Television and its Relationship to a Person's Character

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TELEVISION AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO A
PERSON'S CHARACTER

being

A Thesis Presented to the Graduate Faculty
of the Fort Hays State University in
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Master of Science

by

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Date 12.1.95 Approved

Approved

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Approved

Chair, Graduate Council
The research described in this thesis utilized human subjects. The thesis prospectus was therefore examined by the Human Subjects Research Committee of the Psychology Department, Fort Hays State University, and found to comply with Title 45, Subtitle A - Department of Health, Education and Welfare, General Administration; Part 46 - Protection of Human Subjects.

Date

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Ethics Committee Chairman

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Ethics Committee Member
ABSTRACT

The following study looked at the relationship between the types of television shows a person watches, either violent, neutral, or nonviolent, and his/her score on the Character Counts Questionnaire (CCQ), which measures a person's character and ethical values. Subjects were asked to complete the CCQ and rate on a five point bipolar scale, whether they enjoyed or did not enjoy watching the selected television shows.

While using the CCQ, several problems were found and changes were made to overcome them. The most prevalent problem was that the original scoring method was so rigid it did not give a reflective measure of the person's character. In order to derive a more reflective measure of the subject's character an alternate scoring method was implemented. Results from both scoring methods were analyzed and discussed.

It was hypothesized that the results would show a negative correlation between the CCQ scores and the enjoyment of violent television shows, as well as a positive correlation between the CCQ scores and the enjoyment of both nonviolent and neutral television shows. The Pearson product-moment correlation was used to measure the relationships. The results using both the original and alternate scoring supported the hypothesis of a negative correlation between the CCQ scores and the enjoyment of violent television shows, but did not support the hypotheses of a positive correlation between the CCQ scores and the enjoyment of both nonviolent and neutral television shows. This study also tested whether males would have lower scores than females, regardless of age, whether older subjects would have higher scores than younger subjects, regardless of gender, and whether young males would have the lowest scores as compared to old males and young or old females. A 2 (Age Group) x 2 (Gender) ANOVA was used to analyze
the hypotheses. Using the original scoring, no significant differences were found between the groups. However, using the alternate scoring significant differences did arise. Males had significantly lower scores than females, regardless of age, older subjects had significantly higher scores than younger subjects, regardless of gender, and young males had the lowest scores as compared to old males and young or old females.
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INTRODUCTION

In the United States today, television has become a major socializing instrument shaping attitudes concerning all aspects of life, including gender roles, authority, problem solving and individual responsibility. For this reason there has been much literature and research produced on the topic of television and how it affects people. As of 1982, 2500 scientific reports have been written with approximately four-fifths of them dealing with television's effect on antisocial behavior (Hennigan, Del Rosario, Heath, Cook, Wharton, & Calder, 1982). Social science research has found that viewing television programs portraying violent and/or criminal acts can, under certain circumstances, cause some children and adolescents to act more aggressively (Hennigan et al., 1982). It is important to note that Hennigan et al. find this impact occurs only under certain conditions, which are not specified, and that not everyone will be affected by the television programs they are viewing. Hennigan et al. (1982) hypothesize that television viewing has had an impact on instrumental criminal behavior (i.e., theft and burglary) for the following reasons: first, television advertisers purposefully stimulate desires for material goods, as well as portray wealthy people as more appealing than lower income viewers; second, television has promoted comparing oneself to the attractive and popular wealthy people portrayed on television; and third, television has become an important and accessible source for normative information.

In America all children, no matter whether rich or poor, spend much time viewing television. In 1990, 99% of American households owned at least one television, and 66% owned two or more. Today's children spend an average of 15,000 hours watching television as compared to 11,000 hours spent in school. The average teenager will have spent about 7 years of his or her life in front of the
television (Comstock & Strasburger, 1990). The American Psychological Association Task Force on Television and Society reported that by the end of elementary school, the average child viewing television will have witnessed approximately 30,000 violent acts with as many as 800 of these being murders (Hoberman, 1990).

American adolescents, when not in front of the television, have become both the perpetrators and the victims of a disproportionate number of antisocial acts, and an estimated 15% of the adolescents repeatedly participate in antisocial acts. Teenagers commit one-third of all violent crimes. Suicide and homicide have become two of the three leading causes of death for this country’s adolescents (Hoberman, 1990).

Literature Review

Defining Violence

The biggest dilemma facing researchers today in the study of television violence is finding a single definition for violence. The definition being used depends on which organization is defining violence and how it will benefit that organization. The Cultural Indicators Project defines violence as: “The overt expression of physical force (with or without a weapon, against self or others) compelling action against one’s will on pain of being hurt or killed, or actually hurting or killing” (Surgeon General, 1972, p.36). Columbia Broadcasting System’s monitoring project defines violence as “the use of physical force against persons or animals, or the articulated, explicit threat of physical force to compel particular behavior on the part of that person” (Surgeon General, 1972, p.36). Another commonly used definition of violence is “physical acts or the threats of physical acts
by humans designed to inflict physical injury to persons or damage to property” (Surgeon General, 1972, p.36).

Two other problems facing researchers in studying violence is defining the rate of violence within a given period of time and measuring the violence. The CBS monitoring project defines a single act of violence as: “one sustained dramatically continuous event involving violence with essentially the same group of participants and with no major interruption in continuity” (Surgeon General, 1972, p.37). In other words, rather than counting each individual hit or kick that takes place in a scene, CBS counts the entire scene as a single act of violence. Measuring violence may also be difficult. The questionnaire is a common tool used for measuring violence. Questionnaires have the advantages of being easily administered and scored, less time consuming, and more cost efficient than other available measurement methods. However, questionnaires do have two potential problems. First, the terms used in the questionnaire may be ambiguous and, second, the desired responses may be readily apparent (Edmunds & Kendrick, 1980). Several standard questionnaires have been developed to avoid these pitfalls while accurately measuring violence and hostility. Examples of such questionnaires include the Buss-Durkee Inventory, Green and Stacey Aggression and Hostility Questionnaire, Zaks and Walters Aggressiveness Scale, The Manifest Hostility Scale, The Iowa Hostility Inventory, and the Need Aggression Scale (Edmunds & Kendrick, 1980).

These questionnaires were developed to consider a wide variety of aggression types. For example, the Buss-Durkee Inventory is an inventory made up of eight scales: Assault, Indirect Hostility, Irritability, Negativism, Resentment, Suspicion, Verbal Hostility, Guilt, and consists of 75 items (Buss & Durkee, 1957). This inventory measures the various ways hostility is expressed as well as the
various aspects of hostility. The Buss-Durkee Inventory has been used in several real-life setting studies to show that attending violent movies promotes aggressive tendencies. A study using the Buss-Durkee Inventory conducted by Black and Bevan (1992), found that not only do films featuring violence tend to draw a crowd with a propensity for violence but viewing such films further heightens the viewers' violent tendencies.

Theoretical Perspectives

As the types and amounts of violence have increased so have the theories that account for them. Attention to violence on television, and the systematic study of violence on television began in the 1950s when television first became commonplace in the American home. Over the past four decades theories of how television programs and advertisements affect television viewers have increased but for this paper only the more widely favored theories will be discussed.

Sociological Theory. The sociological theory of television violence and aggression simply states that the amount of television violence being viewed is the critical factor for determining aggression. Lynn, Hampson, and Agahi (1989) contend that this definition is the fundamental error of the theory since individual differences related to susceptibility of viewing television violence are not taken into account. Advocates of the sociological theory maintain that violent behavior viewed on television is learned through modeling and desensitization. Desensitization, in terms of viewing violence on television, occurs when expectations learned through past experiences shape a person’s current behaviors by failing to initiate a response that previously would have been appropriate for the situation (Griffiths & Shuckford, 1989).

Even though the supporting evidence for the sociological theory is weak, the evidence still warrants discussion. First, many studies have found that while
adolescent subjects displayed elevated levels of aggression immediately after viewing a violent film, these behaviors were short lived and did not transfer into everyday life. Second, several studies did find a correlation between viewing television violence and aggression, however, the correlation is quite low, \( r = .05 \) to \( .15 \). Three alternate explanations for this positive correlation were proposed: (a) the television violence caused the aggression, (b) the person with aggressive tendencies enjoys and, therefore, watches more television violence, and (c) there is a common factor underlying both the aggressive personality and viewing television violence, such as a sociopathic personality. The third piece of evidence offered as support for the sociological theory is two studies, one conducted in Finland and the other in the United States, which hypothesized that one can predict later aggression by the amount of television violence viewed as a child. However, this hypothesis was not supported in Finland for either girls or boys, and there was only minimal evidence supporting this hypothesis in the United States, and then only for girls, \( r = .135 \) (Lynn et al., 1989).

