Examining the relationships between violent media programming, aggression and prosocial behaviors among Black college students

By
Jamie M. Williams

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Faculty of Mississippi State University
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Counselor Education in the Department of Counseling, Educational Psychology, and Foundations

Mississippi State, Mississippi

December 2015
Copyright by

Jamie M. Williams

2015
Examining the relationship between violent media programming aggression, and prosocial behaviors among Black college students.

By

Jamie M. Williams

Approved:

Daniel W. Wong
(Major Professor)

Rebecca M. Goldberg
(Committee Member)

Tommy M. Phillips
(Committee Member)

Adam W. Love
(Committee Member)

Charles D. Palmer
(Graduate Coordinator)

Richard Blackbourn
Dean
College of Education
The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between violent media programming, aggression and prosocial behaviors among Black college students. The study included 108 Black college students from a historically Black college/university on the East Coast. The researcher evaluated the participants’ aggression using Buss & Warren’s (2000) Aggression Questionnaire and evaluated the participants’ prosocial behaviors using Penner’s (1995) prosocial personality battery. The researcher then used an independent samples t-test to analyze the data and test the hypothesis that a relationship between the variables exists. Furthermore, the researcher employed discriminant analysis to determine if group membership could be predicted, based on scores on the aggression questionnaire. The independent samples t-test produced results that indicated a statistically significant difference in mean scores on the aggression questionnaire, between light viewers and heavy viewers of violent media programming. The discriminant analysis produced results which indicated the predictor variable, scores on the aggression questionnaire, predicts group membership in either heavy or light viewers, at a statistically significant level ($p = .024$). Additionally, visual inspection of the
scores on the prosocial personality battery indicated participants who reported engaging in violent media programming scored significantly lower on the prosocial personality battery than those who reported engaging in light viewing of violent media programming. Results contribute to literature, research, practice and theory in the field of counseling.
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents: James & Delois Williams, for encouraging me to ask questions and seek answers.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To my siblings, Michael, Zakia, Reginald, Malcolm, Samora, Johannah, Dawn, Angela, Tina and Lois, thank you for taking a genuine interest in my research and encouraging me to push myself. To Ayo, Marimba, Kali, Diallo, Addison, Zoe and Michel; you are the future, and I can only pray that this violent and aggressive world is a little less intimidating before you are fully exposed to it as adults; your auntie is working on it. I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to my advisor, Dr. Daniel Wong. I give my most sincere thanks for your encouragement and untiring efforts to assist me through this journey. To my committee members: Dr. Goldberg, Dr. Palmer, Dr. Phillips and Dr. Love, I express my sincere appreciation for the role you have played in the completion of this dissertation, your full support and scholarly contributions were most appreciated. Thank you for teaching me, and encouraging me to continue on this academic journey.

To my dear friend, Tamisha J. Ponder, none of this would have been possible without you. You are truly the definition of a friend and your support has been unmatched. I sincerely thank you wholeheartedly for all that you have done to assist me throughout this tiring journey. Lastly, to the love of my life, Kendrick Williams, you kept me going when I did not know that I could, motivated me when I felt unmotivated, and believed in me when I did not believe in myself. You are truly my support system and I love you dearly.

iii
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION .................................................................................................................... ii  
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ............................................................................................... iii  
LIST OF TABLES ............................................................................................................. vi  
CHAPTER  

I. INTRODUCTION ................................................................................................1  
  Statement of the Problem ......................................................................................6  
  Theoretical Framework .........................................................................................7  
  Purpose of the Study ..............................................................................................9  
  Research Question ...............................................................................................10  
  Need for the Study ...............................................................................................11  
  Definition of Terms/Variables .............................................................................13  
  Summary ..............................................................................................................14  

II. LITERATURE REVIEW ...................................................................................15  
  Violence in Television ..........................................................................................17  
  Violence in Movies ...............................................................................................21  
  Violence in Video Games ...................................................................................24  
  Violence in Music and Music Videos ..................................................................28  
  Bandura’s Social Learning Theory and Media Violence ....................................32  
  Desensitization Theory and Media Violence .......................................................32  
  Cultivation Theory and Media Violence ...............................................................33  
  The Relationship between Media Violence and Real Life Violence ..................34  
  Violence and Aggression among Black College Students ..................................36  
  Social Impacts ....................................................................................................38  
    Aggression .......................................................................................................38  
    Prosocial Behaviors .........................................................................................40  
  Summary ..............................................................................................................42  

III. METHODOLOGY .............................................................................................43  
  Description of Research Methodology ................................................................43  
    Independent Variables ......................................................................................44  
    Dependent Variables .......................................................................................44  

LIST OF TABLES

1  Frequencies and Percentages of Responses to Demographic Variables ........57
2  The Mean and Standard Deviation of Variables ..............................................59
3  Test of Homogeneity of Variances .................................................................61
4  Shapiro-Wilks’ Test of Normality .................................................................61
5  Independent Samples T-Tests ......................................................................63
6  Discriminant Analysis Wilks’ Lambda .........................................................65
Violence and aggression have been a long-standing issue in Black communities. Childhood aggressive and disruptive behaviors are among the most common reasons for referral to child mental health services for this population (Neary & Eyberg, 2002). In low socioeconomic communities, the prevalence of behavioral difficulties, such as disruptive and aggressive behaviors, among youths ranges from 24% to 40%, making this the most significant mental health problem in these communities (Tolan & Guerra, 1994). These statistics are relevant, as Blacks typically live in disproportionately lower income communities. According to the 2012 U.S Census Bureau, 24.2% of Blacks live in poverty in comparison to 11.8% of other races. Although there is not one single cause of aggression, there are many different factors that can lead to the development of aggression and aggressive behaviors. Some of the many theoretical and empirical perspectives of the development of aggression have identified biological, socialization, family influences, social-cognitive influence, environmental and extra-familial/peer relational factors associated with aggression as the main contributors to violence and aggression (Veenema, 2009).

Research conducted by Veenema (2009) shows early life stressors such as child and adolescent abuse, as well as neglect and trauma, can induce robust alterations in emotional and social functioning, which often results in enhanced risk for the
development of psychopathologies such as aggressive disorders. There has been compelling evidence from multiple studies demonstrating that early life stress significantly contributes to the development of excessive and impulsive aggression (Barnow, Lucht, & Freyberger, 2005; Dodge, Bates, & Pettit, 1990; Èthier, Lemelin, & Lacharitè, 2004; Fonagy, Gergely, & Jurist, 2004; Hildyard & Wolfe, 2002; Lewis & Butcher, 1992; Loeber & Stouthamer-Loeber, 1998). This is particularly of importance, as Blacks are typically more often exposed to childhood stressors than any other ethnic group. A study of adolescents in a diverse sample compared exposure levels of five types of violence across four racial/ethnic groups and found Black youth had consistently higher mean levels of exposure to spousal violence (both male-on-female and female-on-male), child abuse, threats or physical assault in the community, and weapon injury in the community (Malik, Sorenson, & Aneshensel, 1997). A similar study found clear racial and ethnic differences in violence exposure among adolescents as Blacks were at a much higher risk for any violence exposure than Whites (Hanson et al., 2006).

Aggressive behaviors are thought to persist both over time and across generations (Huesmann, Eron, Lefkowitz, & Walder, 1984), and are also thought to predict other maladaptive outcomes such as delinquency and hostility in the adolescent and adult years (Farrington, 1986). These vulnerabilities are perhaps exacerbated when the people afflicted are growing up in dangerous and violent households and/or neighborhoods, which, as was discussed earlier in this chapter, many Blacks often do. Research shows developmental pathways of physically aggressive individuals in low socio economic environments are directly related to familial adversity and poor parenting and also serve as predictors of future delinquency and legal problems (Haapasalo & Tremblay, 1994).
Previous research suggests that the prevalence of aggression is higher among low-income Black youth who have to cope with a number of psychological stressors, which occurs when youth are under pressure or have difficulty coping with a particular situation or stimulus (Pouwels & Cillessen, 2013). A meta-analysis by Card, Stucky, Sawalani, & Little (2008) showed that direct aggression is associated with emotion dysregulation and the absence of prosocial behavior. These associations are thought to maintain presences across childhood and adolescence. Poor peer relationships, bullying and inability to maintain social interactions are also thought to be vulnerabilities that may lead to the development of aggressive behaviors.

In addition to the association with poor peer relationships, research has identified other factors that may lead to the development of aggressive behaviors. Coie, Lochman, Terry, & Hyman (1992) conducted a study among Black third grade children from low-income families and found that aggression was associated with externalizing and internalizing problems. In addition, aggression is associated with internalizing symptoms such as loneliness, depression, and social anxiety (Storch, Bagner, Geffken, & Baumeister, 2004). Research shows that young people whose parents divorce are three times more likely to become aggressive (Beckford, 2008). Statistics show that Blacks are more likely to get married and divorced than any other ethnicity, accounting for 36% of divorces, in comparison to Whites that only account for 32% of divorces (The Barna Group, 2008).

In addition to the aforementioned contributing factors, other more obvious predictors of the development of aggression has been debated the past years, concluding that television violence can incidentally increase the consumer’s appetite for real life
aggression (Huesmann, Moise-Titus, Podolski, & Eron, 2003). Research has argued that
the magnitude of incidental learning from television is amplified among lower class
minorities who tend to spend more time watching television than their middle class White
counterparts (Huesmann, 2007). According to past research (Rideout, Lauricella, &
Wartella, 2011), the amount of time that Blacks spend engaging in media consumption,
especially television is significantly higher than Whites. In a study entitled Generation M
(Rideout et al., 2011), researchers found a large increase in the amount of time Black
youth spend watching or listening to media programming, to the extent that they are
consuming close to 13 hours (12:59) worth of media content per day. In comparison,
White youth are spending about eight and a half hours (8:36) consuming media content; a
difference of about four and a half hours per day. In recent years, this gap in media usage
between White and Black youth has doubled (Rideout et al., 2011).

Research shows minorities are more likely to be a part of aggressive groups, and
engage in violent crimes than White US citizens: The National Youth Gang Center
(2011), state that of gang members in America, 88.5% are minorities, with only 11.5%
being White. According to past research on FBI Uniform Crime Reports (Unnever, 2011),
in 2008 Black youths, who make up 16% of the youth population, accounted for 52% of
juvenile violent crime arrests, including 58.5% of youth arrests for homicide and 67% for
robbery. Black youths were overrepresented in all offense categories except driving under
the influence, liquor laws and drunkenness (Unnever, 2011).

Television is regarded as the most influential form of media socialization
(Watkins, 2000). For the last decade, research has emerged that suggests the exposure to
violent media increases the risk of viewers engaging in violent behaviors (Anderson et
Research suggests that excessive engagement in violent media programming has the same effect on viewers as growing up in environments filled with real life violence (Huesmann, 2007). In 1980, 98% of U.S. Citizens had televisions in their homes (Harris, 2004). More recently, U.S. Citizens reportedly have up to three television sets in their homes, with 90% of parents reporting that by the age of three, almost 1/3 of children have televisions in their bedrooms and are often unmonitored while watching television (Brown, 2011). The actuality of media, most notably television and film, is severely violent. According to Harris (2004), 60% of U.S. television programs and 90% of the movies on television contain some sort of violence while 85% of video games have violence as an underlying theme. Harris (2004) also reported five violent acts per prime-time hour and 18 violent acts per weekend daytime hour on television.

This study explored the effects of violent media programming on aggression and prosocial behaviors. It sought to identify how, if at all, violent media programming influences aggression and prosocial behaviors among Black college students. Several studies have been conducted which concluded that high levels of aggression in minorities is in part, the result of consuming large amounts of violent media programming (Anderson et al., 2005; Neal, 2008). In order to prepare the reader for the current study, a review of the literature related to violent media programming, aggression, and prosocial behaviors was included. Additionally, comparison studies were discussed in the introductory and literature review sections of this manuscript. Statements of the problem, the purpose of the study, research questions, hypothesis and brief definitions of related terms were also presented. Finally, implications to this study were provided at the conclusion of the chapter. For the purpose of the instruments used in the study, I used the
term ‘Black(s)’ to describe the population being studied, although many may identify as African American(s). This is the term used in the demographic instrument on which data were collected, so for consistency, I used this term throughout the duration of this manuscript.

**Statement of the Problem**

Violence is becoming increasingly prevalent among minorities, as homicides rank as the number one killer of Black males, aged 15-34 (Neal, 2008). Violence and aggression have spread significantly from communities to college campuses. Aggressive behavior among college students is becoming an immediate concern on and around college campuses (Flannery, Daniel & Quinn-Leering, 2000; Tsui & Santamaria, 2015). This aggressive behavior not only affects the campus where it is a phenomenon, but in turn affects the surrounding communities as well. Chekwa, Thomas, & Jones (2013) found that communities surrounding college campuses experience ten times the rate of violent crime, as do the college campuses themselves. In addition, many college students, most significantly those residing in inner-city communities, continuously experience threatening behavior as victims, perpetrators or both (Chekwa et al., 2013). Furthermore, physical and verbal acts of violence and intolerance that cause harm to other individuals are becoming extremely prevalent on Historically Black college and university (HBCU) campuses (Chekwa et al., 2013; Davis, 1997).

Media violence is thought to increase aggression, at least in part, by desensitizing viewers to the effects of real life violence (Bartholow, Bushman, & Davis, 2005). Anderson et al. (2005) conducted a study involving 34 male college students in an effort to determine the effects of violent media programming on the attitudes of the participants
in reference to aggression and prosocial behaviors. Anderson et al.’s (2005) study observed, “playing violent video games increases aggressive behavior and decreases prosocial behavior among male college students” (p. 537). The latter results supported the hypothesis that exposure to violence in the context of television drama or video games decreases the participant’s emotional response to portrayals of real-life violence and aggression. The results indicate that increased exposure to violent media programming decreases the consumer’s ability to be emotionally responsive to real-life violence. Much research has been done on the topic, yielding significant results indicating that engaging in specific forms of violent media programming increases aggressive behavior and decreases prosocial behavior (Anderson, 2004; Anderson & Bushman, 2001).

