cycle that is rising in our community even further. Kids

are inspiring to have a gangster lifestyle. (TG1-1)

Another teacher supported this statement by referencing *GTA (Grand Theft Auto).* This

school year especially because of games like *GTA (Grand Theft Auto)* and *Halo* I see the

students are role-playing more, specifically characters from these mature rated games.

(TG1-2) A consensus amongst the four teachers about the impact exposure to violent

video games has on children was that the exposure could cause the children to act

violently. The teachers also felt it could desensitize children over time. One teacher

stated,

You would see a lot more impact with younger children. There could be

an emotional impact that would produce mood swings. For example, some

children come to centers happy, then a conflict arises and they use

aggression towards others. Some students live in fear depending on

something that might have happened in their unsettled home environment.

(TK)

During my data retrieval through the use parent questionnaires as well as parent

and teacher interviews, I was able to ensure credibility, transferability, dependability, and

confirmability. All these then led to the parents and teachers trusting me and trusting the

confidentiality of their responses. Through each step of the process, participants were assured that their participation was voluntary, they could decide to exit the study early without consequences and that anything they shared would be used professionally as a part of my study.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

To ensure the credibility of the study, I audiotaped and transcribed the interviews, which helped preserve the integrity of the data (Lodico et al., 2010). Prior to coding the data, respondents participated in member checking, ensuring I interpreted the responses accurately (Creswell, 2012). During preliminary analysis, I wrote general comments and notes in the margins of the data sources to begin to get a general sense of the data and look for themes (Lodico et al., 2010). Furthermore, I analyzed each data source and, as themes emerged from one source, evidence from the other sources was triangulated to substantiate the findings (Creswell, 2012).

Transferability

Although generalization of the findings to other settings was not a goal of this study, I took steps so that transferability might be possible. Selected participants included parents and teachers that represented a range of grade levels to ensure a more comprehensive picture of the central phenomenon. In addition, I described both parent and teacher perspectives and provided detailed information as well as direct quotations to support the findings. These detailed descriptions allow the reader to determine whether the findings can be transferred to other settings (Lodico et al., 2010; Creswell, 2012).

Dependability

Along with concentrated descriptions of the context and findings of the study, I included meticulous descriptions of data collection and analysis. A high-quality taping device was used for the face-to-face interviews, which were transcribed with pauses and overlaps in responses (Creswell, 2012). During the phone interviews, copious notes were taken and transcribed. All data sources have been stored in a password-protected file, organized for easy retrieval by me (Creswell, 2012). Finally, I collected data from multiple sources and triangulated the information to corroborate the findings, increasing the dependability of the study.

Confirmability

Due to being a former early childhood teacher, it was inescapable that my personal experiences caused potential bias to result. However, by documenting reflective notes, I was able to examine my personal thoughts (Creswell, 2012) and report them honestly within my study. In addition, throughout the study, I recognized my personal background and experiences that might inform the interpretations of the findings (Creswell, 2012). In my exit strategy to the study I will provide all participants a typed information paper with a summary of results via email. Any participant that is interested in reading my full dissertation I will provide a link to ProQuest for them to download the document. To reach the early childhood community I will write an article for potential publication in a variety of early childhood magazines such as: *Early Childhood News*, an online resource for teachers and parents of children birth through 8 years, or *Young Children,* the NAEYC journal.

Summary

In Chapter 4, I described the findings of a qualitative case study related to parents and teachers' perspectives of children's access to violent media. This chapter also contained information on the participant demographics, data collection, data analysis, and evidence of quality for the study. One broad research question as well as five subquestions were developed and answered using parent questionnaires, parent interviews, and teacher interviews.

The broad research question for this study involved the perspectives of parents and teachers regarding young children's (ages 5-8) exposure to violent media. Responses from participants were consistent about engaging with technology; they all do daily. The foci to answer this question were centered on how parents and teachers engage with technology and what their perspectives are about young children's exposure to violent media. Parents and teachers felt there is a connection between when a child views something violent and how they may act. The common addition from both parents and teachers was that parents need to be more informed and more involved in their child's media use.

The first subquestion for this study involved what parents perceive as violent media for children 5-8 years old. For this question, parents explained what distinguishes if something is violent or not as well as what media violence looks like to them. Parents defined violence to include if there were violent actions, violent language, fighting, or use of weapons. In addition to their definitions, parents also addressed the types of video games with which they allow their child to engage. All parents indicated that their child

engages with video games and most parents check the title and rating on the games frequently or always.

The second subquestion for this study involved the perspectives of parents about the possible effects of violent media exposure on their child. The themes that surfaced were risk, exposure and impact, devices and use, as well as hidden curriculum (message). Regarding risk, half of the parents felt that there was a high risk involved with their child playing violent video games, while the other half of the parents felt there was no risk or a minimal risk involved. When reflecting on whether there is a hidden curriculum or message in the media for children, all parents felt there were and two of them felt it was not hidden. Those two parents said they thought the message was clear and intentional in most cases. All households have some type of technology device that their child has access to, many have multiple types. All but one child in first grade engaged with some type of recreational media on a weekly basis. Looking at the data on hours spent engaged with media each week and how much of it was violent, the general finding was that as the child's age increases the violent media exposure decreases. It seems that kindergarten age children are engaging in more violent media use than first or second grade age children. Some parents shared that they could see physical and emotional changes in their child after they engaged with certain video games.

The third subquestion for this study involved how parents monitor their child's access to violent media. The themes that emerged were what the perspectives of parents were about monitoring and how they monitor as well as game choices. Also addressed in this research question was how parents establish rules and guidelines for their children

regarding their media use. As for game purchasing and monitoring, according to the parents that were interviewed, they all monitor their child's media use in some way. The consensus among parents was that E-rated games were the choice they preferred their children to play. The most popular way to monitor was through restrictive mediation, specifically with the content of the video game. All parents indicated they look for age appropriate video games for their child. Most parents felt it was very important or extremely important to set rules or guidelines for video game use in their homes.

