In recent years, great emphasis has been placed on removing violence from music, movies, and television. The entertainment industry has responded in kind—to an extent—by replacing some of television's violence with sexual situations, especially during television's 8 o'clock "family hour" (Silver, 1995). According to television critic Jeff Greenfield (1993), "They [entertainment executives] have moved into areas once considered untouchable in prime time; yet the most crucial area of all time - the capacity of modern men and women to love, trust, share and provide a moral framework for children, this seems to be beyond their grasp" (as quoted in Dobson and Bauer, 1990, p. 208). Furthermore, shows like Married with Children and Roseanne paint a bleak and dysfunctional picture of families today, a far cry from the sitcoms of the 1950s and 1960s like Ozzie and Harriet and Father Knows Best which promoted family unity and moral character. As William Hurt's (1987) Broadcast News character said, "How do you know where the line [of decency] is when they keep moving it?" (Heldenfels, p. E1).

Many parents are actively involved in their children's television viewing habits, but the lack of acceptable programming during the 8 - 9 p.m. "family hour" and an inconsistent ratings system can make it difficult for them to know what is and is not appropriate for their children to watch. It is interesting to note that 95% of an average child's television viewing consists of shows not specifically produced for children (Comstock and Paik, 1991).

In order to help parents more adequately screen what their children are watching and to keep the government from intervening, during the spring 1997 television broadcast season, the broadcast networks established a voluntary ratings system for American television (Appendix
A). The system was labeled a failure by many sources just weeks after it was instituted, however. According to Marin (1997), this was due to a number of factors including: inconsistent ratings; overuse of the TV-PG rating; ratings which are age-based, not content-based; rating icons which are only displayed for a few seconds at the beginning of each show; and steamy, unrated promos shown at all hours during the broadcast day. Networks often portray their raciest content in their promos which are shown during a variety of commercial breaks.

This study will have as its secondary focus a line of decency that the majority of Americans would agree on, The Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments are the cornerstone of Judeo-Christian beliefs and offer a guideline for behavior that is rarely argued in the mainstream of society.

Interestingly, a spring 1997 poll by *TV Guide* asked the following question: "Which of the Ten Commandments do you think is most often violated on prime-time television?" The results were as follows (Kaufman, 1997):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commandment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do not commit adultery</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not kill</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not take the Lord's name in vain</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not covet your neighbor's wife</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honor your mother and father</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not bear false witness</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not steal</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not covet your neighbor's possessions</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worship only the Lord</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observe the holy days</td>
<td>less than 1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This study will attempt to show how accurate the American public's perception of the relationship between the Ten Commandment and network television is by documenting the number of violations of these guidelines which occur during the "family hour."
Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study will be to use content analysis to document and describe:

1. the sexual references presented on network television between 8 and 9 p.m. on weekday nights during the 1997 television season - a time called "the family hour."
2. the sexual references which were presented between 8 and 9 p.m. on weekday nights during the 1977 television season.
3. the behaviors which show violations of and adherence to the Ten Commandment presented on network television between 8 and 9 p.m. on weekday nights during the 1997 television season.
4. the behaviors which show violations of and adherence to the Ten Commandments which were presented on network television on weekday nights during the 1977 television season.
5. 5. the occurrence of language during the "family hour" which the majority of adults would consider inappropriate for children to hear.
6. the similarities and differences in sexual references between the 1977 and 1997 television shows which are viewed and analyzed.
7. the similarities and differences in following the Ten Commandments between the 1977 and 1997 television shows which are viewed and analyzed.

Those involved in the education and care of children have a responsibility to both the parents and children they serve to be aware of societal influences which may affect the child's behavior both in the home and in the classroom. The findings of this study will attempt to make child care providers, educators, and parents more aware of the subtle messages which are being delivered to their children nightly via the medium of television. This study will also provide a basis for further studies in the area of television, sexual content, and children which, to this point, has not been adequately represented in research. Finally, this study may help equip child care providers, educators, and parents with adequate information to lobby for reform and restraint in the television industry.
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In this chapter, the history of television, basic principles of cognitive and moral development, children and television, and a social learning theory perspective on the effects of television on children will be discussed. Prior studies of significance will be noted and applied.

The History of Television

In 1927, Philo T. Farnsworth first transmitted a wireless televised signal, focusing his camera on a one-dollar bill (Cheney, 1983). Just 12 years later, in 1939, television made its North American debut at a world's fair exhibition, and two years later, on July 1, 1941, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) licensed and approved the operation of the first commercial television stations in the United States. Television did not quickly enter American homes at that point, however, as World War II curtailed many broadcast activities. In 1946, after the War had ended, full-scale broadcasting resumed (Berry & Asamen, 1993).

The growth of television in America can be shown through the number of television sets sold nationwide and the percentage of households with a television set. For example, in 1945, only about 10,000 sets had been sold in the United States. By 1950, this number had jumped to seven million sets sold. Five years later, roughly 65% of all American households had at least one television set, and by 1960, this number had climbed to 90% of American households with 54 million sets in operation. By the end of the 1980s, more than 98% of American households
had television sets and about 66% of these households had two or more television sets (Berry & Asamen, 1993; Comstock & Paik, 1991).

When television was introduced to American society, reviews were mixed (Palmer, 1988; Berry & Asamen, 1993; Cheney, 1983). Some people believed television to be a passing fad, while others saw it as a tool that could be used for both education and entertainment. In 1938, E. B. White, author of many beloved children's books, spoke poignantly about the potential influence of television on modern society.

