Differences in television use between adopted and non-adopted college-aged adults

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DIFFERENCES IN TELEVISION USE BETWEEN

ADOPTED AND NON-ADOPTED

COLLEGE-AGED ADULTS

by

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ABSTRACT

Differences in Television Use Between Adopted and Non-Adopted College-Aged Adults

by

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This thesis is an original study that examines the media usage between adoptive and non-adoptive college-aged adults United States. The beginning of this thesis will focus primarily on television's ability to get a message across to a huge audience in the shortest amount of time. It will state the hypotheses and examine the research questions being sought. Simultaneously, it will examine the effect the media has on our youth. Hypothetically, adopted children have been more susceptible to the messages delivered. It will be the intent to analyze and discuss this susceptibility further in this thesis. The survey asked the subjects about their viewing habits. The goal is to find if a significant difference exists between the way adoptive and non-adoptive college-aged adults view the programs.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Our American population is submersed in an ever-changing world of mass media which has the ability to socialize all people. How many different ways does the media affect adopted and non-adopted television viewers? What influence does television programming have on us? "Telecommunication affects many areas of our society: political, economic, psychological, education, advertising, and similar domains" (Mullen, 1987, p. 1). Research has found that in an average American’s home, the television is turned on for approximately seven hours per day (Steinberg, 1985; http://www.mediascope.org/pubs/ibriefs/mua.htm, 1998). A more recent study found that "men between 18 and 24 spent the least time watching TV, followed by teens and children. Teens (12-17) averaged 16.9 hours a week and children (2-11) averaged 17.9 hours per week" (www.media-awareness.ca, 2000, p. 17).

It is this researcher’s belief that media socialization plays an enormous role in the way society interacts on a daily basis. This type of research looks at
communication studies in the mass media as a "socializing agent" that has the ability to cultivate attitudes and beliefs that are already present in a culture. This project will utilize the theory of socialization and attempt to decipher if adoption plays any role in determining what these individuals will watch and how they will watch it.

The purpose of the project is to explore the reasons why media usage differs between adopted and non-adopted college-aged adults. If there is indeed a difference, then why this is the case? The premise is that the media have powerful tools capable of socialization through individual media usage. A survey will be conducted to provide the necessary support that in its findings will validate the support of the thesis.

A great deal of research has been conducted on television and similar fields but nothing directly related to adoption. Conversely, it was found that a great deal of research has been done on non-adopted children and their relationships with their fathers and mothers; still, nothing on adoption and the media. There is a great deal of research focusing on a child's relationship with parents and friends, and statistics on how many children (male and female) were adopted in their given states. However, there
were still no studies being conducted on adopted and non-adopted individuals and their television usage.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

It is essential to include many different aspects of media use in this literature review to understand fully what this thesis is attempting to illustrate. Since little research has been conducted on adoption and media usage, scholarly work from seemingly unrelated areas needs to be synthesized for this project. Some of this research includes heavy television viewing habits, "Trash TV," gender portrayals on television, and television ratings.

Important studies have been done over the years on the influence of television and more specifically, talk shows or "trash TV" on young viewers. Davis and Mares (1998) looked at the effects of talk show viewing on adolescents' social reality beliefs. They examined deviant behaviors to determine whether viewers became desensitized to the suffering of the guest and if viewers trivialize the importance of these social issues. The authors found that "talk show viewing was positively related, among some age groups, to perceived importance of social issues" (Davis and Mares, 1998, p. 69). They found that viewers of talk
shows often times overestimate the frequency of deviant behaviors, but the authors were unable to find a correlation between talk show viewing and the desensitization of the heavy viewer.

Potter and Warren (1998) discussed the way in which violence is portrayed in comedy programs. Potter and Warren (1998) looked at how comedy programs that contained violence portrayed the shows content to be a minor issue.

The findings suggest that the rate of violence (especially verbal forms) is very high on comedy programs, but that the rate is largely due to high number of acts among the relatively minor forms of violence. (Potter and Warren, 1998, p. 40)

This study looks at how the content of the comedy show is portrayed in a way that trivializes the violent acts. Potter and Warren also found that there is a link between verbal hostility and the violent acts rather than more serious assaults or vandalism.

Kremar and Green (1998) analyzed "the uses-and-gratifications tradition posits that individual needs for stimulation and for information vary systematically" (Kremar and Green, 1998, p. 26). The author's surveyed adolescent and college student volunteers to further look
at the correlation between sensation seekers and exposure to violent and non-violent television. The authors found two sensation-seeking dimensions, "disinhibition" (positively) and experience seeking (negatively). So which dimension do adopted and non-adopted individuals fall into? Is there a difference?

Television is a major aspect of most Americans' lives, and it is important to understand what messages it is portraying.

Television has become the common symbolic environment that interacts with most of the things we think and do. Therefore, understanding its dynamics can help develop and maintain a sense of alternatives and independence essential for self-direction and self-government in the television age. (Bryant & Zillmann, 1986, p. 39)

It is important to examine all aspects of television and especially its affect on an individual's mental capacity. It is important to be interested not only in the aggression in viewers, but also in television's influence on prosocial behaviors and attitudes, perceptions of social reality, role socialization, cognitive and social development, health behaviors, the development of
imagination, and school performance. (Bryant & Zillmann, 1986, p. 41)

Television was chosen because of the wide variety of people that watch it. People from all different cultures, backgrounds, creeds, and generations view the television and the wide variety of programs it provides.

Compared to other media, television provides a relatively restricted set of choices for a virtually unrestricted variety of interest and publics. Most of its programs are by commercial necessity designed to be watched by nearly everyone in a relatively nonselective fashion. (Bryant & Zillmann, 1998, p. 19)

If this is the case, how does it affect people differently? More specifically, how does it affect adoptive versus non-adoptive college-aged men and women.

Many researchers have disagreed on the reasons how television can affect those who watch it in both good and bad ways. According to Bryant and Zillmann (1986), “layers of demographic, social, personal, and cultural contexts also determine the shape, scope, and degree of the contribution television is likely to make” Bryant & Zillmann, 1986, p. 23). A definition such as this gives a rather broad outlook on television and the reasons why it
has such power over us. Bryant and Zillmann (1986) go on to state, "people are born into a symbolic environment with television as its mainstream" (Bryant & Zillmann, 1986, p. 23).

The mainstream can be thought of as a relative commonality of outlooks and values the exposure to features and dynamics of the television world tends to cultivate. By mainstreaming we mean the expression of the commonality by heavy viewers in those demographic groups whose light viewers hold divergent views. In other words, differences found in the responses of different groups of viewers, differences that can be associated with other cultural, social, and political characteristics of these groups, may be diminished or even absent from the responses of heavy viewers in the same groups. (Bryant & Zillmann, 1986, p. 31)

Television's ability to socialize Americans seems to be increasing because most Americans have never lived without television.

The longer we live with television, the more invisible it becomes. As the number of people who have never lived without television continues
to grow, the medium is increasingly taken for
granted as an appliance, a piece of furniture, a
storyteller, a member of the family. (Bryant &
Zillmann, 1986, p. 17)

Television and its programming only appear to be
growing stronger in its influence. "The mass ritual that is
television shows no signs of weakening its hold over the
common symbolic environment into which our children are
born and in which we all live out our lives" (Bryant &
Zillmann, 1986, p. 17). The television has changed the way
most Americans will forever live their lives. It serves as
both a source of entertainment and as an educational tool.

Transcending historic barriers of literacy and
mobility, television has become the primary
common source of socialization and everyday
information (mostly in the form of entertainment) of an otherwise heterogeneous population. The
repetitive pattern of television's mass-produced
messages and images forms the mainstream of a
common symbolic environment. (Bryant & Zillmann,
1986, p. 18)
Parenting

Good parenting at home can create a better living situation for a teenager (Gibbs, 2001). It can help the teen to gain trust in a parent as well as lead to a more positive parent-teen relationship (Gibbs, 2001). Good parenting can help the teen to gain trust in a parent as well as lead to a more positive parent-teen relationship. A parent or parents have the ability to help their son or daughter grow in maturity and become contributing members to society. Parenting is important to discuss in this thesis because of the major role it plays in the development of all individuals.

Numerous studies (Gibbs, August, Cole, Lofaro, Padgett, Ressner, and Winters 2001; Potter and Warren 1998; Davis and Mares 1998) have been conducted on the negative effects of the media and good parenting techniques. A teen has a better opportunity to contribute positively to society if he or she has a good relationship with a parent. The more comfortable teens feel, the more likely they are to look favorably on a parent and view them as a role model (Benjack, 2002). Parents with poor parenting techniques have a better chance of causing their teen to find role models elsewhere (Gibbs, 2001).
Studies have been conducted about the importance of good parenting and the negative effects talk shows can have on a child during their teenage years. One study that was done on parenting during the baby boom generation, was conducted by Gibbs, August, Cole, Lofaro, Padgett, Ressner, and Winters in 2001. This study focused on how the baby boom generation is parenting their children in the United States. This journal looked at the influence of advertising and peer pressure. It examined the contribution of technology "to the erosion of parental authority" (Gibbs, August, Cole, Lofaro, Padgett, Ressner, and Winters, 2001, p. 1). The daily struggles facing the millennial parent were discussed as well as the loss of the extended-family structure. The article provided descriptive stories about parents and their teenage sons and daughters. It talked of their daily struggles and how the parents or authority figures dealt with problems that arose.

In 1955 when the British psychologist Hilde Himmelweit began her pioneering study, *Television and the Child*, she could unequivocally assert that:

"There were few facts available about children's behavior and reactions to viewing" (Himmelwiet, Oppenheim, & Vince, 1958, p. xiii). Twenty-five years later, one bibliographer
compiled nearly 2500 English-language citations about children and television (Murray, 1980). Such phenomenal growth in research and commentary reflects the academic community's belief in the social importance and intellectual challenge of this topic. That conviction continues today (Dorr, 1986, p. 7).

Television is a medium that has the ability to pass a large amount of information across to a mass amount of viewers in minutes. Many Americans take television for granted and it has become just another luxury that most Americans use on a consistent basis. "Although most Americans treat television as just another piece of furniture or a slightly odd member of the family, many parents, teachers, social commentators, and social scientists realize that television provides important experiences for children growing up today" (Dorr, 1986, p. 7).

"It is a medium whose technical capabilities and circumstances of use set it apart from other media" (Dorr, 1986, p. 7). Television works as a form of entertainment (Dorr, 1986), and its realistic programs and commercials serve as a way of enlightening many children and young adults. Children view television with their own
preexisting ideals and values. They view television both for entertainment and education.

They come to it as a special audience, with incomplete understanding of the physical and social world in which they live, eager to learn, and somewhat limited in their abilities. Television offers them an enthralling world to try to understand and from which to learn. (Dorr, 1986, p. 7)

Many different aspects of society easily influence children and it would be unfair to say television is the culprit in all cases. The family and friends that surround them, other forms of media, the area in which they live, and the schools they attend alter a child’s life.

Obviously, television is not children’s only socialization agent nor is it a medium entirely different from other media. Just as obviously, children are not monolithic, undifferentiated group nor are they entirely different from adult television viewers. Because of these points of commonality between television and other media and between children and other audiences, the fields of mass communications, child development, education, psychology, and sociology can
contribute to our understanding of children's interactions with television. (Dorr, 1986, p. 7 & 8)

"In the 30 years since television first began to take hold in the United States, it has significantly altered politics, education, marketing, news, popular culture, social life, and family life" (Dorr, 1986, p. 7). So why is television so important and how does it have such a major impact? Questions like these can be easily answered when you look at the facts. According to Dorr (1986), television is present in more than 95% of all American households today and it is more common than toilets and even the telephone. It was found that the majority of households have more than one operating television set. Further, in an average residence, a set is turned on about seven hours a day. The average family member devotes two and one-half to five hours a day to viewing. At high school graduation, American children will have spent more time in front of the television set than in a classroom. By the time they are 65, more than nine full years of their lives will have been devoted to watching television. (Dorr, 1986, p. 8)
When looking at statistics such as these, it becomes apparent how much power the television has on all American men, women, and children.