Psychological blunting or desensitization has been supported by several studies. Cline, Croft, and Courrier (1973) found that heavy television viewers were less aroused by violent, dramatic programs than were the less frequent viewers. It is also hypothesized that the surroundings of the viewer may cause the person to become desensitized to violence. If a person continually watches violent programs in the surroundings of a safe and relaxed environment, such as a home, they will become conditioned to remain calm when encountering violence (Griffiths & Shuckford, 1989). Drabman and Thomas performed studies in 1974 and 1975 in which they found that a child’s awareness of violence is decreased to the extent that the child’s tolerance level for aggression increases with additional exposure to television violence (Drabmen & Thomas, 1974). An alternate but similar
explanation for desensitization is that repeated exposure to violence on television causes violent acts to lose their impact or ability to stimulate and habituation occurs (Griffiths & Shuckford, 1989).

Even though support for the sociological theory is weak, it should not be ignored. This theory may not fully answer the television violence-aggressive behavior question, but it may play an important part. Since psychological blunting or desensitization has been supported by several studies, the sociological theory may be one piece of the puzzle.

**Genotype-Environment Correlation and Interaction Theory.** The correlation and the interaction between genetics and environment are two different processes that explain how genetics determines personality and behavior. The genotype-environment correlation explains how parents transmit their characteristics both genetically and environmentally to their children (Lynn et al., 1989). An example of the genotype-environment correlation is intelligence. Parents transmit their intelligence to their children through their genes and through the educational environment they provide. Genotype-environment interaction attempts to explain why unrelated children react differently in the same environment, as well as why siblings may react differently to the same violent film (Lynn et al., 1989). The theory postulates that children form their own environments in accordance with their genetic predispositions, but they also seek out different environments that compliment these genetic predispositions (Lynn et al., 1989).

One important variable in the genotype-environment correlation and interaction theory is the type of television viewer the child is—active or passive. If the child is a passive viewer of television violence, that is, the child views the violent programs in the presence of the family, then the high level of aggression would be transmitted to the child both genetically and environmentally since the parents are
indicating approval of these programs and thus showing the existence of a general sociopathic personality trait in the family. In a study by Lynn et al. (1989), this theory was not supported in that families with a high level of aggression did not pass this aggression on to their children merely by watching television violence (Lynn et al., 1989). If however, the child is an active viewer, that is, the child specifically watches violent programs, researchers postulate that a genetically determined personality disposition, and not environmental factors alone, was responsible for the enjoyment of such programs (Lynn et al., 1989). The Lynn et al. study (1989) found that there is a correlation between adolescent television viewing and the amount of violence in the programs \((r=.96)\) for both sexes. It was also found that viewing TV violence was positively correlated with the enjoyment of television violence \((r=.18\) for males, \(r=.27\) for females). These results indicate that the amount of violence in a television program is related to the reason children watch and enjoy the program. However, this study found that the amount of television violence viewed had no effect on aggression. This study does not support the sociological theory, but is consistent with the genotype-environment interaction theory and explains why unrelated children might react differently to the same TV program in the same environment (Lynn et al., 1989).

**Social Learning Theory.** In 1963, Bandura developed his social learning theory that states that all children model their behaviors after those of adults. The theory also states that children learn which behaviors are acceptable and when they are appropriate by observing adults performing these behaviors. Since today's children spend approximately 4,000 more hours watching television than attending school and since many parents are away from home working, the television has become the newest and most easily accessible model for observational learning about many adult behaviors, including rape, murder, and domestic violence.
(Comstock & Strasburger, 1990). Steuer, Applefield, and Smith (1971) validated Bandura's Bobo-Doll study that supported the social learning theory. Steuer et al. (1971) had nursery school students view violent and non-violent television programs during their class breaks and found that after viewing the violent programs the children displayed more aggressiveness on the playground as compared to behavior following viewing the non-violent programs. Other data from the Bobo-doll studies showed that novel aggressive responses are readily mimicked from cartoons such as “Cat Lady” suggesting that Saturday morning cartoons to be an unhealthy reservoir of violence (Comstock & Strasburger, 1990). Also in support of the social learning theory, a study done by Singer and Singer (1981) found that viewing violent television was predictive of aggressive behavior for the following 2 years. Hicks (1965) showed that children exposed to aggressive cartoon shows could reproduce the actions up to 6 or 8 months later upon request.

Instigation and Cue Theory. This theory postulates that the social learning theory is valid but that it is missing an important component, that of generalization. This theory suggests that since many television programs portray violence as a means to gain power, if the good guys come out on top, then violence is justifiable. The idea of justifiable violence, coupled with the fact that many of today's television programs portray the world as a violent place where criminals walk the streets looking for victims, leads children who view these programs to conclude that violence is a justifiable means to achieve a peaceful world (Comstock & Strasburger, 1990). Bandura, Ross, and Ross (1963) showed preschoolers two versions of a movie with the characters “Rocky” and “Johnny”. In the first version, Rocky took Johnny’s toy away from him and Rocky was rewarded. In the second version Johnny defended himself aggressively against Rocky (i.e. the aggressor was punished for his actions). Upon viewing the first version where the aggressor
is rewarded, the preschoolers acted more aggressively themselves. When the preschoolers were asked how many of them would imitate Rocky, 60% of the children who saw him rewarded but only 20% of the children who saw him punished said that they would (Bandura et al., 1963). The researchers showed that behavior is not only learned through observation but is also shaped by how effective the behavior appears to be (Bandura et al., 1963).

Arousal Theory. The arousal theory states that certain programs that evoke a generalized level of emotional arousal can affect a person's subsequent behavior. The arousal theory has important implications since a characteristic that separates American children's television programs from those of other cultures is their frenzied pace of presentation, rapid cuts, loud music, and quick commercials. Studies have even linked "Sesame Street" to aggressive behaviors and restlessness in preschoolers who watch the show several times a day (Comstock & Strasburger, 1990). Game shows have also been associated with aggressive behaviors in children. The screaming contestants and strong music can be confusing to a young child who can not process these programs in the same way as adults (Singer, 1985). A corollary of the arousal theory is that frequent viewing of violent films has been shown to desensitize the viewer so that the viewer no longer becomes physiologically aroused. Moreover, the studies found that when aroused a desensitized person is more likely to act aggressively (Comstock & Strasburger, 1990). Zajonc (1965) suggested that when highly aroused, a person will tend to act out those behaviors most easily retrieved from memory. It stands to reason that if a person watches a large amount of violence, then violent behaviors will most likely be displayed (Zajonc, 1965).

Catharsis Theory. This theory, although not supported by research, states that viewing violent television programs helps people purge their aggressive
behaviors, thus making them less violent. Researchers studying this theory, however, found that "this type of fantasy violence may actually increase the likelihood that some recently angered member of a movie or television audience will attack his own frustrater, or perhaps even some innocent people he happens to associate with the anger instigator" (Berkowitz & Rawlings, 1963, p.411). It may also be that the fantasizing, through television watching, may actually provide an opportunity to rehearse aggressive behaviors that may be displayed at a later time (Singer, 1985). According to these studies there is no firm substantiation for the catharsis theory.

After four decades of researching the various theories attempting to explain how and why television violence impacts behavior, most evidence appears to be in favor of Bandura’s social learning theory and its modifications. In the future, this theory may play an important part in producing television shows and movies.

**Research Methodologies**

According to Edmunds and Kendrick (1980) there are two main categories of research methods used to study the effect of violence: field studies and laboratory experiments. In addition, a third method has been recently introduced, the experience sampling method.

**Field Studies.** Field studies seek to overcome many of the limitations found in laboratory research, such as restricted viewing time and artificial settings (Liebert, Sprafkin, & Davidson 1972). There are two major types of field studies: correlational and experimental. Correlational field studies play an important role when conducting research on questions of a "which came first, the chicken or the egg" nature. In the case of television violence and behavior, correlational studies have produced many pieces of evidence showing that viewing television violence and acting aggressively are related, but the evidence does not definitively prove
whether viewing television violence caused the aggressive actions or if people who act aggressively also prefer to watch violent television programs (Comstock & Strasburger, 1990). One example of this dilemma is shown by the 1972 Maryland survey in which 2300 junior and senior high school students were asked to list their four favorite TV shows and fill out a questionnaire concerning their daily activities. The television programs were then rated for their violent content and the answers on the questionnaire analyzed for aggressive or deviant behavior. It was found that the more aggressive or behaviorally deviant the student was the higher the violence content of their favorite television shows (Comstock & Strasburger, 1990).

However, whether violent programs caused the aggressive behavior or was merely a choice made by an aggressive person was not determined.

The experimental field study combines the experimental control of the laboratory setting with the naturalistic approach of the correlational field study (Liebert et al., 1972). In experimental field studies, subjects are randomly selected from a group with specified characteristics and placed in simulated natural settings. In these settings the subjects are shown different television programs or movies with varying degrees of violence. The researchers then measure the effect these programs have on the subjects' aggressive behaviors after a period of time (hours, days, or weeks). This type of study is important because it provides the strongest test of validity in both a time and cost efficient manner. However, field study research using natural settings can be difficult to structure (Freedman, 1984). A major drawback is that all potential situational determinants of aggression can not be controlled and, thus, a causal relationship between variables can not be definitively established (Edmunds & Kendrick, 1980). Another criticism of field studies is that the effects of exposure to a stimulus may be underestimated due to the abnormally short viewing durations (Wood, Wong, & Chachere, 1991). For
example, viewing a violent television program for several hours may not show the same effect as consistently viewing these programs for several years.

