Uncovering the Reasons Why People Choose to Watch Violence: What Is the Relationship with Anxiety and Fear of Crime?

Elizabeth Marie Anderson

Loyola University Chicago

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

UNCOVERING THE REASONS WHY PEOPLE CHOOSE TO WATCH VIOLENCE:
WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP WITH ANXIETY AND FEAR OF CRIME?

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

BY
ELIZABETH MARIE ANDERSON

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MAY 1997
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Finally, to my dear friends, Tracey Bertram and Colleen Lange. Your friendship and support mean more to me than words can express. Thank you.
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ABSTRACT

The relationship between anxiety, fear of crime, and the preference for violent movies was examined to test the hypothesis that individuals who are anxious about crime choose to watch violence as a method of reducing anxiety (Wakshlag, Vial, & Tamborini, 1983; Zillmann & Wakshlag, 1985). Introductory Psychology students (N = 136) completed a questionnaire assessing their beliefs about violent movies, intentions to watch violence, anxiety, and fear of crime. Contrary to expectations, preference for violent movies was negatively correlated with anxiety, fear of crime, and previous viewing of violence, yet positively correlated with attitudes toward violent movies. Thus, it is suggested that people who have seen more violent movies in the past are more anxious and fear crime more, yet have more negative attitudes toward violent movies, and thus have less of a preference for violent movies.
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

The influence of the media is pervasive. In modern society, people are constantly bombarded by images and information through television, newspapers, computers, and the radio. This can have both intentional and unintentional consequences. Persuasive messages may be used to influence audiences to buy a product or vote for a candidate, while the mere appearance of certain behaviors on television and in movies may lead to an inference that they are acceptable or perhaps even laudable. Violent media in particular has been shown to have many detrimental effects. Violent films and television have been linked to a higher likelihood of aggression, greater fear levels, desensitization to violence, and many other negative outcomes (Berkowitz & Alioto; 1973; Doob & Macdonald, 1979; Berkowitz, 1984: Heath & Gilbert, 1996). It seems that watching violence should be avoided at all costs. Yet there is still a large audience for violent films. Why is this? What is it about these films that makes them so popular? To understand the appeal of violent films, we must first examine the impact of the media on individuals and how it may help to create a mindset that may lead to a
greater likelihood for viewing violence. First, the literature on fear of crime and anxiety as related to media exposure will be reviewed, in order to provide a framework for the hypotheses of this study.

**Fear of Crime and Media Exposure**

One unintended consequence of media exposure is increased fear of crime. While fear levels increase as crime rates increase, fear does not fall as rapidly when crime declines (Taylor & Hale, 1986). Many more people are fearful than are actually victimized, and fear levels are higher than would seem to be warranted by actual crime rates, even if a substantial amount of unreported crime is assumed (Heath & Gilbert, 1996; Taylor & Hale, 1986). Fear is highest among the lonely, dissatisfied, alienated, and anxious, and among females, the elderly, non-whites, and the poor (Liska & Baccaglini, 1990). One reason for this discrepancy between actual crime rates and fear of crime seems to be due to the presentation of crime from the media. People learn about crime and violence from the media. When crime is portrayed as random and dramatic, this contributes to fear (Box, Hale, and Andrews, 1988; Heath, 1984). Heavy television viewers have been reported to experience a significantly higher sense of personal risk, mistrust, and suspicion, as well as a tendency to overestimate the prevalence of violent crime (Gerbner,
Gross, Eleey, Jackson-Beeck, Jeffries-Fox, and Signorielli, 1977; Heath & Petraitis, 1987). Berkowitz (1984) noted that portrayals of anti-social behavior can produce exaggerated estimates of the prevalence of such behaviors in society and could even lead to indifference to these behaviors. As a consequence of these exaggerated estimates, people may have increased levels of fear that are not realistic. Gerbner et al. (1977) argued that witnessing television violence may lead viewers to cultivate a long-lasting conception of the social environment as wicked and dangerous. Heavy viewers may develop a perception of social reality that is consistent with the media depiction of life and therefore acquire a paranoid conception of their environment.

People may rely upon the information they receive from the mass media to make generalized inferences about human nature which may affect their subsequent perceptions of violence in films. Tversky & Kahneman (1973) note that individuals evaluate the probability of an uncertain event by the ease with which relevant examples come to mind. Constant exposure to media portrayals of violent crimes may lead to a higher recollection of these events, and their likelihood may be seen as much greater than should be realistically expected.