It was only about 60 years ago that television did not have such an affect on American society. Then in the 1950’s, the television set found its way into one in every fifteen American homes (Dorr, 1986). By the 1960’s the television was in seven out of every eight American households. "Today’s home media environment has been diversified by the adoption of an increasingly wide array or media technologies” (Dorr & Kunkell, 1990, p. 21). This amazing increase in television usage continued to grow and changed the way Americans live their lives. "It has changed what children and their parents do at home, what the home environment is like, where they turn for information and entertainment, and what information and entertainment are easily available to them at home and at school” (Dorr, 1986, p. 8). Television became a medium that grew in the vast majority of American households and especially those with young children. According to Dorr & Kunkell, (1990), virtually all in society have enjoyed access to a television capable of receiving broadcast signals in the last few decades. The television had become an easy form of entertainment with a totally unknown
influence. "According to TV Facts, 1985, the average person spends more time watching television than any other leisure activity" (Mullen, 1987, p. 1).

The television does much more than just entertain and has turned into a medium that most individuals depend on.

Television is an unremarkable part of their daily activities, accepted as the source of believable news, important information and education, useful product information, accurate social knowledge, pleasurable entertainment, and relaxing companionship. (Dorr, 1986, p. 8)

The television has turned into an item that most people cannot live without and are influenced by on a daily basis whether they are aware of it or not.

"It is not only the ubiquity of television's distribution and use that makes it important. Equally significant is the nature of its content" (Dorr, 1986, p. 9). Television can present realistic content in a way that is unknown to all other types of media besides film, video, and just recently the DVD. The realistic style of television programming allows the audience to see the faces, bodies, hands, movements, and hear the voices of the people or actors on screen. "We can also hear how quiet their voices are, how little they use intonation to
emphasize words, how much they hesitate between words, and how they half laugh with embarrassment” (Dorr, 1986, p. 10). The capabilities and realistic values of television do not stop at movement, facial expressions, and the reactions of the people being portrayed. Many subtle clues or shots come on a television screen that go a step further and show much more realism.

In addition to the linguistic, paralinguistic, facial expression, postural, and movement codes, television also uses the artifactual and spatio-temporal codes of face-to-face interaction. When we are shown the President, we will be able to see that he is dressed in a conservative but elegant suit that convey's something of his power, prestige, and exquisite taste. The understated colors that are so carefully coordinated, the fine quality of the wool, the handkerchief in his breast pocket, the monogram on the shirt, and the fine leather wing-tip shoes will all convey qualities of the presidency to us. (Dorr, 1986, p. 10)

These same qualities would become apparent for anyone that came in contact with the President or a prestigious figure like the President explained above.
Television has the option of creating a "constructed" content base when broadcasting a program. The producers have the option of quick cuts, speeding up the motion, slowing the motion down, or fading in and out of a shot. These and "numerous other techniques and conventions can be used to communicate the same meaning conveyed by the codes of everyday life or to augment or alter the meaning" (Dorr, 1986, p. 11). This "constructed" reality becomes something that is interesting, or it is designed to tell a story or to persuade an audience. It is not "real-life" because the reality is altered and it is designed to get maximum impact by the way they portray their programming to the audience.

"The ubiquity, realism, and constructedness of television suggest that its contributions to modern life could be quite large, for good or ill" (Dorr, 1986, p. 11). Television is a medium that nearly 100% of the population will use during much of their lives. It is a medium that is watched by a wide variety of people from different ethnic and economic backgrounds. The television provides society with a form of entertainment and education that most people enjoy.

Critics complain that cartoons and prime-time programs often feature physical and verbal violence; the commercial advertising urges a
misplaced and wasteful consumerism; the news entertains rather than informs; that instructional programs sugarcoat learning; and that virtually every type of content is sometimes sexist, racist, and ageist. (Dorr, 1986, p. 12)

"It presents lifelike experiences for viewers to enjoy and it presents them much more effectively and often than do such other communication media as radio, newspapers, books, magazines, computers, films, and comics" (Dorr, 1986, p. 12). Regardless of an individual's stance on the effects of television it is obvious that it is an influential part of most American's lives.

In fact, "the only face-to-face communication modes that are missing from television are those relying on the senses of smell and touch" (Dorr, 1986, p. 10). However, according to Dorr (1986), smell and touch are the two types of physical communication least often used in face-to-face interactions among Americans so television's effects on people are not going to be diminished. This is true, "because the medium presents so many opportunities for constructing powerful messages about our physical and social world and distributing them to virtually every home and many schools in the nation, there is recurrent interest in evaluating these messages" (Dorr, 1986, p. 12).
As shown above, the television is a powerful medium that is capable of socialization effects.

The multi-channel, multi-option television and the personal computer are two media technologies that have dramatically altered the home media environment. New media technologies have the capacity to create new media use patterns and blur the lines between entertainment and information. (Morrison, 2001, p. 135)

"Television viewing has been transformed by the multi-channel cable environment, diffusion of VCR's, development of the movie rental industry, and the emergence of interactive games" (Morrison, 2001, p. 135).

Due to the expansion of television and its ability to get a mass amount of information across, it is important to know who this information is affecting. "Because media technologies stimulate new consumption patterns with respect to the way media are used, understanding how they modify existing media use patterns is important" (Morrison, 2001, p. 135). Further, "research on the role of media technologies, most notably television, suggest that media may facilitate social interaction, namely through group viewing and television 'talk'" (Morrison, 2001, p. 136).
"When examining how new media technologies affect behavior, it is imperative that such research not be stripped of context" (Morrison, 2001, p. 135). Most research that focuses on in-home media technologies has concentrated primarily on television and its specific technologies. (Brody & Stoneman, 1983; Lodziak, 1986; Lull, 1988; Kubey & Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) "An industry survey (Haran, 1995) illustrated the socializing power of the television and VCR combination: of 1,000 people interviewed nearly half (47.7%) said that they watch television with their family and 44% said they watch movies and videos together" (Morrison, 2001, p. 136). These statistics illustrate that media socialization is likely occurring. 

**Television**

"Television is a crucially important object of study not only because it is a new 'form,' a different 'medium,' but because it brings its massive audience into a direct relationship with particular sets of values and attitudes" (Newcomb, 1982, pp. 479). This gives television a type of power unknown to most other media. Television surpasses sound and still pictures, allowing its viewers to interact on a daily basis, while still reaching a vast amount of people in only a short amount of time.
Television is a rapidly changing media environment and is dynamic in character. In fact, "American children’s media environment has changed dramatically in the last several decades" (Dorr & Kunkell, 1990, p. 21). It has led the way for "risky" programming that contains language and activities not suitable for many audiences. Although it is impossible to predict the future of television precisely, it seems certain that its effects will be impressive (Goodwin & Whannel, 1990, p. 20).

According to Bandura (1986), children typically look to adults, such as parents and teachers, as behavioral models, but television also provides a wide array of attractive models that they can choose from. Bandura (1986) found that viewers learn from positive and negative televised role models and "acquire norms and standards for conduct." So the question must be asked, what are people being exposed to when watching television? The next section of this thesis will cover research conducted on talk shows or "trash TV."

"Trash TV"

Viewers often witness startling events and scenes on television everyday in the United States. This is significant because many individuals adopt certain values and behaviors from these shows. Jeffres (1986), states
that "television consumers" learn (passively or actively) attitudes, beliefs, and generally accepted values from the television. Television shows socialize and teach individuals "how to behave in certain situations and learn the expectations which go with a given role or status in society" (McQuail, 1987, p. 280). "The relationships among communication, values, socialization, and popular television are complex" (Newcomb, 1982, p. 9). No single study could completely exhaust the complex television world.

This study will focus in on television talk shows for two reasons. First, talk shows are one of the most popular types of television programming; and second, a great deal of "negative" content is present in most of them. "In the past ten years, daytime talk shows became very popular among television programmers and viewers alike" (Brinson & Winn, 1997, p. 25). Talk show viewers are often subjected to serious "self-disclosures, and gut-wrenching confessions from their guests" (Hill & Zillmann, 1999, p. 67) who view the shows and the dynamic show topics.

From the amount of new talk shows being generated today, it appears that "trash TV" is going to remain a common occurrence.
The popularity of talk shows is demonstrated by the number of these programs on television and the large audiences they garner. Presently there are forty talk shows accessible in the syndication market, seventeen of which appear daily in most U.S. television markets. The sheer number of these shows dominates the available programming time on television. (Hift, 1993, p. 13)

Regardless of an individual’s stance on this controversial topic, the "negative" influence is indeed present. Television makes it possible to get these messages, good and bad, across to a mass quantity of people. These shows are "wildly popular among viewers, the programs are important sources of revenue for television stations, syndicators, advertisers, production companies, and the hosts for whom the programs typically are named" (Brinson & Winn, 1997, p. 25). Multimedia Turner (1993), found that talk shows are the most popular form of television entertainment in the United States.

"Any day's programming presents a wide variety of topics, from the banal to the bizarre" (Brinson & Winn, 1997, p. 29). Due to the ever-growing number of new talk shows, producers are forced to overcome the competition by
making their show more exciting than the rest, in whatever way possible. Most of the primetime producers choose to go with controversial shows that often times contain much negativity (Hift, 1993). This constant negative content has earned talk shows nicknames like "circus sideshows" (Goodman, 1992), "Trash TV" (Keller, 1993), and "Dirty Laundryland" (Maslin, 1993). For instance, it is not uncommon to see talk shows portraying incest, love triangles, lying, and all types of sexual fetishes. These are the way in which shows get ratings, and thus it is more common than most people can imagine.

We clearly have reason to believe that television could be affecting our value judgments. Producers of popular television series admit, for example, that they selectively dramatize certain values rather than others. While entertaining their viewers, these producers also appear to be functioning as persuaders who intentionally emphasize certain values discriminately. While each might promote a different value, virtually all of the major producers are overtly aware that their series dramatize certain values at the expense of others. (Newcomb, 1982, pp. 9)
Television Content

Producers often will employ techniques to "disarm us and make us view other persons or products as a normal part of our everyday lives, when in fact, such representations are persuasive efforts to make us endorse 'foreign' agents or objects as part of us" (Newcomb, 1982, pp. 20). Much of the reasoning behind this notion is the number of shows that portray such "bizarre" behavior. In just one 10-year span, the content and messages being passed to television audiences has horribly diminished. People need to just sit back and wait to see who takes the content and negativity a step further.

The television is a powerful instrument, and many people argue that because of its ability to get mass information across to people, it is a constructive medium. The truth is:

Television’s coverage of national public affairs represents only about three percent of the programs it presents, usually at a financial loss and to fulfill part of its legal obligation to operate "in the public interest." It is far more widely, and accurately, perceived as a medium of mass entertainment. (Newcomb, 1982, pp. 290)
Although some producers may want to show more educational programming, or programming that can be considered more productive, this often times is not practical. Like most business, television needs to attract a large number of people to be successful. "As a business, television networks profits derive from presenting entertainment shows which attract a nationwide audience for 'delivery' to commercial advertisers" (Newcomb, 1982, pp. 290).

This thesis focuses on media usage and does not delve into the effects of television content directly. However, it is important to understand why so much "trash" is being created and shown on television by its producers. How can all these negative messages be shown, and why would anyone want to create such material?

Like most popular communication media, television is a marketing tool and the programs it presents must appeal to a large number of viewers (Newcomb, 1982, p. 315). "As an enterprise, it has been enormously successful at meeting its goal: the appeal of popular culture on television is pervasive, and its presence insistent and continuous" (Newcomb, 1982, pp. 290). The idea is simple, the show must have viewers, and otherwise advertisers and their money will diminish.
The cancellation rate of existing programs in the 1990's significantly increased, and new talk show failures doubled (Newcomb, 1982). What makes top-rated programs like The Simpsons, Jenny Jones, NYPD Blue, and Jackass successful, is that their "national audiences cut across demographic boundaries and present to diverse groups of Americans a set of common symbols, vocabularies, information, and shared experiences" (Newcomb, 1982, pp. 290-291).