**Laboratory Studies.** Laboratory settings differ from field settings in that the participants are aware that they are being tested, random assignment of participants can be controlled, and the independent variable can be manipulated with less difficulty (Wood et al., 1991). Laboratory experiments, due to the highly controlled nature of the studies, allow a researcher to make causal inferences about relationships. The experimental method used in laboratories involves manipulating the independent variable or variables and measuring how these changes affect the dependent variable while holding all other variables constant. In this way the researcher can be sure that the resulting changes are due to the independent variable and, therefore, show a causal relationship. While this type of research shows causal relationships, one may not be able to generalize these results to situations outside the laboratory setting (Freedman, 1984). For example, laboratory results of the effects of television violence on aggression may not generalize outside the lab for the following reasons: the measures of aggression are only indicators of possible aggression if put into a similar situation, the subjects may assume that the researchers approve of the behaviors and thus be more likely to perform them, and the programs shown for the studies may be more extreme and are shown in isolation as compared to normal television viewing (Freedman, 1984). Freedman (1986) submits that laboratory studies overestimate the effect television violence has on aggression, and that it is up to studies performed outside this setting to show that violence on television does impact aggressive behavior.

**Experience Sampling Method.** The experience sampling method (ESM) is a relatively new technique for studying the role television plays in people's daily lives (Kubey & Csikszentmihalyi, 1992). In the experience sampling method the subject
uses an electronic beeper and a diary, filling in a diary page every time the beeper sounds—about six times a day for one year. This technique is popular among social scientists since a person’s emotional responses to every day events can be evaluated in a “naturalistic” setting. However, those opposed to the use of ESM argue, “...that this is a very intrusive procedure that results in peculiar findings from a bizarre sample of the populace that is willing to submit to electronic voyeurism” (Kubey & Csikszentmihalyi, 1992, p.760). The procedure requires a dedicated and dependable subject who may not be easy to find and when found may not represent a cross-section of the population.

A study of 107 adults in the Chicago area from five different corporations found some interesting results. The results showed that nearly 25% of the time at home was spent watching television. It was also found that while viewing television “oral” consumption, such as eating and smoking was extremely high (34.9%) as compared to the occurrence during non-viewing activities. Viewers who watched more than 3 1/2 hours of television a day reported feeling less active and alert while participating in family activities. Kubey and Csikszentmihalyi (1992) also report that, “heavy viewers spend more time with TV but find it less rewarding. Heavy viewers’ experience with the medium is also more likely to be low in concentration and alertness, and this suggests that some viewers may be less mentally alert and more desensitized when viewing” (p.761-762). This desensitization while viewing violence on television can increase the person’s tolerance to violence in real life (Griffiths & Shuckford, 1989).

Studies on Aggression and Violence

As with many other controversial issues, there are studies supporting and not supporting the effect that television violence has on a child’s aggressiveness as well as the child’s perception of violence in the world around them. Conclusions
presented in the 1972 Surgeon General's Report and the 1982 report from the National Institute of Mental Health showing that television violence has a causal effect on children were reaffirmed by the American Psychological Association (Friedrich-Cofer & Huston, 1986). Even though some researchers, like Freedman (1986), will argue about the validity of these studies, the vast majority of evidence from various research methods support the hypothesis that television violence affects aggression (Friedrich-Cofer & Huston, 1986). Some of the more notable studies will be summarized in the following material.

Friedman and Johnson (1972) conducted a study to advance the understanding of the relationship between television viewing and social aggression in boys. In a Baltimore school Friedman and Johnson studied 19 white and 20 black eighth and ninth grade boys with disciplinary problems and 41 boys of similar racial distribution who had no known disciplinary problems. After administering questionnaires that asked for a history of each boy's television habits, as well as the use of other media and the sports in which they were involved, some interesting results were found. Many boys indicated that their main reason for viewing television was for enjoyment or passing time. The "aggressive" boys reported watching television approximately 20% more than the "nonaggressive" boys. The "aggressive" boys also appeared more selective in their viewing habits than were the "nonaggressive" boys. When asked about their perception of people in general, the "aggressive" white boys indicated a lower amount of trust in others as compared to the "nonaggressive" white boys. There was no difference found among the black boys. Although this study indicates a relationship between televised violence and aggression, statistically it is not strong enough to show direct evidence.
Belson, in 1978, did a correlational study in which he surveyed 1500 12-17 year old males in London. Belson examined 13 different types of violence including "realistic fiction", "gruesome", "horrific", and "in good cause." In addition, he also studied different types of television programs like cartoons, sports, comedies, and science fiction. Belson then statistically matched the boys on all variables except the ones of interest and came up with four major findings. First, the males who watched larger amounts of violent programs committed more seriously harmful, antisocial and criminal acts than those who viewed less of this type of programing. Second, less serious aggressive behaviors were also positively associated with increased viewing of violent programs. Third, exposure to other media violence, such as comic books and films, were associated with both serious and less serious types of aggression. Exposure to violence in the newspaper was also associated with less serious offenses. Fourth, aggressiveness in sports and the use of foul language was also associated with higher exposure to television violence (Belson, 1978).

Singer and Singer (1983) found that in studies in which they logged the television viewing and spontaneous play of two groups of pre-schoolers over a year's time, the children who continually viewed aggressive action adventure or cartoon shows displayed more overt aggressive behaviors. These results could not be disputed by either the preferential-viewing hypothesis which states that an aggressive child may simply prefer to watch violent television programs, or the family aggression pattern which is that an aggressive child is imitating a parent who is openly violent and may also prefer violent television programs (Singer & Singer, 1983).

In 1976, Gerbner and Gross studied the relationship between viewing violence on the local news broadcasts and children's perceptions of violence and
crime in their neighborhoods. They found that individuals who watched a great deal of television were more likely to perceive their neighborhoods as unsafe and worry about their own safety. Gerbner and Gross also found that these individuals tended to overestimate the number of people employed in law enforcement occupations (Gerbner & Gross, 1976). Although other researchers had been unable to replicate Gerbner and Gross’s study, which was done in the United States, Cairns (1990) set out to see if the same results could be found in Northern Ireland. Cairns’ study consisted of interviewing 520 eight and eleven year old children from five small, rural towns in Northern Ireland. The children were asked how often they viewed the local news and then how much crime had taken place around their towns in the previous 2 years. It was found that overall those children from areas with more news coverage of crime reported greater levels of crime than those children from areas with less crime coverage. It was also found that boys tended to report greater levels of crime than did girls in the same area. These results suggest that exposure to television news does influence some children’s perceptions of violence in their neighborhoods. These results have, however, been questioned since the study did not conclude if the result was a correlation with viewing televised news specifically or simply a correlation with heavy television viewing in general that affected the children’s perceptions of violence (Cairns, 1990).

The Milavsky NBC report was issued in 1982 lending strong evidence to the argument that viewing television violence is associated with aggression. This report was a 3-year longitudinal study that collected data at six different intervals from 2400 7-12 year old males and 800 12-16 year old males from Minneapolis and Fort Worth. This study showed that young people who viewed more television violence also displayed a greater amount of aggressive behavior. These findings also provided further evidence that continued exposure to violent television may
have a cumulative effect. Due to the large numbers of subjects and consistent findings for both sexes at all ages, this study dramatically supports the positive relationship between aggressive behavior and viewing television violence (Comstock & Strasburger, 1990).

Huesmann and Eron et al. conducted an extensive longitudinal study consisting of three individual studies reported in 1963, 1972, and 1984. The original study in 1960 consisted of 875 third graders from a semirural county in New York's Hudson River Valley. The students, their peers, and their parents were interviewed to determine the students' favorite television programs and their levels of aggressiveness as viewed by themselves and others. Ten years later a second study of 427 teenagers who participated in the original 1960 study was conducted. The teenagers and their peers were interviewed and the same information gathered using the same interviewing technique as in the previous study. The responses from the interviews in both studies were categorized either as measures of aggression or as potential predictors of aggression (Eron, Huesmann, Lefkowitz, & Walder, 1972).

Eron et al. (1972) found that the television habits established by 8 to 9 year old boys influenced their aggressive behavior at that time and was also strongly correlated with aggressive behavior 10 years later. They also found that the more violent the programs that third grade boys preferred, the more aggressive their behavior was immediately and 10 years later. However, aggressive behavior in the 3rd grade was not predictive of the viewing of television violence at age 19. This study also found that early viewing habits were more reliable predictors of later aggression than were the current viewing habits of the 19 year olds. In addition, the more television the subjects watched at age 18 and the more violent the programs, the more likely they were to believe these scenes were realistic and thus
portrayed appropriate ways to settle problems (Eron et al., 1972). These results were not found to be true for girls. The results also coincide with Bandura’s findings that boys tend to imitate violent behaviors more often than girls. Girls will, however, imitate aggressive behaviors when such behavior is reinforced (Eron et al., 1972).

Huesmann and his colleagues, 10 years later, again restudied the subjects from the 1960 study, now age 30. They again found a link between viewing television at 8 years of age and antisocial behavior 20 years later (Huesmann, 1986). With these findings they concluded:

Aggressive habits seem to be learned early in life, and once established, are resistant to change and predictive of serious adult antisocial behavior. If a child’s observation of media violence promotes the learning of aggressive habits, it can have harmful lifelong consequences. (Huesmann, 1986, p.129).