**Theoretical Framework**

Social learning theory has been applied extensively to the understanding of aggression and provides one of the best contexts for the discussion of the study. Social learning theory posits that most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling, a process in which exhibited behaviors are imitated by others (Bandura, 1973). Research has shown that aggression among Blacks is linked to what they have been exposed to and/or learned from engaging in violent media programming (Neal, 2008). According to Bandura (1973), it is through observing others that individuals form ideas of how new behaviors are performed, and puts these behaviors into practice. This theory is best suited for the current study as it states that individuals develop their ideas of appropriate behavior through modeling the conduct of others and regarding those behaviors as normal courses of action.
Many researchers (Bartholow et al., 2005; Dominick, 1990) have relied on a number of different theories as frameworks for researching the effects of violent media programming on those who engage in it. One such theory, the desensitization theory, hypothesizes that repeated exposures to media violence desensitizes viewers to real world violence, increasing aggression by blunting aversive reactions to violence and removing normal inhibitions against aggression (Bartholow et al., 2005). This theory can also be used as a theoretical framework to determine the effects that violent programming has on the consumer specifically as it relates to aggression and prosocial behavior. The basic premise of this theory posits repetitions of violence in the media make people jaded towards violence and their reactions become less prominent, as consumers of media become accustomed to seeing acts of violence such as explosions, blood and guts, and mayhem on regular and consistent bases (Rambeau, 2010). Many researchers have studied this topic with most of the research conducted yielding results that align with the expected outcomes of this study (Anderson, 2004; Anderson & Bushman, 2001). One possible explanation for this conclusion sides with the example offered by the desensitization theory. It is believed that people who engage in significant amounts of violent media programming become less sensitive to violence after prolonged exposure (Comstock, 1989). As a result, they experience decreases in what is to be considered normal reactions to and disdain against violence and aggression, making individuals less responsive to the pain and suffering experienced by victims of violence, and less likely to respond in social crises or assist those in need (Carnagey, Bushman, & Anderson, n.d.; Funk, Baldacci, Pasold & Baumgartner, 2004).
The final theory that was used to guide the focus of the study is the Cultivation theory. The cultivation theory also lends itself to the topic of media violence and its effects on those who engage in it (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1980). Cultivation theory suggests that television is responsible for shaping, or ‘cultivating’ viewers’ conceptions of social reality (Dominick, 1990). The combined effects of massive television exposure by viewers over time subtly shape the perceptions of social reality for individuals and, ultimately, for our culture as a whole (Dominick, 1990).

**Purpose of the Study**

Given the need to further explore the precipitating factors of aggression among Black college students, the purpose of this study was to examine the impact that violent media programming has on aggression and prosocial behaviors. Because of the rising number of Blacks who commit violent acts, it is important to gain complete understanding of the personal, social, and emotional aspects of behavior that violent media programming may influence. Overall, examining the possible relationships between the variables being studied will expand the scientific knowledge base and will lead to more effective counseling practices, specifically for intervention and prevention.

It is hypothesized that there are statistically significant differences among those who are characterized as heavy viewers of violent media programming and light viewers of violent media programming as it relates to aggression, and prosocial behaviors (Anderson et al., 2005). More specifically, it is hypothesized that the more violent media young adults consume, the greater the likelihood that they will become less sensitive to the pain of others and more likely to inflict pain upon others (Neal, 2008). Research supports this theory (Anderson et al., 2005); studies have shown that by viewing
significant amounts of violent media programming, individuals become less responsive to it, more lackluster, and less excited or disturbed by it (Bartholow et al., 2005; Harris 2004). Harris (2004), conducted a study in which, after having seen a violent television show, one group of adolescents were less sensitive to violent images in a subsequent film than were the adolescents who had seen a nonviolent film first. Similarly, a study was conducted in which individuals who were asked to view violent programming had slower response times to a staged altercation than those who did not engage in the violent programming (Bushman & Anderson, 2009). The following research question and hypothesis was proposed to address the purpose of the present study.

**Research Question**

The current research assessed whether or not violent media programming has effects on aggression and prosocial behavior. Because minority aggression is on the rise (Davey & Smith, 2015), it will be helpful for counselors, researchers and policy makers to understand possible contributing factors that are not usually considered as often as more obvious factors (e.g., low SES, poor social relationships, environmental factors, etc.), such as violent media programming. Thus, the current study attempted to answer the following question and test the following null hypothesis:

*Research Question:* Is there a statistically significant difference between heavy and light viewers of violent media programming on aggression and prosocial behavior assessments?

*Null Hypothesis:* There is no statistically significant difference between heavy and light viewers of violent media programming on aggression, and prosocial behavior assessments.
Alternate Hypothesis: There is a statistically significant difference between heavy and light viewers of violent media programming on aggression, and prosocial behavior assessments.

Need for the Study

According to past research (Cooper & Smith, 2012), minorities accounted for 54.7% of homicide offenders from 1980 to 2008, while Whites only accounted for 45.3%. The offending rate for Blacks was almost eight times higher than Whites, and the victim rate six times higher. Most murders were intraracial, with 84% of White homicide victims being murdered by Whites, and 93% of Black victims being murdered by Blacks (Cooper & Smith, 2012). Black men between the ages of 24 and 40 are much more likely to die from homicide than any other ethnic group (Haynie, 2007). With numbers such as the ones previously presented, research such as this are imperative in attempting to determine the underpinnings for violence and aggression among Blacks.

Rationale for this study lies in the paucity of studies on the effects of violent media programming that focus specifically on Blacks, and there is even less research on Blacks in this age group. Previous research has been geared toward middle class White college students (Anderson et al., 2005). This past research neglected to address the concerns of the Black communities and offer different explanations for the rising crime rates among minorities, and decreases in prosocial behavior. The present study is primarily necessary in that it can contribute to the dearth literature on the effects of violent media programming in the rising number of aggressive Black youths. Moreover, this study stands to contribute a great deal to the extant literature in the field of counseling. In terms of better counseling practices, this research can assist with
developing proactive and reactive measures to aid in working with aggressive Blacks on college campuses, most notably in the area of prevention.

With media programming being described as the number one tool of entertainment (Harris, 2004), studying the relationship between violent media programming and aggression in Black college students makes this study exceedingly significant. If violent media programming is statistically significantly linked to aggression and prosocial behaviors among Black college students, counselors can develop more appropriate interventions, which may be used as both prevention and intervention tools. In the area of training, the field of counseling can benefit a great deal from this study as evidenced by implementing training on these factors for counselors, specifically college counselors so that they are better equipped to handle aggression and aggressive students on college campuses. Finally, the study is significant as it could open up the possibilities for future research with other populations such as minorities who are not enrolled in college and minority adolescents.

Blacks are unfortunately grossly understudied and this research is needed as an attempt to determine the severity of aggression and decrease in prosocial behaviors, as well as identify possible contributing factors. The odds are stacked against Blacks as they are more likely to become incarcerated, and if they are unemployed the chances of becoming incarcerated increases (Amurao, 2015). With numbers like these, any study that may determine why aggression levels among Blacks are elevated is valuable to the field of counseling.
**Definition of Terms/Variables**

1. *Aggression*- any behavior with intent to inflict harm or injury on another living being, hostile or forceful action intended to dominate or violate, and behavior that is intended to injure another person physically or verbally (Benjamin, 1985).

2. *Attitude*- an individual’s outlook or perspective on any given situation.

3. *Blacks* – A term used to describe people who are considered to be African Americans.

4. *College Student*- person(s) currently enrolled in courses at a college or university.

5. *Heavy Viewers*- Participants who engage in a specified median amount (which will be determined in SPSS) or more hours of violent media programming per day.

6. *Light Viewers*- Participants who engage in less than a specified median amount which will be determined in SPSS) of hours of violent media programming per day.


8. *Prosocial behaviors*- positive actions that benefit others, prompted by empathy, moral values, and the sense of personal responsibility rather than the desire for personal gain. (Kidron & Fleischman, 2006).
9. **Violence**- Aggressive behavior where the actor or perpetrator uses his or her own body or an object (including a weapon) to inflict relatively serious injury or discomfort upon another individual (Olweus, 1999).

10. **Violent media programming**- Any form of television, movies, video games, music or music videos that entail violent content (Harris, 2004).

**Summary**

Elevated levels of aggression and decreases in prosocial behaviors continue to be issues for Blacks. The impact that violence has on Blacks can be detrimental to their prosocial behaviors and aggression levels. To date, the precipitating factor of the aforementioned variables has not been extensively examined with this population. The purpose of the current study is to determine if there are clear statistically significant differences between participants who engage in “heavy” viewing of violent media programming, and those who engage in “light” viewing of violent media programming, on assessments measuring aggression and prosocial behaviors. The results will be meaningful in that clinical mental health counselors, school counselors, college counselors and marriage and family counselors, can implement prevention strategies with minors who may potentially grow into these behaviors. Additionally, college campuses can focus on targeting violent media programming as possible contributing factors to campus violence and aggression. Moreover, research can benefit from this study in that it may add to and challenge other research on the topic. The following chapter will expand on the concepts presented in this chapter and provide a review of literature related to violent media programming, aggression, and decrease in prosocial behaviors.
CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

One of the most notable changes in our society has come in the 20th and 21st Centuries in the form of digital and mass media. In this new environment, radio, television, movies, videos, video games, cell phones, and computer networks have assumed central roles in daily routines. For better or for worse the mass media are having enormous impacts on youth’s values, beliefs, and behaviors (Huesmann, 2007). The introduction of the television played a critical role in making violent entertainment more accessible to youth (Felson, 1996). More recently, cable systems, DVDs, phone apps, and video games have increased exposure to violent media programming. Felson (1996) found that hand-held cameras and video monitors increase exposure to violent media programming as well, as they make it easy for perpetrators and onlookers to film actual crimes in progress and post them on the World Wide Web for immediate review. More recently, this is being done with cellular phones, iPads and other smart devices and loaded directly to websites such as YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Vine and a host of other social networking and digital media sites.

Violence in media has become increasingly prevalent in today’s society and is the underpinning for many television dramas, films, videogames, music and music videos (Osborn, 2007). In this era, technology is ever-present, therefore, many individuals have unlimited access to and consume a variety of different forms of media. Among those
forms are television, movies, videogames, music and music videos, many of which contain high levels of violent content (Lomonaco, 2004). It has been argued that the construction of these mass media outlets has contributed to the rise of violent media programming (Harris, 2004). Technological advances have radically amplified the accessibility of aggressive entertainment.

For years, virtually since the dawn of television, parents, teachers, legislators and mental health professionals have wanted to understand the impact of television programs on consumers (Parent’s Television Council, 2013). The focus has mainly been on the effects of violent media programming. Extensive research has been done over the course of many years, most of which has produced disturbing findings concerning the violent content in media programming (Anderson et al., 2005; Felson, 1996; Harris, 2004). In 1969, The Surgeon General's Scientific Advisory Committee on Television and Social Behavior was formed in order to better monitor the impact of violence on the attitudes, values and behavior of consumers (Van der Voort, 1986). The resulting report and a follow-up report conducted in 1982 identified these major effects of seeing violence on television: Children may become less sensitive to the pain and suffering of others. Children may be more fearful of the world around them. Children may be more likely to behave in aggressive or harmful ways toward others (American Psychological Association, 2013).

Despite the insistence of media executives that no relationship exists between violent media programming and aggression (Orlik, 2008), a multitude of studies have found conflicting results. Previous research conducted over 40 years ago found that heavy consumers of violent media programming while in elementary school, showed
increased levels of aggressive behavior when they became teenagers. The researchers went on to observe these consumers in adulthood and found that heavy viewers of violent media programming (as children), were more likely to be prosecuted of criminal acts as adults (Huesmann, 1986). Research has found that childhood aggression does not predict consuming violent media programming, suggesting that consuming violent media programming could be a contribution rather than a consequence of aggressive behavior (American Psychological Association, 2013).

**Violence in Television**

The portrayal of violence is pervasive in contemporary U.S television programming (Gibson, 2014). The National Television Violence study (Bushman, 2001) evaluated almost 10,000 hours of broadcast programming from 1995 through 1997 and found that 61% of the programming portrayed interpersonal violence, much of it in entertaining or glamorized manners in which perpetrators were celebrated instead of punished. Those numbers continue to increase annually and are now at an alarming rate. In 2014, it was reported that young adults between the ages of 18-24 spend close to 22.5 hours watching television per week, while people ages 25-34 spend around 28 hours per week watching television (Hinckley, 2014).

Consumers of televised programming are now seeing an increase in broadcast networks showing the same level of explicit and violent content as cable networks in attempts to compete with their viewers and fan bases (Parent’s Television Council, 2013). As a result of this competition, violent and unproductive media may be even more accessible to viewers than before. The Parent’s Television Council (2013) conducted a study that compared seven cable television shows: *American Horror Story* (Murphy &
Falchuck, 2013), *The Walking Dead* (Kirkman & Darabont, 2013), *Sons of Anarchy* (Sutter, 2013), *Breaking Bad* (Gilligan, 2013), *Copper* (Fontana, 2013), *Justified* (Yost & Leonard, 2013) and *Bullet in the Face* (Spencer, 2013) with seven broadcast television shows: *Revolution* (Abrams, 2013), *The Blacklist* (Sonnier, Bokenkamp & Carnahan, 2013), *Supernatural* (Kripke, 2013), *Criminal Minds* (Hedden & Davis, 2013), *Sleepy Hollow* (Townsend & Blake, 2013), *CSI* (Mendelsohn, 2013) and *Law & Order SVU* (Wolf, 2013). Of the shows listed, both cable and network programming; child molestation, rape, mutilation/disfigurement, dismemberment, graphic killings and/or injuries by gunfire and stabbings, violent abductions, physical torture, cannibalism, burning flesh, suicide, beatings, guns and bladed weapons that were depicted but not used, and dead bodies comprised 77% of the violent and graphically violent depictions aired during the primetime broadcasts of the programming (Parent’s Television Council, 2013). Moreover, the researchers found that there was only a 6% difference between the amounts of violence on cable shows compared to the shows that aired on broadcast television. In fact, a gun or bladed weapon was reported to have shown every 3 minutes on cable television shows, while people who watch four episodes of *Criminal Minds* (Hedden & Davis, 2013), which airs on CBS, were exposed to 52.8 acts of violence per episode and 91.5 acts of violence per episode of *Revolution* (Parent’s Television Council, 2013). Research has found that television crime dramas contribute a large amount to violent media programming. One study conducted by Gibson (2014) suggested that official violence (defined as being committed by police, FBI, CIA officers, etc.) is often overlooked in many research studies on the topic of media violence, and are responsible for large amounts of violence that are shown in television programming. In crime dramas,
the depiction of violence is framed and shaped in ways that both privilege some behaviors and dismiss others.

It is most common that U.S homes are equipped with television sets, and it is reported that that television set is in use for at least seven hours each day while the number increases among college students (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2008). By the age of 18 years, the average U.S Citizen will have witnessed 200,000 acts of violence, including 40,000 murders on television (Lomonaco, 2004). In a study conducted to assess the violence in media programming Harris (2004) found one-third of the violent scenes on television showed villains who were never punished while 70% of these “bad” characters showed no remorse when committing the violent acts. In addition, 40% of the violence in the scenes was done by actors being depicted as heroes (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2008). The violence seen on television is almost never portrayed realistically, making it easy for individuals to believe that they too, can commit these types of behaviors without being punished or injured. Osborn (2007) concluded, “Television violence doesn't bleed. There are lots of shootouts and fistfights, but amazingly! No one gets seriously hurt. Television rarely shows the consequences of violence” (p. 11).