If television programmers are to keep pace with the "rapid structural and contextual changes in broadcast and cable television, and maintain their young audiences, they must gain a better understanding of a children's viewing motives and viewing patterns" (Abelman & Atkin, 2000, pp. 143). If a producer does not understand whom they are targeting, their program will not last. It is a fact that children ages four to 12 are responsible for an excess of $165 billion dollars in spending in the United States (McGee, 1997) and McNeal (1998) found that six to 12-year-olds buy $24.4 billion dollars worth of merchandise each year in the United States. Further, "television provides the bulk of the advertising for that merchandise (Robinson & Bianchi, 1997), which results in a "newly burgeoning body" of children's programming.
Violent Content

"Violence is popular in America. It is ubiquitous" (Reber & Chang, 2000, p. 99). "It is nearly impossible to view any form of media without being bombarded with violence of every imaginable sort" (Kane, Taub, & Hayes, 2000, p. 58). Violence surrounds us in the media and this is never so true when looking at television.

Researchers disagree on how much influence television can have over people of all ages. Take the story of six-year-old Jeremy Nexworski, who tragically died while trying to imitate a "hangman scene" from a popular cartoon (Remsberg, 1982). Or, 18-year-old Timothy Jones, who hung himself in a prison cell after watching the programming of "Hill Street Blues" where a convict tried to hang himself in a jail cell (Liebert & Sprafkin, 1988, p. 10). Take the story of 13-year-old Genaro Garcia, as discussed by Liebert & Sprafkin (1988), who shot and killed himself because his father confiscated a television set from his room. Garcia left a suicide note stating that he couldn't live another minute without television. Most recently, on January 15, 2003, two Orange County, California brothers brutally murdered their mother (41-years-old) and got the idea from the Sopranos (Italian Mobster television program). Jason Batista (20-years-old) and his younger
brother (15-years-old), name unable to be released because he is a minor), cut their mothers head and hands off in an attempt to make her remains undetectable. The two boys admitted that they got the idea from watching a recent episode of the Sopranos. Police later found the head and hands of the boys' mother at their apartment while the rest of the body was dumped down a local hillside after the older brother drove the family's vehicle to the dump-site. Stories like these four are drastic but they help to illustrate the ability of television to influence and socialize people of all ages. The popularity of television and its programming make it one of the most powerful socializing tools society knows.

"It is possible that those who are already predisposed towards aggressive behavior enjoy watching aggression" (Barlow & Hill, 1985, p. 19). Joy, Kimball, & Zabrack (1986), conducted a study whose findings were rather alarming. They found a significant increase in aggressive behavior (verbal and physical) among children in a community that was introduced to television. The researchers found that this increase in aggressive behavior was significant not just in children that were already aggressive, but the non-aggressive children as well.
According to Gerbner (1996), a *U.S. News & World Report* (1994) survey, found that 59% of media workers in Hollywood saw television violence as a real problem. This fact becomes especially alarming considering these are the people who are responsible for putting this trash on American television sets everyday.

Syndicators demand "action" (the code word for violence) because it "travels well around the world," said the producer of "Die Hard 2". Everyone understands an action movie. If I tell a joke, you may not get it, but if a bullet goes through the window, we all know how to hit the floor, no matter the language. (Gerbner, 1996, p. 3)

It comes down to the fact that "violence is a stable and integral part of that world. The percentage of prime time television dramatic programs with overt physical violence was 58 in 1974, 73 in 1984, and 75 in 1994" (Gerbner, 1996, p. 2). "Humankind may have had more bloodthirsty eras, but none as filled with images of violence as the present, primarily because of television's obsession with crime" (Gerbner, 1996, p.1). "The violence overkill is an ingredient in a global marketing scheme"
imposed on media professionals and foisted on the children of the world" (Gerbner, 1996, p. 1). For example, the typical viewer of prime time television drama sees, every week, an average of 21 criminals arrayed against an army of 41 public and private law enforcers. Crime and violence engage more characters than all other occupations combined. (Gerbner, 1996, p. 2)

This may indeed be a problem but when looking at recent statistics and research it appears that nothing is going to be done to fix this negative influence. "Researchers found that a minimum of six violent incident occur in each hour of the typical violent program" (Reber & Chang, 2000, p. 99). Further, "prime time broadcast programs containing violent content increased by 14 percent between 1994 and 1998" (Gerbner, 1970, p. 74).

According to Reber and Chang (2000), violence is a cheap and easy way to bump up television ratings. However, Kremar & Greene (1999) state, television violence is not trivial and can play a large role in the development of individuals, especially at a young, vulnerable age. Research indicated that the amount of television viewing directly influenced "prevalence" estimates of violence in society (Nabi, & Sullivan, 2001).
Aggression and violence from an individual of any age can be a major problem. Researchers agree that an aggressive "behavior is only aggressive if it causes some kind of damage" (Voort, 1986, p. 16). "An action is therefore only aggressive when it is aimed at doing others harm" (Voort, 1986, p. 17). In other words an aggressive act cannot be an accident, the intention must be present. It becomes even more disturbing knowing how violence and aggression run ramped on our television sets.

The above section has illustrated televisions potential to negatively affect a large amount of people and this is of concern to parents, educators, and "youth workers" (Morton, Wilson, & Laing, 1999, p. 23). The power of television is not always used negatively and it does in fact do much good.

Conversely, in another study conducted by Coates, Pusser, & Goodman (1976), it was found that exposure of preschoolers to "Sesame Street" and "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood" increases "positive reinforcement" and "social interactions" with others.

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Sexual Content

"The fact that such programs do not intend to teach sexual socialization lessons hardly mitigates the potential influence of their portrayals" (Kunkel & Cope, 1999, p. 231).

Most television viewers are aware of the fact that they will be exposed to sexual messages while watching their favorite television broadcasts. However, many people do not realize that "television portrayals may contribute to the sexual socialization of children and adolescents" (Kunkel & Cope, 1999, p. 230). "Sexual socialization is influenced by a wide range of sources, including parents, peers, and the mass media" (Hyde & DeLameter, 1997, p. 230). Television has become one medium that seems to escape regulation, and a diverse audience views many sexual messages.

In trying to understand the process by which young people acquire their sexual beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors, the study of media provides information about potential socializing messages that are an important part of everyday life for children and adolescents "(Greenberg, Brown & Buerkel-Rothfuss, 1993, p. 230).

Most people understand that television is not the only influence on sexual socialization which individuals are
subject to. However, it is through the television that some individuals reported that portrayals in the media helped them to learn sexual and romantic scripts and norms for sexual behavior (Brown, Childers, & Waszak, 1990). Further, 40% of teens (one out of four) admitted to have extracted ideas for how to talk to their significant other about sexual issues directly from media portrayals of characters or guests (Kaiser Family Foundation, 1998).

According to Kunkel & Cope (1999), there is a growing body of evidence documenting the possible effects of sexual content on television. "For example, two studies have reported correlations between watching television programs high in sexual content and the early initiation of sexual intercourse by adolescents (Brown & Newcomer, 1991; Peterson, Moore, & Furstenberg, 1991), while another found heavy television viewing to be predictive of negative attitudes toward remaining a virgin (Courtrights & Baran, 1980)" (Kunkel & Cope, 1999, p. 231).
Adoption

Some people argue that the only legitimate family is that which is rooted in 'nature' or the 'longstanding traditions' of society. (Shanley, 2001, p. 148)

Adoption is a topic that is very complex and many people have a wide variety of views concerning it. Adoption is much more than "finding babies for childless couples" (Mather, 2001, p. 1556). Also, the "perfect" baby is no longer thought of as a developmentally normal Caucasian boy or girl. Advertisements such as an early 1920's notice from the Outlook no longer appear:

Desirable home is available for boy of seven or eight with superior mentality and healthy heredity. Family consists of university graduates, and child would receive skillful attention in respect to health and educations, including music if desirable, also college and professional training later. Neighborhood and general environment are the best. (Melosh, 2002, p. 12)

Since adoption first became legal in the United Kingdom in 1926 (Rowe, 1979, & Mather, 2001), more changes have been made and the more complicated the adoption process has become.
It is true that parents, both adoptive and non-adoptive, take on "heavy responsibilities" when adopting a child (Rowe, 1979). However, for the purpose of this paper, the focus will be on illustrating how susceptible adoptive children are to socialization agents. Further, the project will examine how susceptible adoptive children are to media socialization. It will attempt to find a connection with the developmental problems present in the lives of many adopted individuals and the socialization agents they are exposed too. This section examines problems that adopted children often face and illustrates how these adopted individuals can be manipulated and socialized by the "trash" seen every day on American television sets.

**Age**

Hundreds of older children are being adopted every year in the United States and this is a relatively new concept. According to Benjack (2002), an older child adoption can usually be considered to be in the six-12 year age range. For example, in the mid-1950's such adoptions and placement of older children were extremely rare and "unthinkable" (Feigelman & Silverman, 1983, p. 31). In recent years, this is no longer holds true. However, in the middle of the 20th century, concrete explanations have surfaced helping to explain some of the reasons for these
changes. "All older adopted children have some degree of attachment issues" (Ward, 2002, p. 1). Often times it is difficult for older children to settle into a new environment, which will cause unforeseen problems for both the child and the parent. "The age of the child dictates the developmental response and manifestations to stress" (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2000, p. 4). In addition, some older adopted children arrive into their forever homes with limited understanding of cause and effect. Their world is so self-focused that external nudges are not enough to get them to change their behaviors. (Ward, 2002, p. 1)

"Age has consistently been found to be an important variable in studies of the disruption of and adjustment to adoption," (Stevens, 2001, p. 119), and practitioners now realize that clinical issues in preparing children and parents for adopted placements are present. The adopted child, regardless of age, is going through a difficult time in their lives filled with doubt and confusion. "It is not the child's job to reassure the parents that they are loved. It is the parents' job, instead, to let the child know that he is loved and understood" (Benjack, 2002, p. 1).
This type of compassion and love is essential because this older adopted child is not only being placed in a new home environment, but is additionally facing introduction to a new school, and a new set of friends or peers.

Fitting in with peers and having a sense of belonging is crucial to the young school-age child. Children between 6 and 12 fall into a characteristic developmental stage with vast differences around the issues of sexual, cognitive, and emotional development. For the adopted child, it is a time in which he may first experience cognitive dissonance and emotional pain around being adopted. (Benjack, 2002, p. 1)

For example, look at the commentary by Alison Louington Boh Hyung Peck, extracted from a 2002 copy of Roots & Wings Adoption Magazine. Peck, a 15-year-old girl, compiled a list of questions pertaining to the reasons she had been adopted. They are as follows:

1. How come I was given up by my birthparents?
2. Do I have any brothers and sisters in my home country?
3. Will I be able to go back to my place of birth to visit?
4. Do my birthparents think about me at all?
5. Where was I adopted? Who arranged my adoption?

6. Will I ever get to see my birthparents when I get older?

Questions like Peck's listed above, are helpful because they allow the reader an opportunity to get a grasp of what many adopted individuals go through and feel. The isolation, grief, confusion, and anger are common among adopted children (Benjack, 2002; Cohen & Westhues, 1990), and at times cause a great deal of mental anguish.

Adoptees at this middle school age will experience this grief-awakening in a number of possible ways: anger, distractibility, social isolation, lashing out at parents, unexplainable sadness and tears, fear of being lost/left/abandoned, physical complaints such as headaches and intestinal problems, or acting-out behaviors designed to get attention such as cruelty to other/self/animals. (Benjack, 2002, p. 2 & 3)

So what effect can the television have in the socialization of adopted individuals? Does this "weakness" end or does it leave these individuals more susceptible to the messages being passed on by television?
"Normal" Adoption

For many adopted children the "journey is hazardous and the destination uncertain" (Selinske, Naughton, Flanagan, Fry, & Pickles, 2001). According to the same authors, this is the reason adoption agencies, social workers, and pediatricians work so hard and try to keep the best interest of the adoptee in mind.