While it may seem that media exposure would
consistently lead to an increase in fear of crime, there are some qualifiers to this relationship, especially concerning one's personal vulnerability to crime. Media exposure may lead to increased fear about crime in the world in general, but not in one's own life. Hawkins and Pingree (1980) suggested that heavy television viewers may have higher perceptions of the frequency of antisocial behavior in the world, but still may not believe that they are more likely to be victimized. Doob and Macdonald (1979) report that there is no overall relationship between television viewing and fear of becoming a victim of crime. These researchers examined television viewing habits as they related to the amount of crime in the neighborhood of the viewer. They found that overall, heavy viewers tended to be the most afraid. However, this effect did not hold for low-crime areas. There was no relationship between media usage and fear of crime when the effect of neighborhood was removed. Doob and Macdonald (1979) suggested that viewing television itself is not likely to be a direct cause of one's fear of becoming a victim of crime. When other demographic variables were taken into account, these seemed to be even better predictors of perceptions of being a likely crime victim and of fear of crime than simply watching television.

Heath and Petraitis (1987) also qualified the fear
findings. They suggested that the total amount of television viewed is related to fear in distant urban settings, but not to fear in one's own city or to fear in one's immediate neighborhood (Heath & Petraitis, 1987; Tyler & Cook, 1984). The knowledge of distant violent crimes seemed to reassure people that they were safe where they were. It is the geographic location of the crime which seems to be a pivotal variable in increasing fear. The effect of watching crime stories in the news is also dependent upon their presentation. The proportion of crime stories in which the crimes are portrayed as local, random and sensational interact to affect fear. When the proportion of crime stories that were local was high, those that were random and sensational increased fear, but when the proportion of local crime stories was low, these same stories decreased fear (Heath, 1984).

The effect of newspaper coverage of violence on fear of crime is also varied, with some forms of coverage increasing fear while others may decrease fear. Newspapers which report a higher number of local homicide stories, especially in the first part of the paper, contribute to the image of some cities as dangerous, crime-ridden places (Liska & Baccaglini, 1990). The news media may affect perceptions of the seriousness of unrelated and less serious offenses by emphasizing serious crimes such as
homicide (Gebotys, Roberts & DasGupta, 1986). Constantly reading, hearing, and seeing stories about violent crime may have a cumulative effect on people's perceptions of the seriousness of a variety of offenses. Gebotys et al. (1986) found a significant positive relationship between the index of news media use and seriousness of crime ratings. This relationship held for all types of crimes, not only those that appear frequently in the news. It was not the case that ratings of seriousness were higher only for those crimes that receive the most media coverage. Ratings of even those crimes that appear infrequently in the news were affected by media exposure, demonstrating its pervasive influence.

**Anxiety and Media Exposure**

Along with fear of crime, the anxiety level of the viewer has also been examined in relation to violent media. The interaction between anxiety and violence in films has been examined in a variety of different ways and many reasons for the attraction of violence have been proposed. An early study examined the preference for violent movies after a brutal murder was committed and subsequently highly publicized throughout the surrounding community (Boyanowsky, Newton, & Walster, 1974). Movie theater attendance at a highly violent movie increased after the murder when compared to a non-violent movie. Although
other factors which may have contributed to the increased viewership at this movie were not controlled for, this was suggestive of a pattern and led to further research.

Bryant, Carveth, and Brown (1981) examined low and high anxiety subjects who received either heavy or light exposure to violent media. They found that it was not the heavy exposure to violent media per se which increased anxiety. Instead, only heavy exposure to crime dramas which showed a triumph of injustice increased anxiety levels. Individuals who were the most anxious and watched dramas where justice was restored actually tended to show a reduction in anxiety (Bryant et al., 1981). It was not the exposure itself that increased anxiety, it was dependent upon whether the violence seemed to be justified in some way. Zillmann and Wakshlag (1985) suggested that heavy prior exposure to crime dramas in which justice is restored leads people to seek out more crime dramas, while watching those in which justice is not restored serves as a deterrent.