Although violence depicted in broadcast television has been reportedly disturbing, it is also true that cable television shows are also extremely violent in nature (Harris, 2004). According to the Parent’s Television Council (2013), cable television shows are most violent. In this study, the researchers (Parent’s Television Council, 2013) determined that *The Walking Dead* (Kirkman & Darabont, 2013), which airs on the cable network AMC, totaled 546 violent acts in only four episodes. Moreover, during the four
hours of programming, viewers witnessed “202 dead bodies, 82 stabbings, 54 individuals being injured or killed by gunfire, 90 guns, 80 bladed weapons, 33 decapitations, 21 attempted shootings and more. The cable television shows *Bullet In the Face*, which airs on IFC cable network, showed 134 violent incidents per programming hour” (Parent’s Television Council, p. 10).

Not all violence on television occurs in fictional formats, however. The news is often filled with descriptions of violence and its aftermath. Television news violence also contributes to increased violence, principally in the form of imitative suicides and acts of aggression (Huesmann & Taylor, 2006). In a survey of parents of kindergarten, second, fourth, and sixth grade children, 37% of the children reported having been frightened or upset by news stories on television; the top categories of stories producing fear were violence between strangers, wars and natural disasters (Cantor & Nathanson, 2006).

In a study conducted on violence in the news, researchers (Dorfman, Woodruff, Chavez, & Wallak, 1997) studied 214 hours of news programming. The results of the study indicated violence was the single most frequent story topic. In this same study, the researchers found there were 783 stories that involved both youth and violence. The majority of these stories (70%) focused on specific crimes and their aftermath in the courts. The 444 stories on crimes included shootings, abductions, and child abuse and neglect. The 108 stories on trials were dominated by two prominent murder cases. Seventy-four stories focused on crime at schools, including vandalism, shootings, etc. Children and youth were the victims of violence in 60% of these stories and were the aggressor in the other 40% of the stories. (Dorfman et al., 1997). The following section, will address violence in movies.
Violence in Movies

Violence is not only present in television shows; it is also prevalent in movies, perhaps more so due to limited restrictions in ratings. Of all animated feature films produced in the U.S between 1937 and 1999, 100% portrayed violence, and the amount of violence with intent to injure has increased through the years (Bushman, 2001). According to DuRant, Rich, Emans, Rome, & Allred (1997), movies normalize carrying and using weapons and glamorize them as sources of personal power. Movies portray highly unrealistic views of violence. Osborne (2007) contended that adults see much more violence in the movies than actually exists in real life, the reason being that movie writers and producers suppose that they have to pump movies with extraordinary violence in order to keep viewers interested. As a result, heavy moviegoers think that the world is more dangerous and violent than it actually is (Osborne, 2007). This phenomenon is often called the mean world syndrome (Osborne, 2007). The mean world syndrome is a condition in which people who watch large amounts of movies and television are more likely to believe that the world is an unforgiving and frightening place (Deebs, 2005). This is an important aspect of the current research, as violence on college campuses can often create mass hysteria that reaches across campuses, cities and states. In response to this fear, many students are often carrying weapons on campus as reaction to the perceived fear that may exists on the university.

Not all movies are guilty of portraying false ideas about real life violence; unfortunately those movies are not as prevalent as their counterparts. Past research (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2008) gave credit to movies like Macbeth (Polanski & Braunsberg, 1971) and Saving Private Ryan (Rodat & Spielberg 1998) that depict
violence just as it is and illustrates the appropriate outcomes—suffering, loss, and
sadness. A majority of movie writers and producers take different approaches; most
entertainment violence is used for immediate instinctive thrills without portraying any
human expenditures. Sophisticated special effects are particularly dangerous; the
increasingly graphic depictions of violent killings, shootings and aggressive fights make
virtual violence more believable and appealing. A past study showed that the more
realistically violence is portrayed, the greater the likelihood that it will be tolerated and
learned (Cantor, 1998).

In a past study, Kronenberger, Mathews, Dunn, Wang, and Wood (2004)
conducted research to determine the relationship between violent media exposure and
executive functioning. The pool or participants were adolescents with no history of
psychiatric disorders or backgrounds of aggressive or disruptive behaviors. A significant
relationship was found between elevated amounts of media violence exposure and
discrepancies in self-report, parent-report, and other measures of executive functioning
(Kronenberger et al., 2004). The results indicated a moderate to strong relationship
among adolescents with exposure to media violence and overall poor executive
functioning (Kronenberger et al., 2004). Executive function is a term used to describe
management, regulation and control of cognitive processes, specifically working
memory, reasoning, task flexibility and problem solving, as well as planning and
execution (Chan, Shum, Touloupoulou, & Chen, 2008). The same study (Chan et al.,
2008) also reported that violent media exposure among adolescents with histories of
disruptive and aggressive behaviors only enhances those behaviors and makes them far
close.
Some researchers (Bushman et al., 2013) are concerned that young adults are targeted for violent media programming more so than adults and children. It is believed that movies rated PG 13 are more violent than movies rated G (general audiences), PG (parental guidance suggested for young children) and R (restricted). A new study reveals that gun violence in PG-13 movies has more than tripled since 1985, and in recent years, has been more prevalent in PG-13 films than R-rated ones (Castillo, 2013). In a 2013 study, researchers (Bushman et al.) looked at over 900 films from 1950-2012 that were among the top 30 grossing movies of the year. The results of the study indicated the rate of violent sequences jumped almost four times from 1950 to 2010. Of the top-grossing movies looked at since 1985, 94% included one or more 5-minute segments with violence. Overall, there were 700 segments since 1985 that included guns. Results of the study (Bushman et al., 2013) also found that violence in films has more than doubled since 1950, and gun violence in PG-13–rated films has more than tripled since 1985. When the PG-13 rating was introduced, these films contained about as much gun violence as G, and PG films. Since 2009, PG-13–rated films have contained as much or more violence as R-rated films, which are only appropriate for viewers over the age of 17 (Bushman et al., 2013).

Another study was conducted by Bleakly, Romer, and Jamieson (2013), in which researchers conducted a content analysis of the top grossing films from 1985-2010. The results of the study indicated that 90% of the movies contained segments with main characters involved in violent acts. Moreover, the researchers found that popular films that contain violent characters also show those characters simultaneously engaging in other risky behaviors, such as drinking and driving, smoking, etc. The researchers of this
Violence is also prevalent in lower rated films. In 2000, researchers (Yokata & Thompson) conducted a study of G-rated films to determine the amount, if any, of violent content in these films. In this study, they reviewed the content of all G-rated animated feature films available on videocassette in the United States. The study (Yokata & Thompson, 2000) covered only movies first released in the theaters, recorded in English, at least 60 minutes in length, and available for purchase or rental before September 1999. Results of the study indicated that all 74 films contained at least one act of violence. The total duration of exposure to violent acts ranged from only six seconds, *My Neighbor Totoro* (Miyazaki, 1988) to 24 minutes, *Quest for Camelot* (Clavel & Dowlatabadi, 1998) with a mean of 9.5 minutes. Thirty-six films (49%) showed at least one character celebrating an act of violence by cheering or laughing, and only 24 films (32%) showed at least one character voicing a message on nonviolence (Yokata & Thompson, 2000). Of the films reviewed, there were 62 fatalities due to violence. Moreover, 55 films (74%) had identifiable primary antagonists who menaced the "good" guys, 26 of whom were killed or presumably dead by the end of the film. Twenty were killed by good or neutral characters, one was killed by a bad character, and the other five died accidentally while engaged in violent acts to harm other characters (Yokota & Thompson, 2000). The following section, will detail violence and video games.

**Violence in Video Games**

One of the most recent and perhaps more prominent sources of media violence comes in the form of video games. Past research (Funk, Baldacci, Pasold, &
Baumgartner, 2003) argues that video games should receive special attention due to their unique hands on active nature. People who indulge in video games are afforded the opportunity to actually participate in, and to some extent generate the video game actions, rather than simply being content recipients (Funk et al., 2004). One of the earliest video games to raise concern due to its violent content was titled *Death Race*, and was released in 1976 (Exidy Publishing, 1976). In this game, the player is put in the front seat of a vehicle with the main purpose of the game being to run over gremlins that, at the time, mostly favored stick figures (Gonzalez, 2014). Around 1981, the second video game to be critiqued because of its violent nature was *Castle Wolfenstein* (Muse Software, 1981). In this video game, the goal was to make the player into a first person shooter. The player’s job was to escape a Nazi prison and shoot his or her way through an imaginary place called Castle Wolfenstein. In this task, the player is to shoot and kill anything that moves, including prison guards as well as guard dogs, with the ultimate task to assassinate Adolf Hitler. The player was armed with a gun, grenade or knife (Carnagey, Anderson, & Bushman, 2007).

In 1992, *Mortal Kombat* (Boon & Tobias) was released. In this game, the object is to pit one player against another player in a violent fight to the finish. The players are equipped with a number of special effects that can assist in killing their opponents. The ultimate goal of the fight is to inflict pain and ultimately death on the other player. This is usually accomplished by ripping the opponent’s head off, burning him/her alive, or dismembering him/her (Gonzalez, 2014).

Some of today’s video games such as *Call of Duty* (Chichoski, 2003), *Grand Theft Auto* (Baglow, 1997) and other popular games, are extremely violent. With the
advancement of computer technology, especially in graphics processing units, the average first person shooter features realistic graphics, physics, and weapons. One video game in particular, not only allows the player to put a bullet through someone’s head with a sniper rifle, but also allows him or her to maim the corpse afterwards; this is allowed in the game *Soldier of Fortune* (Raven Software, 2000). Another video game allows players to engage in violent behavior for no particular purpose, ranging from setting a marching band on fire with gasoline, to poisoning police officers with anthrax and then urinating on them as in the game *Postal 2* (Running with Scissors, 2003). In *Grand Theft Auto III* (DMA Design, 2001), one of the more popular and controversial video games, a lot of players pay prostitutes to get into the backseats of their cars and then beat them to death with bats to get their money back, and that is usually after killing hundreds of pedestrians by driving them over, shooting them with Uzis, or throwing Molotov cocktails. Because violence is rewarded in video games, Carnagey et al. (n.d.) argued that overtime exposure to violence in video games leads to decline of standard inhibitions against aggression and makes individuals less responsive to the pain and suffering experienced by victims in real life violence. In another study, results showed exposure to video game violence was significantly associated with lack of empathy and pro-violence attitudes among 150 elementary school aged children (Funk et al., 2004). These feelings are anticipated to persist and perhaps increase as the population ages.

Violence in video games has been thought to play a role in some of the U.S’s most volatile and irrational killings. According to Anderson et al. (2005), the quandary of violence in video games first surfaced with school shootings by ardent players of such games at West Paducah, KY in winter of 1997, Jonesboro, AR in the spring of 1998,
Springfield, OR in summer of 1998, and Littleton, CO in the spring of 1999. More recently, it is being argued that violent video games are encouraging violent killings in school settings. Anderson et al. (2005) supported these arguments in a study that revealed past engagement of excessive violent video game play by the perpetrators behind the 2001 and 2003 school shooting sprees in Santee, CA, Wellsboro and Red Lion, PA, the 2003 violent crime spree in Oakland, CA, five homicides in several parts of Minnesota, the 2002 assault and battery cases leading to deaths in Medina, OH, Wyoming, Michigan, and finally the Washington, DC “beltway” sniper shootings occurring in the fall of 2002.

It is argued that prolonged exposure to media violence can increase aggression and desensitization (Anderson et al. 2005) however; it has also been reported that brief exposure to violent media programming can produce the same results. Carnagey et al. (n.d.) conducted a study using 257 college students, 124 were male and 133 were female. The participants were instructed to play a video game considered to be violent, while being closely monitored by finger electrodes. The researcher reported that the participants began to show signs of desensitization as briefly as 20 minutes subsequent to starting the game. The results demonstrated that exposure to media violence can cause college students to become less physiologically aroused by real violence, and are less likely to respond in time of a real life crisis.

Anderson et al. (2005) also conducted a study using only male college students to determine the effects of violent video games on their attitudes towards aggression. His study yielded results that indicated exposure to violent media programming increases aggressive behavior and decreases prosocial behavior among the male college students.
that were studied (Anderson et al., 2005). In an additional study, Bartholow (2004) found similar results. After testing a population of 39 male college students, the researcher found violent video game exposure to be significantly associated with aggressive behavior. Bartholow et al. (2005) conducted an identical study a year later and yielded the same results.

**Violence in Music and Music Videos**

Over the last half-century, music lyrics and videos have become progressively more explicit, with references to drug use and distribution, sexual involvement, and more importantly, violence (The social impact of music violence, 1997). Of the most volatile music artists to date and perhaps one of the most controversial is Marshal Mathers, better known as Eminem. His popular music CD *The Marshal Mathers LP* (Mathers, 2000) led the sales charts and swept the Music Television (MTV) Video Music Awards in the year 2000 and featured songs about rape and murder with graphic lyrics and sound effects (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2008). In a song entitled “Stan”, Mathers (2000, track 3) tells the story of a crazed fan, Stan, who over a period of time following Mathers’ career, was consequently influenced by Mathers’ gory lyrics and public abhorrence for then wife, Kimberly Ann Scott. With this obsession came Stan’s desire to carry out all of the violent acts Mathers claimed he had inflicted on Scott, to his own wife. These acts included kidnapping his pregnant wife and locking her in the trunk of his car. Stan then killed himself and his girlfriend by intentionally driving his car off of a bridge; these acts were also depicted in the music video (Atwell, 2000).

Past research (The social impact of music violence, 1997) argued that the issue of violence in music goes far beyond the realms of rap music. The introduction of rock and
roll music in the 1950s brought with it the fear that its lyrics and new rhythms would adversely affect young listeners. That fear has carried over into the 21st Century, but now the criticism is focused primarily on heavy metal. It has been suggested that the lyrics in these types of music promote aggression, suicide, violence, and homicide (Parker, 2015). Palumbo (The social impact of music violence, 1997) showed discontent for the Nine Inch Nails release of “Big Man with a Gun,” (Lee, 1994, track 9) which tells the tale of explicit violence and sexual assault, as well as Marilyn Manson’s popular hits “Cake and Sodomy” (Warner, 1994a, track 7), and “Get your Gunn” (Warner, 1994b, track 4).