Health care systems, social services systems, and judicial systems are frequently overwhelmed by their responsibilities and caseloads. Pediatricians can serve as advocates to ensure each child's conditions and needs are evaluated and treated properly and to improve the overall operation of these provisions of health care. Adequate knowledge about each child's development supports better placement, custody, and treatment decisions. Improved programs for all children enhance the therapeutic effects of government-sponsored protective services. (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2000, p. 2)

Further, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics (2000), comprehensive pediatric assessments can complement programs that prevent abuse and neglect, decrease the likelihood of placement in foster care, identify whether a
According to the American Academy of Pediatrics (2000), an interruption in the continuity of a child’s caregiver can be detrimental. It is possible for these interruptions to cause harmful effects in an individual’s growth, well-being; especially, development. One expert stated, "children needing adoption now are likely to have complex physical, emotional, developmental, and educational needs and have often been damaged by inadequate parenting, abuse, and neglect" (Mather, 2001, p. 1556).

Due to the fact that many adopted individuals are forced to deal with so much stress, it is vital to find the best possible home. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics (2000), the psychosocial context and the quality of the relationship from which a child is being removed, as well as the quality of alternative care that is being offered during the placement, must be evaluated carefully.

Adopted children grieve and will often need our help. Left unacknowledged and unsupported, children can become overwhelmed by their own grief and end up labeled with negative terms such as ‘difficult, troublesome, disturbed, and hyperactive.’ Any of these labels can be the
warning signs of a grief-orientated depression.

(Benjack, 2002, p. 3)

"Even amid the hectic pace of car pools, homework, sport practices, and lessons children think about their birth families" (Benjack, 2002, p. 4). It is truly a traumatizing time in the lives of these individuals and often causes many more psychological problems.

**Adoption Statistics**

"There is no current public or private attempt to collect comprehensive national data on adoption" (www.calib.com/naic/stats/) so general statistics on adoption were either inaccurate or unavailable. In fact, the last year when comprehensive national data was collected on adoption was in 1992. Further, according to the United States Department of Health & Human Services (www.calib.com/naic/stats/) the only useful comprehensive data was collected in 1957-1975 by the federally-funded National Center for Social Statistics.

"Currently we have statistics of the number of children adopted from foster care in the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) and the number of children adopted internationally through the State Department records of orphan visas issued, however there is
no systematic collection of stats regarding independent or private adoption in the United States" (www.calib.com/naic/stats/).

Despite the lack of general information available, significant statistics and information was found and will be presented in the following paragraphs.

For every 1000 individuals that are adopted, another 2000 are in desperate need of a home.

As of December 1981, 29 states have formal adoption exchanges where information about available children and prospective adoptive parents is recorded and matched, and referrals made to agencies for facilitating adoptions of specific children; 12 other states have informal referral services; 10 states compile photo listing books of available waiting children. (Feigelman & Silverman, 1983, p. 32)

This was 20-years ago, but the effort is still being made.

"In fiscal year 1999, 46,000 children were adopted from the public foster care system, and an estimated 134,000 children were waiting to be adopted as of March 31, 2000" (McGlone, Santos, Kazama, Fong, & Mueller, 2002, p. 151).

While so many children are without a permanent home, many agencies and social workers alike feel like they need
to work harder. Their job is so challenging that placing a child has been compared to marriage, "with introduction, courtship, engagement, and marriage ceremony" (Bass, 1975, p. 507). Smith (1976) calls it the linking of the family and the child. Regardless of what it should be called, one thing is for sure, it is no easy task.

Most experts agree that adoption agencies are working hard but are just too overwhelmed with the load of work they are forced to bear. "In fact, there are usually so many couples waiting to adopt that there are not enough babies to go around" (Rowe, 1979, p. 15). Due to this problem, many adoption agencies are pressured to find a home for as many children as possible; as quickly as possible. "Every effort should be made to rapidly establish a permanent placement for the child. Tangible continuity relationships with family and friends is essential for a child's healthy development" (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2000, p. 7). However, because of the huge amount of cases, and the relatively small amount of workers, placement mistakes can occur if workers are not careful (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2000).

According to Cohen (1990), & The American Academy of Pediatrics (2000), people need to think and do what is in the best interest of the child. "Adoption qualifications
are necessary to protect the children from potentially abusive situations, however, some current qualifications are based more on society's prejudices than on the best interests of the child" (Respect for Life Web-Page, 2002, p. 1). When deciding where to place a child it should be "based in part on a comprehensive assessment and periodic reassessment of the child and family by professionals who are experts in pediatrics and child development" (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2000, p. 7). This is important because every child is different, and no single person, adopted or not, is the same.

It only makes sense that the amount of children adopted slipped from 1999 - 2001 (Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, 2002), when looking at the "challenges facing the millennial parent, including the loss of the extended-family structure, the influence of advertising and peer pressure," (Gibbs, August, Cole, Padgett, Ressner, & Winters, 2001, p. 40), making sure the child is adapting well to their new home environment, finding them a school in which they can fit in, and most of all giving them the love and compassion they so desperately need. The term "parent" cannot be taken lightly and in recent years it has been "stretched to new limits." In the case of this project, an adopted parent is one who takes on
the role of a biological parent in "situations in which children are separated by death, abandonment, or relinquishing of rights of their true parents" (Guttery, Friday, Field, Riggs, Hagan, & Joseph 2002). Further, many adoptees and their adopted parents deal with discrimination and "stigmatization" on a regular basis (Lansford, Ceballo, Abbey, & Steward, 2001). According to Kressierer and Bryant (1996), adoptive relationships are often stigmatizing because of societal expectations that men and women would prefer to parent biological children. They concluded that adopted parents often question the legitimacy of their parental roles.

The studies and information listed above illustrate how susceptible adopted children can be to the world surrounding them. It is this researcher's belief that this susceptibility carries over from other aspects of their lives, into media socialization, and plays a role in what types of television programming they view.

"Adoptive family structures also are an increasingly common family form" (Lansford, Ceballo, Abbey, & Steward, 2001, p. 840). This could be due in part to the adopted parents' openness, or just to the fact that the population of children that need homes has greatly increased. In fact, around the 1970's,
in response to social forces and outcries from birth parents, adopted persons, adoptive persons, adoptive parents, and adoption practitioners (Reitz & Watson, 1992), adoption practices began a gradual transformation from the secrecy model to an open one, based on increased levels of contact and shared communication. (Fravel, McRoy, & Grotevant, 2000)

Although curiosity about adoption, birthparents, and other facets of adoption increases and decreases depending on age, studies still show that adopted children are vulnerable to socialization through the media. "Adoption adds an additional dimension of 'differentness' to integrate into one's overall sense of self" (Kohler, Grotevant, & McRoy, 2002, p. 93). In this search for a sense of self, adopted individuals become entangled in the messages passed along by the television. Hence, a good chance exists that adopted individuals are being socialized by the media and do not even know it considering the fact that a television set can be found in almost every American household in the United States.
Socialization

The effects of television and American's exposure to it, is nothing short of "cataclysmic."
(Boorstin, 1973, pp. 281)

Television has been called a structure that has the ability to mold reality into organized patterns for efficient conveyance (Orlik, 1988, p. 221). Turner (1990) sees television as a medium whose manipulative power is so great that it is almost invisible and unnoticed to the individuals watching it. No matter what way you look at it, television plays a significant role in the socialization of American men, women, and children (Hoffner, 1996).

There have been many studies conducted on socialization that cover many different fields of study. Studies have been conducted on politics and socialization (Chaffee & Yang, 1988; O'Keefe & Reid-Nash, 1987), television viewing habits and the initiation of youth smoking (Gidwani, Sobol, Gortmaker, DeJong, & Perrin, 2002), the nature of television's effects on heavy viewers (Nacos, 2000; Morgan & Shanahan, 1997; Reber & Chang, 2000), home-schooling and socialization (Taylor, 2001), socialization and higher education (Ellis, 2001), electronic media and the socialization of young Americans, socialization of Israeli youth, overweight kids and
socialization, American college students and soap opera socialization (Dominick, 1990), and the list goes on. There is no shortage of socialization literature out there and more studies continue to surface.

Many different studies have been done on socialization over the years in many different fields. "Such areas include the study of violence in entertainment programming, especially as it affects the young, and for political and health communication" (Newhagen, 1998, p. 274). However, the ability to find information about how the media has the ability to socialize adopted people is nowhere in sight. Due to this fact it is imperative to show that television does indeed have the ability to socialize individuals, and in this case, adopted individuals.

Socialization is something that takes place all throughout an individual's life. Most people would even agree that socialization is a good thing in many cases and it is a normal part of everyday life. "It would appear that socialization takes place mainly in childhood, but socialization can be seen as an ongoing long-term process affecting adults as well" (McQuail, 2002, p. 51). For this project, concentration will be focused on television's ability to socialize with various types of popular television programming.
Johnson (1967) reported that television's influence is so great that it has the ability to change the way families live their lives. It was found that 60% of families' sleeping habits changed because of television, 55% had their meals altered, and 78% of parents used the television as an "electronic babysitter" (Johnson 1967). Further, "activities that decreased were sleep, social gatherings away from home, other leisure activities (e.g., correspondence and knitting), conversations, and household care" (Liebert & Sprafkin, 1988, p. 6).

Heavy viewers of television have a tendency to make demographic estimates that are closer to the television population rather than the "real world" when it comes to age (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1980) and also sex and race (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1986). According to Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli (1980), many people—particularly the socially and media naïve—perceive television programs to be objective presentations of 'reality;' hence, their lives are judged according to their ability to "measure up" to TV characters' lives (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1980).

The television is used for a number of reasons, but "research indicates individuals use the mass media for
parasocial and interpersonal reasons, for entertainment, for education, and information" (Brinson, 1992, p. 20).  

**Heavy Viewing**

It has been estimated that by the age of 18 a child born today will have spent more time watching television than in any other single activity besides sleep. (Liebert & Sprafkin, 1988, p. ix)

Researchers and experts alike disagree on many aspects of television's ability to socialize, but most agree that those most susceptible to television socialization are the heavy viewers. "Television helps to shape their expectations as well; and heavy viewers, particularly those who are using television as an important informational source, may be more likely to accept television's version of reality and may become more fearful, more biased, or less tolerant" (Evra, 1990, p.203). "The cumulative effect of television is to create a synthetic world that heavy viewers come to see as reality" (Morgan & Shanahan, 1997, p. 2).

"Heavy viewers of television share a commonality of outlook that is consistent with television portrayals, and may develop distorted and inaccurate perceptions of violence in the real world" (Evra, 1990, p. 95); along with sex, age, and gender. "The television has the ability to
construct an "imaginary world that builds on appeals to individual and social fantasies" (McQuail, 2002, p. 54).

Like many researchers, "Gerbner is concerned with the cumulative pattern communicated by television over a long period of exposure rather than any particular content or special effect" (Thompson, 1998, p. 15).

This theory proposes that media and television in particular present a "pseudoreality" that is different from the social reality most people experience. People who watch television for hours on end will tend to replace their own social experience with that of television reality, resulting in a 'television view' of the world. (McQuail, 2002, p. 52)

Casey, Casey, French, & Lewis (2002), state, in other words, just as the agenda of meetings is set with more important items placed prominently on the agenda, television programmers can help define the boundaries of what audiences talk about and think (Casey, Casey, Calvert, French, & Lewis, 2002). There is even a connection with increased exposure to television and the adoption of cultural values portrayed (Chaffee, 1990). No one can say for sure, but "cultivation theorists argue that television has long-term effects which are small, gradual,
indirect but cumulative and significant" (Chandler, 2002, p. 1).

Social Subjects

"Socialization can refer to the various ways in which individuals become social subjects" (McQuail, 2002, p. 51). In the past 30-years, a "considerable" amount of research has been conducted which describes the portrayals of characters on the television (Harwood & Anderson, 2002). Roles define the way individuals act by the internalization of certain values and norms and participation in social action among other role references. The acquisition of a new role initiates the individual into a particular social group. (Taylor, Westcott, Bartlett, 2001, p. 24)

"Research on the role of media technologies, most notably television, suggests that media may facilitate social interaction, namely through group viewing and television 'talk'" (Morrison, 2001, pp. 135). This is important because it shows that a type of media socialization is taking place because of the television. Haran (1995) demonstrated the socializing power of the television and VCR combination. Of the 1,000 people interviewed, nearly half (47.7%) said they watch television with their families and 44% said they watch videos.
together. This is almost one-half the population surveyed, and one must wonder what messages were being transferred from the television to the subjects.