Wakshlag, Vial, and Tamborini (1983) also examined the notion of justice restored when examining apprehensive individuals who watched violence. Again, they suggested that it was not the violence itself that attracted highly apprehensive individuals, but the attracting factor was whether the violence resulted in a restoration of justice.
Violence in and of itself was not appealing to highly anxious subjects, but when this violence seemed to promise retribution or to right wrongs, apprehensive individuals were more drawn to it and found it more appealing (Wakshlag et al., 1983).

Not only do apprehensive individuals appear to prefer violent films in which there is a sense of retribution for wrongs which have been committed, individuals who are apprehensive about crime and victimization appear to have more extreme reactions in general to viewing violence than those who are not as apprehensive (Wakshlag, Bart, Dudley, Groth, McCutcheon, and Rolla, 1983). When high and low apprehension subjects were shown violent films in which either the protagonist or antagonist was killed, Wakshlag, Bart et al. (1983) found that apprehensive subjects showed greater increases in heart rates and diastolic blood pressure during the exposure, were more disturbed by the violent endings, and rated their enjoyment of the film as lower than the non-apprehensive subjects. Apprehensive individuals had these reactions to both types of films, suggesting that they had more extreme reactions to violence in general, regardless of whether the protagonist or antagonist was killed (Wakshlag, Bart et al., 1983).

While viewing violence in the media may cause increases in fear levels and may be beneficial for some
anxious individuals, some media effects tend to be fairly transient, suggesting that the observed event may activate reactions or thoughts only for a relatively brief period of time (Berkowitz, 1983). The effects of the media may not be as long-lasting as is often assumed. However, if one is constantly exposed to the media, this could have a cumulative effect. In this way, constant exposure to the media may lead to an increase in fear of crime as well as a more long-lasting perception that society is a dangerous place to be and that the chances for victimization are high. If this belief remains strong, anxiety may increase, and a desire to watch violent films may also increase. Any benefits which anxious individuals obtain from watching violent movies may be short-lived and they may continue to seek out more violence in order to maintain the reduction in anxiety.
CHAPTER II
PURPOSE AND OVERVIEW

Based on the aforementioned research, it appears that individuals who choose to watch violence might differ on some important variables from those who do not choose to watch violence. The purpose of the present study was to explore these potential differences in a more systematic way. It was hoped that this would allow us to describe the types of people who choose to watch violence and contrast them with those who do not watch violence based on differences among their fear and anxiety levels.

It was hypothesized that those individuals who are the most apprehensive about victimization may be the ones who receive the most benefits from watching violence, as long as the violence involves a restoration of justice. Since most popular films attempt to show that good triumphs over evil in some way, most violent dramas will in fact demonstrate this restoration of justice (Zillmann & Wakshlag, 1985). If this is the case, then individuals who are particularly nervous about being victimized may seek out violent drama in order to calm themselves. In this way, they can be reassured that violence is not used indiscriminately and would not randomly affect them. They
may also convince themselves that their own life is better by comparison than what is depicted on the screen. In the safety of their own homes or in movie theaters, they can selectively expose themselves to violent films in order to gain some control over their apprehension (Zillmann & Wakshlag, 1985). Therefore, those anxious individuals who have been previously exposed to a high degree of violent films and have found that it reduces their anxiety would seem to want to continue the exposure to violence, while those who were not satisfied with the effects of watching violence on their anxiety levels would not want to seek out more violence in the future.

Pilot Research

To examine if the relationship among anxiety, fear of crime, and the viewing of violence does exist in the population of interest, a pilot study was conducted. Introductory psychology students (N=45) were administered a survey assessing their fear of crime, anxiety, preference for violent movies, and goals which were achieved by watching violence. As well as indicating some areas for improvement in the survey instrument itself, some interesting information was uncovered. Most participants reported watching violent movies once a month or a few times a year (35.6% and 33.3%, respectively). The reasons endorsed by most respondents for going to see movies were:
when I need to laugh (73.3%), nothing else to do (73%), and to see certain actors (62%). As has been suggested by previous research (Heath & Petraitis, 1987; Liska & Baccaglini, 1990), participants did report higher levels of fear of crime in distant settings than local: 44% of participants said that they would feel very unsafe on the streets at night in a typical big city (8% said they would feel very safe), while only 17% said they felt very unsafe on the streets of their own neighborhood at night (44% felt very safe). Characteristics which made participants consider a movie to be good included: good acting (100%), unpredictable (91%), suspenseful (84%), makes me laugh (78%), makes me think (77%), and has an intricate plot (73%). When forced to make a choice between 21 pairs of violent and non-violent movies, the majority of participants chose roughly half of the violent movies (41.9% chose between 9 and 12 violent movies). The most popular answers to the open-ended question asking participants their reasons for watching violence included: it is exciting because it is unreal and is only in movies (15.5%), it keeps me on the edge of my seat or is interesting (17.7%), and that it is not sought out, but it is okay if it is there, especially if it is historically accurate or educational (15.5%).