Palumbo (The social impact of music violence, 1997) blames the ready availability of these lyrics and videos on the advent of MTV and VH-1, which supplies their viewers not only with opportunity to listen to violent lyrics but with the chance to see it acted out in full color as well. Some experimental studies indicate that music videos may have a significant behavioral impact by desensitizing listeners to violence (Anderson et al., 2005, Neal, 2008).

A content analysis of gangsta rap, by Kubrin (2005) found that this particular subtype of rap music focuses on creating social orders in which the use of violence is not only accepted but also seen as necessary to minority life. Additionally, Kubrin (2005) found that 68% of gangsta rap focuses on the images of violence. Today gangsta rap purportedly provides an insiders’ look into Black urban street life via crime and violence (Davis, 2014; Keyes, 2002; Kitwana, 1994; Parker, 2015). Sociological scholarship on identity, culture, and violence in inner-city communities has been largely overlooked in rap music. Much of the existing literature (Keyes, 2004; Kitwana, 1994) assumes that the
street code is a product of neighborhood processes and neglects an additional source, such as popular culture, which may reflect, reinforce, or even advocate street-code norms.

In 2005, Kubrin conducted a study in which he listened to 130 rap albums, which had 1,922 songs. Of those songs, he randomly selected over 600 to review. Kubrin (2005) found that 79.7% of the lyrics talked about the willingness to fight or use violence, and 82.8% for violent retaliation. Moreover, violence was the most commonly referenced theme in 65% of the lyrics (Kubrin, 2005). In most rap lyrics, rappers describe presumably fictional acts of violence that they claim to have perpetrated on others. The Notorious B.I.G. explained how he killed someone: “As I grab the glock, put it to your headpiece / One in the chamber, the safety is off release / Straight at your dome [head] homes, I wanna see cabbage / Biggie Smalls the savage, doin’ your brain cells much damage” (Wallace, 1994, track 6).

In 2013, Complex magazine (Ettelson, 2013) compiled a list of the 25 most violent rap songs and lyrics. The author then compiled what was considered to be the best threat in the song. Number 25 was Organized Konfusion’s song released in 1994 in which they bragged about having murdered four people. The lyrics explicitly stated “Now it’s a flood of blood in circumference to her face/ and an abundance of brains all in the street/ Shame how we had to meet” (Baskerville, Jamerson, & Hancock, 1994), which was chosen as the best threat in the song. Rap Duo Mob Deep were also included on the list for their song “Shook Ones Pt. II” in which they boasted about having killed six people, with their best threat being “For all of those who wanna profile and pose/ rock in your face, stab your brain with your nose bone” (Muchita, & Johnson, 1994, track 15). In DMX’s song “Bring Your Whole Crew” he bragged about having killed four people with
his best threat being “I got blood on my hands and there’s no remorse/ and I got blood on my dick because I fucked a corpse” (Simmons, 1998, track 2). In rapper Big L's song “All Black”, he details the killing of eight people and states “I be placing snitches inside lakes and ditches/ and If I catch AIDS, then imma start raping bitches” (Coleman, 1995). In a song by the rap duo The Terrorist, the song Dead Bodies details the killing of over 10 people in which they state “I’m just waiting on a fool so I could use his blood for my backyard pool” (Blodget, & Smith, 1991, track 9). Rap Trio N.W.A. released a song called “One Less Bitch” in which they bragged about killing five people and reported “I tied her to the bed, I was thinking the worst/ but yo, I had to let my niggas fuck her first/ yeah, loaded up for 44 yo/ then I straight smoked the hoe” (Curry & Patterson, 1991, track 11) In 1992, rapper Ganksta N-I-P released a song called “Psycho” (Williams, 1992, track 6) in which he detailed the killings of over 10 people and quotes “A muthafuckin' psycho, I need to be dead /Took the knife out of my neck and ate the meat out my own head” (Complex Magazine, 2013).

Although hip hop and rock music and lyrics are most often targeted as having most violent and misogynist content, it is also true that other genres often contribute to the violence that is prevalent in the music and music videos from all eras. Songs like Bob Marley’s “I Shot the Sheriff” (Marley, 1973, track 3), which is reggae, Jimi Hendrix “Hey, Joe” (Valenti, 1965, track 3) and Miranda Lambert’s “Gunpowder and Lead” (Lambert, 2007, track 1), which is a country western song, are good examples of other genres of music that chronicle violent intentions and acts.
Bandura’s Social Learning Theory and Media Violence

Bandura’s (1973) social learning theory argues that most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling. According to past research (Ellison, Musick & Henderson, 2008), minorities are influenced by the media—they learn by observing, imitating, and making behaviors their own. It is through this modeling that minorities develop aggressive attitudes and behaviors that are learned chiefly through observation. Minority adolescents often are exposed to forms of violence including rape, murder, sexual abuse, incest, aggravated physical assault, arson, and armed robbery. This exposure occurs directly through the media (Garrett, 1997).

Desensitization Theory and Media Violence

The desensitization theory posits that people who engage in significant amounts of violent media programming become less sensitive to violence after prolonged exposure (Comstock, 1989). With this theory, it is believed that exposure to entertainment violence may alter cognitive, affective, and behavioral processes, possibly leading to desensitization (Carnagey et al., 2007). This theory suggests that constant exposure to such accessible violence on a regular basis within the media, no longer makes such a strong emotional impact upon the audience, possibly causing them to also be insensitive towards violence in everyday life. Emotional desensitization is evident when there is numbing of emotional reactions to events, which would typically elicit a strong response (Carnagey et al., 2007)
Cultivation Theory and Media Violence

Cultivation theory is a social theory (Cohen & Welmann, 2000), which examines the long-term effects of television, in particular violent television programming on its viewers. Cohen and Welmann (2000) state "The primary proposition of cultivation theory states that the more time people spend 'living' in the television world, the more likely they are to believe social reality portrayed on television" (p. 12). This is to assume that people who engage in violent television programming are more likely to live their lives as if they were part of the violent culture often displayed in television programming (Cohen & Welmann, 2000).

Due to the discrepancy in television violence versus real life violence, the art of cultivation often leaves viewers with flawed perceptions of reality versus fantasy in the world. The cultivation theory was developed by Gerbner et al. (1980). The researchers developed this theory as an explanation for violence and aggression among heavy viewers of violent media programming. The researchers were ultimately concerned with the effects of television programming (particularly violent programming), more specifically the effects it would have on the attitudes and behaviors of the U.S public (Miller, 2005). The theory (Gerbner et al., 1980) suggests that heavy consumers of violent media programming view the world as it is portrayed on television and is therefore cultivated to respond and react accordingly. According to research, the cultivation effect occurs only after long-term, cumulative exposure to television (Cohen & Welmann, 2000). In their research, Gerbner et al. (1980) claimed that, because television contains so much violence, consumers who spend more time in front of the television than those who do not, subsequently develop exaggerated beliefs in a mean and
scary world. He suggested that television is a key member of the household, with virtually unlimited access to every person in the family (Griffin, 2012). The researchers compared the power of television to the power of religion; saying that television was to modern society what religion once was in earlier times (Gerbner et al., 1980). It is believed that in addition to modeling violent behavior, entertainment media may inflate the prevalence of violence in the world by cultivating in viewers the ‘mean world’ syndrome, a perception of the world as a dangerous place and places in youth, Black youth particularly, the fear of being the victim. It is this fear that leads them to become the perpetrators which, according to past research (Funk et al., 2004) is strong motivation for some young people to carry weapons, to be more aggressive, to ‘get them before they get me.’ The researchers (Gerbner et al., 1980) conducted a research study to determine the effects of heavy viewing of violent television programming and subsequent perception of the world. The results of the study found a positive correlation between television viewing and fear of criminal victimization as well as an increase in general mistrust of people (Griffin, 2012).

The Relationship between Media Violence and Real Life Violence

The relationship between exposure to violent media and aggression has been researched extensively over the past twenty years (Kirsh, 2006). A review of 217 studies found that exposure to violent media was consistently correlated with increases in aggressive behavior in youth (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2008). The Children in the Community Study (Johnson, Cohen, Smailes, Kasen, & Brook, 2003) demonstrated a relationship between consistent consumption of media (3 hours a day) in the home/community and an increased likelihood of aggression toward others. In the
aforementioned study, the researcher followed 707 families for a 17-year period and examined the relationship between consumption of media and aggression, using youth self-report, parental report, and criminal arrest data. Forty-two percent of males who viewed television more than three hours per day at age 14 were reported to have been involved in aggressive acts that resulted in injury when they were 16 to 22 years old, this compared to 9% of males who viewed less than one hour of television per day (Johnson et al., 2013). Kirsh (2006) argued that engaging in violent media programming may influence the likelihood that an individual will engage in provoked or unprovoked aggression.

More than 3500 research studies have examined the association between media violence and violent behavior and only 18 failed to show positive relationships between the two (Anderson, 2005). According to Bushman and Anderson (2001), the vigor of the relationship between media violence and aggressive behavior found through meta-analysis is superior to that of calcium intake and bone mass, lead ingestion and lower IQ, unprotected sex and sexually acquired HIV infection, or environmental tobacco smoke and lung cancer.

In a previous study (Huesmann et al., 2003), the researcher followed 557 second, third and fourth graders over a course of 15 years. The results showed that early viewing of television violence strongly correlated with adult violence and physical aggression (Huesmann et al., 2003). The study also found that girls who took part in early viewing of television violence were more likely to be indirectly aggressive (e.g. being resentful, talking behind others’ backs instead of confronting them, being hostile, etc.) while the boys were more prone to grow up and produce physical violence. It has become apparent
to some researchers (Kronenberger et al., 2004) that repeated exposure to media violence affects brain processes and functioning, leading the afflicted to make unsuitable and inappropriate decisions, which often leads to violence and aggression, or the inability to display appropriate prosocial behaviors such as helping someone in need without expecting anything in return.

**Violence and Aggression among Black College Students**

Violent crime has invaded many historically Black colleges and universities, and the institutions are trying hard to maintain an atmosphere of accomplishment in an atmosphere of fear. Heightened security measures, including security checks of student applicants, are increasingly used (Hayes, 1994). Acts of violence on college campuses are becoming more prevalent. Historically Black college and universities are not exempt from verbal and physical acts of violence, and every area of the campus is vulnerable (Davis, 1997). Dickerson (1997), conducted a research project which was designed to collect and describe crime data reported between 1992 and 1996 by selected historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs). The overarching goal was to examine crime data over 5 years with regard to four categories of violence defined by the Federal Bureau of Investigation: aggravated assault, forcible sex offenses, murder, and robbery. Useable responses were received from 40 HBCUs. Data reveal an overall increase in the percentage of HBCUs reporting violent crimes over the 5-year span (Dickerson, 1997).

Fraternity and sorority hazing as well as sexual assault are targets of aggression on HBCU campuses. A study conducted Krebs et al. (2011) sought to examine the prevalence of sexual assault and aggression on HBCU college campuses. The researchers recruited close to 4,000 participants who were described as primarily Black
undergraduate women at four HBCUs. The results of the study indicated 24% of the women recruited reported having experienced an attempted or completed sexual assault either before or since entering college, while approximately 14% of the women reported experiencing completed or attempted sexual assault since entering college. Since entering college, slightly more women reported being the victim of completed sexual assault (9.6%) than attempted sexual assault (7.8%). Nearly 5% of the total sample were forcibly sexually assaulted since college entry (4.8%). Approximately 6% of the women experienced incapacitated sexual assault (Krebs et al., 2011).

In the United States, Black men between the ages of 24 and 40 are much more likely to die from homicide than any other ethnic group of the same age (United States Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2005). Death rates for Blacks are almost three times higher than Whites (Haynie, 2007). Gun violence is particularly a concern in the Black community and on Black college campuses. In 2002, firearm homicide was the number one cause of death for 15-34 year old Blacks, which doubles the number of Whites with death by firearm (United States Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2005). In a study conducted years ago, Neal (2008) discovered that minority teenagers committed almost 80% of the violent crimes perpetrated against minorities and 90% of the time, the offenders and the victims were males. Although not by much, the numbers did rise in 2003, making 91 % of Blacks murder victims slain by Black offenders (Harrell, 2007). According to recent Department of Justice figures, Black males aged 18-24 have the highest homicide rates in the country. Additionally, this same age group is most likely to kill and their Black male peers are their likely targets (Neal, 2008).
Aggressive behavior among college students is becoming an immediate concern on and around college campuses (Flannery et al., 2000). Many college students, most significantly those in residing in Black communities, continuously experience threatening behavior as victims, perpetrators or both. In addition, physical and verbal acts of violence and intolerance that cause harm to another person are becoming extremely prevalent on historically Black colleges and university campuses (Davis, 1997).

Social Impacts

Aggression

For the last 40 or more years researchers have been interested in the influence of media violence on the aggression of children and adults (Bushman & Huesmannn, 2006). Media violence poses a threat to public health inasmuch as research has showed a strong correlation between violent media programming and an increase in real world and aggression (Bushman & Huesmann, 2001). Research clearly shows that fictional television and film violence contribute to increases in aggression and violence, both in short-term instances as well as across the life span (Huesmann & Taylor, 2006).

Research generally shows that there is a correlation between violent media programming and aggression (Fischer, Kastenmüller, & Greitmeyer, 2009). Aggression is defined as any behavior whereby intent is to inflict harm or injury on another living being, hostile or forceful action intended to dominate or violate, and behavior that is intended to injure another person physically or verbally (Benjamin, 1985). Research suggests that aggression is a learned behavior (Bandura, 1973) making the conditions around learning this behavior very important. The conditions most conducive to learning aggression seem to be those in which the aggressor has many opportunities to observe
aggression. In both childhood and adulthood, research has found that certain violent cues seen in the media may trigger the activation of aggressive scripts (learned aggressive behaviors/language) also acquired from identifying with violent characters in movies and television (Huesmann, 1986). Bushman and Huesmann (2006) conducted a study that found exposure to media violence was positively related to subsequent aggressive behavior, aggressive ideas, arousal, and anger. Moreover, there was a significant negative effect of exposure to violence on subsequent helping or prosocial behaviors (Bushman & Huesman, 2006).

In 2001, Anderson and Bushman conducted a study to determine the effects of violent video game play on aggression. In this study, participants were asked to play video games (both violent and non violent), and then asked to engage in competitive assignments following the game play. The results of this experiment supported the hypothesis that playing violent video games would increase aggressive behavior. Participants who played the violent video game later showed more aggression toward opponents during the competitive task than did participants who played the nonviolent game. In addition to violent media being positively correlated with aggression, researchers have found that exposure to violent media was not only positively associated with aggressive behavior, it also correlated with aggressive cognition and aggressive affect (Anderson et al., 2010).