"Television is part of lived culture, the culture of the everyday and ordinary. Its output (texts, programs) and its organization (industry) can similarly be regarded as significant aspects of cultural life" (Casey, Casey, Calvert, French, & Lewis, 2002, p. 54). According to Newcomb (1982), many mass society theorists generally believe the audience is helpless and that technology and industrialization is responsible for what popular culture is today.

Its political and cultural power lie in this combination of technical capacity superior to other media, with the organizational arrangements which permit and encourage the absorption by so many millions of viewers of images produced and controlled by so few networks, and made so easily accessible to people through the U.S. and abroad. The resultant "global village" unquestionably plays a significant role in the political and cultural life of contemporary America. (Newcomb, 1982, pp. 281)
The roles that people in television take on can greatly affect the way society views the social group being portrayed on television. The character may be portrayed positively or negatively, but research shows that the media is helping in the socialization of social groups. But as previously mentioned, television programmers can help define the boundaries of what audiences talk about (Cassey, Casey, Calvert, French, & Lewis, 2002, p. 7).

Socialization is defined by McQuail (2002) as a learning process in which people learn how to behave in certain situations and adapt to what is expected with a status or given role in society. This paper will next discuss three social groups that the television commonly portrays: Gender, race, and age.

**Gender**

Women and men learn specific behaviors and attitudes expected of them over the years and are socialized accordingly. Researchers believe gender socialization does indeed, in large part, have to do with television and the mass media (Brinson, 1992).

If real life abounds in sex-role stereotyping, television confirms if not exaggerates these biases by portraying markedly more males than females in programs, by showing males in dominant
roles, by having women more often victims of violence, and with only a few exceptions, by showing that the career world is a male one. (Williams, LaRose, & Frost, 1981, p. 26-27)

"People are taught, generally speaking, that women should behave in a 'feminine' way: passive, affectionate, gentle, kind, soft-hearted, dependent, nurturing, understanding, other-oriented" (Brinson, 1992, p. 89), while "men learn to behave in masculine ways: aggressive, confident, independent, rational, self-oriented" (Brinson, 1992, p. 89). These gross generalizations are portrayed on television regularly and it has become a norm of society.

According to Cowan & Stewart (1977), studies indicate that many individuals accept these gender roles and apply them in making personal judgments about others. It is suggested that "television programming is a rich source for the communication of gender-typed behaviors for women and men. Indeed, it is possible that television may be very effective at communication information and educating audiences" (Brinson & Winn, 1997, p. 28).

Television plays an important role in reiterating our societies most widely and deeply held values. Among the most central values television retraces daily are those that construct gender roles. Our
culture's assumption about how males and females should think, act, and speak is rehearsed with unending regularity in television programs. The potential influence of televised gender portrayals on our sense of who we are and who we should be merits serious consideration. (Berg, 1991, p. 47)

In the last 15-years, the portrayals of males and females on television have changed considerably (Hoffner, 1996, p. 2). Some of these changes have been positive, others have been negative, but television's ability to socialize has never lessened.

Viewers identify more readily with characters of the same sex (Miller & Reeves, 1976, p. 2). Nearly all boys will select or focus in on same-sex characters in everyday television shows (Hoffner, 1996, p. 5). "Overall girls reported more wishful identification and parasocial interaction with same-sex characters" (Hoffner, 1996, p. 5). Hoffner (1996) also believes that this identification with selected characters is one outcome of television viewing that is believed to "mediate" the socialization process.
"Women are socialized to be other-oriented, submissive, nurturing, and primarily concerned with creating and maintaining relationships" (Brinson, Winn, & Emmett, 1997, p. 26). For example, in confrontational situations, most women are unable to maintain long periods of eye contact and this is often communicated as a sign of weakness (Dierks-Stewart, 1979; Pearson, Turner, & Todd-Mancillas, 1991). "Another way in which submission may be communicated by women during an argument is though some form of nonverbal withdrawal, such as refusing to speak" (Brinson, Winn, & Emmett, 1997, p. 26).

In the 1970’s, women filled about one-third of the roles in prime time television programming (Sternglanz & Serbin, 1974; Tedesco, 1974). Since the 1970’s women’s appearance in television shows have increased but the roles in which they play have come under question. Gerbner (1980) discovered that television displayed adult female characters as dependent, while Signorielli & Bacue (1999) found that women were still badly underrepresented when compared to census date between the years of 1967 and 1998.

"Television still perpetuates a high level of sex-role stereotype, both in occupational choice and in other behaviors. Women tend to be underrepresented, and males
and females are depicted in very different ways" (Evra, 1990, p. 132). Studies have found that women are taught to speak with quite, "ladylike" voices (Bate, 1988; Butler, 1981). "Some of the girls felt that its female characters were often presented as unrealistically passive, and were frustrated by the characters' failure to assert themselves in the way they would have wished to do in their own lives" (Buckingham, 1987, p. 201). It was found that most women were avoiding confrontation and had an inability to stand up for themselves (Gerbner, 1980).

According to Brinson, Winn, & Emmett (1997), female television characters represent similar sex-type behaviors. It was found that women are more likely to be presented in television as serving, nurturing, and dominated roles (Greenberg, 1980; Henderson & Greenberg, 1980). Henderson (1980) found that women are more likely to need emotional support in television programming, while Dominick, Richman, & Wurtzel (1979), found that women are more likely to use helping behaviors to resolve problems in television programs.
Men

"Men are socialized to be competitive, independent, dominant, and self-oriented" (Brinson, Winn, & Emmett, 1997, p. 28).

Researchers have discovered that men are portrayed as "macho" and tough on the television. Men are portrayed far differently than are women.

The sex role socialization of men may also demand certain behaviors, such as men viewing interpersonal conflict as a competition; something to be won. Unlike women, men are encouraged to promote themselves, so that their focus in an argument may be to seek self-satisfaction. Moreover, since interpersonal arguments may be perceived by men as a form of competition, it is unlikely they would engage in any withdrawing behaviors. (Brinson, Winn, & Emmett, 1997, p. 28)

Gerbner (1980) found that males were shown as settled, mature, and active. Brinson, Winn, & Emmett (1997) found that men manifest their "sex-role socialization" though verbal aggression. Further, Lackoff (1975) found that men achieve a greater social acceptance when they raise their voices, and that this may be associated with independence, power, and self-confidence.
"The behavior of men in fictional TV tends to conform to masculine behavioral expectations" (Brinson, Winn, & Emmett, 1997, p. 28). For example, research points to the fact that male television characters are dominant by the way they give orders, make plans, and handle situations (Greenberg, Brown & Buerkel-Rothfuss, 1993; Greenberg, Richards, & Henderson, 1980).

For most people the portrayals of men on television has become "second-nature" and it is now the norm. The studies above illustrate how males are presented on many popular television programs and may help to make the viewer conscious of what they are witnessing on their television sets.

Race

Television's impact on American society can be attributed to the attractiveness of its programming used to get a mass quantity of people to watch the various shows (Newcomb, 1982, pp. 281). These audiences are composed of people from all regions, classes and backgrounds. "Television is a crucial location in which relationships between social groups, stereotyping, group identity, and the like, are played out" (Harwood & Anderson, 2002, p. 81).
"Both experimental and cultivation research conceptualize the audience as a relatively passive aggregate of individuals affected differently by mass media as exposure and background variables diverge" (McQuail, 2002, p. 52). Weigel, Kim, & Frost (1995), discovered that the amount of blacks portrayed on television doubled between 1978 and 1989, all while cross-racial relationships tripled in the United States. "Minority leaders have often said that blacks and Hispanics are demonized by the choice of faces shown in crime stories" (Gerbner, 1996, p. 1). In addition, most other minorities are even more underrepresented as well. "Most of the groups that are underrepresented are also over-victimized" (Gerbner, 1996, p. 2).

Viewers who see members of their own group underrepresented but over victimized develop an even greater sense of apprehension and mistrust. Insecure, angry, mistrustful people may be prone to violence but are even more likely to be dependent on authority and susceptible to deceptively simple, strong, hard-line postures and appeals. (Gerbner, 1996, p. 3)
Young Vulnerability

It is no surprise that television is having such a profound impact on society's youth. According to Nielsen Media Research (1998), young people still spend more time viewing the television than any other type of medium in the field of communication. Further, Sheehan (1983) found that over one-half of elementary school children watched the television when they did their homework and ate their evening meals.

"An American child today is born into a home in which television is on for an average of over seven hours a day. By the time children learn to read and to distinguish news from other stories, they are fully integrated into a television view of the world" (Gerbner, 1996, p. 2). Due to this fact "children find television content more realistic and/or have greater difficulty distinguishing realistic material from unrealistic material, its impact on them should be stronger" (Evra, 1990, p. 171). It is no wonder why so many young minds become manipulated for they are at a vulnerable age and can easily be formed by the television.

Unfortunately, as previous sections of this paper have illustrated, the influence spans far across the spectrum affecting men, women, and children as well. Television
gives its viewers an unrealistic picture of the real world, partly by the age of the characters portrayed on many popular programs.

Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli (1980) found that characters aged 25 through 45 were over represented while characters under that age of 18 were significantly underrepresented. Robinson and Skill (1995) found a similar result in their study. They found that approximately 70% of the characters shown on prime-time television were between the ages of 20 and 49. Prime-time television research found that older adults were badly underrepresented and negatively portrayed in programming (Aronoff, 1974; Gerbner, Gross, Morgan & Signorielli, 1980). Harris and Feinberg (1977) discovered that “older adults” often times lacked depth of emotions and personal relationships with other characters; while Gerbner (1980), noted that older adults were often shown as “foolish” and “eccentric.”

Many researchers and experts disagree upon the effect this type of age socialization is having. The above information helps to argue that the possibility of an individuals’ development of unrealistic age socialization exists, and did so by the use of various research.
The disharmony between the televised and real world will be apparent to adults who have experienced conflict and, hence, may reject the arguments as unrealistic. However, preadolescents, adolescents and young adults, many of whom watch programs to learn how to behave as adults, will receive a distorted view of adult arguments. Children and adolescents will be media socialized to expect more passive behaviors than they are likely to encounter; their conversational partners will raise their voices, will withdraw, will interrupt, and will call them names. In this regard, television socializes some individuals to expect a world that does not exist. (Brinson, 1992, p. 99)

"Television’s role in the perpetuation of aggressive tendencies or of ethnic, racial, or sex-role stereotypes, should not be underestimated" (Evra, 1990, p. 203). Most people realize how much time is spent viewing television, but it remains unclear is why individuals turn on the set, how it is being perceived, and what the individuals “levels of involvement” are while watching. Television has indeed influenced many people in various ways and it appears that it has found a permanent place in the lives of most people.
Mass media consumers usually learn acceptable and unacceptable societal attitudes, values and behaviors (Jeffres, 1986). "Our attitudes and behaviors are typically a reflection of the values we have acquired. As we mature, our true orientations are subtly shaped by our parents, churches, and schools" (Newcomb, 1982, p. 8). Lowery & DeFleur (1995), name the family, peers, school, and mass media as the culprits in socializing individuals. "Obviously these socialization agents do not exert their influences independently. There is continual interaction and transaction between these agents and the individual" (Kane, Taub, & Hayes, 2000, p. 59). The influence may be both direct as well as indirect. The influence of the mass media, especially television, on literally every aspect of American life is large and difficult to dispute (Nacos, 2000, p. 317). One can only estimate the effects it is having on people of all genders, ethnic backgrounds, and ages, both positive and negative.

**Hypothesis**

It is this researcher's belief that adopted individuals will be more susceptible to intense messages being portrayed on the television due to media socialization.
H1: There will be a significant difference between the current TV use of adopted college-aged adults and non-adopted college-aged adults.

H2: It is hypothesized that the adopted individual will have stricter regulations set forth by the parents to protect them from the influence of popular television.