Multiple regression was then used to examine whether
choice of violent movies predicted anxiety levels. Movie choices did predict anxiety ($R^2 = .72, p < .03$) and movie choice also predicted the one item asking what the effect of violent content is on liking for the movie (whether it made participants like it more, like is less, or had no effect), ($R^2 = .31, p < .0001$). A discriminant analysis was used to classify participants into high and low anxiety categories on the basis of the total number of violent movies chosen, the effect of content, and the frequency of viewing violent movies. It was assumed that participants who were classified as having either high or low anxiety would differ on these independent variables. The univariate F-ratio showed that violent movie total and the effect of content were significant predictors of group membership ($p < .01$ and $p < .04$, respectively). The overall function was significant ($p < .04$), and these variables allowed for correct classification of 69.23% of the cases.

**Hypotheses of Current Study**

Based on the results from the pilot study, a correlational study was proposed to examine these factors and to determine how they are related to a preference for violent films when examined with a larger sample and more extensive questions. Fear of crime, anxiety, and attitudes toward violent movies were variables proposed to provide
insight into the choice to watch violent films, the distinguishing factors of the types of people who are drawn to violence, and the particular circumstances in which violence is attractive. While previous research makes some suggestions about the lure of violent movies among apprehensive participants, these explanations were not obtained by asking the participants themselves and does not explain the attraction for non-apprehensive participants. Since participants are not always able to report accurately on their reasons for watching violence, a variety of types of questions were used to attempt to uncover this information.

This survey proposed to answer these questions more thoroughly by asking about viewing habits, preferences, and reasons for choosing violent films in general and for choosing them instead of non-violent options. It proposed to examine how people who choose to watch violent movies differ from those who do not watch violent movies on fear and anxiety levels as well as attitudes toward violent movies. It was hypothesized that those who watch more violent movies would have higher fear and anxiety levels and more positive attitudes toward violent movies.

Theory of Reasoned Action. One approach to uncovering this relationship is suggested by the Theory of Reasoned Action (Azjen & Fishbein, 1980). This theory states that
behavior can be understood by examining intentions to behave, which are based upon the attitudes we have about behavior toward an attitude object and our subjective norms. To predict whether individuals will choose to watch violent films, we must first understand their attitudes toward watching violent films as well as what they believe important others would think about their engaging in this behavior. Do important others approve of their watching violent films, and regardless of this approval or disapproval, is compliance with those others likely to occur?

In the framework of the Theory of Reasoned Action, an attitude refers to an individual’s evaluation of a psychological object (e.g., watching violent movies) and is distinct from beliefs, intentions and behaviors (Azjen & Fishbein, 1980). This evaluation of favorability or unfavorability is in terms of the individual’s own performance of the behavior, not whether performance of the behavior is positive or negative in general. The other component which influences intentions to behave is an individual’s subjective norm, which considers the influence of the social environment on intentions and behavior. It refers to the individual’s perception that important others wish that he/she would or would not engage in a specific behavior. Along with this perception is the individual’s
desire to comply or not to comply with the wishes of these important others.

In order to understand attitudes toward violent movies, the beliefs about watching violence which participants evaluate must correspond to those attitudes. To ensure that they did, the two-stage process suggested by the Theory of Reasoned Action was used. First, a representative sample ($N = 36$) of the population to be examined was asked to describe their beliefs about the advantages and disadvantages of watching both violent and non-violent movies. These questions should elicit salient beliefs about watching violent movies, which are the immediate determinants of attitude (Azjen & Fishbein, 1980). Those responses most frequently elicited by participants constituted the modal set of beliefs. This set of beliefs was then used to generate belief scales to which later participants responded. Participants were asked to evaluate each belief on a 7-point, good-bad bipolar scale. They then indicated the strength of each belief again using a 7-point scale, this time ranging from likely to unlikely. This indicates how confident the individual is that the behavior does in fact lead to each of the consequences. Attitudes toward violent movies were then predicted by multiplying the evaluation of each of the behavioral consequences by the strength of belief of each
corresponding consequence and summing the products. This not only allowed for the prediction of a given individual's attitude toward violent movies, it also provided information about the determinants of that attitude (Azjen & Fishbein, 1980).