The fourth subquestion for this study involved what teachers that teach children (ages 5-8) perceive as violent media. Foci for this research question were how teachers define violence, specifically violent media, what violent media they hear students talking about engaging with as well as what type of media they use in their own classrooms, the importance of ratings and reviews, and what rules and guidelines they set for their students. All teachers who were interviewed indicated that they use educational video games to reach their curriculum goals. Teachers, much like parents, defined violent media to include fighting, blood, violent acts, and use of weapons. Video games, a TV show, and a movie that children talked about engaging with were outlined to explain the violent content and ratings they include. Teacher's shared ways they find out if media is safe and one of those ways was the kidSAFE Seal Program. In addition, commonsensemedia.org is a resource both teachers and parents can use to screen media and check for content and ratings. All but one teacher felt that it was the classroom teacher's role to talk to students about safe media use. The one teacher who felt differently said it was the librarian's role to do so. Teachers explained that all children

must be supervised in their classroom when they are engaging with electronic media. Teachers were also in agreement that students must stay on the preselected game or website they are assigned. The school district the interviewed teachers work in has a strict acceptable use policy about media use for students, teachers, and parents that must be signed by everyone at the beginning of the school year.

The fifth subquestion for this study involved what the perspectives of teachers were about the possible effects of violent exposure on children 5-8 years old. The focus for this question was the actions of the children in these teacher's classrooms. Teachers felt exposure to violent video games could lead to violent actions at school. Teachers also said they hear their students talking about mature rated video games they play at home. They also often see children role-playing about violent or mature rated video games they have played at home. Several teachers discussed the change they have observed in student behavior over the last few years and how the students seem to want to be like the violent characters they see in the video games they play.

Chapter 5 includes the interpretation of the findings, as compared to peer-reviewed literature, as well as in connection to the theoretical framework. Limitations to the study and recommendations for further research are included. Implications for social change are also discussed.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore perspectives of parents and teachers of children 5 to 8 years old regarding children's exposure to violent media in addition to parental monitoring practices in place. Video gaming was the specific focus of my study. I explored the perspectives of kindergarten, first, and second grade parents and teachers to discover what they felt defined violence in the media and what they thought the impact of exposure to that violence might be on young children. In addition, I examined what types of monitoring parents currently use with their children regarding recreational media and violent media. I also explored whether parents check ratings, titles, and reviews of video games before purchasing or downloading them for their child. Media violence is one of the most studied phenomena affecting children over the age of 8 and has become accessible for very young children through television, video games, and popular toys (Erwin & Morton, 2008). Due to the lack of research on children under the age of 8 regarding exposure to violent media, an objective of this study was to fill a gap in research by exploring the perspectives of parents and teachers who have or work with children 5 to 8 years old.

Findings showed that parents and teachers believe that they need to be more informed about the possible effects that exposure to violent media, specifically video games, could have on young children. Both groups felt that the child's behavior was directly affected by the viewing of violence. It was also noted by both parents and teachers that often it was the younger children, specifically of kindergarten age, who were exposed to the most amount of time with violent media.

Parents expressed that they know monitoring, setting rules and guidelines, being involved in their children's media choices, and talking to their children about the media with which they engage is extremely important. However, reflected on the parent questionnaires were data to show that parents do not always monitor, read ratings or reviews, or restrict or stop their child from engaging with violent media.

Teachers shared that they often hear young students in their classrooms discussing mature rated media they are engaging with and see children acting aggressively during less structured times of the day. They indicated, however, that children's behavior over that last few years reflected an increased role-play of violent game characters that is surfacing in the classroom setting. Teachers then explained the rules and guidelines that are in place in the school involving media use.

Interpretation of the Findings

Research Question 1

The first research question was as follows: What are the perspectives of parents and teachers regarding young children's (ages 5- 8) exposure to violent media? Findings included that parents and teachers feel there is a connection between when a child views something violent and how they may act. The common addition from both parents and teachers was that parents need to be more informed and more involved in their child's media use. The two main themes that emerged from data related to this question were how much both parents and teachers engage with technology and what their perspectives were about children engaging with technology and media.

Engaging with technology. Teachers and parents both indicated that they themselves use technology daily and often multiple types. Parents explained that their children sometimes use three to four types of technology at one time. It was apparent that technology was a normal part of a child's day at school and at home. Teachers expressed that multiple forms of technology, such as laptops and SMART boards, were available in their classrooms for students to interact with frequently. Teachers explained that they felt young children are not only exposed to many forms of media but that the content of that media is sometimes violent. They also expressed that they feel that students are influenced by the violent media exposure. The number of hours indicated, by parents, that their child engages with recreational media averaged between 1 and 10 hours a week.

Regarding violent media exposure, it appeared that kindergarten students spent more time engaged with violent media than first and second grade level students. I was also reminded that it was the kindergarten parents who coview the games more frequently than first and second grade parents, which could be the reason they observe more violence in the games. It could be that the other parents simply did not see all the violence involved because they were not watching or choose to believe it was not there. For example, two of the parents indicated that they used a timer to monitor their child's game playing, which does not address the content, but rather how long a child is exposed or engaged with the media. Most parents read the ratings provided with the trust that it reflects appropriate content. On the other hand, there were parents in each group who allowed their child to engage in those games that were above their age. The target population in this study was small, so it cannot be said with certainty that these findings

are generalizable. However, the findings could reflect a trend and it is something that should be pursued further through quantitative means. The findings regarding violent media exposure validate that young children are engaging with recreational media on a weekly basis and that some of the children are engaging with violent media that is inappropriate for their age.