There have been a number of studies (Anderson et al., 2005; Bushman & Huesmann, 2001) done to determine the overall social impact of violent media programming on aggression. In previous research on the effects of violent video games, Irwin and Gross (1995) assessed physically aggressive acts such as pushing, striking,
kicking and pinching between young males who had just engaged in playing either violent or non violent video games. The results of this study indicated that the young males who played the violent video games were more likely to be aggressive toward their peers than the boys who had played the nonviolent video game (Irwin & Gross, 1995). Other research has looked at college students and measured their tendency to be physically aggressive after they had engaged (or not engaged) in violent video game play. An example of one such study, was conducted by Bartholow and Anderson (2002) in which they found that male and female college students who had played violent video games subsequently delivered more than two and a half times as many high-intensity punishments to peers as those who played nonviolent video games. Similarly, other research has shown that the actual violence in violent media programming produces increased aggression (Anderson, 1997).

Research (Anderson, 2005; Irwin & Gross, 1995) has shown us that viewing violent videos, films, cartoons, or television dramas or playing violent video games cause the risk to go up that the observing party will behave seriously aggressively toward others immediately afterwards. This is not only true of preschoolers, elementary school children, and high school children; it is also true of college students, and adults. Those who watch the violent clips tend to behave more aggressively than those who view non-violent clips, and they adopt beliefs that are more accepting of violence (Anderson, 1997).

Prosocial Behaviors

Prosocial behavior is defined as positive actions that benefit others, prompted by empathy, moral values, and a sense of personal responsibility rather than a desire for
personal gain (Kidron & Fleischman, 2006). Discussions of media violence frequently include reduction in prosocial behavior as one additional negative consequence for consumers (Bushman & Anderson, 2001). Studies suggest that prosocial behaviors are often decreased after long-term exposure to violent media programming (Bushman & Anderson, 2009; Carnagey et al., 2007). It is argued that exposure to violent media programming (movies, music, video games, etc.) can lead to decreased sympathy for the victim, which in turn can increase one’s belief that violence is normative, and decrease negative attitudes toward violence all of which conspire to decrease feelings of personal responsibility. With the lack of personal responsibility, helping behavior is less likely to occur in times of seeing victims in distress (Bushman & Anderson, 2009).

Social–cognitive models of social behavior suggest that briefly playing a violent video game can potentially decrease prosocial or helping behavior. Researchers (Carnagey et al., 2007) believe the temporary increase in aggressive cognition and affect could potentially interfere with empathic thoughts and emotions that frequently underlie prosocial behavior. Similarly, researcher report short-term desensitization effects could reduce helping victims of violence in several ways (Carnagey et al., 2007). Anderson et al. (2010) found that increased exposure to violent video game play was significantly linked to a decrease in prosocial behavior.

Researchers conducted a Meta analysis of a number of studies with a combined 676 participants and found that exposure to violent media programming is negatively correlated to real world prosocial and helping behavior (Anderson & Bushman, 2001). The negative correlation indicates that as exposure to violent media programming increases, prosocial behaviors decrease. Fraser, Padilla-Walker, Coyne, Nelson, &
Stockdale (2011) conducted research to determine the effects of violent video gaming on prosocial behaviors. The results of the study suggested that violent video gaming was associated with lower levels of prosocial behavior toward strangers, friends and family members with the strongest effects on prosocial behavior toward strangers (Fraser et al., 2011). Of all of the variables proposed in this study prosocial behaviors may be one of the least studied with minimal research on the subject. Most research (Saleem, Anderson, & Gentile, 2012) conducted has found a relationship between exposure to violent media programming and reduction in prosocial and helping behaviors.

**Summary**

In conclusion, research has shown consistent correlations between the consumption of violent media programming and aggression and prosocial behaviors. The purpose of the current research is to further the research on the topic, with the hopes to determine if there are statistically significant relationships between violent media programming and aggression and prosocial behaviors specifically among Black college students. Studying the correlations between these variables will expand the scientific knowledge base and lead to more effective counseling practices. The methodology proposed to address this overall purpose and the related research question is presented in the subsequent chapter.
CHAPTER III
METHODOLOGY

The current chapter is designed to provide the reader with an overview of the methodology that was used in order to effectively address the proposed research question. As such, this chapter will provide information related to the study’s instrumentation, materials and procedures, independent and dependent variables, research design, and data analysis procedures.

Description of Research Methodology

In this exploratory study, the researcher attempted to determine if there is a statistically significant difference among Black college students characterized as ‘light viewers’ and ‘heavy viewers’ of violent media programming, on assessments that measure aggression and prosocial behaviors. These differences existed, and the researcher inferred a relationship between the independent and dependent variables. The researcher strengthened the study by running a second analysis to predict group membership based on scores on assessments. Participants were observed categorically as heavy viewers or light viewers of violent media programming after amount (in hours) of violent media consumptions were calculated. Additionally, participants completed a demographic survey in order for the researcher to get basic demographic data (i.e. age, race, socio economic status, parental education level, zip code, amount of violent media programming consumption), Buss and Warren’s (2000) Aggression Questionnaire to
assess aggression levels, and Louis Penner’s (1995) Prosocial Personality Battery to assess for presence of prosocial personality traits.

**Independent Variables**

The independent variable was violent media programming which had two levels. The grouping variable was heavy and light viewers of media violence. The researcher conducted a median split to form the two groups. After the data was collected the researcher found the median amount of violent media programming consumption and the participants with median hours and above were characterized as heavy viewers, and participants with less than median hours were characterized as light viewers.

**Dependent Variables**

The dependent variables for this study were the scores from the Aggression Questionnaire (Buss & Warren, 2000) and Penner’s (1995) Prosocial Personality Battery. Clinically significant scores for each scale were considered noteworthy. Buss & Warren’s (2000) Aggression Questionnaire is a 29-item questionnaire, which consists of four scales: physical aggression (physical expression of anger), verbal aggression (argumentative and hostile language), hostility (resentment, social isolation, and paranoia) and indirect aggression (expression of anger without direct confrontation). The participants were asked to rate items scored on a five-point Likert type scale concerning self-reported behavior and feelings. The responses are scored on a scale from 1 (*not at all like me*) to 5 (*completely like me*).

The Prosocial Personality Battery (1995) is an instrument created to assess an individual’s ability to think about the rights and wellbeing of others, to feel empathy and
worry for others and to behave in a manner that benefits others. The measure is designed to capture this personality trait. The measure is made up of two factors: 1.) Other-oriented empathy which is the tendency to feel empathy and concern for others, and 2) helpfulness, which is the tendency to perform helpful acts (Penner, 1995). The scale is made up of 56 total items and has 5 answer choices that are presented on a Likert-type scale that range from strongly disagree to strongly agree. There is an abbreviated version of this assessment, which consists of 30 items. This version was employed in this study, in an attempt to prevent participants’ fatigue.

**Extraneous Variables**

Extraneous variables are those variables that the researcher cannot control which may compete with the independent variable in explaining the outcome of a study. Some extraneous variables that could potentially be issues in this study are environmental factors such as growing up in violent neighborhoods, in volatile households or being exposed to real life violence. These extraneous variables cannot be controlled for, and could potentially explain the outcome of the study. Another extraneous variable may be fatigue. Participants who are taking this assessment at the end of the day may have been fatigued and may have tried to answer the test questions quickly or with little thought. Finally, participants may not have answered the assessment truthfully. Though the researcher told participants that all information gathered from the assessment is confidential and names are coded, participants may have still felt uneasy about answering some of the questions that may be difficult to answer honestly.
**Threats to Internal Validity**

Threats to internal validity compromise researcher’s confidence in saying that a relationship exists between the independent and dependent variables. One threat to internal validity is history. With history, some unanticipated event may have occurred before the experiment and may have affected the dependent variable. A participant may have been raised in a household where prosocial behaviors were not taught in the home and this may have affected his/her responses on that battery, which could have affected the dependent variable. These threats may minimize generalizability of the study. The threat of history was difficult to minimize as outside factors, other than engaging in violent media programming may have influenced how a participant answered questions on assessments. Finally, participant’s attitudes could have affected the assessment. The participant could have had a negative encounter prior to taking the assessment, which could have affect attitude and responses. Conversely, something positive could have happened to make the participant feel extremely happy which could also affect how he/she responds to certain questions on particular assessments. To try and control for this, the researcher asked the participants to answer the assessment based on how they typically feel, and not how they feel in the moment.

**Threats to External Validity**

Threats to external validity compromise our confidence in stating whether the results of the study are generalizable to other groups. Some threats to external validity include age, SES, ethnicity, and geography or location of the study. This study may not be generalizable to other ages and focuses primarily on college aged minorities. Ethnicity
was primarily Blacks. This is also a threat to generalizability because this may not reflect the ethnic percentages of the state, as data are limited to the northeast area of Maryland.

**Participants**

Black college students were defined as participant’s, primarily African Americans, ages 18-28 currently enrolled in courses at a college or university. These participants were recruited to participate in the study through flyers posted around campus, and on-campus recruitment efforts via classroom visitations to solicit participation. Specifically, Blacks who attend an HBCU on the East coast were recruited.

**Population**

Black college students from a local university on the East coast were recruited. Participants were informed about the present study by the researcher who described the study, as well as from flyers posted around campus advertising the study. The participants were recruited from different counties, cities and towns on the East Coast. Both male and female participants were recruited, and were between the ages of 18 and 28. Advertising flyers were posted around campus, and this researcher visited classes at the university for recruitment opportunities.

**Procedures & Techniques:**

Upon receiving Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from both Mississippi State University and the university being studied, the researcher began to collect data. The researcher had solidified opportunities to present research and recruit participants with scheduled visits to speak in five classes at the university that will be studied. In addition to these efforts, the researcher posted flyers around campus to recruit
participants. Data were collected over the course of 4 weeks. Participants were made aware of the goals of the study and were asked to carefully read and sign informed consent forms prior to participation. Following the completion of the informed consent, the participants were given a packet consisting of a demographic questionnaire, the Prosocial Personality Battery (Penner, 1995) and Buss and Warren’s (2000) Aggression Questionnaire. The participants were asked to first complete the demographic form consisting of a series of preliminary questions concerning age, ethnicity, and some of which addressed to what degree, if any, students were engaging in violent media programming, with an open ended question format (ex. “How often, in hours per day, do you watch television or movies with violent content?). After the participants complete the demographic questionnaire, the researcher then administered Buss & Warren’s (2000) Aggression Questionnaire and the Penner’s (1995) Prosocial Personality Battery. The researcher carefully explained the instructions of the instruments and answered any questions concerning completion. The assessments were administered to over 100 participants who were allowed to complete their packets independently to protect confidentiality. Each individual was allotted a maximum of 10 minutes to complete each assessment. The data were then collected, compiled and stored in a sealed envelope. Once data were collected, the researcher then entered it into IBM’s Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 18.0 and simple cross-sectional, correlational research was conducted.
Instrumentation

Demographic Questionnaire

The demographic questionnaire consisted of several items including basic demographic information such as age, gender, race, parent’s educational level and zip code. Three of the items were designed to assess the amount of violent media programming (television, radio, video games) the participant engages in on a daily basis. These variables were continuous and the participants were asked to write in their responses as oppose to selecting responses.

Buss & Warren’s Aggression Questionnaire

Buss and Warren’s (2000) Aggression Questionnaire is designed to measure four dispositional sub-traits of aggression, which are defined as follows: “Physical and verbal aggression, which involve hurting or harming others, represent the instrumental or motor component of behavior. Anger, which involves physiological arousal and preparation for aggression, represents the emotional or affective component of behavior. Hostility, which consists of feelings of ill will and injustice, represents the cognitive component of behavior, and indirect aggression, which consists of expressions of anger without direct confrontation” (p. 457). The Aggression Questionnaire (Buss & Warren, 2000) consists of 29 items in which the participant is scored on four scales. These scales are physical aggression, verbal aggression, hostility and indirect aggression. The physical aggression scale hones in on an individual’s tendency to use physical expressions of anger. Verbal aggression focuses on an individual’s tendency to be argumentative or use hostile language without actually becoming physical. The hostility scale focuses on an individual’s tendency to hold resentment, engage in social isolation or experience levels
of paranoia about others. Lastly, indirect aggression focuses on an individual’s tendency to have expressions of anger, physical or verbal without direct confrontation towards the person with which they are angry (Buss & Warren, 2000).

The assessment requires participants to rate the 29 items scored on a five-point Likert type scale concerning self-reported behavior and feelings. The responses were scored on a scale from 1 (not at all like me) to 5 (completely like me). The Aggression Questionnaire (Buss & Warren, 2000) had been tested and retested for reliability and validity. Previous reports of reliability (coefficient alpha) suggest good to moderate reliability: Physical Aggression ($r = .88$), Verbal Aggression ($r = .76$), Anger ($r = .78$), Hostility ($r = .82$), Indirect Aggression ($r = .71$), and the Total scale ($r = .94$) (Buss & Warren, 2000). To provide evidence of construct validity, researchers have correlated scores on the Aggression Questionnaire with scores of other instruments purported to measure a similar construct.

**Prosocial Personality Battery**

The Prosocial Personality Battery was created by Penner (1995). It is a 56 (or 30) item battery that is used to assess an individual’s prosocial personality traits. The authors define prosocial personality as the lasting dispositional tendency for an individual to think about the rights and well being of others, to feel empathy and worry for others, and to behave in a manner that benefits others (Penner, 1995). The measure is designed to capture this dispositional tendency. The instrument is made up of two factors: 1) Other-oriented empathy and 2) Helpfulness. Other oriented empathy measures the tendency to feel empathy and concern for others, while helpfulness measures the tendency to perform helpful acts, based on past experiences (Penner, 1995). The scale uses a Likert-type scale
with five answer-choices ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree. The instrument measures prosocial behavior on seven scales: Social responsibility, empathic concern, perspective taking, personal distress, other-oriented moral reasoning, mutual concern moral reasoning and self-reported altruism. Additionally, the prosocial personality battery (Penner, 1995) is based on 4 components: 1) Ascription of responsibility, 2) Empathy, 3) Moral reasoning, and 4) Helpfulness. All components reportedly have Cronbach’s alpha of internal consistency of .77, .87, .63 and .83 respectively. The 56-item is reportedly more reliable than the 30-item assessment (Penner, personal communication, July 14, 2015).

Research Question

This study investigated the relationship that is hypothesized to exist between violent media programming and prosocial behaviors and aggression Black college students. Research question are based on statistically significance differences among means in the sample population. The current study will attempt to combat the following null hypothesis:

*Research Question:* Is there a statistically significant difference between heavy and light viewers of violent media programming on aggression, and prosocial behavior assessments?

*Null Hypothesis:* There is no statistically significant difference between heavy and light viewers of violent media programming on aggression, and prosocial behavior assessments.
Alternate Hypothesis: There is a statistically significant difference between heavy and light viewers of violent media programming on aggression, and prosocial behavior assessments.