Huesmann later added an information-processing perspective to his theory. Huesmann suggested that children form and store problem-solving strategies learned through observation. Repeated scenes depicting violence as a form of problem-solving can lead to the storage of patterns for aggressive behavior that can later be recalled if similar retrieval cues are present (Josephson, 1987). Huesmann contends that by pairing ordinary situational stimuli with portrayals of violence one can affect children's aggressive actions. In classical conditioning terms, previously neutral stimuli can have an aggressive meaning if the stimuli have been paired with an aggressive act (Josephson, 1987).

Implications of Research

The results of experiments involving young children and the effect of television violence on later aggression have important implications for adolescent behavior. The survey data from numerous experiments can identify possible circumstances that may trigger aggressive or antisocial behavior in children. Such circumstances may include, but are not limited to:
1. reward or lack of punishment for the perpetrator of violence;
2. portrayal of the violence as being justified;
3. cues in the portrayal that mimic real life;
4. portrayal of the perpetrator as being similar to the viewer;
5. depiction of behavior that has vengeful motives;
6. depiction of violence without consequences—violence without pain, suffering, sorrow, or remorse;
7. real-life violence;
8. uncriticized violence;
9. violence that pleases the viewer;
10. violence without associated humor in the story;
11. abuse that includes physical violence as well verbal abuse;
12. aggression against females by males engaged in sexual conquest;
13. portrayals—whether violent or not—that leave the viewer in an aroused state;
14. viewers who are angry or provoked before viewing a violent portrayal or who are frustrated afterward


The research findings may also suggest ways to avoid the negative effects of television violence on children. One of the greatest predictors of how a child will react to television violence is the parent-child interaction around television. Even though parents are voicing concern over what their children are watching, there is little parental control or supervision over television viewing. Rubenstein (1983) notes that this lack of supervision is most unfortunate since many studies now show that parental intervention through discussion may prevent the negative effects of viewing and may, in fact, enhance the positive effects. Children viewing television programs with their parents tend to learn more from the television's educational content and less from the television's negative portrayals than children who view television without their parents. It appears that if consistent messages come from other socialization sources, such as parents, these messages will override the contrary messages delivered by the television (Van Evra, 1992).

As the previous survey indicates, there has been extensive research published to determine the effect television violence has in promoting aggressive
behavior. The present study examined the effect of television violence on the viewing audience from a different perspective. The main shortcoming of the earlier studies has been their failure to explain why some children become aggressive while other children do not, despite viewing the same violent programs. This failure suggests that a much deeper issue is being raised, and that is the issue of the character of the child and his or her values that allow or inhibit certain behaviors. In the past, parents shaped the character of their children by teaching their own values. Is it possible that television is taking over this important task of teaching values?

In comparison to studies on how television affects aggressive behavior, studies examining how television violence affects a person's values are relatively new. The following study examined the relationship between viewing and enjoyment of aggressive television shows and a person's character and value system. Researchers may never prove that television violence causes aggression, but they may be able to show a relationship between the viewing of violent programs and a measured decrease in those values that might inhibit aggressive acts.
Hypotheses

This study examined the relationship between types of television viewed, either violent, nonviolent, or neutral, and a person's character as measured by the Character Counts Questionnaire.

Hypotheses to be tested were:

1. There will be a negative correlation between the Character Counts Questionnaire scores and the enjoyment of violent television shows. This hypothesis is supported by Hearold's (1986) study in which he found that people viewing violent shows had the potential to display more antisocial behaviors than those not viewing violent television.

2. There will be a positive correlation between the Character Counts Questionnaire scores and the enjoyment of nonviolent television shows. This hypothesis is an extension of the previous one. If violent television is positively correlated with low Character Counts Questionnaire scores then viewing nonviolent shows should be less negatively and possibly positively correlated with the CCQ scores.

3. There will be a positive correlation between the Character Counts Questionnaire scores and the enjoyment of neutral television shows. This hypothesis is based on the assumption that if enjoyment of violent television is negatively correlated with Character Counts Questionnaire scores then enjoying neutral shows rather than violent shows should result in a less negative, and possibly positive relationship.

4. Males, regardless of age, will have significantly lower Character Counts Questionnaire scores than females, regardless of age. This hypothesis is supported by the findings that boys tend to resist and challenge their parents and other authority figures more so than females who tend to
cooperate and follow rules to avoid conflict with their parents and other authority figures (Maccoby, 1980).

5. Older subjects, regardless of gender, will have significantly higher Character Counts Questionnaire scores than younger subjects, regardless of gender. Younger subjects have not had the opportunity to observe and learn from their mistakes as older subjects (Bandura, 1963) and thus should have lower Character Counts Questionnaire scores.

6. Young males will have significantly lower Character Counts Questionnaire scores than the other three groups. This hypothesis is an outgrowth of Hypotheses four and five. If Hypotheses four and five are supported then Hypothesis six should also be supported.
Method

Subjects

There were 194 subjects tested for this research project. However, since there were only 10 subjects in the 18 and younger group and a different questionnaire was administered to this group, their scores were not included in the analysis. Therefore, the data from 184 subjects responding to the “Adult” Character Counts Questionnaire were used in this investigation. The subjects were selected from the General Psychology classes offered at Fort Hays State University. They were asked to volunteer to participate in the study and received extra credit towards the class in return (see Appendix A). These subjects were then divided into two groups, those 19-20 and those 21 and over in age.

Apparatus

Character Counts Questionnaire: The method of measurement for this study was the Character Counts Questionnaire designed by Michael S. Josephson of the Josephson Institute of Ethics in September 1992 (see Appendix B). The Character Counts Questionnaire has been administered to several schools in California. In 1992, The Josephson Institute surveyed nearly 9,000 high school and college students and found that lying, cheating, and drunken driving were quite common. More alarming was the fact that the students had no remorse or guilt about these actions. The Josephson Institute, made up of educators, youth group leaders and ethicists agreed on a set of universally acceptable core moral values called the “Six Pillars of Character”, which include: trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, justice, caring, and civic virtue or becoming involved in public service (Josephson, 1994). It is these “Six Pillars of Character” that the Character Counts Questionnaire measures. This multiple choice questionnaire dealt with several
scenarios that test the ethical values of the person taking the test. There were two separate questionnaires relating to age groups, one for youth age 18 and younger, and one for adults ages 19 and over. Both forms of the questionnaire were used in this study. Normal scoring of the questionnaire allows for several right answers and several wrong answers (see Appendix C). For example, some questions have only one clearly ethical response, whereas another question has several ethical responses that should be marked as well as answers that should not be marked. In order to have systematic control, the subjects would have to mark all of the appropriate ethical responses and omit the unethical responses to get the question correct. Each correct question received a score of 1 and each incorrect question received a score of 0. Since there were five questions in each questionnaire, the subject received a total score between 0 and 5 with 0 being an ethnically low score and 5 being an ethnically high score.

Television Enjoyment Rating Questionnaire: A list of television shows varying in degree of judged aggression was also provided. The degree of aggression for each show was previously determined by a group of the subjects' peers, college students from a Social Psychology class. The subjects were asked to rate their estimated enjoyment for each of the shows on a 5-point bipolar scale (see Appendix D). The reasoning behind this scale was that the more the subject enjoys a show, the more likely he or she is to watch that show on a continual basis.

Social Desirability Scale: The Social Desirability Scale (see Appendix E) is a 33 item questionnaire that is answered either true or false. The purpose of this questionnaire was to locate those individuals who describe themselves in a positive, socially desirable manner in order to receive approval from others. This need for social approval could affect the validity of the Character Counts Questionnaire scores for that individual. The Social Desirability Scale was scored
so that each response in the socially desirable direction received one point so that scores vary between 0 (no social desirability) to 33 (highest social desirability).

Procedure

The researcher visited several of the General Psychology classes offered at Fort Hays State University to ask for volunteers to participate in the study (see Appendix A). The researcher explained that potential subjects would be asked to fill out a questionnaire that would take approximately 30 minutes to an hour to complete. The students were also told that for their time and effort they would receive a certain number of extra credit points agreed on by the instructor. A sign-up sheet with various dates and times was passed around for signatures of the students who wished to participate.

On the day of testing the subjects met at a specified classroom. No special seating arrangement was required for this study. The subjects were asked to sign a consent form (see Appendix F) and then handed the questionnaire. The following instructions were read, “Answer these questions as honestly as you can, indicating what you would do, not what you think you should do. You may mark more than one answer per question, as long as the answers are consistent. When you are finished turn in your questionnaire.” As the students turned in their questionnaires, they were handed a debriefing statement (see Appendix G) that explained the nature and intent of the study, asked to read the statement, and given a chance to ask any questions they might have concerning this study. Before leaving, the subjects were thanked for their time and effort. If requested, research findings were made available.
RESULTS

The data collected for this study were examined and summarized using procedures available on SPSS. Demographic variables were summarized in Table 1 for the total sample by male and female subsamples as well as age groups, ages 19-20 (M = 19) and ages 21 and over (M = 26) (Data from 10 subjects who were 18 or younger were not included in the analysis).