I believe television is going to be the test of the modern world, and in this new opportunity to see beyond the range of our vision, we shall discover either a new and unbearable disturbance of the general peace or a saving radiance in the sky. We shall stand or fall by television—of that I am quite sure (cited in Boyer, 1991, p. 79).

Moral Development in Children

Children learn through organization and accommodation, by-products of observing their world. According to Piaget (1951), this learning comes about in a series of cognitive schemes. A scheme is "a pattern of thought or action that is similar in some respects to what the layperson calls a strategy or concept" (Shaffer, 1993, p. 238).

Children progress through three schemes as they acquire knowledge about their world. First, children learn through behavioral schemes. A behavioral scheme is "an organized pattern of behavior that the child uses to represent or respond to an object or experience" (Shaffer, 1993, p. 238). Second, at about two years of age, children begin to adapt to their environments through symbolic schemes. During this time, children are able to think about objects and events without having physically acted upon them. Piaget gave the example of his 16-month-old daughter in his book, Play, Dreams and Imitation in Childhood (1951):
Jacqueline had a visit from a little boy (18 months of age) . . . who, in the course of the afternoon, got into a terrible temper. He screamed as he tried to get out of a playpen and pushed it backward, stamping his feet. Jacqueline stood watching him in amazement, never having witnessed such a scene before. The next day, she herself screamed in her playpen and tried to move it, stamping her foot . . . (p. 63).

Finally, children aged seven and older act on observations to make a logical conclusion. They use cognitive operations, internal mental activities "that a person performs on his or her objects of thought to reach a logical conclusion" (Shaffer, p. 239). These cognitive operations are possible because children have developed the cognitive operation of reversibility.

Like cognitive development, moral development, "the process by which children acquire society's standards of right and wrong" (Shaffer, 1993), is also a vital part of a child's growth. Lawrence Kohlberg's theory of moral development has contributed significantly to society's basic understanding of how children develop their sense of morality. According to Kohlberg (1984), six stages and three levels of moral development exist:

Level 1 - Preconventional morality. At this level, the child conforms to rules, not because he has internalized their meaning or necessity, but because he is fearful of punishment or striving for reward.

Stage 1 - Punishment-and-obedience orientation. At this stage, a child defines a behavior as good or bad based on its outcome and its consequences.

Stage 2 - Naive hedonism. At this stage, the child defines a behavior as good or bad based on how it will benefit him.

Level 2 - Conventional morality. At this level, the child conforms to rules to gain the approval of others or to maintain social order.

Stage 3 - "Good boy/girl" orientation. At this stage, a child defines a behavior as good or bad based on the reactions of others.

Stage 4 - Social-order-maintaining morality. At this stage, a child defines a behavior as good or bad based on the laws of the land.

Level 3 - Postconventional/Principled morality. At this level, a child begins to have a much broader understanding of the goodness or badness of a behavior because he can differentiate between morally right and legally allowed.
Stage 5 - Morality of contract, individual rights, and democratically accepted law. At this stage, an individual defines a behavior as good or bad based on human values and the benefit of the whole versus the individual.

Stage 6 - Morality of individual principles of conscience. At this stage—the highest level of moral reasoning in Kohlberg's theory—an individual defines a behavior as good or bad based on his own ethical principles, rather than principles set down by a society.

Kohlberg's theory of moral development is not without its critics. For example, Carol Gilligan (1992) believed that Kohlberg had a justice perspective, "a moral perspective that focuses on the individual; individuals stand alone and independently make moral decisions" (Santrock, p. 427). Gilligan stated Kohlberg's theory lacked a care perspective, "a moral perspective that views people in terms of their connectedness with others and emphasizes interpersonal communication, relationships with others, and concern for others," on moral development (Santrock, p. 427). Gilligan felt that this deficiency was due to the fact that Kohlberg was a man and most of his research was done with males (Santrock, 1996). According to Gilligan, men tend to view the world from a justice perspective, while women view life from a care perspective. This translates into men being willing to stand by their code of morality with little regard to the feelings and needs of others, while women tend to want to take the feelings and needs of others into consideration when they make decisions, even if these decisions should be based on moral or ethical principles. For example, a teenage girl may know that saving her virginity is the right choice for her to make, but she may give into her boyfriend's sexual overtures because she wants to please him and believes that it is not wrong to change one's standards when meeting the needs, wants, or desires of another.

Gilligan's argument can be applied to concern over television content. Cultural elements and the environment in which one lives serve to mold one's socialization and thinking on moral
issues. According to Gilligan, this is especially true of girls who are most influenced by what they perceive to be cultural norms. If one believes that young people are greatly influenced by the social morality in the world around them, it is feasible to conclude that the rise in divorce, teen suicide, births to unwed mothers, STDs, and other social ills are a result of the mass media's influence on society since the mass media glamorizes sex and portrays illicit sexual behavior without consequence, while rarely mentioning important factors such as contraception, commitment, and caring.

According to Comstock (1975), "The observation of TV portrayals can alter the balance between the inclination to perform an act and the inhibitions against it (with adolescents)" (p. 28). Likewise, Greenberg, Abelman, and Neuendorf (1991) concluded that television soaps have the potential to be a major force in the transmission of values and lifestyle and sexual information to young viewers. If television is to be considered a cultural element of our society, it must bear some of the responsibility for the moral decline of society's members, just as parents bear a significant responsibility for what their children are viewing.