Data Analysis

The independent samples t-test is used to compare means between two groups on the same dependent variable. The goal is to determine if there are statistically significant differences between the groups. The t-test was employed here to determine if there was a statistically significant difference in mean scores on assessment among participants who reportedly engaged in “heavy viewing” of violent media programming and those who reportedly engaged in “light viewing” of violent media programming. The T-test can strengthen the data analysis in that it will show statistically significant differences between the two groups and scores on the aggression questionnaire. In this study, the independent variable was violent media programming and the two groups were “heavy viewers” and “light viewers”.

The t-test has several assumptions that must be met before the analysis could be run. The first assumption is that the dependent variable is measured on a continuous scale at the interval or ratio level, which is satisfied with this data set. The second assumption is that the data set has an independent variable that consists of two or more categorical and independent groups. In this study, the independent variable was violent media programming, and the two groups were “heavy viewers” and “light viewers”. The third assumption is that there is independence of observation. With this assumption, it is expected that there is no overlapping of groups. The researcher made sure that there were no participants being represented in both groups by conducting a median split in SPSS.
The fourth assumption is that there are no significant outliers, which was checked in SPSS prior to running the data analysis. This was checked with visual inspection of box plots, which are used to detect outliers in SPSS. The fifth assumption is that the dependent variable is approximately normally distributed for each group in the independent variable. The researcher tested for violations of normality using Shapiro-Wilks test of normality in SPSS. Additionally, the researcher used visual inspection of histograms in SPSS. The final assumption that was checked in this research was that there was homogeneity of variances. The researcher tested for violation of this assumption in SPSS using Levene’s test for homogeneity of variances.

The researcher used an alpha level of .05. An alpha level is the probability of committing a Type I error, which means there is a 5% chance the results of the study are due to chance. The researcher used a power level of .08. Power is the probability that the study is statistically significant, even if the research does not yield statistically significant results. The researcher also used a medium effect size (.30) for the study and utilized a sample size greater than 100.

After the independent samples t-test analysis, the researcher employed the discriminant function analysis. The discriminant functional analysis was used to predict group membership (heavy/light viewers) based on scores on the aggression questionnaire. The Discriminant Functional Analysis has many of the same assumptions as the t-test, however; there are other assumptions that must be met before the analysis can be run. The first additional assumption is normal distribution. The researcher examined whether or not the variables were normally distributed with a histogram of frequency distribution in SPSS. The second analysis is homogeneity of variances/covariances. It is assumed that
the variance/covariance matrices of variables are homogenous across groups. The researcher looked at within-group variances and correlation matrices with a scatterplot matrix. A major assumption with discriminant function analysis is the correlation between means and variances. The researcher inspected the descriptive statistics to be sure that the means and standard deviation of variance did not violate the assumption. During the course of the research, the researcher discovered that the Prosocial Personality Battery (Penner, 1995) could not be analyzed in SPSS, and was instead analyzed through visual inspection. This will be detailed further in the next chapter.

Summary
In summary, the researcher sought to determine if there was a statistically significant difference between heavy viewers of violent media programming and light viewers of violent media programming, on the Aggression Questionnaire (Buss & Warren, 2000) and Prosocial Personality Battery (Penner, 1995). To determine this, the researcher ran an independent sample t-test with the hopes of disproving the null hypothesis, which states no difference exists. The researcher then determined if participants group membership (heavy viewers or light viewers) could be predicted using discriminant function analysis, based on the scores of the Aggression Questionnaire (Buss & Warren, 2000). The researcher recruited over 100 participants to be a part of the study, and was aware of internal and external threats to validity. The researcher took all steps necessary to be sure assumptions were met in an attempt to carry out a more robust study.
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Given the need to further explore the precipitating factors of aggression among Blacks, the purpose of this study was to examine the impact that violent media programming has on aggression and prosocial behaviors. It is hypothesized that those who were classified as heavy viewers of violent media exhibited higher degrees of aggression and lower degree of prosocial behavior than those who were classified as light viewers of violent media programming. Once the researcher conducted a thorough literature review, and decided upon a course of study for the research, an application to conduct the research was submitted to Mississippi State University and an HBCU on the east coast's IRBs, as an attempt to gain approval to conduct the study. Both universities granted approval and the research commenced. The data were collected at an HBCU located on the East Coast. Participants were recruited from a public HBCU. A total of 116 students participated in the research study. Six surveys were excluded from the analysis because participants failed to fully complete the instruments/scales used in the study and two participants were excluded as they identified as multiracial, while this study focused primarily on Black college students. The final sample consisted of 108 students. Participants’ ages ranged from 18 to 28 years. Eighty-four participants reported being in the age range of 18 to 20 years (76.45%), 16 participants reported being between 20-22 (14.5%) years of age, 6 participants reported being between 22-24 (6%) years, and
4 participants reported being between the ages of 24-26 (3.6%). A total of 108 participants (100%) reported being Black. Other demographic data that were collected included whether or not participants were from single parent homes, as well as the highest level of education completed for their parents. Forty-seven (43.6%) participants reported being from single parent households, while 61 (56.4%) reported growing up in two-parent households. Sixty-four (64%) of the participants were male, and 44 (44%) of the participants were female. Lastly, 37 (34.5%) participants reported a parent or parents whose highest level of education was high school, while 51 (47.3%) participants reported their parent’s highest levels of education being college, while 20 (18.2%) participants reported having parents who completed graduate school. These demographics are displayed in Table 1.
Table 1

*Frequencies and Percentages of Responses to Demographic Variables*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>100 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-20</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>76.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-22</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22-24</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24-26</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-28</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single Parent Household</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>43.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>56.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent’s highest level of completed education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>34.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>47.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate School</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>59.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>40.75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total N = 108

After having collected the data for both assessments, the researcher found that the Prosocial Personality Battery could not be analyzed in SPSS and would be more
appropriate for visual inspection, which will be further detailed. In correspondence with
the author of the assessment, the researcher discovered there were no norms for the
scales, and high/low values essentially had little meaning:

“There are no norms on the scale so the absolute values have no real meaning in
terms of percentiles, etc. The scale was intended to predict individual differences in
various kinds of prosocial actions (e.g., volunteering). So one can talk about associations
between higher and lower scores (e.g., more active volunteers scored higher on factor 1),
but the total score tells you little. Also the second factor is derived by subtraction so its
total score relative to the first is pretty much meaningless as well”. (Penner, personal
communication, July 14th, 2015).

**Mean and Standard Deviation of Variables**

The mean and standard deviation tell readers a lot about the data. The value of the
standard deviation indicates how measurements for a group are spread out from the mean,
or expected value. A low standard deviation indicates that most of the numbers are very
close to the mean, while a high standard deviation tells us that the numbers are spread out
(Walker, 1931). As shown in Table 2, the mean of the amount of violent media intake in
hours per day was 10.15 (10.53). Table 2 also depicts the mean M = 52 (12.19) for the
participant’s aggression levels.
Table 2

*The Mean and Standard Deviation of Variables*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Media Intake</th>
<th>Aggression Levels</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.15</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Variables**

Aggression levels were measured with Buss & Warren’s (2000) Aggression Questionnaire. Total t-scores on the Aggression Questionnaire range from < 25 to >80 with higher scores reflecting higher levels of aggression on the sub scales of physical, verbal, anger, hostility and indirect aggression (Buss & Warren, 2000). For this study, scores on this scale ranged between 13 and 78 M = 52.06 (10.53) indicating moderate to high levels of aggression.

**Reliability Analyses**

Reliability of the aggression questionnaire used in this study was estimated using Cronbach’s alpha coefficients to examine their internal consistencies. The Cronbach’s alpha for the Aggression Questionnaire for this study was .869, which indicates a high level of internal consistency. The author of the Prosocial Personality Battery reports the Cronbach’s alpha of .65 for social empathy, .67 for empathic concern, .66 for perspective taking, .77 for personal distress, .64 for moral reasoning, .77 for other oriented reasoning and .73 for self-reported altruism (Penner, 2002).
**Testing of Null Hypotheses**

The current research sought to examine whether or not violent media programming has effects on aggression and Prosocial behavior. Because minority aggression is on the rise (Davey & Smith, 2015), it will be helpful for counselors to understand possible contributing factors that are not usually considered as often as more obvious factors such as low SES, growing up in single parent homes, education level, etc. Data was collected on these variables as well. Although the aforementioned data was collected, this research focuses solely on the effects of violent media programming. The current study attempted to answer the following question and test the following hypothesis:

*Research Question 1:* Is there a statistically significant difference between heavy and light viewers of violent media programming on aggression, and prosocial behavior assessments?

*Null Hypothesis:* There is no statistically significant difference between heavy and light viewers of violent media programming on aggression and prosocial behavior assessments.

*Alternate Hypothesis:* There is a statistically significant difference between heavy and light viewers of violent media programming on aggression, and prosocial behavior assessments.

The alpha level, according to Noymer (2008) is used to assess the statistical significance of test results. The 0.05 alpha level is seen as standard practice, also previous research on this topic, which found statistically significant relationship between violent media programming and aggression, have used the alpha of .05 in their research.
(Anderson et al., 2010) thus the alpha level for all analyses in this study was set at .05. Preliminary analyses were conducted to determine if any of the assumptions of analysis had been violated. The researcher checked to be sure the data were normally distributed and the assumption of homogeneity of variance was met. Inspections of the Q-Q Plots, as well as the Shapiro-Wilks test of normality for the light/heavy viewers produced the following results: $F(1, 108) = 0.964, p = .079$ & $F(1, 108) = 0.964, p = .383$, respectively. Inspection of the Q-Q plots revealed that the data were normally distributed for both groups and that the homogeneity of variance as assessed by Levene’s test of Equality of Variances $F(1, 108) = 0.841, p = .361$. Lastly, the test of equal population covariance, was ran using Box’s M, which produced a significance level of 0.764, which indicated the assumption had been met. Tables 3 and 4 show the homogeneity of variance and normality of the variables.

Table 3

*Test of Homogeneity of Variances*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test of Homogeneity of Variances</th>
<th>df1</th>
<th>df2</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Levene’s Statistic</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>.361</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4

*Shapiro-Wilks’ Test of Normality*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shapiro-Wilks’ Test of Normality</th>
<th>Statistic</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Light Viewers</td>
<td>.964</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>.079</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heavy Viewers</td>
<td>.976</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>.383</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data Analysis - Independent Samples T-Test

A number of analyses were considered for this study. The researcher ran separate one-way analyses of variance (ANOVAs) for the data, a univariate analysis and ultimately decided to employ the t-test. The multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was not used, as there was only one dependent variable, following the author of the prosocial personality test advising against running it in SPSS: (Penner, personal communication, July 14th, 2015). Running separate one-way ANOVAs was not effective, as they did not produce multivariate results. The univariate analysis was employed, but was not as preferred as the independent samples-t test, which was ultimately employed, as it appropriately addressed the research question and was the best fit for the study.

Violent media intake was evaluated using the demographic questionnaire, which assessed the participants’ active involvement in violent media programming with questions concerning to what degree, if any, and how often, if at all, students engaged in violent media programming (i.e. video games, music videos, movies, television shows and compact discs with explicit content). The demographic questionnaire consisted of open-ended questions, where by participants were asked to identify how many hours per week they engaged in violent media programming, which was defined as “any form of television, movies, video games, music or music videos that entail violent content” (Harris, 2004). After the data were collected, a median split was conducted to form the two groups: heavy viewers and light viewers. In order to accomplish this, the researcher found the median number of hours violent media programming was consumed and the participants with the median number of hours and above were characterized as heavy
viewers, and participants with less than median number of hours and below were characterized as light viewers, which was computed using SPSS. The aggression levels were tested using Buss and Warren’s (2000) Aggression Questionnaire. The results of the study are as follows:

Table 5

Independent Samples T-Tests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Equal variances assumed</th>
<th>Equal variances not assumed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( t )</td>
<td>( df )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-2.297</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare aggression levels for participants who reported engaging in heavy viewing of violent media programming, and viewers who engaged in light viewing of violent media programming. As seen in Table 5, there was a statistically significant difference in the scores for light viewers with a \( M = 49.6 \ (11.7) \) and heavy viewers \( M = 54.8 \ (12.22) \); \( t \ (1, 108) = -2.297, p = .024 \). These results suggest violent media programming does affect aggression levels. Following this analysis, the researcher wanted to further strengthen the study by performing a second analysis to determine if participants could accurately be predicted to belong in the “heavy viewers” group or the “light viewers” group based solely on their responses to the aggression questionnaire. This hypothesis was tested using the discriminant function analysis, which is typically used to predict group membership based on given scores.
Data analysis - Discriminant Analysis

Discriminant analysis is typically used when groups are known beforehand, in this study, the groups were heavy viewers of violent media programming, and light viewers of violent media programming. Discriminant analysis was particularly appropriate for this study, as it is used to predict group membership based on a particular set of scores. Additionally, discriminant analysis attempts to use the independent variable to distinguish among the groups or categories of the dependent variable. Lastly, the model is most useful in that it is based upon its accuracy rate, or ability to predict group membership in the categories of the dependent variable. The canonical correlation produced a value of .216, which was squared to equal .43, which indicated a medium effect size. This value indicates the magnitude of the affect of violent media programming on aggression. This value tells the magnitude of the difference between the mean of the two groups; heavy and light viewers of violent media programming. As shown in Table 6, the analysis yielded statistically significant results. The Discriminant analysis produced results which indicated the predictor variable, aggression questionnaire scores, predicts the outcome of group membership, heavy or light viewers, at a statistically significant level (p= .024). Additionally, the analysis concluded that there is a statistically significant difference in mean scores on the aggression questionnaire among participants characterized as ‘light viewers’ and ‘heavy viewers’ of violent media programming. These results indicate the discriminant analysis is a very strong model as this group of predictor variables can make predictions that are statistically significant in their accuracy.
Table 6

**Discriminant Analysis Wilks’ Lambda**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test of Functions</th>
<th>Wilks’ Lambda</th>
<th>Chi Square</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>.953</td>
<td>5.129</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.024</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Visual Inspection of Prosocial Personality Battery**

Prosocial behaviors was measured with the Prosocial Personality Battery. With the Prosocial Personality Battery (Penner, 1995), there are no norms on the scale, so the absolute values have no real meaning in terms of percentile (Penner, personal communication, July 14th, 2015). The researcher was only made aware of this, after the data had been collected, and consulted with the author to determine the best course of action. The researcher suggested visual inspection of the dataset. Visual inspection of scores on both factors of the Prosocial Personality Battery indicated that participants who reportedly engaged in higher levels of violent media programming scored lower on Factor 1 & 2 of the prosocial personality battery with the total highest score (in that group) being 83 and the lowest total score being 35. Participants who reported engaging in lower levels of violent media programming scored higher on both factors with the highest total score being 140 and the lowest being 96.