Table 1. Demographic Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>AGE 19 TO 20</th>
<th>AGE 21 &amp; OLDER</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MALE</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEMALE</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Character Counts Questionnaire (CCQ) was administered and then scored using two different methods of scoring. The original scoring required the individual to mark every one of the correct responses to receive credit for the question. Because many of the questions had several correct responses and the subjects generally selected only one answer, many subjects received very low scores. In order to derive a more reflective measure of the subject's character, an alternate scoring method was implemented. This alternate scoring method gave
credit if at least one of the correct responses was selected. The alternate scoring method still kept the score range 0 to 5 as in the original scoring method (see page 47 in Discussion for explanation of scores).

The Television Enjoyment Rating questionnaire consisted of six popular television shows previously ranked by a group of the subjects’ peers as either violent, nonviolent, or neutral. Each category consisted of two shows. The students were asked to rate, on a 5-point bipolar scale (0 = not enjoy, 4 = do enjoy), how much they enjoyed watching each show. Each show could receive a possible score of 0 to 4 with each category of show receiving a potential score of 0 to 8. The category with the highest score was the type of show respondents most enjoyed watching.

The Social Desirability scale was also given as a method of control. A score over 25 indicated that the individual was answering in a socially desirable manner. This level of score meant that the individual may not have answered in an honest fashion, possibly invalidating his/her data. Any data sets with a score over 25 on the Social Desirability scale were discarded prior to data entry. Four such data sets were discarded.

**Hypothesis One.** Hypothesis One predicted a negative correlation between the CCQ scores and the enjoyment of violent television shows. The Pearson product-moment correlation was used to measure this relationship and indicated that the results did support the first hypothesis. Using the original scoring there was a significant negative correlation, \( r(181) = -.1990, p < .05 \) between the CCQ scores and the television enjoyment rating scores. The alternate scoring also had a significant negative correlation, \( r(181) = - .4237, p < .05 \) between the CCQ scores and the television enjoyment rating scores.

**Hypothesis Two.** The second hypothesis predicted a positive correlation between the CCQ score and the enjoyment of nonviolent television shows. The
Pearson product-moment correlation was used to measure this relationship. Using the original scoring there was not a significant positive correlation, \( r(181) = -.0742, \text{ ns.} \) There was also not a significant positive correlation using the alternate scoring, \( r(181) = -.0768, \text{ ns.} \) The results from both scoring methods did not support the second hypothesis.

**Hypothesis Three.** The third hypothesis predicted a positive correlation between the CCQ score and the enjoyment of neutral television shows. The Pearson product-moment correlation was used to measure this relationship. Using the original scoring there was not a significant positive correlation, \( r(181) = .1113, \text{ ns.} \) There was also not a significant positive correlation using the alternate scoring, \( r(181) = .1178, \text{ ns.} \) The results from both scoring methods did not support the third hypothesis.

Hypothesis Four and Hypothesis Five were analyzed by a 2 (Age Group) x 2 (Gender) ANOVA. The two hypotheses addressed main effects from the ANOVA.

**Hypothesis Four.** The fourth hypothesis predicted that males, regardless of age, would have significantly lower CCQ scores than females, regardless of age. Using the original scoring, Hypothesis Four was not supported. Males (\( M = .83 \)) , regardless of age, did not have significantly lower scores than females (\( M = .86 \)), \( F(1, 182) = .06, \text{ ns.} \) However, Hypothesis Four was supported using the alternate scoring. Males (\( M = 2.50 \)), regardless of age, did have significantly lower scores than females (\( M = 3.10 \)), \( F(1, 182) = 8.68, \ p<.05. \)

**Hypothesis Five.** The fifth hypothesis predicted that older subjects, regardless of gender, would have significantly higher CCQ scores than younger subjects, regardless of gender. Using the original scoring, Hypothesis Five was not supported. Older subjects (\( M = .88 \)), regardless of gender, did not have significantly higher scores than younger subjects (\( M = .81 \)), \( F(1, 182) = .36, \text{ ns.} \) Again, Hypothesis Five was supported using the alternate scoring. Older subjects
(M = 3.05), regardless of gender, did have significantly higher scores than younger subjects (M = 2.62), $F(1, 182) = 4.52, p<.05$. The interaction between age and gender on the CCQ scores using the original scoring was not significant, $F(1, 182) = .156, ns$. The interaction between age and gender on the CCQ scores using the alternate scoring was also not significant, $F(1, 181) = .264, ns$.

**Hypothesis Six.** The sixth hypothesis predicted that young males would have significantly lower CCQ scores than the other 3 groups. In order to test this hypothesis using the original scoring method, the scores of the other three groups (M = .80, .83, .91 for young females, older males, and older females, respectively) were combined and compared to the score of the young males (M = .82). This comparison was not significant, $t(180) = -.194, ns$.

In order to test this hypothesis using the alternate scoring method, the scores of the other three groups (M = 2.94, 2.78, 3.24 for young females, older males, and older females, respectively) were combined and compared to the score of the young males (M = 2.27). This comparison was significant, $t(180) = -3.030, p<.003$.

**Character Counts Questionnaire and Social Desirability Scale**

In order to see the relationship between the scores on the CCQ and the scores on the Social Desirability Scale, Pearson product-moment correlations were conducted using both scoring methods. Using the original scoring method, there was a positive correlation that approached statistical significance, $r(181) = .127, p<.09$. The alternate scoring method also resulted in a positive correlation that approached statistical significance, $r(181) = .141, p<.06$. Both nonsignificant correlations indicate that as scores on the CCQ increase, so do scores on the Social Desirability Scale. 
Discussion

Hypothesis One

The first hypothesis predicted that there would be a negative correlation between the CCQ scores and the enjoyment of violent television shows. The data using both scoring methods did support Hypothesis One indicating that those individuals who enjoy watching violent shows have lower character score, as measured by the CCQ.

The current study supports several previous studies and theories. Support for the first hypothesis indicates that those individuals who watched and enjoyed violent shows felt it was okay to participate in socially unacceptable behaviors as a means to achieve their goals. This result supports Bandura's social learning theory in that children learn which behaviors are acceptable and when the behaviors are appropriate by observing adults performing these behaviors (Comstock & Strasburger, 1990).

The present study found that there was a positive correlation between enjoying violent television shows and lower character scores in adults. If adults are learning inappropriate behaviors from these shows, then children may also be learning these behaviors from the adults and indirectly being affected by the violent shows.

These findings also support the instigation and cue theory that states that many television programs portray violence as a way to gain power, and violence is justifiable if the good guys come out ahead (Comstock & Strasburger, 1990). Several of the questions on the CCQ dealt with thinking that socially inappropriate behaviors are acceptable in order to gain more if no one gets hurt. One of the questions asked if it was justifiable to lie about your address in order for your child to go to a good school for a better education where zoning laws apply. Forty-two
percent of the subjects felt that lying was justifiable since nothing was more important than their child's education, and that a rule making their child go to an inferior school was unfair. About 21% of the subjects felt it was acceptable to lie about their address because others lie and their children go to better schools. Twenty-four percent of the subjects also felt that it was acceptable to underestimate debts on a bank loan application in order to receive the loan if there was no other way of obtaining the money and if the money could be paid back.

These results support research by Bandura et al. (1963) who found that behavior is not only learned through observation but also through how effective the behavior appears to be. An adult or child learns that sometimes stretching the truth is an effective and appropriate means to receive something if these behaviors are observed to be effective and if others are doing it.

It should also be noted that Hypothesis One was the only hypothesis supported by both scoring methods. This finding indicates the high level of support for this relationship.

**Hypothesis Two**

The second hypothesis predicted that there would be a positive correlation between the CCQ scores and the enjoyment of nonviolent television shows. The data using both scoring methods did not support Hypothesis Two, indicating that the enjoyment of nonviolent television shows had no relationship with a person's character as measured by the CCQ.

One possible explanation for this finding is that the television shows used in the Television Enjoyment Rating scale for this category were popular shows and have been nominated for or won several Emmy Awards. Because of the popularity of these shows, more people choose to watch these shows over the shows in the other two categories, regardless of content. It was found that 138 subjects enjoyed
the nonviolent shows, whereas only 39 subjects enjoyed the violent shows and 18 subjects enjoyed the neutral shows.

Hypothesis Three

The third hypothesis predicted that there would be a positive correlation between the CCQ and the enjoyment of neutral television shows. The data using both scoring methods did not support Hypothesis Three indicating that the enjoyment of neutral television shows had no relationship to a person's character as measured by the CCQ.

As a possible explanation for this finding, the shows in this category were not watched as much as the shows in the nonviolent category. The data supported this interpretation with 138 subjects enjoying the nonviolent shows and only 18 subjects enjoying the neutral shows. The shows chosen for the neutral category were not as popular as the shows in the other categories. For example, the show, "Murder She Wrote", may not have appealed to the age group questioned. This finding does not mean that neutral shows were not enjoyed, but rather the specific shows featured in the category were not enjoyed.

