Recent violent events in universities and other shooting incidents in the U.S. have increased the focus on aggressive behavior. However, violence is not constrained to particular countries; it is a global issue. Violence is one of the most important social issues in many countries including the U.S. and Korea. Existing literature has been devoted to providing evidence of the contributing effects of media violence on aggression (i.e., Anderson et al., 2003; Huesmann et al., 2003). Many of these studies have been conducted in similar cultures (i.e., the West). It is unclear if these previous findings can be applied to different cultural contexts, or whether other cultural, societal, and educational factors should be incorporated with psychological factors in order to predict aggressive behaviors.

One argument scholars (e.g., Anderson et al., 2003) have presented is that current research focuses on establishing the relationship between media violence and aggression rather than on how to prevent aggression associated with media violence. Researchers have postulated that the influence of violent media content on aggressive attitudes and behaviors can vary, based on how media content is constructed (Cantor & Wilson, 2003). The existing research on media-based strategies for aggression reduction can be divided into the categories of the effectiveness of simple interventions (centered on message-based intervention), formal media literacy curricula, and use of media production (Cantor & Wilson, 2003). Message-based intervention (e.g., verbal/written messages during violent programs) is not very effective for younger children, and studies on media-based intervention focus heavily on the influence of anti-violence media content (Mattern & Lindholm, 2001; Cantor & Wilson, 2003). Previous studies in the area of media violence investigated the effects of the cognition-based-intervention (i.e., change in attitudes on aggression). According to excitation transfer theory, elevated arousal level by viewing media violence may be transferred to the following experiences and intensify the emotional responses to the later experiences (Zillmann, 1971). Based on this theory, it was hypothesized that non-violent media content would serve as a mechanism to decrease the arousal level during and after exposure to media violence and could also reduce aggressive behaviors. While it has been proven that repeated exposure to media violence has both short-term (Ballard et al., 2006) and long-term effects (Huesmann, 2003), the current study is one of the first know attempts to cross-culturally examine the short-term effects of media violence, as well as the role of non-violent content between and after the repeated exposure to media violence.

One subset of media violence is sports media violence. That is the focus of this study. The reason for focusing on sport media violence is that sports (and news) are the most prevalent media violence conduits. The Sports Business Research Network (2006) reported that 18-to-34 year olds yielded over 52% of the Mixed Martial Arts viewing market. Also, sports media violence is not included in the rating systems in the U.S. and Canada (McDaniel et al., 2006). Finally, there is a need for more attention to be paid to sports media violence because of the proliferation of new violent sports such as “Ultimate Fighting Championship” in the U.S. and the K-League in South Korea.

The primary purpose of this study was to demonstrate whether viewing non-violent content (i.e., figure-skating and non-violent cartoons) between/after exposure to sports media violence reduces the level of aggression in the subject. Additionally, this study measured whether there is a difference between two different non-violent programs in terms of the effectiveness in aggression reduction.

A user-friendly, web-based aggression measurement program (WAMP) was developed for this study. This allowed subjects to play a reaction-time game against a character or imaginary confederate, while having a chance to punish him/her with electronic shocks or noise by pressing the shock button (i.e., by clicking a mouse button). This was similar to the traditional aggression measurement methods. The sample chosen for this study consisted of males and females from the U.S. and South Korea whose ages ranged between 10 and 16 years old.

Based on the two-pronged purpose noted above, this study utilized a 2 (level of media violence) × 2 (level of media violence) × 2 (level of media violence) repeated factorial design in which subjects will be assigned to one of four treatment conditions. Subjects viewed three different sequences of media content. Subjects in all four conditions were exposed to violent media.
content (violent1, violent2, violent3) lasting approximately 30 minutes. After exposure to violent content, participants completed baseline tasks (i.e., listening to meditation music). This controlled baseline emotion and arousal and lasted five minutes. Following initial media exposure subsequent media content varied (e.g., violent1, non-violent1, violent2) according to the subjects’ group assignments. Subjects’ level of state aggression was measured during/after each media stimuli. Subjects completed WAMP after watching each video stimulus. Heart rate and blood pressure were recorded every 15 minutes. Using WAMP scores as a comparison between groups allowed investigation of the following issues: 1) the alleviating effect of non-violent media content, 2) its effectiveness at reducing the level of aggression in terms of time of exposure (i.e., between viewing violent media vs. after viewing violent media) and 3) its effectiveness in reducing levels of aggression in terms of the type of non-violent media content (i.e., sports vs. cartoon). The series of comparison was measured by one-way ANOVA analysis in SPSS 17.0.

The results from this study showed that non-violent content can serve as a significant moderating factor for Korean subjects. Data indicated that American subjects in the condition with two violent clips and one non-violent clip showed higher levels of aggression ($M = 74.18, SD = 32$) than those in the condition with three violent clips ($M = 69.03, SD = 23.34$). On the contrary, Korean subjects in the three violent clips condition showed higher levels of aggression ($M = 67.56, SD = 2.91$) than subjects in the two violent clips and one non-violent clip condition ($M = 55.56, SD = 2.31$).

The findings of this study indicate that Americans may have become desensitized to violent media content. Exposure to violent media content, following non-violent media content produced higher levels of aggression in American subjects then continuous exposure to violent media content. Based on the finding of this study, the sport management and communication implications are immense. As sports serves as a form of entertainment in American society, will desensitization to violent media content, including violent sport media content, result in sport organizations increasing violent content to produce the entertainment aspect of sport? This will not only perpetually increase violent media content, but also subsequently increase aggression levels, which could have negative implications in a sports fan (entertainment) environment.