Perspectives of parents and teachers. Parents and teachers feel that parents need to be more informed about and more involved with their children's media use and choices. If parents could be more informed and involved, they could help their children make safe and more age appropriate choices about the content of the media they engage with and are exposed to. Parents expressed that they feel pressure from society to buy gaming systems for their young children. They also stated that technology is far more advanced from recent generations. Both parents and teachers explained they feel children should be monitored more than ever when they are engaging with any type of media. It was evident that parents know that they should monitor their children's media use and restrict them from viewing and engaging with violent media. The problem seemed to be that even though parents knew they should do those things, they did not always follow through in doing so.

One second grade parent stated that parents do not realize the impact on brain development, social skills, academics, and the negative impact in general violent media can have on young children. Some of the bad habits picked up by media use will not go away for children. There is also a sense of peer pressure for parents to buy the latest game console or game. This finding is unique because it shows that parents may know that

certain media or games for their child may be inappropriate and above their child's age level, but they follow society's lead and buy these regardless.

Research Subquestion 1

The first research subquestion was as follows: What do parents of children (ages 5-8) perceive as violent media? Findings included that parents had certain things that they classified as violent, many of which included injuring someone or committing an aggressive act. I also concluded that parents know they should choose "E" for Everyone rated games for their child. The two main themes that emerged from the data were how parents defined violence and which types of games they allow their children to play.

Definition of violence. Parents perceive media as violent based on if the content involves weaponry, killings, gore, or strong language. One parent stated that they defined violence as one human hurting another human. Researchers have been able to provide a wealth of evidence that being exposed to violent media of any type can increase aggressive behavior (Gentile, 2014). What is known is that there is a connection between being exposed to media and feelings, thoughts, and behaviors of hostility (Hummer, 2015). Young children should not interact with devices, but instead, with humans. Brody (2015) stated that more time can be spent with the screen if the child is older, but the content should be high quality.

Types of games. Parents indicated they usually choose "E" for Everyone rated games. A few parents said they occasionally choose games that are rated above their child's age range. There seemed to be a shared concern among parents about their children being exposed to violent content, but a few parents felt that some violent content

exposure was unavoidable. Findings revealed that parents do feel they can control the video games their child plays and other types of media engagement. However, the responses indicated there was a lot of time when the child is left alone to play the game with no direct oversight.

Research Subquestion 2

The second research subquestion was: What are the perspectives of parents about the possible effects of violent media exposure on their child? Findings included that parents felt that there could be possible effects from their child being exposed to violent media. Though some parents felt the effects could be different for each child, they all indicated common themes that exposure could lead to violent acts, language, or negative physical reactions. There were four main themes that emerged from the data. These were what impact exposure has, what devices children use, what risk is involved with exposure to violent media for young children, and the possible hidden curriculum or message within the media for children.

Exposure and influence. One participant felt children are molded by violent acts that they see. They indicated that children are not emotionally or mentally mature enough to process what they are seeing. One subtheme that emerged was that parents felt there was connection between when a child views something violent and how they may act. One kindergarten parent felt that children who play lots of video games may live in a virtual world. Many American youth are "plugged in" and tend to not notice the rest of the world around them for several hours a day. In many cases even toddlers are "plugged in" because a caregiver had handed the child a cell phone or tablet to play with as a form

of entertainment or diversion while they the parents or other caregivers are busy with another task. This certainly takes the child's focus away from the world around them (Brody, 2015). Another parent, who has a second-grade age child, discussed a negative physical reaction he had after playing a video game for just 30 minutes. The parent stated he was flushed and became agitated.

Devices and use. All households have some type of technology available for children to use and many have multiple types. The amount of use was measured by parent questionnaires in the study and data showed that all, except one first grade child, engaged with at least one hour of recreational media each week. Some children engaged with up to 15 hours of recreational media. When looking at how much of that media use involved violent media, the findings showed that kindergarten age students engaged with more violent media than the older two grade levels that were surveyed. Participants in the study reflected that violence exhibited in the media children are viewing ranges from shooting, fighting, blood, strong language, use of weapons, and war games. Empathy seems to be lacking in gamers after being exposed to violence through as the perspective of the killer (Bushman & Anderson, 2015). A first-grade teacher who was interviewed discussed how she hears students make comments such as, "I'm only killing zombies, these are not real people this is cool and fun!" These kinds of statements from children indicate they think it is okay to kill something as long as they don't kill a human.

Risk. A question parents should consider regarding their children is, "Is the risk of playing or viewing virtual violence justified by the benefit of that experience?" (Bushman & Anderson, 2015, p. 1808). When surveyed, about half of the parents did feel

that there was a high risk of the violent video game having a negative impact. A unique

finding was that the other half of the parents felt there was no risk or minimal risk

involved. There were a few parents who felt there was an extremely high risk involved.

There was a convincing agreement between researchers in the psychology field as well as

health and medical professionals that exposure to media that contains violent images is an

important risk factor to examine that is negatively affecting young children (Gentile,

2014). They also found that excessive playing of video games also contributed to a higher

risk of attention problems and was an even bigger factor than television viewing

(Greenfield, 2014).

Recent research has shown that excessive exposure to violent video games raises

the moral disengagement in the youth. In addition, a rise in dehumanization happens,

which can lead to more aggressive behaviors (Hartmann et al., 2014). Additional risks as

outlined by the American Academy of Pediatrics relating to excessive media exposure

include: childhood obesity, negative sleep patterns, negative consequences on their

academics, and a higher risk for gaming disorders. By enlightening parents about the

potential risk of violent media exposure they can be "media mentors" for their children

and help them establish a "sensible media diet" (Wager & Mandracchia, 2016).