Hypothesis Four

The fourth hypothesis predicted that males, regardless of age would have significantly lower CCQ scores than females, regardless of age. The fourth hypothesis was supported by the data using the alternate scoring but not the original scoring.

These findings may be interpreted in light of the types of television programs and how these programs portray males and females. Males are usually portrayed as more aggressive, powerful, and dominant than females and are generally portrayed in more authoritative roles. Women, on the other hand, are portrayed as submissive, emotional and generally more concerned about domestic affairs or
becoming more attractive (Zuckerman & Zuckerman, 1985). Even though today's television portrays women as having more authority and working outside the home, a high level of gender-stereotyping prevails (Calvert & Huston, 1987).

Another explanation may simply be how boys and girls are raised. Maccoby (1980) found that boys play more boisterously than females. They tend to be rougher, fight more, and develop dominance over other children. Boys also try to resist and challenge their parents and other authority figures more frequently than females who tend to cooperate and follow rules to avoid conflict with their parents and other authority figures. These differences alone may account for the males' lower character scores.

**Hypothesis Five**

The fifth hypothesis predicted that older subjects, regardless of gender, would have significantly higher CCQ scores than younger subjects, regardless of gender. The fifth hypothesis was supported by data using the alternate scoring but not the original scoring.

These results could be explained in part by Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1963). Children must learn what is appropriate and inappropriate by observing others as well as by having their own behaviors punished or praised. Younger children have not had as many opportunities as adults to observe what is appropriate and inappropriate and therefore would be expected to have lower character scores.

The results could also suggest that as a society the character of the younger generations is getting lower over time. This implication could be supported by the vast increase in violent crimes being committed by younger children in this country (Hoberman, 1990).
Hypothesis Six

The sixth hypothesis predicted that young males would have significantly lower CCQ scores than the other three groups. The sixth hypothesis was supported by data using the alternate scoring but not the original scoring.

The results for Hypothesis Six confirm the work of several earlier researchers. Maccoby (1980) contends that males are shaped by our society to be more violent and aggressive than females. As evidence, Maccoby points out that the toys produced for boys and girls are different. Boys are given toy guns and swords to play cops and robbers, and therefore to play more aggressively than girls. Girls are given Barbie Dolls and baby dolls with which to play house. As children grow up and become adults their behaviors are shaped by what they have learned is appropriate. Children learn what is right and wrong by behaving in certain ways and either being punished or praised for these actions, lending support to Rubenstein's (1983) claim that parental intervention is extremely important in shaping values.

In addition, Hearold’s (1986) study of different types of antisocial behavior, including rule breaking, materialism, and aggression resulting from perceiving oneself as powerless in society is also supported. Hearold found that males viewing violent shows had the potential to display more antisocial behaviors than those not viewing violent television. The Gerbner and Gross study (1976) showed that people’s perception of violence around them is influenced by the amount of violent crimes covered by local news broadcasts. Gerbner and Gross found that people who view news programs that cover violence and other acts of aggression have unrealistic perceptions of the safety in their communities. This unrealistic perception of violence in a community coupled with television portrayals that villains must be caught and punished could increase the possibility that a recently angered
person would attack his frustrater or worse, an innocent person especially if he/she felt police were not solving the problem (Berkowitz & Rawlings, 1962).

Character Counts Questionnaire

Further discussion about the CCQ is necessary since it is a fairly new questionnaire and is not standardized. While using the CCQ, several problems were found and changes were made to overcome them. The most prevalent problem was the scoring method that was so rigid that it did not give a reflective measurement of the person’s character. The original scoring required the individual to mark every one of the correct responses to receive credit for the question. Because many of the questions had several correct responses and 87% of the subjects selected only one answer, many subjects received very low scores. In order to derive a more reflective measure of the subject’s character, an alternate scoring method was implemented. This alternate scoring method gave credit if at least one of the correct responses was selected. The two scoring methods had a positive correlation of \( r(181) = .5642, p < .05 \), but the alternate scoring method raised the scores on average 2 to 3 points and gave a more reflective measurement of the person’s character. These differences in scoring results are important to mention since only one of the six hypotheses was supported by both scoring methods and three of the six hypotheses were supported by the alternate scoring method and not the original scoring method.

Another weakness of the CCQ is that it is not standardized. It is believed that this is the only systematic, empirical study that has implemented the CCQ and may lend further information regarding the questionnaire’s reliability and validity. Correlating the CCQ with a simple personality test, such as the 16 PF, which measures among other things, group conformity, guilt proneness, rebelliousness, and dominance, would be a useful step toward standardization. In the present
study, the scores on the CCQ correlated positively with the Social Desirability scores. The direction and strength of this relationship warrants further investigation.

It is also important to determine the relationship between the two different age group forms. The CCQ should be given to a large number of children younger than 18 years and compare the scores on this form with the scores on the adult form. Without this comparison, there is no way to determine if the two forms are measuring the same thing, and there is no way to compile longitudinal data.

There is no scientific support for the idea that humans are naturally aggressive. However, there is support for the idea that violence is learned through social learning and environmental contingencies (Hoberman, 1990). Study after study has found considerable empirical support to link the increase in aggressive and antisocial behaviors to viewing television and film violence (Comstock, 1988).

Hoberman (1990) identified five specific consequences of media violence. First, media violence offers the opportunity to teach specific acts or social scripts of violent or specific cues for violent relationships. In addition, media violence has been shown to facilitate more general patterns or tendencies toward aggressive and antisocial behavior. In particular, the study group identified a special connection between media violence and the area of sexual aggression. Furthermore, media violence was seen as modifying the attitudes of society in the direction of accepting or condoning violence, in part based on increasing the perception of the prevalence of violence in society. Emotional desensitization to violence was seen as another outcome of the availability of or the exposure to media violence. Lastly, media violence was viewed as problematic because of the failure to provide an explanation for the sociopolitical context of violence as well as the consequences of violence. In other words, the social and economic roots of violence are seldom explored, leaving the impression that violence is predominantly an interpersonal issue (Hoberman, 1990, pp.45-46).

Hoberman (1990) makes several recommendations and comments regarding the violence on television. He recommends that as a society, we must take control of what is portrayed on television. Additional studies should be aimed
at finding alternatives to violence that are still considered arousing and stimulating. He feels that the media plays a major part in teaching people about the world around them and how to interact with others. Television can be a powerful tool if used appropriately. The media industry should be encouraged to show that violence does not pay off and specific acts of violence, such as rape and gang violence, should be portrayed as problematic, according to Haberman (1990). Finally Haberman (1990) states that more violence is found in primetime television shows allowing more opportunities for unsupervised adolescent viewing. Since adolescents can not, nor should they be, constantly supervised, they need to acquire critical viewing skills. Haberman (1990) quoted from a presentation Comstock made in 1988:

“The key to effective intervention lies in raising or lowering the likelihood that a young viewer will attribute efficacy, normativeness, or pertinence to the portrayed behavior, and altering the degree to which he or she is rendered more or less susceptible by a particular experience” p.47.

Parents need to increase knowledge and skepticism about media violence and show that the violence media portrays is undesirable (Haberman, 1990).

**Future Research**

In future research, one might test several different age groups using the CCQ to see how television affects character. Due to accessibility, only college age subjects were tested in the present study. Future research should include grade school, middle school, as well as high school age subjects. The CCQ scores could give information on how changing social patterns, such as working, single parent households and increased media violence are effecting today’s children as compared to children 20 years ago.
References


APPENDIX A

Speech to Obtain Subjects
My name is Keri Phillips and I am a graduate student in Clinical Psychology at Fort Hays State University. For my Master’s Degree in Psychology I am studying television and its effects on society’s ethical values. This research is under the supervision of Dr. Jackson. I am looking for volunteers to participate in this study. The study entails filling out three short questionnaires that should take approximately 30 minutes to complete. Your answers will be confidential and in no way be associated with your name. After completing the questionnaires, I will explain more about the research and, if you are interested, send you a copy of the results when the research is completed. If you decide to participate, you will receive a designated number of extra credit points. If you do not want to participate, your instructor will provide an alternative activity. I am sending a sign up sheet around with several dates and times if you decide to participate. If you wish to participate but the times on the sheet will not work, please see me. Thank you for your time.
APPENDIX B

Character Counts Questionnaires
Forms A & B and Answer Sheet
Answer these questions as honestly as you can, indicating what you would do, not what you think you should do. You may mark more than one answer per question, as long as the answers are consistent. Please mark your answers by circling the corresponding letter(s) on the provided answer sheet.
1. You want to go to a different high school to be with your friends, but in order to do so, you would have to say you live with your aunt. If your parents and aunt would let you, would you lie about where you live?

a  Yes, nothing is more important than my education.

b  Yes, any rule that would make me go to a school I don't like is unfair.

c  Yes, if I know lots of other kids give false addresses.

d  No, if I get caught, I could get into trouble and it would be embarrassing.

e  No, it is unfair to the kids & parents who tell the truth.

f  No, it would be dishonest.
2. You look younger than you are. You could save $24 at an amusement park if you lie about your age. Would you do it?

a  Yes, I need the money more than they do.

b  Yes, it's unfair to make people pay more just because they're older.