**Television and Children**

As various forms of mass media have gained substantial influence over society through the years, both professionals and the general public have expressed their concern over its potential effects. Although all forms of the mass media have come under criticism, television seems to have been targeted more heavily and severely over time. Many wonder what effects television, which reaches the homes of millions, has on America as a whole, particularly children and their ability to learn and reason about various situations, especially moral dilemmas.
According to Cheney (1983), this concern over television grows out of five basic factors.

- First, television seems realistic—even though it is not real.
- Second, television is now watched by nearly every member of the population.
- Third, television provides a single experience that millions share.
- Fourth, many viewers view much of television as being factual, although much of it is fiction.
- Finally, television is the product of a relative few which is marketed to the masses.

Berry and Asamen (1993) also noted that much of the concern over television grows out of its potential impact on children, especially in the area of violence and behavior. Many are concerned that exposure to violence on television will make children less sensitive to the needs of others, more fearful of their world, and more prone to be aggressive in their behavior (Miller, 1977). Others have focused their research on the role parental interaction plays in a child's view of television (vander Voort, Nikken, van Lil, 1992; Austin, 1993; Larson, 1993), finding that parents can have significant influence over both their child's viewing habits and the child's understanding and interpretation of what is viewed, yet few parents are able to fulfill this function.

The problem here lies in the fact that parents are not carefully guarding what their children are viewing. Because of this, some would take the responsibility for television screening out of the parents' hands and put it with the government. This proposition leads to the argument of censorship versus free speech. Although our Constitution guarantees the right to
freedom of speech, much could and should be said about the necessity of civic responsibility as well as civil liberty. Speaking of the mass media, Hillary Rodham Clinton (1995) said:

What modern culture desperately needs are internal values that call on us to exercise our responsibilities, as well as our rights, as citizens. Instead of trying to justify inappropriate behavior, people in positions of power must start to behave responsibly and show restraint (Opinion, p. 1).

Rodham Clinton was referring to the issue of free speech versus censorship. The point of her article was that civic responsibility is just as important as civil liberty, and failure to exercise restraint is undermining the morals of America's youth. Because it is impossible for parents to screen everything their children see—billboards, television commercials, and trailers for movies, for example—the entertainment industry should be exercising its civic responsibilities as well as its First Amendment rights.

This concern over television and its impact on the general public has led researchers to attempt to measure both television's content and its impact on specific segments of the population. Content analyses have been done to rate various aspects of television including violence, sexual content, gender roles, and portrayal of families. For example, Monique Ward (1995) of the University of California at Los Angeles used content analysis in her study of the "family hour" (8 p.m. - 9 p.m.) for the 1992 - 1993 television season. Ward focused her study on those shows most popular with young people between the ages of 2 and 17 and the sexual dialogue found in these shows. Ward defined sexuality into broad terms of courtship, maintenance of relationships, physical acts, and sexual interaction. Her research indicated the most popular shows often depicted sex as "exciting amusement for people," with many child-oriented shows relying heavily on sexually-based humor for punchlines. For example, Blossom,
a popular show about adolescence, based 58% of all interactions on sex talk of some kind. Even
*Full House*, a show typically thought to be family-oriented, relied on sexual dialogue in almost
16% of its interactions. Ward's study also concluded that the networks often depict women as
sexual objects valued by men for their physical appearance, while depicting sexual relations as a
competition where both men and women are manipulating and plotting against each other.
Comparable studies such as the one conducted jointly by Children Now and the Kaiser Family
Foundation (Kunkel, Cope, & Colvin, 1996) have yielded similar results about a variety of
prime-time, "family-oriented" shows, and a study by Sapolsky and Taberlet (1991) found sexual
innuendo to be the most prevalent form of sex on prime-time television. This study, which
compared the 1979 and 1989 television seasons, revealed that sexual interaction on television is
most often portrayed between unmarried couples.

According to Doubleday and Doerge (1993), this type of dialogue and exposure does
have an impact on a child's social learning and his perception of the world in which he lives.

Television viewing is not a one-way experience for children. Social effects of
television viewing are not merely a result of the television content on the screen.
Children bring various cognitive abilities to the television viewing experience at different
ages that will influence what they attend to, perceive, and understand of what they have
viewed. . . . Preschoolers and young children attend more to television than older
children, comprehend less of truly central and more incident content, and have difficulty
making inferences about content. Knowledge of the informative meaning of formal
features is not complete. These youngest viewers have difficulty representing television
content and are likely to "fill in" their incomplete representations with stereotypes and
familiar scripts taken from their more limited general knowledge of television and the
world. They are more likely to believe in the reality or realism of television content on
television (pp. 34 - 35).

This concern over the lack of media restraint in its broadcasting and its potential effect on
society has led to the enactment of both laws and regulations. One of the most controversial
regulations established by Congress is the mandatory installation of the V-chip on televisions sold after 1997. Regulations such as this show that even politicians realize that children are greatly influenced by the world in which they live—and the entertainment which they are exposed to.

A Social-Learning Theory Perspective on the Effects of Television on Children

According to social-learning theorist Albert Bandura (1977), most human behavior is learned by observing others. This term is commonly referred to as modeling. He theorized that successful modeling occurs when children actively attend to the behavior of others, retain this modeled behavior in their memories, mentally process this information received from their observation by converting it into symbolic memory, and then later retrieving it and putting it into action based on the individual's motivation to pursue the learned behavior.