As previously stated, this project will attempt to determine if there is a correlation between adoption and media usage. This project serves as a groundbreaking study that is significant because adopted individuals have often times been overlooked in the field of communication. If adoption does indeed play a role in what college-aged adults watch, then this study can lead the way for future research to be conducted. The following research questions will be sought:

Will talk shows be the most popular television program for college-aged adults? Will participants have a better relationship with their mother or father? Which parent will this individual spend the most time with? How much did the parents of adopted and non-adopted individuals regulate their television viewing? Will adopted and non-adopted individuals acknowledge television’s ability to socialize people? How much time do adopted and non-adopted
individuals spend outside of watching television and work? Will adopted and non-adopted individuals commonly view television programming that contains violence, sex or nudity, or profanity? Because it is a fact that some television contains a great deal of violence, are adoptive individuals more prone to lash out violently? How common is adoption? How much do adopted and non-adopted individuals watch television? How much television did adopted and non-adopted individuals watch as children? Do adopted and non-adopted individuals view television content differently? If there is indeed a difference, could it be hypothesized that television affects adopted college-aged adults differently from those who are not adopted? While society is so familiar with television, what messages are filtering in the minds of adoptive and non-adoptive individuals?

Questions like these are important to look at and it can only benefit society in a positive way. These questions will help to find significant differences in individual’s viewing habits. They will help to decipher if these differences affect adoptive children in a negative or positive manner. If they are negative, then what can societies do to avoid them altogether? It has been stressed that parents of adopted children have the same challenges of raising their kids, as do biological parents.
If this is true, then there should be time spent on the viewing habits of non-biological children. The media are one source of socialization, and a goal of this study is to find if adoptive individuals are being socialized differently from non-adoptive individuals in terms of their television usage. If significant differences in the subjects' television use are found, it is now possible to speculate that adoptive individuals are being socialized and raised differently than are non-adoptive individuals.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

A convenience sample of 229 college students from the University of Nevada Las Vegas were given a 30-question survey (See Appendix I) to uncover information regarding their television usage from both the past and present. The participants were all volunteers and received no compensation for the completion of the survey. All volunteers were current students enrolled in the Communication Department at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. The 229 participants surveyed are not necessarily communication majors but are enrolled in communication courses to fill graduation requirements for fields such as business and marketing. It is believed that the survey will detect media usage differences between adopted and non-adopted individuals due to the many differences discussed in the literature review. The students came from 12 communication courses at UNLV; 10 courses of Public Speaking, one course of Visual Literacy, and one course of Introduction to Video Production.

This research is relevant for four main reasons:
1) It is a groundbreaking research in the field of communication in terms of adoptive and non-adoptive media usage.

2) The general media usage questions on the survey can be compared to previous studies conducted on media usage to discover if changes have occurred.

3) The enormous influence the media has on many people, including college-aged adult students.

4) Las Vegas serves as a "melting pot" so it allows this study to question a diverse set of subjects.

The survey instructions were modified according to the rules and standards set forth by the Human Subjects Research Office at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. The participants that volunteered were under no pressure to complete the survey and were aware that they could discontinue the survey or skip questions at any time while participating in this research study. Participants were asked to complete the 30-question survey both honestly and completely. Participants were not told that this survey was seeking information about the media usage of adoptive college-aged adults in the hope to get more truthful answers and to be as nonabrasive as possible while conducting the research. Rather, participants were simply told that the research was looking at "media usage."
The types of questions asked on the survey differed throughout. For each section of the survey, directions were included to help the participants understand how to answer the different types of questions. The survey was written at an seventh or eighth grade level, to be better understood by the diverse group of communication students participating in the research; to avoid confusion. The survey included the following types of questions:

**Text Instrument**

The questions asked for basic demographic facts, what types of shows they watched, how long they watched, regulation (if any) of television viewing by parents when they were young, if they were an only child, if not how many younger and older brothers/sisters the participant had, and finally if they were adopted. The survey was created in a simplistic manner equivalent to an seventh or eighth grade level. The survey questions were asked in three ways, on a nominal level ("arbitrary" numerals or symbols are used to classify objects, people, and characteristics), interval level (intervals between the adjacent points on a scale are equal), and ratio level (has all the levels as an interval scale but also has a true zero point). Further, at certain questions the participants were asked to fill in the blanks.
Survey Questions

Question number one asked the participants if they believed television was manipulative. The participants were given the option of circling three possible choices; yes, no, and unsure. Question two searched for the participant's (current) favorite type of television show. Participants were able to choose from four popular television programs; talk shows, soap operas, sports games/highlights, news, or other. If the participants circled the other choice, they were asked to print the type of program they favored. Questions three, four, five, and six were nominal questions that asked the subject information about their siblings. Question three asked if the participant was an only child, Question four asked what type of child (oldest, middle, or youngest), and Question five asked the participant how many siblings they had (1-2, 3-4, 5-7, 8 or more). Question six went into more detail and asked the participants how many brothers they had if applicable, sisters if applicable, and if any of them (including the volunteer) were adopted. Question seven asked if the participant was adopted in a yes and no nominal format, while question eight was created for only adopted individuals. It asked the adopted individual if they had other biological brothers and sisters or
determined if they were an only child adoptee. Participants were given choice options of yes, no, and unsure. Questions nine and 10 asked the participant questions about parental regulation of television programs in terms of the content and the amount of time spent in front of the television. The participants were to circle 'yes' or 'no' for questions nine and 10. For questions 11 and 12, the participants were to fill in the blanks and asked questions pertaining to how much time they spent watching television and they were asked on a ratio level. Question 11 asked how much time they currently spend, while question 12 inquired about their television usage as a child. Although questions 13-17 asked different survey questions, and were all asked on an interval level, the answer choices provided all utilized the following format: Strongly agree, agree, not sure, disagree, and strongly disagree. Questions 13-15 all pertained to the realism of popular television. Question 13 asked if popular television shows portray realistic (day-to-day) life styles, question 14 asked if the participant believed talk show and popular television topics were make-believe, and question 15 (to be answered by participants with children only) asked if their son or daughter believes what they see on talk shows and other popular television is realistic. Questions 16 and 17
looked into the influence of television. Question 16 inquired about the influence television has on the individual personally, while question 17 asked the participant for their opinion on television’s influence and socialization powers on other people. Questions 18 through 21 sought information regarding the participant’s relationship to their mother and father. Question 18 asked the participant about his/her relationship with their mother, question 19 asked about the participants relationship with their father, question 20 asked if the participant spent quality time with their mother when time and schedules allowed. Or, question 21 asked if the participant spent quality time with their father when time and schedules allowed. Question 22 asked the participants how many hours a day they spent (average day) outdoors, reading, etc. (other than watching television and employment hours). Questions 23 through 25 looked at what types of content were in the television programs watched by the participants. Question 23 asked if the programs they watch portray violence, question 24 asked if the programs they watch portray nudity or sexual messages, and question 25 asked if the programs they watch portray unsuitable language or profanity. Questions 26 through 30, asked the participant demographic questions. Question 26 asked for
the participant's age range. The participants were asked to circle one of the following numbers: 17-19, 20-22, 23-25, 26-28, or 29 or over. Question 27 asked if the participant was male or female, and question 28 asked for the participant's marital status. Question 29 asked for the participant's religious beliefs. The participants were given the following choice options: Catholic, Mormon, Jewish, Protestant, Baptist, and other choice which they were asked to fill in their own answer. Question 30 was a three-part fill in the blank question that asked if the participant had children. If so, how many children? Were any of these children adopted (if applicable)?

Participants

The participants that participated in this research were all undergraduate communication students at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, but differed in religion, sex, and majors. This research project was fortunate enough to have a diverse student body and this diversity carried over into the communication classes examined. Not all communication students were also communication majors. This often is the case because many majors throughout the campus require students to take communication classes to graduate; this was very often the case in 10 speech courses that participated. Although 229 surveys were completed,
and only six of these were from adopted participants, the diversity of the students tested helped to gain a more accurate representation of adoption and media usage than otherwise would have been possible.

Procedure

According to the Human Subjects Research office at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, a one-day, online, certification program was needed in order to conduct a survey involving human participants (See Appendix II). When completed, researchers were able to print out a completion certificate to verify the program was successfully accomplished. This printed certificate was required of both the researcher and the faculty advisor.

Three hundred and thirty surveys were printed out and included directions for completing the survey in accordance with the rules of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, along with the consent form (See Appendix III) allowing the completed survey to be included in this study on adopted media usage. All surveys were given to the seven instructors that agreed to conduct research in their classroom environment on January 28, 2003 at approximately 12:00 P.M. The surveys were handed to the communication students when it was convenient for the instructor. All surveys were completed and handed back by February 13,
Of the original 330 surveys printed, 229 were successfully completed. This was most likely due to student absence and others unwillingness to take part in this research study. Class sizes ranged from 16 to 54 students. Classes also differed in days, times, and campus locations. The teachers that helped conduct the survey were as follows: Amy Johnson (Speech 101), Bob Vickery (Speech 101), Flora Jackson (Speech 101), Daniel McCue (Speech 101), Lisa Menegatos (Speech 101), Dr. Mullen (Visual Literacy), and DeLaura Kostiw (Introduction to Video Production).
CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

One hundred and one men (44.1%) and 128 women (55.9%) formed the sample. Only six (2.6%) of the sample admitted that they were adopted, one (.4%) did not answer the question at all, and the rest said they were not adopted. One hundred and ninety-four out of the 220 volunteer participants were between the ages of 17-22 (84.7%), 16 (7.0%) were between the ages of 23-25, seven (3.1%) were 26-28, and 12 (5.2%) were 29 or older. Only 15 (6.6%) were married and just 10 (4.4%) of the participants surveyed had children. Of the subjects that did have children, eight (3.5%) had between one and two children, while one participant (.4%) had 8 or more brothers and sisters.

There were not as many significant mean differences (p< .05) as a researcher would hope for. However, the results indicate three survey questions with significant differences between means at the p< .05 level. The data was measured using an Independent Sample t-test in the SPSS 11.1 computer package.
Table 1  **Comparison of Adopted and Non-Adopted Media Use** (t-test Analyses)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>General TV Use</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Current Ave. TV Use: Adopted</td>
<td>3.000</td>
<td>.894</td>
<td>.032</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Ave. TV Use: Non-Adopted</td>
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<td>.669</td>
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<td>.971</td>
</tr>
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<td>.901</td>
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<tr>
<td>Portray Realistic: Adopted</td>
<td>2.500</td>
<td>1.048</td>
<td>.218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portray Realistic: Non-Adopted</td>
<td>3.058</td>
<td>1.093</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make-Believe: Adopted</td>
<td>2.333</td>
<td>1.032</td>
<td>.664</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make-Believe: Non-Adopted</td>
<td>2.482</td>
<td>.833</td>
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<tr>
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<td>.874</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Influence on Others: Adopted</td>
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<td>.566</td>
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<tr>
<td>Influence on Others: Non-Adopted</td>
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<tr>
<td>Subject Rel. with Mother: Adopted</td>
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<td>.516</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject Rel. with Mother: Non-Adopted</td>
<td>1.887</td>
<td>1.020</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject Rel. with Father: Adopted</td>
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<td>.610</td>
</tr>
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<td>.408</td>
<td>--</td>
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<tr>
<td>Time Spent with Mother: Non-Adopted</td>
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(Table 1 Continued)

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<td>Nudity or Sex: Adopted</td>
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<td>.037</td>
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<td>Nudity or Sex: Non-Adopted</td>
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<td>.646</td>
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<tr>
<td>Profanity or Bad Lang: Adopted</td>
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<td>.516</td>
<td>.440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profanity or Bad Lang: Non-Adopted</td>
<td>2.531</td>
<td>.621</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first survey question found that a significant difference existed, and also supported Hypothesis 1. Hypothesis 1 stated that there would be a significant difference between the current TV use of adopted college aged adults (mean=3.000, SD=.894) and non-adopted adults (mean=2.396, SD=.669), was supported in the research (t=2.160, df=226, p=.032).