Hidden curriculum. Parents felt there was a message in the media for children,

but some of them felt it was hidden, but direct. All of them agreed that the message was

not usually a positive one. Often the message glorified violence and made it seem

acceptable and appropriate. Marketing was another impact, surfaced by the parents that

the media has on children, as messages to buy certain things were embedded within

various programs. Findings revealed that parents felt that the marketing involved in the media was directly affecting children and that behind it was a push a to make money. This idea circles back all the way to 1984 when the Reagan Administration deregulated advertising targeting children (Linn, 2004).

Research Subquestion 3

The third research subquestion was: How do parents monitor their child's access to violent media? Findings include that parents know that they should monitor their children's media use. In fact, many parents indicated that it is extremely important. They also felt that it is important to set rules and guidelines for media use and to be actively involved in the media choices their children make, especially video games. The main themes that emerged from the data were parents' perspectives on monitoring, how they set rules and guidelines for media use, and what game choices they make for their children.

Perspectives on monitoring. All parents said that their children play with video games of some kind. If a parent was to read a title of a game their child may play, then they usually check the rating. Kindergarten parents checked ratings less frequently then other grade levels of parents. However, most parents in all grade levels felt it was important to be a part of choosing media for their child. They equally felt it was important to monitor their child's media use. The finding was that parents know, as indicated by the research data, that they should play an active role, but don't always. Being a role model for acceptable media use for children is an especially important role for parents. Thompson (2016) recommended that parents adhere to similar restraints as

their children, to ensure that expected media consumption and behaviors are clear. Looking across all the different types of monitoring types, parents most often restrict the content of the games their children play or co-view the games with their child. Connell, Lauricella, and Wartella (2015) found that few studies have examined co-playing of video games with parents although one study suggested more parental involvement increased prosocial behaviors and fewer personal problems among teenage daughters who played games with their parents. Media researcher Dr. Gentile shared in a personal conversation (January 21, 2015) that despite the concerns parents may have about how much time their children engage with media, there was still growth in the amount of time children engage with screen media over the last decade. Parental monitoring needs to have a key role in children's interactions with media.

Setting rules and guidelines. Parents felt that it is very or extremely important to set rules and guidelines for their children's media use, specifically video game use in their home. They also thought it was important to talk with their children about media use and the video games they play. It seemed like there was a direct correlation between the importance of setting rules and guidelines and talking to their children about media use. Almost all parents use media for entertainment purposes for their children at one time or another (Vittrup et al., 2016). However, parents who have rules for media use in their home and restrict screen time see fewer problem behaviors from their children (Sanders et al., 2016).

Game choices. Parents look for several different criteria when choosing video games for their children. They look at price, age appropriateness, ratings, educational

purpose, and familiar titles. Some parents even check the game by viewing it or playing before their child does. Parents must keep up with new technologies and games to provide proper monitoring for their children's media use. The "digital divide" is becoming less differentiated as many parents today were raised in this digital age. Although the divide is diminishing some parents are considered digital immigrants while children are considered digital natives (Gentile, 2014). Barriers that were once evident are becoming invisible or difficult to recognize. Game choices and monitoring efforts for parents are becoming more of a challenge, but they must try to serve as mediators between the media and their children. Another challenge for parents is to understand the appropriateness of the range and content of media available to children (Vittrup et al., 2016).

Research Subquestion 4

The fourth research subquestion was: What do teachers that teach children (ages 5-8) perceive as violent media? Findings include that teachers define violence as any aggressive act to someone or something else. They also feel that it is important to have safety measures, such as rules and guidelines, for media use in their classrooms. The main themes that emerged from the data were how teachers define violence, which reviews they read to ensure safety of media they use with children and the rules and guidelines they set in place for media use at school.

Defining violence. Teachers felt that violence occurs when weapons are used, blood is shed, fighting occurs, someone hurts someone else, or violent language is spoken. They outlined and discussed different first-person shooter video games, rated

mature, that they hear their current students talk about playing at home. Few studies were found to address games that involve first person shooter or criminal behavior. Due to the lack of research, there is yet a connection to be made between playing violent video games and real-life mass shootings and violent behavior. (Strasburger & Donnerstein, 2014). They also discussed how they use non-violent educational video games in their classroom, as well as how they monitor and ensure media use safety in their classrooms.

Reviews and safety. Teachers look for certain criteria when selecting digital media to use, in their classroom, to meet their curriculum goals. They often look for the kidsSAFE seal of approval or academic accolades that would indicate that the media is not only safe, but also of quality. A unique finding was that only one of the four teachers who were interviewed said that they read reviews of the games and websites that they use with the children in their classes. Additionally, one other teacher felt it was not her role to discuss media safety with her students, but that the librarian was responsible for that.

Rules and guidelines. In regard to setting rules and guidelines, teachers seem to do a thorough job of this and the school district also ensures that there are set rules and precautions for media use. One teacher explained that she reviews the rules for media use every time before students even turn on a device. Additionally, students also must agree electronically to an acceptable use policy on each device use, to comply with the district policy for safe media use. When asked why they felt rules and guidelines were important to have in their classroom when having students use media, the teachers said it keeps students on task and safeguards that students only visit preapproved websites and games.

Research Subquestion 5

The fifth research subquestion was: What are the perspectives of teachers about the possible effects of violent media exposure on children (ages 5-8)? Findings include that teachers seem to agree that violent media exposure can have profound effects on young children. They also discussed how they see students manifest anger and have short temper fuses recently. The teachers questioned whether this was from excessive exposure to violent media. The main theme that emerged from the data was what actions teachers see from their students at school in relation to the possible violent media they are exposed to at home.

Actions of children. Teachers had many thoughts about the actions they see children producing at school in relation to the violent video games they play at home. All the teachers said they have seen more role-playing of violent and aggressive actions, during center time and during recess time, than they ever have before. One teacher even said that this past school year, she sent more students to the administration due to violent role-playing that often involved children imitating the use of weapons, than in her entire 14-year career.

