

Media Effects on Prosocial Behaviour

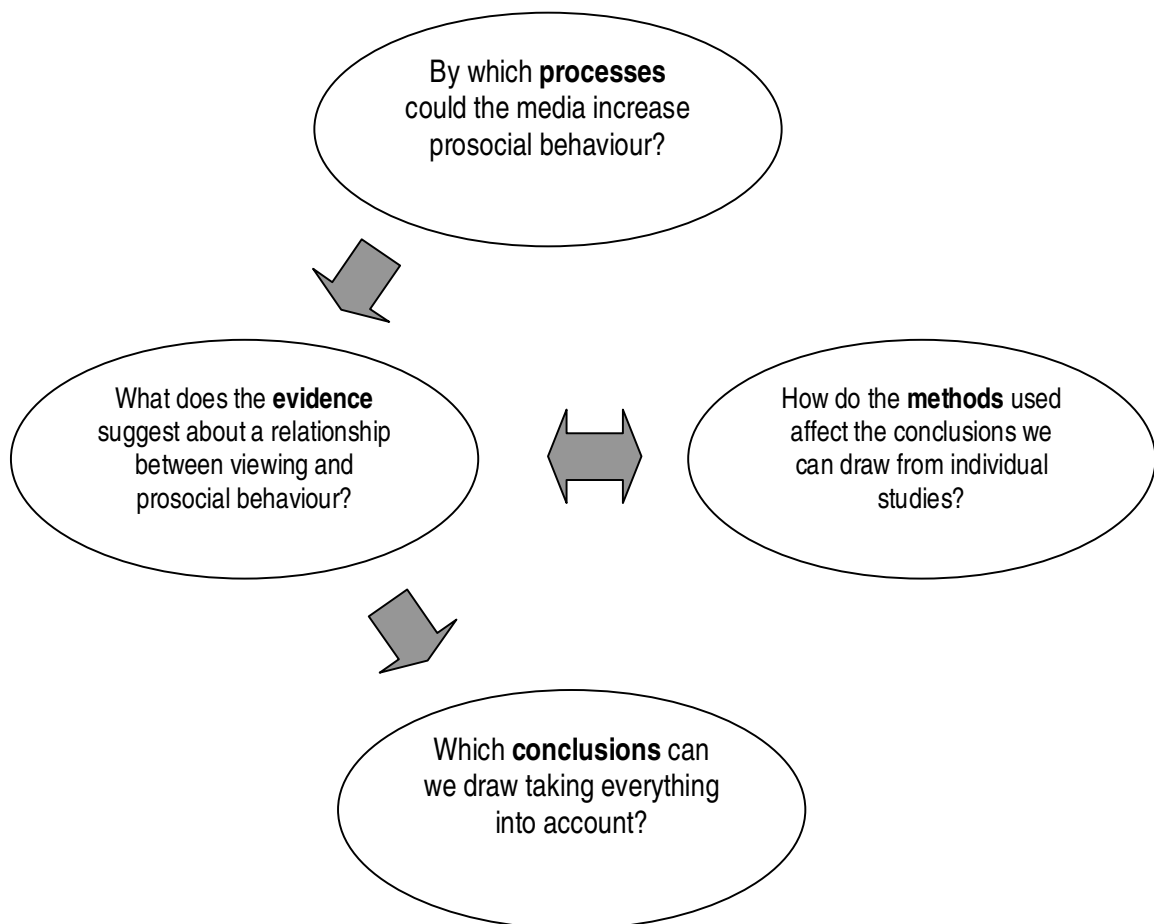


This activity will help you to:

- Understand and recall research studies of media effects on prosocial behaviour
- Write commentary on research findings
- Draw conclusions about the impact of the media on prosocial behaviour
- Use your knowledge of research issues to evaluate media research

Recently we have examined the view that the media (TV, films, computer games) could have the effect of increasing antisocial behaviour. If we accept that this is at least a possibility then we have a duty to examine that the media might also have the potential to increase prosocial behaviour.

When examining this view, we need to take account of the same sorts of issues that applied to antisocial behaviour and we will be going through the same process.



Essay Commentary at A2 Level

When you write essays in your A2 exams, you need to get a great deal of information into a small amount of writing. You can only achieve this by leaving things out, so it is important that you understand what is essential and what is not. Some of the problems that A2 students have achieving marks relate to the amount of irrelevant information they put into their exam answers. Common errors include:

- Trying to include every theory or study they know about.
- Giving ultra-complete accounts of research studies (like APFCCs at AS)
- In their commentary, focusing on trivia or irrelevant points of evaluation

If you learn to eliminate these errors, your essays will be better focused and will contain a greater proportion of relevant material – which means more marks for you.

What is or isn't relevant will depend entirely on the question the examiner asks. Ideally, you will have a good stock of knowledge from which to draw. The skill is in selecting from that knowledge only the bits that are relevant to the question. Here are two examples of possible questions, and an indication of which information is relevant and how it should be used:

Material	“Describe and evaluate two or more studies of the effect of the media on prosocial behaviour.”	“Discuss the view that the media has an effect on prosocial behaviour.”
Explanations of how the media might affect prosocial behaviour.	Not required as part of AO1, except where giving context for the aims of a study. <i>E.G. 'this study was a test of the social learning theory, which suggests'</i>	Definitely should be included, to give a context for the discussion.
Studies of media effects on prosocial behaviour.	At least two need to be described in detail (APFCC).	A number need to be included, but the focus should be on findings and conclusions only. Masses of detail are not required.
Commentary on the implications of the research findings.	Can play a small part in the AO2 side of your essay. <i>E.G. 'This study was useful in giving support to...'</i>	Should be discussed thoroughly in the light of the various explanations of how the media might affect behaviour.
Criticisms of the validity or reliability of research studies (methodological criticisms).	Should be detailed and specific to the study being evaluated. The focus should be on factors that affect the quality of the study.	Is generally less detailed, and should be brought in only when it is relevant to the conclusions that can be drawn about 'the view that...' <i>E.G. 'The lack of ecological validity in this study diminishes its support for...because...'</i>
Ethical criticisms of the research studies.	Are relevant. The focus is on the quality of the studies.	Are not relevant. The focus is on 'the view that...'
Conclusions about the overall quality of the research studies.	Should definitely be included, and should be specific to the study being evaluated.	Can be included, but in more general terms, possibly referring to a range of studies. <i>E.G. 'Research in this area has only examined short term effects so...'</i>
Conclusions about the validity of explanations of media effects.	Are not really relevant.	Should definitely be included