Attitudes toward Violence and Aggression may be influenced by several factors. Buss and Perry’s Aggression Questionnaire (1992) was used to determine how aggressive participants in this study reported themselves to be, while a modified version of the Velicer Attitudes toward Violence Scale was used to determine their attitude toward violence. Amount of college sport participation, sports viewing, television viewing, videogames played, exercise, and MMA (Mixed Martial Arts)/pro-wrestling viewing were all factors examined in connection with violence and aggression. Significant relationships were found between attitudes toward violence and these factors. Participants’ reported aggressiveness level was significantly correlated with MMA viewing, race, gender, and the amount of time spent playing videogames.

Understanding attitudes toward violence and one’s aggression level is important for understanding an individual’s behavior. Individuals who view violence more favorably and those who have more aggressive tendencies may be inclined to certain types of behavior. Sonya Brady (2007) studied attitudes toward violence and its association with television viewing. She found that the more time an individual spends per week watching sports related television and playing videogames with aggressive themes the more accepting their attitudes towards violence. After adjusting for influences, like parental education, Brady found that there was a significant relationship between sports viewing and playing sports related videogames.

A popular pass time is watching MMA (Mixed Martial Arts) and professional wrestling. Unlike MMA, a relatively new pass time, previous studies have examined the possible link between professional wrestling and the increase of violence and aggression in viewers. In one study on violence and professional wrestling it was found that the viewing violence was likely to increase some viewers’ acceptance toward violence (Tamborini, Skalski, Lachlan, Westerman, Davis, and Smith, 2005). According to their study “overall, violence in wrestling is not only unremitting but is more likely to be portrayed as justified, unpunished, and lacking extreme harm” (Tamborini et al., 2005).

The Aggression Questionnaire was developed by Arnold Buss and Mark Perry (1992). It replaced the Hostility Inventory, which they argued had several problems. The Hostility Inventory was a longer survey than the Aggression Questionnaire, and some of the questions were ambiguous and difficult for participants to correctly answer. Buss and Perry’s questionnaire identifies four
types of aggression: “Physical and verbal aggression, which involve hurting or harming others, represents the instrumental or motor component of behavior. Anger, which involves physiological arousal and preparation for aggression, represents the emotional or affective component of behavior. Hostility, which consists of feelings of ill will and injustice, represents the cognitive component of behavior” (Buss & Perry, 1992). Each of these types is an important part of an individual’s aggressiveness. This questionnaire is composed of 29 true or false questions (Buss & Perry, 1992).

Several questionnaires have been created to judge an individual’s attitudes toward violence. One, such test is the Velicer Attitudes toward Violence Scale. This scale looks at violent attitudes dealing with war, corporal punishment, judicial violence, and interpersonal violence (Anderson, Benjamin, Wood, & Bonacci, 2006). It is looking for relationships and certain behaviors that may lead to attitudes toward violence and aggression. Some behaviors that will be examined in this study with regards to violence and aggression are playing sports, sports viewing, television viewing, playing videogames, exercising, and watching MMA type shows. The research described above suggests all of these variables are indicators of high levels of acceptance toward violence and predictive of aggressive tendencies.

Method

Respondents

Sixty-eight undergraduates from LaGrange College responded out of 96 selected for the survey. The response rate was slightly higher that 70%. All participants were selected from CORE classes. There were 35 male and 33 females participating. The participants were treated in accordance with the “Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct” (American Psychological Association, 1992).

The Questionnaire

To develop the questionnaire for this research, previous questionnaires of violence and aggression were studied. The questions concerning attitudes toward violence were adapted from the Velicer Attitudes toward Violence Scale (Anderson et al., 2006). These items were scored on a five point Likert scale, ranging from “Strongly Agree” (1 or 5) to “Strongly Disagree” (1 or 5). The higher scores indicate a more favorable attitude toward violence. The scale was reversed for selected items. Twelve items were used to measure attitudes toward violence. These Questions are included in Table 1. In addition, part of Buss and Perry’s (1992) Aggression Questionnaire was used. Sixteen out of their 29 questions were used in the survey. Questions were selected for each of their four types of aggression. Buss & Perry (1992) had performed a factor analysis on their questions. The questions for this study were those for which the factor loadings were the highest for each of the four types of aggression.
A Study of Attitudes Toward Violence and Aggression

The participants’ responses to each question would be either true or false. A participant’s indication that a particular aggressive statement was true of them produced a higher score on the aggression scale. Also, if they indicated a passive statement was false of them that also produced a higher score on the aggression scale. The complete questionnaire is included in Appendix A.

Procedure

Professors of six CORE classes were contacted to participate in this research. The classes were selected systematically from a list of LaGrange College’s CORE course offerings. The research was explained and all questions were answered. Only one professor declined to participate in the survey. Professors were given envelopes containing the survey and asked to complete the survey by November 25. It was requested that the questionnaires be filled out at the beginning of class, and for the professor to read a standard set of instructions. Professor’s instructions are included in Appendix B. Not all students enrolled in each class were present on the selected days for professors to administer the survey. Students were told that by completing the survey they were giving their informed consent for participation.

Results

Attitudes toward violence were significantly correlated with aggressiveness $r = .399$, $p=.01$. The mean score on aggression was 5.91 (scale was 0 to 16). The mean of the sum total score of violent attitudes was 31.29; scores could range from 12 to 60. Caucasians were less likely to report being aggressive than individuals of other races ($r = .272$, $p=.05$). Male students were also more likely to report being aggressive then female students ($r = -.333$, $p=.01$). Those spending more time per week watching videogames had higher aggression score ($r = .273$, $p=.05$), and those watching more television like MMA also had significantly higher aggression scores ($r = .303$, $p=.05$).

The sum of an individual’s attitude toward violence was significantly correlated with the number of sports they played ($r = .324$, $p= .01$), the amount of sports they watch ($r = .328$, $p=.01$), the amount of television they watch ($r = .246$, $p=.05$), the amount of videogames the play ($r = .332$, $p= .01$), the amount they exercise ($r = .379$, $p=.01$), and the amount of MMA type shows they watch ($r = .355$, $p=.01$).

Discussion and Conclusions

The results were equally in the predicted directions. It appears that individuals who involve themselves in more aggressive and violent activities are more accepting of violence and aggression. The number of sports played and the amount of exercise were both significantly related to tolerance of violence. This could be because the greater the number of sports one plays and exercises increases certain hormones that will make individuals more aggressive. The relationship of violence and MMA type viewing was also high. This is
something important that should be studied further. Tamborini et al. (2005) have been doing research almost exclusively on professional wrestling and not on the growing popular MMA. If MMA is a cause of violent or aggressive tendency, parents especially should be warned before they allow their children to view it. It would be interesting to see in an experiment if MMA viewing does cause increases in aggression and tolerance toward violence.

Racial minorities tended to report more aggression than Caucasians; however there was no significant difference in their attitudes toward violence and aggression. One of the types of aggression is hostility, and one of the questions concerning hostility is “other people always seem to get the breaks” (Buss & Perry, 1992). For some groups this question may not actually measure aggression. Minorities may be simply responding to the experience that other groups of people (e.g., Caucasian) appear to have easier life circumstances. Violence and aggression are important determinants in the behavior of many individuals, and the more we are able to predict behavior the more closely we are reaching a fundamental goal of psychology.

References