An interesting finding was that one first grade teacher discussed how she consistently sees more boys than girls acting violently and talking about violent things. This brings up the issue of gender. While I didn't focus on this in my research, the teachers surfaced it as they discussed that boys were more involved in talking about violence than girls. This surfaces an additional concern about gender and that is how male and female roles are being portrayed. Children identify and adopt behaviors to act

out. Such behaviors can eventually become part of who they are within the larger

society. Hughes (2015), explained that neither gender is innately predisposed to violence,

but men are more likely to commit violent acts. Hughes also makes clear that men are

affected to a higher degree by their social environment due to the patriarchal

circumstances the world is currently prevailing under. The amount of violence young

boys see in their social environment can directly affect them negatively later in adulthood

(Hughes, 2015). I noticed that my interview participants were all female and most

questionnaire responses were also from females.

Across conversations with all four teachers, they continuously said how shocked

they were with the conversations students were having about violent media they are

engaging with at home. One teacher was very disturbed by young children talking about

wanting to be in gangs and live gang life styles because they see the different gangs in the

video games they play. Another teacher expressed her concern about the possible long-

term emotional impact all the exposure to violence may have on the young children. In

addition, the teachers discussed how desensitized many of the students seem to be getting

to seeing violent images or hearing about violent actions or traumatic events. There is a

desensitization factor to be considered when people consume violent media. Some people

not only become desensitized by the violence, but also become aroused by it (Bushman &

Anderson, 2015).

Limitations of the Study

One limitation of this study was the small sample size chosen from one rural East

Coast area. The participants who returned the questionnaires may not have reflected all

the parents with children 5-8 years old in the area. While my aim was to reach all eligible participants in the target population, the rate of return is rarely 100%. The response rate of 40% in a population of approximately 150 is an acceptable return (University of Texas, 2010).

The limitations in this study were overcome by addressing the small sample size, which contributes to trustworthiness. The response rate from the target population was robust at a 67% return. I felt I reached saturation when I started to receive similar answers from the respondents, which confirmed the response rate was adequate. While generalization is limited, it is not impossible, and it doesn't compromise the trustworthiness of the study.

When determining sample size for a qualitative study, there are no hard or fast rules, but saturation or redundancy should be considered (Patton, 2001). Patton recommended approximately five interviewees for a qualitative case study and a large and representative sample size for questionnaires to be used. For my study, I used 10 interviewees, which included six teachers, representing grades kindergarten through second, and four parents representing the same grades. I was sent 51 questionnaires and I had 35 retuned to me completed. I sent a reminder email to all participants if I did not receive a response from them within 1-2 weeks of sending the original email. Generalizing the results of this study to a larger population was limited, due to the small rural area involved.

This study was also limited by my own bias as a former kindergarten teacher. Listening to students talk about the violent media they watched and the violent video

games they played led me to believe parental monitoring may be inconsistent. Much of the information I obtained with the parent questionnaires and the interviews both with parents and teachers supported my own beliefs as well as what was found in the literature. I attempted to minimize my biases by thinking of myself as a member of the parent group (Creswell, 2012) who would not want to be judged by my child's teacher based upon what my child said at school.

Recommendations

In this study, I explored the perspectives of parents and teachers about children, 5-8 years old, regarding children's exposure to violent media in addition to parental monitoring practices in place. Kindergarten, first, and second grade teachers and parents, whose children were currently in those grade levels, were recruited for participation, as those were the age levels of children not explored as often in the existing research. Therefore, the perspectives of parents and teachers of younger children, birth to five years olds, warrant investigation, as perceptions may differ. Exploring the perspectives of parents and teachers of very young children could help to identify how early exposure to violent media and media use in general start and what impact it may have on very young children. Children first mimic what they see and then develop behaviors that later transform into lasting social behaviors. Once these children reach middle childhood and early adolescence age, the behaviors are difficult to change (Wager & Mandracchia, 2016). It is important to try to intervene early before behaviors become difficult to change.

I conducted this study in one small rural area on the East Coast. Research should be done with early childhood teachers and parents in other demographic areas as well. Much of the research related to perspectives and impact of exposure to violent media on young children is qualitative in nature. There were few studies that were longitudinal and quantitative. There were quantitative threads within some of the studies in Chapter 2, but many focused on statistics of screen time, not about impact of the violent content. The quantitative studies that did exist included one about the frequency that children, ages 8-18, engage with media on a daily basis, which was 11 hours per day. This exceeds the amount by four times as much as recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics for the age group 8-18 years old (Steinkuehler, 2016). Another quantitative study looked at the percentages of families that had certain technologies in their homes, such as 99% of households had computers and 79% had game consoles (Stephen, Stevenson, & Adey, 2013). An additional quantitative study, conducted by the Kaiser Family Foundation, examined the hours per day the average 8-10-year-old child engages with media, which was eight hours, while the average teenage child engages 11 hours per day (Brody, 2015).

With minimal research existing about the impact and perceptions of exposure of children under the age of eight, it seems appropriate to conduct additional studies with parents and teachers of even younger children. Additionally, it would be informative to speak with the children themselves about their media use and what they consider violent media. Also missing in the current research are gender-based studies regarding violent media exposure on young children. As one first grade teacher indicated, she sees more boys than girls role-playing aggressive acts and discussing mature rated video games. It

would also prove helpful to explore specific device use, such as tablets, laptops, phones, and video game consoles, by children under the age of eight in future research. Engaging pediatricians and other stakeholders who work with or engage with young children would be crucial for future intervention and success with more consistent monitoring.