**Summary**

This chapter began with an overview of the data analysis procedures, a description of the demographic characteristics of the 108 participating students, and descriptions of the reliability and validity of the Aggression Questionnaire (Buss & Warren, 2000) and the Prosocial Personality Battery (Penner, 1995). The responses to
each question contained within the main categorical headings were examined using descriptive statistics, including frequencies, means, and standard deviations. The main focus of the study was to determine if there was a statistically significant difference in aggression levels and prosocial personality traits in heavy and light viewers of violent media programming. The collected data were analyzed using the latest version of IBM SPSS software. The descriptive statistics shows the total population of the participants was Blacks with a majority of the participants being between the age of 18 and 20. The mean and standard deviation of the variables being studied indicates moderately high physical, verbal, hostility and indirect aggression levels among the participants.

The results of the research findings were statistically significant. The independent samples t-test produced results that indicated a statistically significant difference in mean scores on the aggression questionnaire, between light viewers and heavy viewers of violent media programming. The discriminant analysis produced results which indicated the predictor variable, scores on the aggression questionnaire, predicts group membership in either heavy or light viewers, at a statistically significant level ($p = .024$). Lastly, visual inspection of the scores on both factors of the prosocial personality battery, showed participants who engaged in heavy viewing of violent media programming scored lower on both factors, than those who engaged in light viewing of violent media programming.

The insights gained by this research study contributed to the lack of quantitative data in existence regarding the ability of violent media programming to affect aggression and prosocial personality traits in minority college students. This will assist educational leaders, as well as counselors and therapists in making decisions regarding preventative measures to potentially curb university violence, as well as communal aggression as we
are better equipped to identify its potential source. Having identified a statistically significant relationship between violent media programming and aggression can contribute a great deal to the knowledge base of the counseling field. Additionally, research shows that parents who seek counseling about limiting the amount of screen time afforded to their children, have been effective in curbing the engagement of violent media programming, and subsequently curbing aggression. For example, according to the research study, just a minute or two of counseling about media violence and guns could lead to less violence exposure for more than 800,000 children per year (Strasburger, 2009). Chapter 5 provides an interpretation of the data and conclusions. Findings will be presented in a manner that extends the knowledge base contained within the accompanying literature review. In addition, suggestions for clinical and educational policy and practice, as well as further research will be discussed.
The purpose of the research is to examine whether or not a relationship exists between heavy viewing of violent media intake, aggression levels, and prosocial behaviors in minority college students. Although a great deal of research have been done attempting to examine a relationship between media violence, prosocial behaviors and aggression (Huesmann et al., 2003), little research has been done concerning media as a probable source of aggression among minority college students. The researcher hypothesized that there was a statistically significant difference between light viewers and heavy viewers of violent media programming, as it relates to aggression and prosocial behaviors.

The researcher employed Bandura’s social learning theory which argues that most human behavior is learned through observation and later used as a guide for one’s actions (Bandura, 1973), along with the cultivation theory, which suggests that television is responsible for shaping, or ‘cultivating’ viewers’ conceptions of social reality (Dominick, 1990). The combined effects of massive television exposure by viewers over time subtly shape the perceptions of social reality for individuals and, ultimately, for the U.S culture as a whole (Dominick, 1990). The aforementioned theoretical frameworks coupled with the hypothesis that Blacks are influenced by the media as they learn by observing, imitating, and making behaviors their own (Davis, Gilpin, Loken, Viswanath,
& Wakefield, 2008), served as the basis for the research. With these learning theories, it is important to note that each time an individual consumes violent media programming severs as a learning trial. Just as with any learned behavior, the more you learn, the more equipped you are to engage in the learned behavior.

**Findings and Interpretations**

In summary, the theoretical hypothesis about the relationship between exposure to media violence aggression and prosocial behaviors was not contradicted by the research data. As hypothesized, there is a statistically significant difference in scores on the Aggression Questionnaire (Buss & Warren 2000), between those who reported engaging in heavy viewing if violent media programming, and those who reported engaging in light viewing of violent media programming. Moreover, participants who reported engaging in lower amounts of violent media programming scored higher on both factors of the Prosocial Personality Battery which focused on empathy and helpfulness, while participants who reported engaging in higher amounts of violent media programming scored lower on both factors of the assessment.

With the discriminant analysis results, minority college students who scored higher on the Aggression Questionnaire (Buss & Warren, 2000) subsequently reported engaging in heavy viewing of violent media programming, and those who scored lower on the Aggression Questionnaire reported engaging in lower levels of violent media programming, and were correctly predicted to belong in either the heavy viewing or light viewing group of participants based on the scores on the assessment. This is consistent with the hypothesis that there is a statistically significant difference between those who engage in higher levels of violent media programming, and those who do not, as it relates
to aggression and prosocial behavior. Additionally, the research showed that there were overall modest but significant effect sizes for exposure to media violence on aggressive behaviors.

**Implications for Clinicians**

There are important implications to be drawn from these conclusions for clinical practice. Although engaging in violent media programming may increase aggression in Black college students, it most likely did not begin at the age of the participants being studied, and could potentially be a long-term effect from childhood. Research shows that childhood exposure to violent media programming can lead to aggression in adulthood.

In a previous study (Coker et al., 2015), researchers were studying the effects of violent media on children. The researchers analyzed data from a population-based, cross-sectional survey of over 5,000 children who were reportedly in the fifth grade, as well as their parents. The study took place in in three metropolitan areas in the United States. The results of the study indicated child-reported media violence exposure was associated with physical aggression after multivariable adjustment for sociodemographics, family and community violence, and child mental health symptoms. This association was significant and independent for television, video games, and music violence exposure in a model including television, video games and music. The researchers went on to report the strength of this association of media violence may be at least as important as that of other factors with physical aggression in children, such as neighborhood violence, home violence, child mental health, and male gender (Coker et al., 2015).

The results of this aforementioned study are supportive of the hypothesis stated, and past studies have found similar results. In a meta-analysis of studies on this topic
conducted by Strasburger, Donnerstein and Bushman (2014), found that of the studies they reviewed, 2000 studies showed a link between aggressive attitudes and behavior, there was a strong desensitization effect on consumers of violent media programming, potentially leading to decreased prosocial behaviors, and exposure of normal children to media violence has been associated with antisocial and even criminal behavior in adults.

Research has consistently shown a relationship between violent media programming, increased aggression and decreased prosocial behavior (Anderson et al., 2005, Anderson et al., 2010) including the current research study. As a result, there could be much benefit in determining ways to mitigate the social, communal and overall influence of mass media. This can be done by examining and implementing effective intervention strategies at the state level, as well as proactive policy making at the government level, that addresses this concern. In order to effectively deal with this correlation, the plan of action must be guided by an empirical and theoretical understanding of the correlation between violent media programming, aggression and prosocial behaviors.

College counselors, specifically, can benefit a great deal from this research by implementing prevention strategies on college campuses to assist students who may present with aggressive behaviors or decreased prosocial personality behaviors. In the role of a college counselor, it is important to work to maintain open communication and a positive relationship with students. Talking to student about the kinds of violence that occur on college campuses such as harassment, sexual assault, hazing, vandalism, and physical assault is imperative. Bringing these issues to awareness in a mature discussion may help inoculate a student against making a bad decision. Knowing these factors that
may contribute to aggressive behaviors, it is important for college counselors to consider student’s risk for engaging in violence and or aggression.

Long-term solutions need to focus on programs that promote mental health. With early detection and intervention, college counselors can cultivate students that are less prone to violence, monitoring the amount of violent media programming shown in neutral areas such as the student unions, residential halls, game rooms, cafeterias, etc. College counselors can also implement groups and trainings to teach students to cope with life stressors and triggers in non-aggressive ways.

**Implications for Research**

Researchers in the field would do well to review existing knowledge on the subject, explore and fill gaps in research, determine potentially successful interventions in an attempt to curb the negative influence of media and further research on potential benefits of mass media as it relates to a possible reduction in aggressive behaviors. Leaders in the field can utilize what is learned from research as the catalyst for change.

In completion of this literature review, although that have been many studies, which determine a statistically significant relationship between violent media, aggression and prosocial behaviors, there has not been definitive proof that media violence is a cause of in aggressive behavior. As many variables could lead to aggression, a recommendation for future studies is that such research should address the influence of rival causalities. Given that much more research is needed on such factors, media violence, and aggressive behavior, it remains the belief of some that there is simply not enough empirical evidence to implicate media violence as a cause of aggression.
Limitations/ Recommendation

One of the major limitations of this study is the inability to determine causation. Although we have identified a statistically significant relationship between violent media programming, aggression and prosocial behavior, we are unable to determine which is the cause and which is the effect. The researcher is unable to say, with any degree of certainty, that people get more violent when they engage in violent media programming, or if they are more prone to engage in violent media programming because they are predisposed to aggression. Another limitation is the inability to distinguish state versus trait aggression among the participants. Trait aggression has been defined as a relatively stable personality predisposition to respond to certain situations with acts of aggression (“Trait aggression”, 2015); In comparison with state aggression, which is defined as a transitory, conscious feeling of aggression, often expressed in overtly aggressive acts against a human target (“State aggression”, 2015).

As it relates to sample and data analysis, it is recommended that future studies use larger samples from a larger populace as to be more representative of the total population. The researcher used 108 participants while previous research using over 500 participants yielded significant results. In addition, future researchers should not only conduct the study at one university but over a series of college campuses. The local city newspaper, for the university being studied, reported 30 acts of violence in its annual crime report for the academic year of 2007-2008. According to the Maryland Crime Statistics (2015), the area where participants were recruited reports an annual 83 violent crimes a year and almost 1,000 property crimes annually. Although these are alarming numbers, there are other areas in the state of Maryland with much higher crime rates. Perhaps future studies
should be conducted in areas of the world, and on college campuses, where crime rates are moderate to high. The researcher also recommends that future studies use other instruments that measure media intake. In the current study, the researcher developed the questionnaire and it has yet to be tested and re-tested for validity and reliability. Additionally, it may be beneficial to utilize an assessment that has normative scales and meaningful scores to measure prosocial behaviors so that it can be appropriately analyzed in SPSS.

**Researcher Reflections**

Prior to beginning this research, I had preconceived ideas and notions about the effects of violent media programming. Having grown up in a household where I was not allowed to engage in violent media programming for fear that it would lead to real life aggression, I always had a vested interest in this correlation. Moreover, having worked with aggressive children and adolescents for a number of years, I became increasingly aware of aggression being present with the absence of any other variable that is usually linked to the development of aggression such as low socioeconomic status, single parent homes, living conditions among other factors. Many of the youth served came from middle to upper class two-parent homes, lived in affluent neighborhoods, went to private well-known schools with little to no opportunity to be influenced by peers. Over the years, I began wondering if these youths lacked proper parental supervision of music, video games and television shows/movies with violent themes. A number of the youth referenced music artists and movie stars as their role models. This piqued my interest in conducting this research. Although I have always had a vested interest in the relationship between violent media programming and aggression, prosocial behavior was a new
endeavor. After extensive research in the field, it became clear that a correlation might exist between the variables being studied. Having completed this research with statistically significant results certainly reinforced my views on the effects of engaging in violent media programming.

**Suggestions for Further Research**

To truly understand the effects of violent media, researchers will need to study participants who do not present with other circumstances that may affect the outcomes of the study. In this study, participants were asked if they grew up in single parent homes, what neighborhoods they grew up in, and their parent’s education levels were also assessed. Many of the participants grew up in single parent households, with parents with little to no education, and were raised in lower class neighborhoods. Any or all of these circumstances could attribute to their aggression levels, as well as their poor prosocial behaviors. It would be beneficial to the field if participants who did not present with outside factors, and still engaged in violent media programming, could be studied.

Additionally, it would be helpful for research to develop a comprehensive model that includes all factors (violent media programming, socioeconomic, education, upbringing, etc.), and determines the impact of each of the aforementioned factors on aggression and prosocial behavior. Lastly, future research could also focus on the impact of positive and helpful media programming as it relates to an increase in prosocial behaviors and a reduction in aggression levels. Lastly, future research should do well to focus on mental health and its role in making some consumers of violent media programming more vulnerable than others.
Lastly, future researchers could do well to utilize an assessment that measures prosocial personality behaviors instead of prosocial personality traits, which could be more difficult to pinpoint. As it relates to these assessments in particular, it could be difficult to get honest responses on assessments when participants may feel judged if questions are answered truthfully and as a result of this perceived judgments, participants may answer questions inaccurately, in an attempt to represent themselves in a more positive light. To control for this limitation, it may be beneficial to administer Crowne & Marlowe’s (1960) social desirability scale, which assesses if respondents are responding truthfully to questions on assessments, or misrepresenting themselves in order to manage their image.

**Conclusion**

This quantitative research study explored the relationship that is hypothesized to exist between violent media programming, aggression and prosocial behavior. The theoretical framework proposed that aggression development was linked to one’s engagement in video games, movies, music and television shows that were violent in nature, and the amount of exposure to such programming. Moreover, theoretical framework proposed that lower social and emotional prosocial traits were linked to exposure to large amounts of violent media programming as well. The literature implied that violent media programming influenced aggression levels as well as prosocial behaviors of heavy consumers. According to the 108 participants assessed in this study, both variables were influenced by the amount of exposure to violent media programming. While amount of engagement in violent media programming varied among participants, the underlying conclusion of the data analysis in this research study is that higher
amounts of exposure to violent media programming are correlated with higher levels of aggression, and lower levels of prosocial behavior. Chapter 5 concludes this research study. The findings produced results that indicated participants were correctly placed in one of two groups (heavy viewers/ light viewers), based solely on their scores on the Aggression Questionnaire (Buss & Warren, 2000).

Summary

The overarching purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between violent media programming, aggression and prosocial behavior. To accomplish that goal it became necessary to reach some prerequisite goals. Creating a theoretical framework that provides the best guide for the study, operationally defining violent media programming, selecting appropriate instruments, learning from previous research and collecting and analyzing data. Exploring what previous researchers have found on the topic had a high degree of importance during the literature review conducted for this dissertation. Related to that effort, it became necessary to reach an understanding about the nature of media and the impact it is believed to have on aggression and prosocial behaviors.