In other words, children know how to perform the day-to-day tasks of life because they have seen others perform these tasks. They do not necessarily have to be formally taught how to perform certain tasks or engage in certain activities. For example, a child knows the basic principles of how to drive a car, although he has never driven a car, because he has watched the adults in his life get into the car, put the key in the ignition, put the car in gear, and use the gas and brake pedals. Although a child is not qualified to drive a car, he has a firm idea for how it is done.

Bandura further theorized that children can learn behaviors without any reinforcement from outside sources. In other words, children do not need to even noticeably respond in order
for learning from the behaviors of others to take place. All that is required for learning, according to Bandura, is that a child actively observes the behavior which is presented to him and stores this information into memory to be retrieved at a later time.

Television is a medium which lends itself to the principles of social learning theory. According to Pearl, Bouthilet, and Lazar (1982), television most certainly plays a significant part in the socialization of children and increases its impact as exposure increases.

"Social reality" is a term used to refer to the way a person thinks about the world, the person's cognitive system or frame of reference. It has been assumed that television has an effect on people's conceptions of the world around them. If television does indeed influence how people think and feel about the world, it could have far-reaching social implications for culture and society. The accumulated evidence from research over the past decade seems to support the proposition that television, in some instances, does affect the "world view" of those who watch a great deal (p. 239).

Further, Dail and Way (1985) found that television is a major source of messages about life, a source which is powerful even if a particular behavior is not occurring frequently. Dail and Way contend that "since television programming may be considered an influential source of learning, careful attention to program content is warranted" (p. 488).

In light of the theoretical arguments that distinctive links between moral thought and behaviorism exist, a December 1996 study was conducted jointly by the Kaiser Family Foundation and Children Now (Kunkel, et.al., 1996). Findings of this study titled "Sexual Messages on Family Hour Television: Content and Context," include the assertion children do indeed understand sexual references on television. For example, Chart 5 of this report notes:
• Some children knew a "one-night stand" was being depicted in a scene from *Ellen* in which Ellen's roommate, Spence, tells her he has just slept with a woman he thinks is an "idiot." About the same episode, these 8 - 10 year old children said Spence had sex with the woman only because "he liked her body."

• On *Beverly Hills 90210*, 11-13 year old children understood the show was trying to communicate a message about "abstinence" or "not having sex," but also noted that the way the storyline played it out "it sounded like [all the characters] wanted to have sex" and that "not having sex is hard."

• About a clip in which Dr. Quinn and her husband are shown undressing and fondling one another, one 11 - 13 year old girl commented, "they just want to have sex instead of helping their children," when she puts off her son's request for help with his homework when he knocks on the bedroom door.

Understanding the process of cognitive and moral development and noting processes of association and assimilation, it is reasonable to conclude that a loss of inhibition which results from exposure to certain television scenes may not surface for years. Just because a child does not show evidence of television's desensitizing effects early in life does not mean that the child's thinking and reasoning have not been shaped—and skewed—for life, particularly in the area of sexual values and understanding of how relationships truly work.

**Summary**

A careful review of the history of television, basic principles of moral and cognitive development, and social learning reveal that television does impact our society as a whole. More specifically, an observer can infer that television has a specific impact on children which is far
greater than its potential impact on adults because children are still developing their skills of moral and ethical reasoning. Because censorship is considered an evil in our society, both parents and the mass media should be involved in guarding what children are viewing. Parents must take control of their children's viewing by actively screening what their children are watching and discussing programming with their children, and a concept of civic responsibility must be instituted by the television industry in order to save our children from the corrupting influences broadcast via the airwaves—particularly during the heavily-viewed 8 - 9 p.m. "family hour."
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

In this chapter, the research design and methodology of the completed content analysis of 1997 television shows which air between 8 and 9 p.m. and 1977 television shows which aired between 8 and 9 p.m. will be discussed. Issues of sampling, content analysis, research questions and instrumentation, hypotheses, quantitative procedure, and limitations of the study will be addressed.

Sampling

The purpose of this study was to measure the amount of sexual content, language inappropriate for children, and violations of the Ten Commandments contained in a sample of prime-time television shows which aired in 1977 and 1997, regardless of whether these shows would be considered children's programs or not. The programs viewed for this study were randomly selected based on their broadcast time (8 - 9 p.m., the "family hour"), network (ABC, CBS, Fox, NBC), popularity, and genre. Programs from both 1977 and 1997 were chosen in order to compare and contrast the twenty-year period. Random selection was accomplished by choosing two hours of television from each network for the 1997 sample (a one-hour drama and two half-hour situation comedies, when available) on a weekly basis and using all shows from 1977 showing in syndication at the time data collection began. Because of accessibility to recording devices, it was necessary to chose no more than three episodes of programming at any
given time, preferably with only two hours of 1997 programming being recorded on any given night. The popularity of shows was based on their ability to survive the 1996-97 television season. Shows which were viewed were shows which had retained enough viewers to complete their seasons without cancellation.