c  Yes, if I couldn't afford to pay the full price.

d  No, it's unfair to the people who play by the rules.

e  No, it is dishonest.
3. You have a scholarship worth $15,000 if you get a B average this semester. You doubt whether you can get a good grade in physics class. You meet with the physics teacher after class. She is kind and supportive and says you’ll find a way. She asks you to wait while she goes to the restroom. She glances at a folder on her desk and leaves the room. The folder is marked "physics final," and it’s full of copies of the test. You think the teacher might have deliberately left the room so you could take a copy. Would you do it?

a  Yes, but only if I was pretty sure the teacher wanted me to do it.

b  Yes, even if she didn’t do it on purpose, she was pretty foolish to leave the exams that way.

c  Yes, but only if I was sure I would not get caught.

d  Yes, the grade’s just too important.

e  No, if I get caught, I could lose the scholarship completely.

f  No, I would not betray the trust of my teacher or others who know me.

g  No, cheating is wrong.
4. You are captain of your high school tennis team, one of the state’s best. The coach is new and doesn’t know the players. One player has to be cut. The coach asks you, as captain, to decide which of two players should stay on the team. One is your best friend, who really wants to play, but the other is better and could help the team more. Would you choose your friend?

a Yes, loyalty is very important.

b Yes, because of the golden rule. If our positions were reversed, I would want my friend to choose me.

c No, my duty to the team is to select the best player.

d No, I would not like it if the coach selected players on the basis of whom he liked rather than on playing skill.

e No, it is in my own best interests to have the best players possible.

f No, it would be unfair to the other, better player.
5. A good friend confides that she was raped by her boyfriend, the star of the football team. She makes you promise not to tell anyone, but her grades are slipping and she'll lose her chance to go to college. Now she comes to school drunk and gets into fights. You try to talk to her about counseling, but she refuses. She even talks about killing herself. Would you keep your promise and say nothing?

a Yes, friendship requires me to be loyal to my promise.

b Yes, if I said anything, her reputation would suffer.

c Yes, nobody would believe me.

d No, friendship requires me to look out for her best interests, and in this case she needs help.

e No, her health and welfare are more important than our friendship.

f No, the football player may do the same to others unless he is stopped.
Answer these questions as honestly as you can, indicating what you would do, not what you think you should do. You may mark more than one answer per question, as long as the answers are consistent. Please mark your answers by circling the corresponding letter(s) on the provided answer sheet.
1. Your 13-year-old son could get into a much better public school if he said he lives at your sister's address. Would you let him say he lived with your sister?

a. Yes, nothing is more important than my son's education.

b. Yes, the rule that would make my son go to an inferior school is unfair.

c. Yes, if I knew it was fairly common for people to give false addresses.

d. No, if he got caught, it would be embarrassing and I might be prosecuted.

e. No, it's unfair to the kids and parents who tell the truth.

f. No, I teach my kids to be honest, and this would set a bad example.
2. Your 14-year-old looks younger than her age. You could save $24 at an amusement park if you said she's under 13. She wouldn't mind. Would you do it?

a  Yes, the prices at amusement parks are much too high anyway.

b  Yes, I'd probably spend the extra $24 inside the park, so it all works out.

c  Yes, if I couldn't afford it otherwise.

d  No, I teach my kids to be honest, and this would set a bad example.

e  No, because lying is simply wrong.
3. You’re in debt and badly need a bank loan that you wouldn’t get unless you understated the amount you owe. Would you do it?

a Yes, but only if there were really no other way to get the loan.

b Yes, if I knew I could pay back the loan. No one would be hurt.

c Yes, if the bank doesn’t verify my debts, it must not be too important.

d Yes, but only if I was sure I would not get caught.

e No, it’s a crime; I might get caught.

f No, because it’s wrong.
4. Your 11th-grader has a big test today that will determine her grade in an important course. She asks you to let her skip school so she'll have more time to study. Because she feels stress, she wants you to write a note to the school saying she was ill. Would you let her stay home?

a. Yes, if I believed she'd really worked hard to study but needed more time.

b. Yes, her grades are very important for getting into the right college.

c. Yes, if she was stressed, I wouldn't be lying if I said she was ill.

d. Yes, but I would be honest about the reason and let the teacher decide the proper consequences.

e. No, I want her to be responsible; if she is not prepared, she should suffer the consequences.

f. No, it would be unfair to the other kids who have to take the test today.
5. You are in charge of hiring a sales manager for your company. A longtime friend has applied. You think he could do the job, but other applicants definitely are better qualified. Would you hire your friend?

a  Yes, loyalty is very important.

b  Yes, because of the golden rule. If our positions were reversed, I would want my friend to hire me.

c  Yes, because he is qualified.

d  No, my duty to my employer is to hire the most qualified person.

e  No, I would not like it if other people in the company hired on the basis of friendship rather than merit.

f  No, it's in my own best interest to hire the best person possible.
Answer Sheet

I.D. Number ________________

Sex: ___ Female    ___ Male

Your Age: ______ years

Please mark your answers by circling the corresponding letter(s).

1. A B C D E F

2. A B C D E

3. A B C D E F G

4. A B C D E F

5. A B C D E F
APPENDIX C

Character Counts Questionnaire Scoring

Forms A & B
Character Counts Questionnaire Scoring

In order to get credit for each question, the subject must mark all of the most acceptable or best answers. There will be no penalty for marking or omitting the responses labelled acceptable as long as the best or most acceptable response has been marked. No credit will be given for the question if an incorrect answer is marked. The reasoning for each answer is taken from the original Character Counts Questionnaire.

Form A Scoring

1. Should have marked both (E) and (F).

   (A) Is misleading not only because the statement is too strong (there are things more important than education), but also because it is deceptive: The real reason was to be with your friends. Finally, one could pursue one's best education without lying.

   (B) A rule is not unfair simply because it deprives us of what we want.

   (C) Cheating on the system does not make it more fair. In fact, it makes it less fair, because only those who obey the rules are denied what they want. The “everyone is doing it” argument does not create an ethical justification.

   (D) Is based not on moral principle but on self-interest. The ethics of an act are not determined by whether you are punished.

   (E) Lying and evading rules for personal self-interest is unethical no matter how desirable the fruits of the lie may be.

   (F) Lying and evading rules for personal self-interest is unethical no matter how desirable the fruits of the lie may be.
2. Should have marked both (E) and (F).

(A) Poses an excuse with no moral validity.
(B) Poses an excuse with no moral validity.
(C) Poses an excuse with no moral validity.
(D) Lying about your age is unethical (because it's dishonest) and unfair (because people who play by the rules are disadvantaged), and it violates fundamental notions of citizenship.
(E) Lying about your age is unethical (because it's dishonest) and unfair (because people who play by the rules are disadvantaged), and it violates fundamental notions of citizenship.

3. Should have marked (G); (F) is also acceptable.

(A) Is unacceptable. Even if the teacher lets you cheat, cheating is cheating.
(B) You should reject this answer because it seeks to put the responsibility on the teacher to prevent your cheating rather than on you not to cheat.
(C) Fear of getting caught is not a moral reason to do anything.
(D) Simply makes it clear that ethics sometimes require us to sacrifice self-interest.
(E) Shows the long-term self-interest in honesty but is not essentially ethical.
(F) Is acceptable, because it demonstrates the desire to be worthy of trust.
(G) Clearly is an ethical response.
4. Should have marked both (C) and (F); (D) is acceptable. 
Loyalty is an important ethical trait, but only within the framework of other principles.

(A) Is unacceptable. Responsibility encompasses the notion of duty.
(B) Is unacceptable. Responsibility encompasses the notion of duty.
(C) Is unacceptable. Responsibility encompasses the notion of duty.
(D) Is an acceptable answer. It demonstrates that the golden rule could as easily justify choosing on the basis of skill as on the basis of friendship.
(E) Demonstrates that a choice based on merit is to the benefit of everyone on the team.

5. Should have marked (D), (E) and (F).
This is the toughest question of all. There's no clear right and wrong.

(A) This is not a good answer. The ethical values of loyalty and keeping promises (part of trustworthiness) clash with the value of caring and alternative conceptions of loyalty.
(B) This is not a good answer. The ethical values of loyalty and keeping promises (part of trustworthiness) clash with the value of caring and alternative conceptions of loyalty.
(C) This is not a good answer. The ethical values of loyalty and keeping promises (part of trustworthiness) clash with the value of caring and alternative conceptions of loyalty.
(D) Given the very high stakes (possible suicide), your friend's best interests should be the controlling standard.
(E) Indicates an unselfish willingness to sacrifice friendship to help the friend.
(F) Is also a good option, because it shows a concern for others as well as for justice. You should have marked all three.
1. Should have marked (E) and (F).

There's no ethically acceptable justification to lie in this case.

(A) States the importance of education but assumes the only way to advance the child's education is to lie. There are many ways to deal with the school problem without lying. The child's moral education may be as important as his formal education.

(B) Asserts unfairness but proposes a solution — lying — that will perpetuate unfairness.

(C) Seeks refuge in false notion that an action is ethical because many people do it.

(D) Does the right thing, but the reasoning is self-interest.