Hypothesis 2 stated that adopted individuals will have stricter regulations set forth by the parents to protect them from the influence of popular television (mean=3.200, SD=1.303) and non-adopted adults (mean=3.185, SD=.901), was not supported (t=.036, df=219, p=.971). When asked if television shows portray realistic topics, adopted participants (mean=2.500, SD=1.048) and non-adopted participants (mean=3.058, SD=1.093) had no significant relationship (t=-1.236, df=226, p=.218). When asked if television shows are usually make believe, again adopted
participants (mean=2.333, SD=1.032) and non-adopted participants (mean=2.482, SD=.833) had no significance (t=-.429, df=226, p=.669).

The t-test run on TV influence on adopted participants (x=2.833, SD=.983) and non-adopted participants (mean=2.756, SD=1.170) proved to have no significance (t=.159, df=226, p=.874). In addition, there was no significant differences found in adopted (x=2.000, SD=.894) and non-adopted (mean=1.851, SD=.616) participants’ view on the influence of television on other people (t=.575, df=226, p=.566).

There were no significant findings (t=651, df=226, p=.516) in adopted participants (mean=2.166, SD=1.602) and non-adopted participants (mean=1.887, SD=1.020) when asked about their relationship with their mother. The same adopted participants (mean=2.500, SD=1.224) and non-adopted participants (mean=2.242, SD=1.219) were asked about their relationship with their father, and again no significant difference was found (t=.511, df=223, p=.631). Adopted participants (mean=2.166, SD=.408) and non-adopted participants (mean=2.261, SD=.837) were asked about the amount of time they spend with their mother, no significant difference could be discovered (t=-.538, df=6,199, p=.609). When adopted participants (mean=2.400, SD=.547) and non-
adopted participants (mean=2.536, SD=.890) were questioned on the amount of time spent with their father, once again no significant difference was present (t=-.341, df=221, p=.733). Lastly, no significant difference was discovered (t=.273, df=226, p=.785) with adopted participants (mean=3.000, SD=.632) and non-adopted participants (mean=2.887, SD=1.002) in terms of how many hours they spend outside of watching the television or going to work.

When looking at adopted and non-adopted participants and television content, some significant findings were present. For example, when adopted participants (mean=2.000, SD=.632) and non-adopted participants (mean=2.635, SD=.584) were asked about the violence present in the television shows they commonly watch, a significant difference can be noted (mean=-2.622, df=226, p=.009). A significant difference can also be found (mean=-2.104, df=226, p=.037) between adopted participants (mean=2.166, SD=.408) and non-adopted participants (mean=2.725, SD=.646) when looking at the amount of nudity or sex present in the television shows they watch. There was no significant findings (mean=-.774, df=226, p=.440) when looking at the amount of profanity or bad language adopted participants (mean=2.333, SD=.516) and non-adopted participants (mean=2.531, SD=.621) watched.
Marginal Data

Participants were asked if they felt the television could be manipulative, 197 (86%) said yes, 17 participants (7.4%) said no, and 15 (6.6%) were unsure. Two hundred volunteer participants (87.3%) stated that they were not an only child, and 87 (38%) of these participants stated that they were the youngest child. Participants answers greatly differed when asked what popular television show they most commonly watch; 110 participants (48%) marked the other option, 67 participants (29.3% chose sports shows, 20 participants (8.7%) marked both talk shows or news (equally), nine (3.9%) of the participants chose soap operas, and three (1.3%) left the question blank. One hundred and nine participants (47.6%) stated that their parents did not regulate the types of television programs they viewed as children and 124 participants (54.1%) said their parents did not regulate the amount of television they watched as children. Two hundred and twenty-four participants (97.8%) stated that they currently watch television on an average day, and 221 participants (96.5%) stated they watched one or more hours of television on an average day when they were children. When the participants were asked if television had an influence on them, 124 participants (54.2%) strongly agreed or agreed that
television had an influence on them, while another 81 participants (35.4%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with this question. On the other hand, when participants were asked if they believed television had an influence on others, 203 participants (88.6%) strongly agreed or agreed that television did have an influence on others; while only two participants (.9%) disagreed or strongly disagreed. Twenty participants (8.7%) surveyed stated their relationship with their mother was fair or poor, while 36 participants (15.8%) stated their relationship with their father was fair or poor. Further, only 11 participants (4.8%) stated that they never spend quality time with their mother, while 26 participants (11.4%) stated that they never spend quality time with their father. Nine participants (3.9%) admitted that they spend zero hours conducting other activities besides watching the television or going to work on an average day. Two hundred and twenty participants (96.1%) stated that the television show they watch sometimes contains violence, 211 participants (92.1%) noted that the television show they commonly watch sometimes contains nudity or sex, and 222 participants (96.9%) stated that the television show they commonly watch sometimes contains profanity or bad language.
Hypothesis 1, as originally expected was supported in this research. Hypothesis 1 stated that there will be a significant difference between the current TV use of adopted college aged adults and non-adopted college-aged adults. This was predicted because previous studies discussed have shown that adopted and non-adopted individuals differ in most aspects of their lives. Due to these other differences between adopted and non-adopted individuals in other aspects of their lives it was expected to carry over into their television viewing habits.

It was hypothesized (Hypothesis 2) that the adopted individual will have stricter regulations set forth by their parents to protect them from the socializing capability of popular television. This was not supported in the research but should not be completely discarded either. A hypothesis such as this is difficult to prove or disprove with a sample size of six adopted subjects. It was this researcher's belief that this hypothesis would be
proven because of the challenges adopted parents face when adopting a child. These parents are forced to file a large amount of paperwork to prove employment, suitable housing, and responsibility. All these regulations were major factors when creating Hypothesis 2 and it was this researcher's belief that because of the challenge that comes with adopting a child, these adopted parents would be more careful in terms of what their children watch on television. Hence, these participants would have stricter regulations created by their adopted parents.

In survey question two, participants were asked what their favorite type of television show was, and answers came from all across the spectrum. Only 8.7% of the participants circled talk shows to be their favorite type of popular television, and this was originally expected to be their first choice by the researcher. This was expected because of the popularity of talk shows at this time and also because people in the 18-22 age range have been known to be heavy viewers of this "trash TV."

The answers to questions nine and 10 were analyzed next. One hundred and nine participants (47.6%) admitted that their parents did not regulate their television use as children, and another 54.1% admitted that their parents did not regulate the amount of time they watched television as
children. This was unexpected because the television has been shown to be a major socializing agent. With all the negative messages being portrayed, a good possibility exists that many of these subjects were exposed to negative television messages. In addition, 96.4% of these same participants admitted to watching one or more hours of television on an average day when they were children.

When participants in this survey were asked if television had an influence on them, 54.2% said they agreed or strongly agreed. When these same participants were asked if television had an influence on others, 88.6% agreed or strongly agreed. It is believed, as discussed in the literature review, that many of the people being influenced and socialized are unaware that this is occurring. Many people agree that television has the ability to manipulate, socialize, and influence, but many of these same people are unable to see that it is affecting them. This was demonstrated by the 34.4% difference in the two influence questions.

When participants were asked about their relationships with their parents, some interesting information was discovered. When the participants were asked about the quality of their relationship with their mother, only 8.7% said it was fair or poor. When these participants were
asked if they spent quality time with their mother when their schedule allowed; all but 4.8% said they do. On the other hand, 15.8% of these same participants surveyed said their relationship with their father was either fair or poor, while 11.4% said that they never spend quality time with their father when their schedule allows. These results illustrate that the participants surveyed have a better relationship with their mothers than with their fathers. There could be a number of reasons why this is the case, but it is believed this is due to the large and growing amount of strong and single mothers. It is no longer uncommon to see strong single women taking care of multiple children. Unfortunately, it is not uncommon for a father to be out of a child’s life completely either. It is believed this was a major contributing factor in why these survey questions about parental relationships reflected what they did.

Survey Question 22 asked the participants how many hours they spend on an average day outdoors, reading, etc (Anything other than watching television or employment). Nine participants (3.9%) replied that they spend zero hours outside of watching television and work. This is most likely do to the popularity of the television and the fact that almost all homes have at least one television set.
available. The statistics on how much time people sit in front of the television on a daily basis show a pattern, and survey answers like these only further illustrate this fact that television is a major part of what most Americans do everyday.

The statistics focusing on the negative content that many participants are exposed to will be discussed in the following section. Ninety-six percent of the participants surveyed said that the television shows they watch sometimes contain violence, 92.1% stated that the shows they watch sometimes contain nudity or sex, and 96.9% of the participants admitted that the shows they watch sometimes contain profanity or bad language. This is believed to be the case because ratings and advertisers control what is displayed on television. It seems that most people want to see violence, nudity or sex, and profanity. If this is what people want, this is what will be shown; disregarding what may be right or wrong. As previously discussed, the television companies are businesses too, and they must show what people want to see. Unfortunately, this happens to contain a great deal of negativity and many of these programs become unsuitable for children and young adults.
Limitations

This study proved to be significant for a number of reasons as listed above and will hopefully serve as the basis for future research when looking at media usage habits of adopted individuals. However, four significant limitations shall be noted and suggestions for future research will be given.

First and most significant, the sample size of adopted participants included in this research was extremely small. It was more difficult than expected to find adopted college-aged adults and this was the reason for the small sample of adopted participants. There could be a number of reasons why this is the case and it is a possibility that some of the participants did not admit to the fact that they were adopted. It is suggested that a much larger sample of adopted participants be used in future research. Possibly relying on participants that the researcher already knows are adopted or even contacting an adoption agency for assistance.

Second, all volunteer participants that completed the survey were from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas and currently enrolled in communication courses. As previously mentioned, the University of Nevada, Las Vegas and the Communication Department, are a very diverse group of
individuals but no outside participants were utilized for this project. The communication courses the participants came from were chosen out of convenience and are unable to serve as an accurate representation of a societal group other than the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. It is suggested that the researcher use multiple universities or groups instead of relying on just one in future research studies. Further, it may be helpful to use colleges from different states in the hopes of finding more accurate information.

Third, the ages of the participants were almost always in the 18-22 range. Due to this fact, the survey questions primarily reflect results from one generation thus failing to give an accurate representation of all generations. For future research, it is suggested that the sample be expanded from college-aged adults to masters level students to find a better age range. This broader age range would be a better representation of society as a whole and would not be limited to one age range or generation.

Fourth, the survey itself contained its own mistakes and flaws. The first survey flaw was present on question 15. The question asked the subject if their son or daughter believes what they see on talk shows and other popular forms of television are realistic. The problem
surfaces because not everyone in the class has children and instructions should be included to keep from confusing the participants.

Question 20 was flawed as well, this time the problem occurred during formatting at the copy shop. The copy shops computer did not transfer the question correctly and this could have led to confusion among subjects. The question in its correct form should have appeared this way:

\[
20) \text{ I spend quality time with my mother when there is time to do so.} \\
\text{1) Always} \\
\text{2) Often} \\
\text{3) Sometimes} \\
\text{4) Never}
\]

Question 20 on the survey handed out to the 229 volunteer participants appeared like this:

\[
20) \text{ I spend quality time with my mother when there is time to do so.} \\
\text{Always} \\
\text{1) Often} \\
\text{2) Sometimes} \\
\text{3) Never}
\]

The final survey flaw was an error by the lead researcher when creating the survey. Question 29 appeared this way:

\[
29) \text{ What is your religion?} \\
\text{1. Catholic} \\
\text{2. Mormon} \\
\text{3. Jewish} \\
\text{4. Protestant} \\
\text{5. Baptist} \\
\text{6. Other}\underline{______________}(\text{Please fill in})
\]
This was incorrect because Baptist (5) is a Protestant religion.

**Conclusion**

The television has a great deal of power that extends into the lives of children and adults alike. In recent years, the world has become a mediated environment and many people have become somewhat dependent on the television for entertainment, education, and socialization. For example, in a study conducted by the Anneberg Public Policy Center (2000), it was found that the average child spends two and one-half hours a day watching television while only one hour a day is devoted to homework. The same study discusses parents and adults, “ninety-one percent of parents report watching TV with their children as a way to mediate what their kids watch” (www.media-awareness.ca/eng/issues/stats/Usetv.htm, 2000, p. 3). Studies like this, and others previously discussed in the literature review (Ward, 2002; Americana Academy of Pediatrics, 2000; Benjack, 2002; Selinske, Naugton, Flanagan, Fry, & Pickles, 2001) illustrate the socializing power of television and its ability to fascinate its viewers. The television has become a tool that almost all people use on a daily basis and few live without.
Four of five (78 percent) adults in the United States consider TV with their children to be a family activity. More than a quarter (26 percent) watch television every night during dinner. Nineteen percent say they could not survive without television. Forty-seven percent of households have a TV in a child’s room.

