

VIOLENCE AND MEDIA: ARE RATING SYSTEMS NECESSARY?



rating | ban | interact | occur | complex

THINK SCIENTIFICALLY

Mr. Seemy's class is learning about the brain, and today's lesson is about mirror neurons.

"When I touch my ear, neurons fire," Mr. Seemy says. "When I watch you touch your ear, something interesting **occurs**. Some of those same neurons fire again. We call these neurons mirror neurons."

Mr. Seemy continues, "Mirror neurons help us **interact** with other people. When we see someone smile, mirror neurons remind us what it feels like to smile. They also help us imitate **complex** behavior, like dance steps."

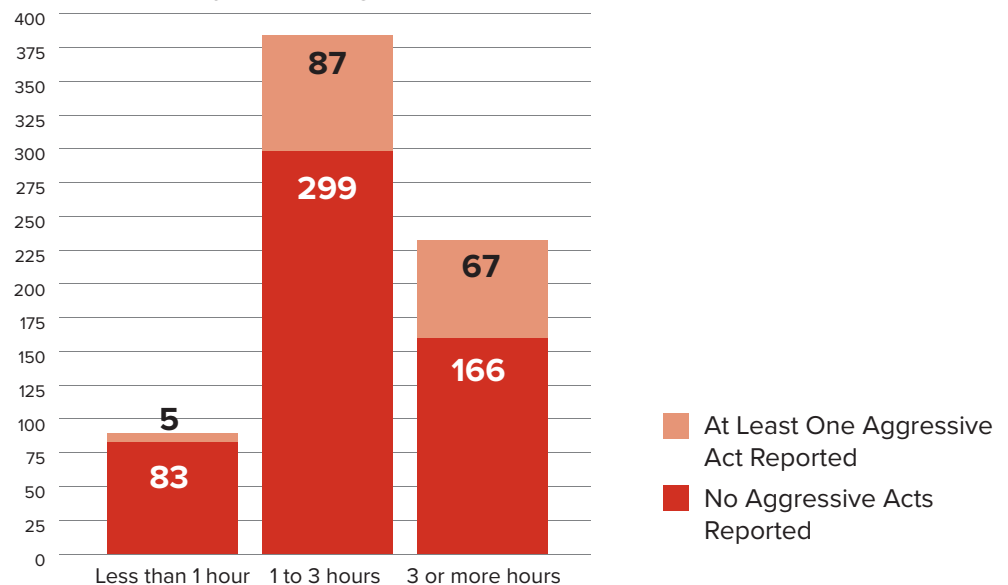
Jamal has been studying media violence, and he has an idea. "Hey, mirror neurons could explain why watching violence in the media might make people violent in real life," he says. "When a kid watches someone punch, mirror neurons help them understand punching, and also help them imitate it."

"My mom read an article once that said watching violent TV makes kids more violent," Jennifer explains. "That's why my brother and I can't watch anything with violence. It's not fair! I'm not going to start being violent just from watching a show!"

"Let's see if we can find the article your mom read online," suggests Mr. Seemy.

Jennifer helps Mr. Seemy locate the online article her mom described: a 2002 study in *Science* magazine. Jennifer shares the information she finds with her classmates. The study compares the amount of TV children around age 14 watched with the number of aggressive acts they committed later (around the ages of 16 and 22).

Aggression Reported After Daily TV Viewing | Total Number of Participants = 707



One of Jennifer's classmates concludes that kids watching 1–3 hours of television led to the highest rate of violence because there were 87 aggressive acts committed by that population. Is she correct? Why or why not?

Do these data support Jennifer's mom's decision to **ban** her children from watching TV shows with violence?

Discuss what other variables you would like to see included in a study like this in order to ensure that time watching TV was the **ONLY** factor leading to aggressive behavior.