This research has built upon earlier research in the field of violent media programming and it’s effects on consumers. It has led to several conclusions about the impact of engaging in large amounts of violent media programming and, perhaps of most importance it has led to recommendations based upon these conclusions. This research is one of the only studies of its kind conducted with Black college students in Maryland. Therefore it provides insights into Black college student’s aggression, prosocial behaviors and amount of engagement in violent media programming. Since this was such
a wide-ranging study involving 108 students from different parts of the state, the findings are likely to be generalized for Black college students throughout the state of Maryland. This sizeable Maryland study can therefore be compared with similar studies in other states. Hence it makes a significant contribution to research in the field of aggression and prosocial behaviors among college aged minorities as it relates to violent media programming. This study may influence the design of future proactive policies regarding aggression, poor prosocial behaviors of young people and the factors shaping them. This study is particularly beneficial for Prince George’s County, Maryland, the county in which the study was conducted. From 1985-2006, Prince George’s County accounted for 20% of murders, and an even higher percentage of violent and aggressive crimes in the state of Maryland (Shewfelt, 2007). By identifying violent media programming as a potential source of heightened aggression and decreased prosocial behaviors, county and state officials can take proactive measures to aid in research on the reduction of violent crimes in the county and the state overall.

Two fundamental themes emerged from this research. First, participants who engaged in higher amounts of violent media programming (movies, music, video games, television shows), scored higher on the Aggression Questionnaire (Buss & Warren, 2000), which assessed physical aggression, verbal aggression, hostility, and indirect aggression than those who engaged in little to no violent media programming. Secondly, participants who reported engaging in heavy amounts of violent media programming were less likely to think about the well-being and rights of others, reported diminished abilities to feel empathy and worry for others and were less likely to behave in manners that would benefit others. These factors were not heightened in individuals who reported
engaging in lower amounts of violent media programming. Having contributed these themes to the field, researchers as well as clinicians and policy makers are better equipped to develop a comprehensive model that can hopefully address aggression and decreased prosocial behaviors among college aged minorities. Clinicians, more specifically college counselors, are encouraged to pursue greater awareness of these factors and work to implement treatment and safety plans to insure the safety of students, faculty, staff as well as the college campus and community as a whole. My research provides some type of interplay between risk factors for aggression and media violence seems to be a fruitful target for intervention and prevention efforts on college campuses.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

SURVEY INSTRUMENTS
Demographic Questionnaire

The purpose of this questionnaire is to gather basic demographic information to aid in research for the study entitled “Examining the relationship between violent media programming and aggression, and pro social behaviors among Black college students”. For the purpose of this study, violent media programming is defined as “any form of television, movies, video games, music or music videos that entail violent content.” (Harris, 2004).

Directions: Please circle (or provide) the appropriate response for the following questions:

1.) What is your Age?
18-20  20-22  22-24  24-26  26-28

2.) What is your Ethnicity?
Black  White  Hispanic  Asian  Other (please specify) _____

3.) How often (in hours per day) do you watch television or Movies with violent content? _____

4.) How often (in hours per day) do you listen to music with violent messages? ______

5.) How often (in hours per day) do you play video games with violent content?_______

6.) Did you grow up in a single parent household? __________________

7.) What is your parent (s) highest level of completed education? ________________

7.) Please identify the zip code in which you grew up______________

Below are a number of statements that may or may not describe you, your feelings, or your behavior. Please read each statement carefully and write (in the space provided) the number that corresponds to choices presented below. **There is no right or wrong response.**

1 2 3 4 5

**Strongly Disagree**  **Disagree**  **Uncertain**  **Agree**  **Strongly Agree**

1. When people are nasty to me, I feel very little responsibility to treat them well. 
   ______

2. I would feel less bothered about leaving litter in a dirty park than in a clean one.
   ______

3. No matter what a person has done to us, there is no excuse for taking advantage of them. ______

4. With the pressure for grades and the widespread cheating in school nowadays, the individual who cheats occasionally is not really as much at fault. ______

5. It doesn't make much sense to be very concerned about how we act when we are sick and feeling miserable. ______

6. If I broke a machine through mishandling, I would feel less guilty if it was already damaged before I used it. ______

7. When you have a job to do, it is impossible to look out for everybody's best interest. 
   ______
8. I sometimes find it difficult to see things from the "other person's" point of view. 

_______

9. When I see someone being taken advantage of, I feel kind of protective towards them. 

_______

10. I sometimes try to understand my friends better by imagining how things look from their perspective. ______

11. Other people's misfortunes do not usually disturb me a great deal. ______ 

12. If I'm sure I'm right about something, I don't waste time listening to other people's arguments. ____

13. When I see someone being treated unfairly, I sometimes don't feel very much pity for them. ______

14. I am usually pretty effective in dealing with emergencies. ______

15. I am often quite touched by things that I see happen. ______

16. I believe that there are two sides to every question and try to look at them both. _____

17. I tend to lose control during emergencies. ______

18. When I’m upset at someone, I usually try to "put myself in their shoes" for a while. __

19. When I see someone who badly needs help in an emergency, I go to pieces. ______

PART 2:

Below are sets of statements, which may or may not describe how you make decisions when you have to choose between two courses of action or alternatives when there is no clear right way or wrong way to act. Some examples of such situations are: being asked to lend something to a close friend who often forgets to
return things; deciding whether you should keep something you have won for
yourself or share it with a friend; and choosing between studying for an important
exam and visiting a sick relative. Read each statement and write (in the space
provided) the number that corresponds to choices presented below. There is no
right or wrong response.

1    2   3   4   5
Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Uncertain  Agree  Strongly Agree

20. My decisions are usually based on my concern for other people. ________
21. My decisions are usually based on what is the most fair and just way to act. ________
22. I choose alternatives that are intended to meet everybody's needs. ________
23. I choose a course of action that maximizes the help other people receive. ________
24. I choose a course of action that considers the rights of all people involved. ________
25. My decisions are usually based on concern for the welfare of others. ________

Below are several different actions in which people sometimes engage. Read each of
them and decide how frequently you have carried it out in the past. Write (in the
space provided) the number that corresponds to choices presented below. There is
no right or wrong response.

1    2   3    4   5
Never  Once  More than Once  Often  Very Often

26. I have helped carry a stranger's belongings (e.g., books, parcels, etc.). ________
27. I have allowed someone to go ahead of me in a line (e.g., supermarket, copying
machine, etc.) _____
28. I have let a neighbor whom I didn't know too well borrow an item of some value (e.g., tools, a dish, etc.). 

29. I have, before being asked, voluntarily looked after a neighbor's pets or children without being paid for it.

30. I have offered to help a handicapped or elderly stranger across a street.
### Buss-Perry Scale

Please rate each of the following items in terms of how characteristic they are of you. Use the following scale for answering these items.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>extremely uncharacteristic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>extremely characteristic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>of me</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>of me</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1) Once in a while I can't control the urge to strike another person.
2) Given enough provocation, I may hit another person.
3) If somebody hits me, I hit back.
4) I get into fights a little more than the average person.
5) If I have to resort to violence to protect my rights, I will.
6) There are people who push me so far that we come to blows.
7) I can think of no good reason for ever hitting a person.
8) I have threatened people I know.
9) I have become so mad that I have broken things.
10) I fail my friends openly when I disagree with them.
11) I often find myself disagreeing with people.
12) When people annoy me, I may tell them what I think of them.
13) I can't help getting into arguments when people disagree with me.
14) My friends say that I'm somewhat argumentative.
15) I flare up quickly but get over it quickly.
16) When frustrated, I have a violent inclination.
17) I sometimes feel like a powder keg ready to explode.
18) I am an even-tempered person.
19) Some of my friends think I'm a brat.
20) Sometimes I fly off the handle for no good reason.
21) I have trouble controlling my temper.
22) I can sometimes cry over trifles.
23) At times I feel I have gotten away from life.
24) Other people always seem to get the breaks.
25) I wonder why sometimes I fail so miserably.
26) I know that 'friends' talk behind my back.
27) I am a suspicious of overly friendly strangers.
28) I sometimes feel that people are laughing at me behind me back.
29) When people are especially nice, I wonder what they want.

---

1-4 Physical Aggression; 10-14 Verbal Aggression; 15-21 Anger; 22-28 Hostility


APPENDIX B

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL
MEMORANDUM

Application Approval Notification

TO: Ms. Jamie M. Williams
FROM: Cosmas U. Nwokeafor, Ph.D.

Chair, IRB
Bowie State University
Bowie, MD 20715

RE: IRB Number 015-014

Project Title: “Examining the relationship between violent media programming, aggression and Prosocial behaviors among minority college students”

Approval Date: May 26, 2015
Expiration Date: May 26, 2016
Type of Application: New Project
Type of Research: Nonexempt
Type of Review: Expedited
The Bowie State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved your IRB Proposal application in accordance with 45 CFR 46, the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects and the Bowie State University’s IRB guidelines and procedures. Please reference the above-cited IRB application number in any future communications with the Board regarding your research.

**Recruitment/Consent:** For research requiring written informed consent, the IRB-approved and stamped informed consent document will be enclosed. The IRB approval expiration date has been reserved. Please keep copies of the consent forms used for this research and this memorandum for three years after the completion of the research.

**Continuing Review:** If you intend to continue to collect data from human subjects or to analyze private, identifiable data collected from human subjects, after the expiration date for this approval (indicated above), you must submit a renewal application to the Chair of BSU IRB at least 30 days before the approval expiration date.

**Modifications:** Any changes to the approved protocol must be approved by the IRB before the change is implemented, except when a change is necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects. If you would like to modify the approved protocol, please submit an addendum request to the IRB Chair. The instructions for submitting a request could be obtained from IRB Chair.

**Unanticipated Problems Involving Risks:** You must promptly report any unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others with your application.

**Student Researchers:** Unless otherwise requested, this IRB approval was sent to the Principal Investigator (PI). The PI should pass on the approval document or a copy to the student researchers. This IRB approval document may be a requirement for student
researchers applying for graduation. The IRB Chair may not be able to provide copies of the approval documents if several years have passed since the date of the original approval. 

Congratulations and best wishes on the completion of your study.

**Additional Information:** If you have any IRB related questions or concern, please contact:

**Dr. Cosmas U. Nwokeafor, Chair IRB**

Center for Business and Graduate Studies

Suite 1312

Bowie State University

Bowie MD 20715

301-860-3410

301-860-3414

[cnwokeafor@bowiestate.edu](mailto:cnwokeafor@bowiestate.edu)
Protocol Title: Examining the relationship between violent media programming, aggression and pro social behaviors among college-aged minorities

Protocol Number: 15-182

Principal Investigator: Ms. Jamie Williams

Date of Determination: 5/28/2015

Qualifying Exempt Category: 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2)

Attachments: Stamped informed consent in separate email.

Dear Ms. Williams:

The Human Research Protection Program has determined the above referenced project exempt from IRB review.

Please note the following:

Retain a copy of this correspondence for your records.

An approval stamp is required on all informed consents. You must use the stamped consent form for obtaining consent from participants.

Only the MSU staff and students named on the application are approved as MSU investigators and/or key personnel for this study.

The approved study will expire on 5/31/2016, which was the completion date indicated on your application. If additional time is needed, submit a continuation request. (SOP 01-07 Continuing Review of Approved Applications)

Any modifications to the project must be reviewed and approved by the HRPP prior to implementation. Any failure to adhere to the approved protocol could result in suspension or termination of your project.

Per university requirement, all research-related records (e.g. application materials, letters of support, signed consent forms, etc.) must be
retained and available for audit for a period of at least 3 years after the research has ended.

It is the responsibility of the investigator to promptly report events that may represent unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others.

This determination is issued under the Mississippi State University’s OHRP Federalwide Assurance #FWA00000203. All forms and procedures can be found on the HRPP website: www.orc.msstate.edu.

Thank you for your cooperation and good luck to you in conducting this research project. If you have questions or concerns, please contact me at nmorse@orc.msstate.edu or call 662-325-5220.

Finally, we would greatly appreciate your feedback on the HRPP approval process. Please take a few minutes to complete our survey at https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/PPM2FBP.

Sincerely,

Nicole Morse, CIP

IRB Compliance Administrator

cc: Daniel Wong, Advisor
APPENDIX C

INFORMED CONSENT
MISISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY
Starkville, MS 39759
Informed Consent

The following tests and/or procedures are needed for the research project entitled, “examining the relationship between violent media programming, aggression, and pro-social behaviors among minority college students.” You are being contacted as an invitation to participate in a study that will examine examining the relationship between media violence and aggressive behaviors, and pro-social behaviors of minority college students. Please note that you are not required to participate in this study and may withdraw at anytime. This study is being conducted by Principal Investigator, Jamie Williams, a graduate of Bowie State University and a PHD candidate at Mississippi State University in the Department of Counselor Education and Research Advisor, Dr. Daniel Wong, a professor at Mississippi State University in the Department of Counselor Education.

You will be asked to complete a collection of surveys. The surveys include the following: (a) The Demographic Profile is a questionnaire related to personal, familial and social background information; (b) The Aggression Questionnaire measures physical aggression (physical expression of anger), verbal aggression (argumentative & hostile language), hostility (resentment, social isolation, and paranoia) and indirect aggression (expression of anger without direct confrontation); (c) The Pro social Personality Battery which assess an individuals’ ability to think about the rights and well being of others, to feel empathy and behave in a manner that benefits others. The measure is made up of two factors 1.) Other-oriented empathy which is the tendency to feel empathy and concern for others, and 2) Helpfulness, which is the tendency to perform helpful acts. Completion of these assessments should take approximately 30 minutes to complete.

There are minimum anticipated risks to your participation in this study. If you experience fatigue, you can take a break between answering questions. One incentive to participating in this study includes entrance into a raffle to win a $50 Target Gift card. Other benefits may include expanding the research literature on Minority college students and the effects of violent media programming. For the purposes of confidentiality, your survey will be given an assigned code number and stored in a locked file cabinet. Please do not put your name or any other identifying information directly on the surveys. Your participation in this study will not jeopardize your relationship with your school, professional organization and/or Bowie State University. The assessments that you complete, will only be seen by the two researchers involved in the study. The participants should be 18 years of age or older. If you are younger than 18, please do not complete the assessments.

You may reach Jamie Williams (principal investigator) at 301-910-9757 in the event you have any questions regarding your research-related rights and participation in this project.

Please take all the time you need to read through this document and decide whether you would like to participate in this research study. If you decide to participate, your completion of the research procedures indicates your consent. Please keep this form for your records.

Approved: 5/28/15
Expires: 5/31/16
IRB # 15-182
APPENDIX D

RECRUITMENT FLYER
Participants Needed for a Research Study at Bowie State University

Bowie State Students are welcomed to participate. Contact us for more information or to sign up:

Expected Duration:
30 minutes – 1 Hour

Restrictions: All participants must be 18 years or older, have full command of the English language, and must be a registered student at Bowie State University

Date: 06/01/15-07/01/15
BSU’s Student Center Room
#3008D
14000 Jericho Park Road
Bowie, MD