(Media-awareness.ca, 2000, p. 20-21)

Further, this 1997 study found that 98.7% of total American households owned a color television.

Statistics like those listed above illustrate the powerful socializing ability the television has, but what is happening to adopted individuals in comparison to non-adopted individuals? Studies have shown that many adopted individuals, especially at the middle-school age are more commonly angry, distracted, socially isolated, lash out at parents more often, face unexplainable sadness, are fearful of being abandoned, act out to get attention, and even tend to be more cruel to themselves and others. (Benjack, 2002, p. 2 & 3) So the question must be asked, if adopted individuals are more susceptible to all these negative behaviors, is the television socializing them differently than non-adopted individuals?
This study has helped to illustrate that there is a good chance that a difference in television socialization is taking place between adopted and non-adopted individuals, and with all the negative messages being transmitted, one can only speculate on the effect television has on adopted people. Benjack (2002) supported this possibility when he found that an adopted child commonly turns to messages from the television because of their search for a sense of self. Regardless of the reason, a difference in adopted and non-adopted individuals' perception can be a serious issue and it is necessary for more research to be conducted in this field. It has been shown throughout this project that television is a major source of socialization for all people, especially children and this issue needs to be addressed.

The above project was successful in some ways, and unsuccessful in others. This study determined that television usage between adopted and non-adopted college-aged adults differed. Although the researcher was unable to directly point out the reason why television usage differed between adopted and non-adopted college-aged adults, a further understanding of their viewing habits was gained and a great deal of information can be used in future research. The four significant limitations will
serve as a learning process for this researcher as well as other researchers that may refer to this project for future studies. There was much more to commend than criticize in this project. However, it is important to note the limitations in order for the same mistakes not to be repeated by future researchers.

While the answers to some research questions are difficult to discover in a survey like this, much insight was gained in this study. This study enabled the researcher to gain a better understanding of the viewing habits of all participants, especially those who were adopted. A better idea of the viewing habits of University of Nevada, Las Vegas students was discovered and an original study was successfully conducted. This study contributed to the theory of socialization because it demonstrated that a great chance exists that adopted participants are being socialized by the television. It has been illustrated in the literature review that adopted individuals differ from non-adopted participants in many ways, and especially in how they mature and interact with society. Studies have shown adopted individuals to be more susceptible to influence, and in knowing that the television is such a vast source of influence, the possibility exists that these messages are being
interpreted differently in the minds of adopted individuals. For this reason and for the reason listed above, this study was successful and has the ability to lead the way for important future studies in this field and fields closely related.
APPENDIX I

SURVEY QUESTIONS
**Differences in Media Usage**

**Instructions:** Please circle the number that best answers each of the following questions.

1) Do you feel television can be manipulative?
   1. Yes
   2. No
   3. Unsure

2) What is your favorite type of television show?
   1. Talk shows
   2. Soap operas
   3. Sports games/highlights
   4. News
   5. Other: _________________ (Please name)

3) Are you an only child?
   1. Yes (If yes please skip numbers 4, 5, & 6)
   2. No

4) What type of child are you?
   1. Eldest
   2. Middle
   3. Youngest

5) How many siblings do you have?
   1. 1-2
   2. 3-4
   3. 5-7
   4. 8 or more

6) How many brothers do you have? __________, sisters? __________, how many were adopted (including yourself)? __________

7) Are you adopted?
   1. Yes
   2. No (If no please skip number 8)
8) If you were adopted, do you have other biological brothers and sisters?
   1. Yes
   2. No
   3. Unsure

9) Did your parents regulate the television shows you were allowed to watch as a child?
   1. Yes
   2. No

10) Did your parents ever limit the amount of television you watched?
    1. Yes
    2. No

   **Instructions:** For the next 2 questions please fill in the blanks.

11) How much television do you currently watch on an average day?________

12) How much television did you watch as a child on an average day?________

   **Instructions:** For the rest of the questions please circle the answer that best fits you.

13) Many popular television shows portray realistic (day-to-day) life styles.
    1. Strongly Agree
    2. Agree
    3. Not Sure
    4. Disagree
    5. Strongly Disagree

14) Talk show topics and other popular forms of television are usually make-believe scenarios.
    1. Strongly Agree
    2. Agree
    3. Not Sure
    4. Disagree
    5. Strongly Disagree

15) My son or daughter believes what they see on the talk shows and other popular forms of television is realistic.
    1. Strongly Agree
    2. Agree
    3. Not Sure
4. Disagree
5. Strongly Disagree

16) I believe the television has an influence on me?
   1. Strongly Agree
   2. Agree
   3. Not Sure
   4. Disagree
   5. Strongly Disagree

17) I believe the television has an influence on other people?
   1. Strongly Agree
   2. Agree
   3. Not Sure
   4. Disagree
   5. Strongly Disagree

18) How is your relationship with your mother?
   1. Excellent
   2. Very Good
   3. Good
   4. Fair
   5. Poor

19) How is your relationship with your father?
   1. Excellent
   2. Very Good
   3. Good
   4. Fair
   5. Poor

20) I spend quality time with my mother when there is time to do so.
   1. Always
   2. Often
   3. Sometimes
   4. Never

21) I spend quality time with my father when there is time to do so.
Always
   1. Often
   2. Sometimes
   3. Never
22) How many hours do you spend on an average day outdoors, reading, etc. (Other than watching television and employment hours)?
   1. None
   2. 1-2 hours
   3. 3-5 hours
   4. 6-8 hours
   5. 9 hours or more

23) The television programs I watch often times portray violence.
   1. Always
   2. Often
   3. Sometimes
   4. Never

24) The television programs I watch often times portray nudity or sexual messages.
   1. Always
   2. Often
   3. Sometimes
   4. Never

25) The television programs I watch often times portray unsuitable language or profanity.
   1. Always
   2. Often
   3. Sometimes
   4. Never

26) What is your age range?
   1. 17-19
   2. 20-22
   3. 23-25
   4. 26-28
   5. 29 or over

27) What is your sex?
   1. Male
   2. Female

28) Are you married?
   1. Yes
   2. No
29) What is your religion?
1. Catholic
2. Mormon
3. Jewish
4. Protestant
5. Baptist
6. Other __________________ (Please fill in)

30) Do you have children? __________________ (Please fill in). If so how many? ________________ (Please fill in), are any of them adopted? ________________ (Please fill in).
APPENDIX II

ONLINE HUMAN SUBJECTS CERTIFICATIONS

106
Completion Certificate

This is to certify that

Christopher Yunker

has completed the Human Participants Protection Education for Research Teams online course, sponsored by the National Institutes of Health (NIH), on 01/27/2003.

This course included the following:

- key historical events and current issues that impact guidelines and legislation on human participant protection in research.
- ethical principles and guidelines that should assist in resolving the ethical issues inherent in the conduct of research with human participants.
- the use of key ethical principles and federal regulations to protect human participants at various stages in the research process.
- a description of guidelines for the protection of special populations in research.
- a definition of informed consent and components necessary for a valid consent.
- a description of the role of the IRB in the research process.
- the roles, responsibilities, and interactions of federal agencies, institutions, and researchers in conducting research with human participants.

National Institutes of Health
http://www.nih.gov
This is to certify that

Lawrence Mullen

has completed the Human Participants Protection Education for Research Teams online course, sponsored by the National Institutes of Health (NIH), on 01/28/2003.

This course included the following:

- key historical events and current issues that impact guidelines and legislation on human participant protection in research.
- ethical principles and guidelines that should assist in resolving the ethical issues inherent in the conduct of research with human participants.
- the use of key ethical principles and federal regulations to protect human participants at various stages in the research process.
- a description of guidelines for the protection of special populations in research.
- a definition of informed consent and components necessary for a valid consent.
- a description of the role of the IRB in the research process.
- the roles, responsibilities, and interactions of federal agencies, institutions, and researchers in conducting research with human participants.

National Institutes of Health
http://www.nih.gov
APPENDIX III

HUMAN PARTICIPANTS

CONSENT FORMS
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
Communication Department

Informed Consent
-Office for the Protection of Research Subjects-

I am Christopher E. Yunker from the UNLV Department of Communication Studies. I am a graduate student and the researcher on this project. You are invited to participate in a research study that deals with the media usage of college-aged men and women. If you volunteer to participate in this study you will be simply asked to spend approximately 5-7 minutes to complete the 30 questions given. Please be truthful and honest because this is a research study. There is no risk in completing this survey. Your results will not be shared with any other party, nor will your name be used for any reason. If for some reason you do not feel comfortable in completing some general questions you have the right to leave them blank and stop taking the survey at any time. By participating in this survey you will walk away with a better understanding of your television viewing habits and be part of a study that will eventually be published here at the Lied Library. If any questions regarding this survey arise please contact Dr. Lawrence Mullen at (702) 895-4491 or e-mail me at Yunker40@aol.com. If questions arise regarding the rights of research subjects the office to contact is the UNLV office of Protection of Research Subjects and their number is (702) 895-2794. Once again please remember that participation is voluntary and you may withdraw from participation at any time without penalty. Thank you for your time and I appreciate your help.
Media Usage
Informed Consent

Contact Information:
If you have any questions about the study or if you believe you may have experienced harmful effects as a result of participation in this study, please contact Dr. Lawrence Mullen at 702-895-4491.
For questions regarding the rights of research subjects, you may contact the UNLV Office for the Protection of Research Subjects at (702) 895-2794.

Voluntary Participation:
Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate in this study or in any part of this study. You may withdraw at any time without prejudice to your relations with the university. You are encouraged to ask questions about his study at the beginning or any time during the research study.

Confidentiality:
All information gathered in this study will be kept completely confidential. No reference will be made in written or oral materials that could link you to this study. All records will be stored in a locked facility at UNLV for at least 3 years after completion of this study. After the storage time the information gathered will be destroyed.

Participant Consent:
I have read the above information and agree to participate in this study. I am at least 18 years of age. A copy of this form or an additional form with this information has been given to me.

______________________________  _______________________
Signature of Participant        Date

______________________________
Participant Name (Please Print)
Appendix IV

Human Subjects Department

Approval Page
Notice of Approval to Conduct Research Involving Human Subjects

DATE: March 7, 2003

TO: Christopher Yunker, Department of Communication
Dr. Lawrence Mullen (Advisor)
M/S 5007

FROM: Dr. Fred Preston, Chair
UNLV Social Behavioral Sciences Institutional Review Board

RE: Status of Human Subject Protocol Entitled: Media Use and Adoption

OPRS# 60050103-067
Approval Date: February 27, 2003

This memorandum is official notification that the protocol for the project referenced above has been reviewed by the Office for the Protection of Research Subjects (OPRS) and has been determined as having met the criteria for exemption from full review by the UNLV Social Behavioral Sciences Institutional Review Board (IRB) as indicated in regulatory statutes 45CFR 46.101. The protocol has been reviewed via the expedited review process and has been approved for a period of one year from the date of this notification. Work on the project may proceed.

Should the use of human subjects described in this protocol continue beyond March 7, 2004, it will be necessary to request an extension. Should there be ANY changes to the protocol, it will be necessary to submit those changes to the Office for the Protection of Research Subjects.

If you have questions or require any assistance, please contact the Office for the Protection of Research Subjects at 895-2794.

Cc: OPRS File
BIBLIOGRAPHY


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VITA

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Thesis Title: Differences in Television Use Between Adopted and Non-Adopted College-Aged Adults

Thesis Examination Committee:
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Committee Member, Dr. David Henry, Ph.D.
Committee Member, Dr. Beth Semic, PH.D.
Graduate Faculty Representative, Bridget Bycina, MS, NCC, LADC.