Much of the literature focused on the negative impact violent media exposure can have on children as well as in general screen time. It's evident that most children and parents engage with some type of technology daily and that this is an increasing trend. Taking technology away from children is not an option and could eventually hurt their academic success by inhibiting their ability to operate the technology tool or device they need to learn. There is a popular perspective that using a gadget such as a smartphone or a tablet prepares children for the adult life, when using technology will be mandatory (Vittrup et al., 2016). My focus was on excessive media use and violent media exposure. I found less literature available focusing on positive ways to engage with technology and what benefits screen time can have for children, specifically young children.

Finally, future research should be conducted surrounding three key issues regarding gender. First, I noticed that mostly women participated in my study; therefore, it would be worthy of further research to understand how to incorporate more men in studies of this nature to hear their point of view. Second, teachers indicated in my study they hear more boys than girls talk about violent media use and role-play violent actions. Additional research is needed to explore why young boys are more consuming more violent media than girls or if the consumption is equal why do young boys seem more

negatively affected. Lastly it would be important to examine how different genders are portrayed in video games, specifically violent video games.

Implications

In this study, I provide information about the preexisting perspectives both parents and teachers have regarding exposure of violent media on young children, ages 5-8. I discuss measures that could prevent future exposure from happening, such as monitoring practices, checking ratings and reviews, setting guidelines and rules, and talking to children about their media use. All of this can positively impact all the key stakeholders, especially young children. This information is particularly helpful for parents to prevent exposure to violent media at home and to put monitoring measures into place. In addition, the information is helpful for teachers to continue with the monitoring of media use in their classrooms, as well as helping them to understand why some students may have aggressive actions at school. The information provided from this study would benefit anyone who works with or has young children that have been exposed to violent media or could be in the future. By increasing knowledge and providing support for parents, positive school change can occur for families and their children. Avoiding negative exposure to technology and focusing more on positive exposure may help children become more productive members of society.

Methodological Implications

Due to the limited population and the fact this was a qualitative study it is worth expanding the study further, using a quantitative approach. Additionally, to augment this study and hone in on the findings, a quantitative study should be launched to examine

how much time children spend with electronic media at school and what types are they engaging with most frequently. It would also be productive to quantitatively look at in the home use per day a child has with electronic media. The home and school time could be combined to get a bigger picture of the overall screen time and media use that children under the age of eight are partaking in, across environments. Also, it would be beneficial to explore the specific types of media that involve violence and look at the hours of movies, TV shows, and video games children are engaged with daily. By looking at this area through a quantitative approach, more precise data could be collected and examined for trends and possible proposed interventions. A quantitative approach could also allow for more information to be gathered from a larger population.

Theoretical Implications

Bronfenbrenner's theory confirms the importance about how the home and school environments interact and how one system doesn't act alone. The two microsystems are integrated into one mesosystem that links them together and they impact each other. In addition, the impact goes beyond the home and school environments and into the larger society. In my study, the integration between the school and home environments became evident when interviewing the teachers. Several teachers reported that young children in their classrooms discuss mature rated topics that stemmed from the mature rated video games they recently played at home. The teachers also observed these same children engaged in aggressive and violent role-playing in their classrooms and on the playground. The children would pretend to be characters from the violent video games they played and act out the aggressive scenarios they saw in the games. One teacher even commented on the fact that more students are being sent to administration for behavioral consequences due to the violent actions at school. There are still many challenges because solutions to the problems that arose in this study are not clear. One of these issues includes how do teachers address the microsystem system of the home environment without providing moral guidance. There are inconsistencies with how parents monitor their child's media use and choices. A teacher's job is to protect the children and society at large, but where these roles end and a parent's role begins is the bigger question that remains unanswered.

Recommendations for Practice

My study sheds light on the fact that the content of what children are watching at home should be considered in terms of what the parents are allowing their children to view. There seem to be inconsistent monitoring systems in place, at home, for many children, as well as non-informed guidance from parents. Implications for practice are a challenge in the sense of how to bring consistency into the inconsistent backgrounds of parents, without implying a moral basis or question of values. Within the school environment, children are aware of media use rules and guidelines and realize they do not have free range. The question becomes how to bring consistency and guidance, established in the school system, to the home environment and into society. Teachers and parents both indicated that they use multiple types of technology and engage with media every day. Due to this daily use, teachers and parents become role models for children regarding how to appropriately use the technology. One parent explained during her interview that she and her husband have quite different views about exposing their young six-year-old daughter to violent video games. The mother felt that it was inappropriate and should never occur while the father felt that if he was playing the violent games with his daughter it was a good way to bond. During such unpredictable and wavering times in our society, bringing parents into the arena of awareness about media use and violent media exposure is vital. Looking into the future and based on the findings from my study, teachers need to maintain the rules and guidelines they already have in place for children's media use. However, they need to start considering a more formalized way to ensure that the media they allow children to use is appropriate and builds important

academic skills. A recommendation would be to create a checklist that would be used to evaluate the media that they are using in their classroom. This recommendation stems from the inconsistent ways teachers reported that they currently evaluate media, as discussed in their interviews. Some teachers stated that they don't read reviews or stay current on educational media. As for parents, I feel one of the most important efforts may be to hold parent workshops at local libraries and community centers. These workshops would help to inform parents about good monitoring practices, how to read ratings and reviews, and information about the impact that excessive media use, as well as exposure to violent media, can have on their children. I also feel that teachers can help make an educational outreach to parents about this information, using pamphlets or informational literature. This recommendation stems from both teachers and parents reporting that there needs to be more information provided about media use and media choices involving young children.