The primary focus of this study was the television programming shown on a regular basis during the spring of 1997 (Appendix B). A basic weekly programming lineup was obtained by comparing the February, March, and April 1997 editions of *TV Guide* and finding which programs aired most regularly during each time slot. The major broadcast networks—ABC, CBS, Fox, and NBC—were included in the sample because they are the largest, most influential broadcast television networks today, reaching more households than the cable networks (Kunkel, et. al., 1996). Three episodes of each selected show were recorded in March and April of 1997, with the exception of *Home Improvement, Temporarily Yours, Suddenly Susan*, and *Ellen* which were pre-empted once by other shows during the recording period, thereby leaving two episodes of each of these shows for viewing instead of three. Shows were selected based on their time slot (8 - 9 p.m.), their broadcast network (2 hours a week chosen from each network), and the length and type of show (one one-hour drama and two half-hour situation comedies chosen from each network). The only exception here was the NBC network which did not have a one-hour drama regularly scheduled during the 8 - 9 p.m. hour for the 1997 viewing period. Therefore, a one-hour block of half-hour situation comedies were used to replace the one-hour drama from NBC.

In order to compare the content of shows airing in 1977 to shows airing in 1997, a sample of programming from 1977 was also obtained. These samples were limited to five episodes of
four shows which are currently airing in syndication on various networks. These shows aired during the "family hour" in 1977 (Appendix C). Again, a basic weekly programming lineup was obtained by comparing the January, February, March, and April 1977 editions of TV Guide and finding which programs aired most regularly during each time slot. Shows which are currently in syndication were chosen for viewing due to ease of access and enduring popularity. No Fox television shows were used for the 1977 study because Fox was not a network at that time. Also, one drama and one sitcom from NBC were chosen, one sitcom from ABC was chosen, and one drama from CBS was chosen because these shows are currently available on network and cable television. A drama or second half-hour sitcom from ABC was not airing in syndication at the time of observation, nor were any sitcoms available which originally aired on CBS.

The ratings sheet used for this study (see Appendix D) was devised through research of past content analyses, specifically studies of prime-time television. The title of the show, the airtime, the day and the date of each viewed episode were recorded in order to provide a background description of the show. The TV rating was noted when applicable, but a rating was not always available because shows which originally aired in 1977 were not rated at the time of initial broadcast. Some syndicating networks did assign a rating, however. The rater's number was recorded on each sheet in case it would be needed for future reference. The rating sheet was divided into two main sections: sexual references and behaviors related to the Ten Commandments. The sexual reference section was further divided into talk about sex and sexual behaviors. A separate line for language unacceptable for children was also available for notation. A basic definition of each sexual variable was given on the rating sheet for ease of
reference, and space was available for further rater comments about each show, as well as space for notations related to resolutions of moral or ethical issues.

Each program was viewed by a panel of trained coders. These coders were instructed as to the basics of what was to be observed and the meaning of behavior that was to be observed, and they were reminded that television viewing for this project was for observation, not entertainment. Further, coders were shown a May, 1994 "PrimeTime Live" broadcast which dealt with children and mass media to further clarify their observations, helping them to view content through the eyes of a child instead of the eyes of an adult and to help them take an objective perspective on the subject matter. The researcher was the primary coder, and she was assisted by the three coders which she trained. The researcher and two coders watched a single episode together as part of their training and to help ensure interrater reliability. After this first viewing, the rating sheets of these three coders were compared. A consensus of 90% was required on overall totals before the raters were allowed to begin viewing shows independently, and a 100% consensus was reached. The fourth coder was trained individually with the researcher at a later date using the same materials as were used in the training of the other two secondary coders.

Coders used the specially constructed rating sheet to rate the viewed television programs based on sexual references, behaviors related to the Ten Commandments, and language inappropriate for children. The 38 hours of television which viewed for this study were divided among the three coders for viewing. One coder watched 17 and 1/2 hours of television, another watched 16 1/2, and the alternate coder watched 4 hours of television. (Thirty seven hours of programming were used in final analysis. One hour of viewed programming was not used for
Because the researcher on this project was also a coder, she observed all 23 hours of recorded television from 1997 as well as all 15 hours of recorded television from 1977 (a total of 57 episodes, 55 of which were used for final data analysis). In the case that there was more than a 10% discrepancy between the primary researcher and a coder, a third coder was then to be asked to view the episode in question in order to bring about consensus. This was not found to be necessary, however. A total of four coders were used in order to ensure the reliability of the results. The fourth coder (alternate) was used to view any episodes which coders two and three did not have time to view in the viewing period.

Content Analysis

As noted above, content analysis was the method of research used for this project. Content analysis is "a research methodology that utilizes a set of procedures to make valid inferences from text. These inferences are about the sender(s) of message, the message itself, or the audience of the message" (Weber, 1985, p. 9). The goal of content analysis is to characterize, condense, and elucidate content by bringing out characteristics which the average viewer would not find readily apparent, rather than simply relating back a story or program (Rosengren, 1981).

Two main types of content analysis exist: qualitative analysis and quantitative analysis. Qualitative analysis is a broad concept which encompasses impressionistic, intuitive, and systematic content while quantitative analysis is based on data on a nominal scale (Rosengren, 1981). According to Rosengren (1981), quantitative analysis is the type of content analysis most often employed in Anglo-Saxon studies. This research project employed quantitative analysis.
Of utmost importance to a researcher using either form of content analysis are the concepts of reliability and validity. Reliability deals with the consistency of results, while validity deals with a measurement's ability to actually measure the intended subject matter. According to Weber (1985), the three types of reliability are stability ("results are invariant over time"), reproducibility (intercoder reliability, "content classification produces the same results when the same text is coded by more than one coder"), and accuracy ("classification of text corresponds to a standard or norm") (p. 17). Weber also defines four types of validity: face validity ("a category . . . appears to measure the construct it is intended to measure), construct validity ("a measure . . . is correlated with some other measure of the same construct"), convergent validity ("high construct validity"), and discriminant validity ("a measure . . . is uncorrelated with measures of dissimilar constructs") (p. 19).