(E) Character requires us to do the right thing even when we could get away with less. This answer states good reasons and good results.

(F) Character requires us to do the right thing even when we could get away with less. This answer states good reasons and good results.
2. Should have marked (D) and (E).

Lying about a child’s age is unethical (because it’s dishonest) and unfair (because people who play by the rules are disadvantaged), and it violates fundamental notions of citizenship.

(A) Poses an excuse with no moral validity.
(B) Poses an excuse with no moral validity.
(C) Poses an excuse with no moral validity.
(D) Is correct in reasoning and result.
(E) Is correct in reasoning and result.

3. Should have marked (F).

(A) Lying is wrong even when we think it is necessary.
(B) Lying is wrong even when we think no one will be hurt. Self-serving judgments always are suspect; they disregard the importance of trustworthiness.
(C) Tries to make the bank responsible for preventing our lying. It is our responsibility to be worthy of trust.
(D) Demonstrates concern about getting caught; that’s a good reason not to lie to get a loan — but it’s also simply wrong to do so.
(E) Demonstrates concern about getting caught; that’s a good reason not to lie to get a loan — but it’s also simply wrong to do so.
(F) Is the best answer.
4. Should have marked (D), (E) and (F).

Under no circumstances should you show your child you think it's all right to lie to get out of responsibility. Sooner or later, she'll use the same reasoning to lie to you or employers. This is a more important lesson than the exam grade.

(A) Effort is important, but that doesn't justify lying.
(B) Grades are important, but they don't justify lying.
(C) The argument that stress is illness is true in extreme cases but probably not in this case. It sounds like a legalistic evasion of moral responsibility.
(D) States an ethical response.
(E) States an ethical response.
(F) States an ethical response.

5. Should have marked (D); (E) and (F) are acceptable.

(A) Loyalty is an important ethical trait, but only within the framework of other principles. This answer is unacceptable.
(B) Loyalty is an important ethical trait, but only within the framework of other principles. This answer is unacceptable.
(C) Loyalty is an important ethical trait, but only within the framework of other principles. This answer is unacceptable.
(D) Responsibility encompasses the notion of duty. This is the best response.
(E) Is justifiable. Note that the golden rule does not solve this question, because it depends on which "others" one chooses to focus on.
(F) Is justifiable. Note that the golden rule does not solve this question, because it depends on which "others" one chooses to focus on.
APPENDIX D

Television Program Enjoyment Rating Questionnaire
This questionnaire asks that you rate the following TV programs by how much perceived enjoyment you receive from viewing them. Please place an X in the space that best represents your enjoyment.

Seinfeld  
Not Enjoy:____:____:____:____:____:Enjoy

Beavis & Butthead  
Not Enjoy:____:____:____:____:____:Enjoy

Cops  
Not Enjoy:____:____:____:____:____:Enjoy

Simpsons  
Not Enjoy:____:____:____:____:____:Enjoy

Murder She Wrote  
Not Enjoy:____:____:____:____:____:Enjoy

Home Improvement  
Not Enjoy:____:____:____:____:____:Enjoy
APPENDIX E

Social Desirability Scale
Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability by placing a “T” in front of the answers which are true for you and a “F” in front of the answers which are false for you. There are no right or wrong answers.

____ 1. Before voting I thoroughly investigate the qualifications of all the candidates.

____ 2. I never hesitate to go out of my way to help someone in trouble.

____ 3. It is sometimes hard for me to go on with my work if I am not encouraged.

____ 4. I have never intensely disliked anyone.

____ 5. On occasion I have had doubts about my ability to succeed in life.

____ 6. I sometimes feel resentful when I don’t get my way.

____ 7. I am always careful about my manner of dress.

____ 8. My table manners at home are as good as when I eat out in a restaurant.

____ 9. If I could get into a movie without paying and be sure I was not seen, I would probably do it.

____ 10. On a few occasions, I have given up doing something because I thought too little of my ability.
11. I like to gossip at times.

12. There have been times when I felt like rebelling against people in authority even though I knew they were right.

13. No matter who I’m talking to, I’m always a good listener.

14. I can remember “playing sick” to get out of something.

15. There have been occasions when I took advantage of someone.

16. I’m always willing to admit it when I make a mistake.

17. I always try to practice what I preach.

18. I don’t find it particularly difficult to get along with loud mouthed, obnoxious people.

19. I sometimes try to get even, rather than forgive and forget.

20. When I don’t know something I don’t mind admitting it.

21. I am always courteous, even to people who are disagreeable.

22. At times I have really insisted on having things my own way.
23. There have been occasions when I felt like smashing things.

24. I would never think of letting someone else be punished for my wrong doings.

25. I never resent being asked to return a favor.

26. I have never been irked when people expressed ideas very different from my own.

27. I never make a long trip without checking the safety of my car.

28. There have been times when I was quite jealous of the good fortune of others.

29. I have almost never felt the urge to tell someone off.

30. I am sometimes irritated by people who ask favors of me.

31. I have never felt that I was punished without cause.

32. I sometimes think when people have a misfortune they only got what they deserved.

33. I have never deliberately said something that hurt someone’s feelings.
APPENDIX F

Consent Form
EXPLANATION OF RESEARCH AND INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Television and Its Relationship to a Person’s Character

This is a study being conducted by Keri Phillips, a graduate student in the Psychology Department at Fort Hays State University. The study is being conducted as a masters thesis and is under the supervision of Dr. Jackson of the Psychology Department.

Should you decide to take part in this study you would be asked to fill out three brief questionnaires. The first is a questionnaire made up of several scenarios and you are asked to choose the answers reflecting what you would do if confronted with each scenario. The second questionnaire has a list of popular television shows and you will be asked to rate your enjoyment of each of them. The third questionnaire consists of 33 True-False questions concerning personal attitudes and traits. These questionnaires should take approximately 30 minutes to complete. There will be no risks in this study. If your instructor has agreed, you may receive extra credit for your participation in this study. If you do not wish to participate, your instructor will provide an alternative activity.

This study has been reviewed to determine that it poses little or no risk of harm to you. However, in the unlikely event that you do feel any coercion, threat, or discomfort at any time during the study, you may withdraw with no further questions asked. If you choose to withdraw, you will still receive extra credit or other payment promised to you in exchange for your participation.

Any information obtained from you will be kept strictly confidential. You may be assigned an arbitrary subject number to assist in data collection. We assure you that neither your name nor subject number will be associated in any way with any reportable results.

You will gain no benefits by participating in this study other than educational, or extra credit if it is offered by your instructor. The researcher is obliged to tell you as much as you care to know about the study after your part in the study is complete.
All persons who take part in this study must sign this consent form. Your signature in the space provided indicates that you have been informed of your rights as a subject, and you have agreed to participate on that basis.

Signed: ________________________________  Date: _____________________

If you would like a written summary of the results, please include your name and address in the space provided, and the researcher will send you a copy when it is available.
APPENDIX G

Further Explanation and Debriefing Statement
Television Violence and Character Study
Debriefing Statement

Television has become a major socializing instrument in today's society, and therefore, has been blamed for the increase of crime and violence. For this reason there has been much literature and research produced on the topic of television and how it affects people. Much of the research available looks at how viewing television violence affects whether a person will act violently or aggressively. This research tends to be somewhat inconclusive with some studies proving that viewing television violence will increase the chances of the viewer acting violently, while other studies disprove this theory.

The study in which you have just participated is looking at the relationship between a person's character or values and the type of television shows he or she watches and enjoys. You were asked to rate television shows in terms of how much you enjoy these shows. You were also given a questionnaire asking you what you would do in certain circumstances. The third questionnaire consisted of 33 True-False questions concerning personal attitudes and traits. The results of these three measures will be compared statistically to see how they are related. All analyses will be group analyses, so individual scores will not be compared. It has been found that a person's values may influence his or her actions, whether they be nonviolent or violent, appropriate or inappropriate. Television may play a part in the increasing amount of crime and violence in today's society. This study is investigating the relationship between character and television viewing.

If you have any further questions, please feel free to ask me. If you feel excessively stressed or bothered by any of the questions, the Kelly Center is available for your use. I would be glad to make arrangements for you. Thank you for your time and participation.

Keri Phillips
APPENDIX H

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APPENDIX I

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APPENDIX J

Vita
Keri L. Phillips
3419 Summer Lane
Hays, KS 67601
(913) 625-8970

Educational History: Fort Hays State University
Hays, KS 67601

Major: Psychology
Minor: Sociology
Degree: B.S., 1990
M.S., Clinical Psychology 1995

Membership in Professional Associations

Psi Chi Member, Fort Hays State University Chapter
Alpha Kappa Delta, Fort Hays State University Chapter

Professional Positions:

Practicum Therapist
Kelly Center, Fort Hays State University,
Hays, KS
Part-time position 1992

Duties: Individual therapy with children, adolescents, and adults,
and psychological evaluation of children.

Psychology Intern
High Plains Mental Health Center, Inpatient Unit
Hays, KS
Full time position during spring semester 1993

Duties: Individual and group therapy with adolescents and adults
as well as family therapy, forming treatment plans and
discharge criteria, and crisis stabilization.