Conclusion

The findings from this study revealed that both parents and teachers have concerns about the amount of exposure of violent media on young children as well as its impact. Participants perceived that they do see an increase in aggressive behaviors and language in young children after engaging in violent media, specifically violent video games. Parents expressed that it is extremely important to have monitoring measures in place and to be actively involved in their children's media choices. Most parents also expressed that checking ratings, reviews, and titles of video games for their child was something they frequently or always do. Due to the potential risk that parents indicated

they feel exposure to violent video games may have on young children, they feel it is important to set rules and guidelines for their children. The number of hours that children, 5-8 years old, spent with recreational media, as well as the number of those hours they spent with violent media was revealed as a part of this study. The main takeaway from those findings was that kindergarten age children spend more time with media that includes violence than first or second grade children. A general agreement for all parents was that they feel video game sales should be guided by the age of the player. This finding was unique because some parents indicated that they sometimes allow their child to play video games that are meant for older youth. Some parents that were interviewed said that they felt there was a strong connection when children viewed violent media and the actions they may have immediately following. Two parents felt it was on a case-by-case basis because of the factors of intervention or parents talking to their children about fantasy vs. reality concepts. Many parents expressed concern about children living in a "virtual world" and having problems communicating with others, due to the amount of time they play video games. Overall, parents said that they want to be more informed about the possible effects of violent media exposure on their young children.

Teachers stated that they use technology with children in their classroom every day. Many use laptops and Smart Boards that include educational video games to enhance their curriculum. Children have access to multiple forms of technology at home and at school. All the teachers discussed the measures in place to ensure safe media use and appropriate content for all children in their classrooms. When asked about the impact of violent media exposure on young children, all the teachers indicated that they hear

students talk about playing mature rated video games at home. Teachers saw a carry over into the classroom and on the playground of violent action role-play and language use. Many teachers explained specific video games, TV shows, and movies that children talk about and act out in school. There was an overall concern from the teachers that children are being exposed to inappropriate and violent media at home and that some of times video games were being used as a "babysitter" in the home environment. Most teachers felt that it was their role to discuss safe media use with the children in their classrooms. Overall, teachers communicated that their role as a teacher requires them to protect their students and educate parents more about the effects of media use and exposure to violent media on their young children.

More knowledge about the impact and effects that excessive media exposure, as well as exposure to violent media, for young children is needed, for both parents and teachers. In addition, a discussion of monitoring practices and the importance of checking age ratings and reading reviews is needed to ensure children are engaging with appropriate media. By helping parents and teachers become more knowledgeable about this topic, positive social change for all key stakeholders, particularly young children can occur.

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Appendix A: Email Invitation to Parents (Questionnaires)

Dear Parent,

I am a doctoral student at Walden University and am currently working on my dissertation. I will be conducting a study entitled *Parent and Teacher Perspectives of Children's Access to Violent Media*. The purpose of the study is to explore perspectives of parents and teachers who have or work with children 5-8 years olds regarding children's exposure to violent media in addition to parental monitoring practices in place.

This letter is an invitation to participate in the study, allowing you to help add to the body of research on children's exposure to violent media. Also included is a questionnaire and consent form to complete. Please know that all information received from the questionnaires will be kept strictly confidential, with all identifying characteristics eliminated from documents. This questionnaire should take 10-20 minutes to complete. Your response is confirmation of your willingness to participate in this study. In addition, all documents will be kept in a password-protected file on my home computer.

Upon reviewing the information, please respond by emailing me at XXX@waldenu.edu by **(December 18, 2017)**. If you would be interested in volunteering in the questionnaire process, please respond to this email with your completed questionnaire and consent form. There will be a random selection from the question are responses for participation in potential interviews. If you have any questions at all, please do not hesitate to contact me at the listed email or by calling XXX. Thank you for

considering being a volunteer for my study. I look forward to hearing back from each one of you.

Sincerely,

Appendix B: Questionnaire for Parents

Please use the highlight tool to select your answer(s) choice. For example: Yes or No

Questions	Answer Choices
Your Child's Current Grade Level	**K 1 2**
1. What types of technology devices are in your home that your child has access to? **Highlight ALL that apply.**	**Smartphone** **Tablet** **Computer (desktop/laptop)** **Game Console** **Other**
2. On an average week, about how many hours does your child engage with recreational media use?	**0 hrs 1-5 hrs 6-10 hrs** **11-15 hrs 16-20hrs 20+ hrs**
3. How much of this recreational media use includes violence?	**0 hrs 1-5 hrs 6-10 hrs** **11-15 hrs 16-20hrs 20+ hrs**
	No Risk **Minimal Risk** **High Risk**

4. How much risk do you think exposure to violent video games could have on children?	**Extremely High Risk**
5. How do you monitor your child's access and exposure to violent video games?	**Active Mediation** *(Discuss or Explain the Content of a Game)* **Restrictive Mediation** *(Amount of Playing Time)* **Restrictive Mediation** *(Content of a Game)* **Co-viewing** *(Watching Your Child Play a Game)* **Co-Playing** *(Playing the Game With Your Child)*
6. Which types/rated video games do you allow your child to play? Highlight ALL that apply.	**E- Everyone** **T- Teen** **E10- For Ages 10 and up** **M-Mature**
	Never **Sometimes** **Often**

7. Check the ratings of the video games your child is playing?	**Frequently** **Always**
8. Look at the titles of the video games your child is playing?	**Never** **Sometimes** **Often** **Frequently** **Always**
9. Stop your child from playing a violent video game?	**Never** **Sometimes** **Often** **Frequently** **Always**
	Never **Sometimes** **Often** **Frequently**

10. Read reviews about the content of the video games your child is playing?	Always
11. How important is setting rules and guidelines for video game use in your home?	**Not Important** **Slightly Important** **Moderately Important** **Important** **Very Important** **Extremely Important**
12. How important is monitoring your child's media use?	**Not Important** **Slightly Important** **Moderately Important** **Important** **Very Important** **Extremely Important**
	Not Important **Slightly Important** **Moderately Important**

13. How important is talking to your child about the media use and the video games they play?	**Important** **Very Important** **Extremely Important**
14. How important is being involved in choosing the media your child interacts with?	**Not Important** **Slightly Important** **Moderately Important** **Important** **Very Important** **Extremely Important**
15. Do you feel that selling video games should be guided by the age of the player?	**YES or NO**

Appendix C: Email Invitation to Parents (Interviews)

Dear Parent,

Thank you for your response to my recent questionnaire for my study *Parent and Teacher Perspectives of Children's Access to Violent Media*. Again, the purpose of the study is to explore perspectives of parents and teachers who have or work with children 5-8 years olds regarding children's exposure to violent media in addition to parental monitoring practices in place.