Objectivity is further related to reliability. According to Rosengren (1981):

Objectivity means that every stage in the research process must be based on explicitly formulated rules and procedures. The content of the text is to be emphasized, and the values and beliefs of the researcher must not influence the result of the examination. Some kind of reliability test must be undertaken, so that another researcher can obtain the same result from the same rules and data. That content analysis is systematic implies inclusion and exclusion of categories according to consistently applied rules. The possibility that the researcher will use only material supporting his hypothesis is thereby eliminated (p. 34).

It is important to note that while reliability is necessary for validity, it does not ensure validity. Likewise, validity implies (but is not implied by) reliability. According to Rosengren (1981), reliability is identified with truth, while validity is identified with relevancy.

As it relates to television, content analysis has been defined as systematically determining the attributes of a specific kind of television content and identifying, documenting,
and tracing those characteristics (Comstock, 1980). Sexual content and observable moral behaviors were the types of television content viewed for this project. Because content analysis is considered an excellent research tool for analyzing the content of the mass media, specifically television shows, many studies have employed this tool in their analysis of various aspects of television and its portrayals of race (Skill & Robinson, 1994), gender roles (Skill & Robinson, 1994), sexuality (Greenberg, et al., 1991; Sapolsky & Tabarlet, 1991; Ward, 1995), violence (Goranson, 1969), and family interactions (Miller, 1977; Dail & Way, 1985; vander Voot, et al., 1992; Austin, 1993; Larson, 1993). As noted earlier, Ward (1995) used content analysis to show the sexual content of dialogue on prime-time television. She coded her observations and those of her two observers based on total number of interactions per episode. This study is significant to this project because it provides a good model of content analysis as it relates to the sexual emphasis of television dialogue.

Two other studies were instrumental in providing initial direction and understanding of television content studies for this research project. The first, "Four Decades of Families on Television: A Demographic Profile, 1950 -1989" (Skill and Robinson, 1994), did an investigation into the life of Americans as portrayed through the medium of television. Their results revealed that television is basically ethnocentric and sexist and that it does not accurately reflect the findings of the U.S. Bureau of the Census regarding the diversity of families in America. Also, "Sex in Primetime Television: 1979 - 1989" (Sapolsky and Tabarlet, 1991) provided significant information on employing content analysis to reveal the amount of sex on television between the hours of 8 and 11 p.m. This study concluded that television has become
an important sex educator in our society which may have lasting effects on a viewer's perceptions of sex and that the amount of sex on television is increasing.

Research Questions and Instrumentation

The central research question of this study is "How does the sexual content of television shows airing during the 1997 family hour compare with the sexual content of television shows airing during the 1977 family hour?" The secondary research question posed by this study is "How do television shows airing during the 1997 family hour compare with television shows airing during the 1977 family hour in following the Ten Commandments?"

The testing instrument used in this study was the rating sheet for content analysis (Appendix D). The rating sheet allowed coders to rate the shows' content in regard to sexual matters, behaviors related to the Ten Commandments, and language inappropriate for children. Sexual content, however, was the focal point of consideration. All sexual content, both blatant and inferred, was taken into consideration through the use of 10 defined references.

For purposes of this study, the content measures for sexual references were adapted from Kunkel, et. al. (1996). Their study, "Sexual Messages on Family Hour Television: Content and Context," focused on regularly broadcast programming from the four largest networks (ABC, CBS, NBC, Fox) during the winter of 1996. Three randomly selected episodes of each regularly scheduled program which aired during the family hour (Pacific Standard Time) were recorded from January 28 to March 30, 1996. Kunkel, et. al. focused on sexually-related talk and behavior. According to their report to the Kaiser Family Foundation and Children Now, "any comment or portrayal that involves sexuality, sexual suggestiveness, or sexual activity would be included. Throughout the entire study, talk about sex and sexual behavior are considered as
distinct categories. Both types of portrayals are coded, but the findings are reported separately (p. 5).

For this research project, sexual content was defined as follows (see Appendix D):

- Talk about sex.
  - Second Hand: Examples include one character telling another who he slept with last night or one character telling another about her past sexual experiences
  - Direct: Examples include two characters talking about taking their relationship from a platonic one to a sexual one and two characters discussing arrangements for their first sexual encounter.
  - Humorous: Example includes dated pick-up lines such as "I would like you to be the mother of my children."
  - Seductive: Example includes conversation between potential lovers where the main objective is sexual intercourse
  - Consequences/contraception: Examples include mentioning the use of a condom or asking a partner if he has been tested for STD's
- Sexual behaviors.
- Flirtatious Use of the Body: Example includes a skirted woman crossing her legs to expose her thighs provocatively

- Kissing: Example includes mouth-to-mouth contact by lovers or potential lovers which conveys intimacy and/or longing

- Caressing/Embracing: Examples include a romantic touch that conveys intimacy as well as fondling or petting

- Sexual Intercourse (Explicit): Example includes at least some physical evidence of the sexual act being present (man and woman writhing beneath the bedsheets)

- Sexual Intercourse (Implied): Example includes an adjacent scent which obviously communicates the unseen action (couple waking up after their first night together and being confront by the children of one of the partners).

Also noted on the rating sheet were behaviors related to the Ten Commandments. For this research project, the Ten Commandments were defined as follows:

- Evidence of Devotion to God
  - Verbal references: Example includes praying before a meal
  - Non-verbal references
    * Setting: Examples include sitting in a church service or having a crucifix in one's home
    * Action: Examples include crossing one's self or closing one's eyes as another prays

- Evidence of Devotion to Idolatry
  - Verbal references: Example includes praying to an idol
- Non-verbal references
  * Setting: Examples include having an idol in one's home or bowing before a god
  * Action: Example includes shunning a symbol of Christianity in favor of a symbol of pagan worship

- Use of Irreverent Language: Examples include words like "God" or "Jesus Christ" used as expletives
- Honoring the Sabbath: Examples include having a special routine on the Sabbath, such as going to church or reading the Bible in the afternoon
- Disrespecting Parents: Example includes speaking back to a parent
- Murder: Example includes purposefully taking the life of another without just cause
- Adultery: Example includes two adults having a physical relationship while one or both are married to another
- Stealing: Examples include taking an object without asking or keeping the extra change a cashier inadvertently gives an individual
- Lying: Example includes telling a caller Mom is not home when she actually does not want to talk to the caller
- Envy: Example includes being motivated by jealousy to actively pursue that which belongs to another

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1
More sexual content is displayed during the 1997 "family hour" than during the 1977 "family hour."

A brief review of shows which aired during the 1977 "family hour" reveals family-oriented shows such as *Grizzly Adams*, *Little House on the Prairie*, *The Waltons*, *Rhoda*, and *Donny and Marie*. Today shows such as *Melrose Place*, *Diagnosis Murder*, *Relativity*, and *High Incident* air during the "family hour."

In the 1970s, the broadcast industry self-regulated during the 8 - 9 p.m. time slot because there was a heavy concentration of young viewers, hence the name the "family hour." According to Wiley (1977), this self-regulation was an outgrowth of societal concern over the content of television and its effects on young viewers and part of the Code of Good Practices of the National Association of Broadcasters. In the late 1980s, however, the industry—under legal pressure from various groups and producer Norman Lear who maintained that regulation violated First Amendment rights—abandoned its formal policy on self-regulation, leaving programming decisions solely up to the networks (Shales, 1997). Shows which now air during the "family hour" are often filled with violence, sexual situations and language, and verbalizations which the majority of society would consider inappropriate for children to hear. A February 1997 national telephone poll by *TV Guide* found that almost 75% of the poll's participants believe that prime-time television has become increasingly less moral, spiritual, and religious over the past five years (Kaufman, 1997).

**Hypothesis 2**
Shows which aired during the spring 1997 family hour "break" more of the Ten Commandments than shows which aired during the 1977 family hour.

The Ten Commandments, the cornerstone of Judeo-Christian behavior, set forth a very specific, yet very stringent code of conduct for mankind to follow. The Ten Commandments, found in Exodus 20:1-17 of the Holy Bible, outline the following guidelines of acceptable behavior. For purposes of this study, the basic Hebrew meaning of the commandment, not the modern day expansion of the concept, was taken into consideration.

1. An individual should place nothing in life before God.
   This commandment deals with one's devotion to God. God reminds the Israelites that He is the One who delivered them from the bondage of Egypt and He deserves their utmost affection and attention.

2. Worship of any idol of any kind is prohibited. Worship is reserved for God alone.
   This commandment explains that man is to neither construct a god out of earthly materials nor bow before or serve an earthly god. God reminds His people that He is a jealous God and will not share his due affection with anyone else.

3. Irreverent language is prohibited.
   This commandment holds a strong penalty: "The Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain." Examples of using the Lord's name in vain include uttering "God" or "Jesus Christ" as an expletive.

4. Work on the Sabbath is prohibited. The Sabbath is a day of rest.
   The Bible strongly teaches that just as God rested on the seventh day of creation, so man should set aside one special day of the week to remember the Lord's goodness and rest. According to Exodus 20:11, the Sabbath is blessed and hallowed.

5. Parents are to be honored and respected.
   This commandment is one of promise. A person who respects and honors his parents will have a longer life than he would if he were disrespectful to his parents.

6. No man should take the life of another man without just cause.
   Although Exodus 20:13 simply states, "Thou shalt not kill," other Old Testament references clarify this to mean that murder of another human is prohibited.

7. Adultery is prohibited.
This commandment specifically speaks of extra-marital sexual relations. Although the Bible is replete with other sexual laws and instructions, this commandment refers simply to extra-marital sex, not fornication (pre-marital sex).

8. Stealing is prohibited.
Taking something that belongs to someone else without their knowledge or permission is prohibited by this commandment.

9. An individual is not to lie.
Through reading the Scriptures, it is evident that God hates lying. Men throughout the Old and New Testament have been judged for this sin, some even being sentenced to death. A lie is a lie, whether it is a "white lie" or a "big lie."

10. Envy is not allowed, specifically in regard to possessions.
Envy (covetousness) goes beyond simple jealousy or admiration of something that belongs to another. When one covets, he actively pursues that which belongs to another, letting his jealous spirit govern his actions.