Your name was randomly selected from the questionnaire responses to participate in a face-to-face interview. I would like to conduct face- to- face audio-recorded interviews with you to ask you questions regarding the technology and media use of your child and how it is monitored. Also included is a consent form to complete. Upon your response, I will personally contact you to set up a day and time to complete the interviews. Your response is confirmation of your willingness to participate in this study. The interview will be audio-recorded and should take 45-60 minutes to complete. Please know that all information obtained in the interviews will be kept strictly confidential, with all identifying characteristics eliminated from documents. In addition, all documents will be kept in a password-protected file on my home computer.

After I review the recorded interviews I will email you a written transcription of your interview so you can review it for accuracy. If there are any corrections to be made please let me know. This process should take you between 20-30 minutes.

Upon reviewing the information, please respond by emailing me at XXX@waldenu.edu by **(December 18, 2017)**. Please let me know if you would be

interested in volunteering if the interview process. If you have any questions at all, please do not hesitate to contact me at the listed email or by calling XXX. Thank you for considering being a volunteer for my study. I look forward to hearing back from each one of you.

Sincerely,

Appendix D: Interviews Questions for Parents

1. Do you engage with technology?

   Probe: What types of technology do you engage with?

   Probe: How frequently do you engage with each type?

2. Does your child play video games?

   Probe: If so, what is the type of contents in the games that they play?

3. When purchasing a video game for your child how do you select the game?

   Probe: Are there certain criteria you look for?

4. How often do you monitor your child engaging with video games?

   Probe: In regard to monitoring the video games your child engages with what

   type(s) of monitoring do you use the most often? (The types of monitoring

   include: Active Mediation, Restrictive Mediation, Co-Viewing, or Co-Playing).

5. How do you distinguish if something is violent or not?

   Probe: How do you as a parent define media violence?

6. How strong do you think the connection is when a child's views something violent and how they may act, what might those actions look like?

   Probe: What impact do you think exposure to violent video games has on children?

7. Do you think there is a "Hidden Curriculum (Message)" in the media for children?

   Probe: If so, what do you think it is?

8. What can you add to the conversation that would be important in terms of the topic of violent media exposure for young children, specifically violent video games?

Appendix E: Email Invitation to Teachers (Interviews)

Dear Teacher,

I am a doctoral student at Walden University and am currently working on my dissertation. I will be conducting a study entitled *Parent and Teacher Perspectives of Children's Access to Violent Media*. The purpose of the study is to explore perspectives of parents and teachers who have or work with children 5-8 years olds regarding children's exposure to violent media in addition to parental monitoring practices in place.

This letter is an invitation to participate in the study, allowing you to help add to the body of research on children's exposure to violent media. I would like to conduct audio-recorded face-to-face interviews with you to ask you questions regarding technology and media use in your classroom. Also included is a consent form to complete. Upon your response, I will personally contact you to set up a day and time to complete the interviews. Your response is confirmation of your willingness to participate in this study. I will personally contact you to set up a day and time to complete the interviews. The interview will be audio-recorded and should take 45-60 minutes to complete. Please know that all information obtained in the interviews will be kept strictly confidential, with all identifying characteristics eliminated from documents. In addition, all documents will be kept in a password-protected file on my home computer.

After I review the recorded interviews I will email you a written transcription of your interview so you can review it for accuracy. If there are any corrections to be made please let me know. This process should take you between 20-30 minutes.

Upon reviewing the information, please respond by emailing me at

XXX@waldenu.edu by **(December 18, 2017)**. Please let me know if you would be

interested in volunteering if the interview process. If you have any questions at all, please

do not hesitate to contact me at the listed email or by calling XXX. Thank you for

considering being a volunteer for my study. I look forward to hearing back from each one

of you.

Sincerely,

Appendix F: Interviews Questions for Teachers

1. Do you engage with technology?

   Probe: What types of technology do you engage with?

   Probe: How frequently do you engage with each type?

2. Do you use any video games to accomplish any of your curriculum goals or to augment the curriculum?

   Probe: If so, what video games do you use and how?

3. What types of technology devices are available in your classroom?

   Probe: Are you a part of the decision on how the types of technology devices and media for use in your classroom is selected?

   Probe: Are there times when students have open access to these devices that is not related to curriculum?

   Probe: If yes, how do you monitor the students while they are using them?

   Probe: Do these devices have filtering controls?

4. How do you distinguish if something is violent or not?

   Probe: How do you as a teacher define media violence?

5. How strong do you think the connection is when a child views something violent and how they may act, what might those actions look like?

Probe: What impact do you think exposure to violent video games has on children?

Probe: What types of things do you hear children talking about regarding violent media or games they engage with?

Probe: At school do your children role play or emulate a video game character or action, possibly in aggressive ways?

6. Do you read reviews and keep current about video games or any electronic media?

Probe: If yes, what resources do you find that provide the best information?

7. What rules and guidelines do you have in place in your classroom regarding media use?

Probe: Why do you feel it is important to have these rules and guidelines?

Probe: Does your school require you to have these rules and guidelines?

8. Do you think it is the teacher's role to talk about safe media use with students?

Probe: If so what specific items do you talk with students about?

Subquestion: If you do not feel it is the teacher's role, whose role do you think it is and why?

9. What can you add to the conversation that would be important in terms of the topic of violent media exposure for young children, specifically violent video games?