Although not all characters in all shows which aired in 1977 consistently displayed the moral and ethical behaviors implied by the Ten Commandments, many were examples of high standards of conduct. Examples include: Charles Ingalls (Little House on the Prairie), Howard Cunnningham (Happy Days), Grizzly Adams (Grizzly Adams), and Olivia Walton (The Waltons). Shows airing in 1997 do not have the same caliber of respectable examples. According to Kaufman (1997):

A big part of the problem [with television today], no doubt, is all those morally, spiritually, and religiously challenged characters running around in prime time. They lie, they cheat, they take the Lord's name in vain, generally behaving as though the Ten Commandments were the Ten Suggestions. Which commandments are most often flouted? Adultery and murder topped pretty much everyone's list. All this messing around may explain why, when asked to rate the morality of the prime-time population, respondents handed down an average rating of 46 out of a possible 100 (p. 35).

Quantitative Procedure

The quantitative procedure used for this study dealt with the four major networks and a sampling of the shows which they aired in 1977 and 1997 (except Fox which was not a network in 1977). For 1997, one one-hour drama was viewed each week from each network (except
NBC which did not have a one-hour drama between 8 and 9 p.m.) as well as a one-hour block which consisted of two half-hour situation comedies. For 1977, four shows which are currently running in syndication were chosen for comparison with the 1997 shows. Two of these shows were half-hour sitcoms, and two were one-hour dramas. Shows viewed were broadcast between March 27 and April 24, 1997 and taped for later viewing. Taping the shows also contributed to reliability and validity of results by allowing coders to view various segments more than one time as needed.

A total of 24 hours of television from the spring 1997 broadcast schedule were viewed, and a total of 15 hours from the 1977 schedule were viewed. The 1997 total of 24 hours was derived from watching 2 hours each week from each of the four major networks over a three-week time period (2 x 4 = 8 x 3 = 24 - 2 [hours deleted from final analysis] = 22). The 1977 total of 15 hours was derived from watching one full week of the four syndicated shows (3 hours a day for 5 days, 3 x 5 = 15). Thirty seven hours of television (55 episodes) were used for final analysis.

Because resources such as coders, time, and video players were limited, percentages of interactions were not able to be obtained. Instead, a straight count of sexual references, explicit language, and violations of the Ten Commandments were noted for each episode of each show. The number of sexual references per show, the use of explicit language on each show, and the violations of the Ten Commandments on a show-by-show basis were used to compare and contrast 1977 and 1997 television. Networks were also evaluated using these numbers, as was the TV rating system.

Limitations of the Study
Due to the nature of this study, several limitations were identified.

1. Shows from 1977 may not have been aired the same week as the shows in 1997. Further, they may not have been aired in 1977, although they are part of a series which ran in 1977.

2. A comparison of Fox Network shows from 1977 and 1997 was not possible because Fox was not a network in 1977.

3. Limited resources necessitated a narrow selection of both television shows and total number of hours viewed.

4. Selection of shows from 1977 was limited to the shows currently in syndication and available through the Akron area's Time Warner cable system.

5. A percentage of interactions which based their dialogue on sexual matter was not feasible due to the limited number of coders and the narrow time frame in which they worked.

6. Shows airing on network television vary from week to week and month to month. Therefore, for both 1997 and 1977 the shows which were regularly scheduled during March and April 1997 were chosen for observation, while shows which were used as substitutes were ignored.

7. Inter-rater reliability was limited to two coders per episode and no other test was used.

Summary

Content analysis is an excellent research tool for quantitatively studying prime-time television in various forms. It was especially appropriate for this study because past studies done
on similar topics offered a guide that helped to narrow and refine sampling, instrumentation, research questions, and quantitative procedure. Past studies also helped identify many of the limitations of this study.
REFERENCES


… and so on
### APPENDIX A

**TELEVISION RATING SYSTEM—SPRING 1997**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TV-Y</td>
<td>Suitable for young people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV-7</td>
<td>Suitable for children 7 or older</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV-G</td>
<td>Suitable for general audiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV-PG</td>
<td>Parental guidance suggested (limited sexual dialogue and violence)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV-14</td>
<td>Show may contain material inappropriate for children under 14; parents of younger children should take special note of potentially objectionable material</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV-M</td>
<td>Suitable for mature audiences only; roughly comparable to the R rating used by the Motion Picture Association of America</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Adapted from various news sources, including the *Akron-Beacon Journal* and *The Washington Post*
### APPENDIX B  Spring 1977 Lineup

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ABC</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:00 - 8:30</td>
<td>Captain and Tennille</td>
<td>&gt;Happy Days</td>
<td>The Bionic Woman</td>
<td>Welcome Back Kotter</td>
<td>Donny &amp; Marie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:30 - 9:00</td>
<td>Laverne and Shirley</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CBS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Good Times</td>
<td><em>The Waltons</em></td>
<td>Special Presentation of the Week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:00 - 8:30</td>
<td>Rhoda</td>
<td>Who's Who</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:30 - 9:00</td>
<td>Phyllis</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>The Waltons</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NBC</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:00 - 8:30</td>
<td>*Little House on the Prairie</td>
<td>Baa Baa Black Sheep</td>
<td>Grizzly Adams</td>
<td>Fantastic Journey</td>
<td>&gt;Sanford &amp; Son</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:30 - 9:00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Italics with bold print are used to identify shows which were viewed for this study.