Subjective norms were assessed by first eliciting the salient important others for the population by asking a representative sample to report the individuals or groups who think that they should or should not watch violent movies. Once these salient referents were determined, participants evaluated their normative beliefs by rating the degree to which they believed that these referents think they should or should not watch violent movies, again using a bipolar 7-point scale. The motivation to comply with each of these referents is then assessed by asking participants how much they want to do what each referent thinks they should do. Finally, subjective norms are predicted by multiplying normative beliefs by the corresponding motivation to comply and summing the products (Azjen & Fishbein, 1980).

Subjective norms and attitudes interact such that individuals usually hold favorable attitudes toward behaviors that their important others think that they should perform and negative attitudes toward behaviors these others do not think they should perform (Azjen &
Fishbein, 1980). However, whether attitudes and subjective norms can predict intentions depends upon the strength of the intention-behavior relationship. Attitudes and subjective norms do not impact directly on behavior, they are mediated by behavioral intentions. Beliefs influence attitudes and subjective norms, which in turn influence intentions, which then influence behavior. For a true understanding of attitudes toward violent movies and the intention to watch such movies, we must examine the underlying beliefs.

**Variables of Interest.** Along with attitudes toward violent movies and subjective norms, the other constructs which were examined in order to arrive at a fuller understanding of how those who choose to watch violence differed from those who do not choose violence included: levels of anxiety and fear of crime, and other behavioral/situational and cognitive variables which may lead to the viewing of violent films. The behavioral/situational factors which may be important include such things as prior experience with victimization, environmental surroundings, and opportunities to see violent or non-violent films. Cognitive components include thoughts about violence, the ability to separate fact from fiction, perceived influence of observed violence on oneself, and reasons for seeing movies.
**Expected Results.** It was expected that this correlational research would show that there is a relationship among anxiety, fear of crime, and attitudes toward violent movies such that participants who prefer violent films would report more anxiety, higher levels of fear of crime, and more positive attitudes toward violent movies. If participants with a preference for violent films are more anxious, they should also be more likely to agree with the statements that they watch violent movies because it calms them, because it improves their mood, and because there is a conflict resolution. These predictions are derived from the idea that violence which involves retributive justice is appealing to anxious individuals because it provides some sort of cathartic release (Wakshlag, Vial, & Tamborini, 1983; Zillmann & Wakshlag, 1985), which may be demonstrated by a calming effect or an improved mood. Participants indicating a preference for violent movies should also have viewed more violent films in the past, and those whose subjective norms are stronger should be more likely to comply with the preferences of important referents. Finally, participants who reported higher levels of media exposure should have correspondingly higher scores on the fear of crime scale.
CHAPTER III

METHOD

Participants

Data were collected in a laboratory setting from a sample of 136 college students (40 males and 96 females). Participants were given course credit for completing the survey.

Procedure

Participants were asked to complete a questionnaire concerning college students' viewing habits. The task lasted approximately 30 minutes. All responses were kept both confidential and anonymous. Upon completion, participants were thanked for their participation and debriefed as to the purposes of the study.

Variable Measures

All measures given to participants are presented in Appendix A.

Anxiety. Anxiety was measured using the 20-item form of the Manifest Anxiety Scale. This 20-item scale measures trait anxiety and includes the most consistently valid items from the standard Manifest Anxiety Scale and has eliminated the items of low internal consistency and validity (Bendig, 1956).
Fear of crime. Fear of crime was examined with twelve questions modified from previous research (Brockway & Heath, 1996; Heath & Davidson, 1988). Such questions asked about perceptions of both personal and general chances of victimization (See Appendix A). Sample questions include: "How safe do you feel out alone on the streets of your neighborhood at night?" and "How safe do you think a teenage girl would be alone on the streets of your neighborhood at night?". All items were presented on 7-point bipolar scales, with higher scores representing more fear. Responses from all 12 items were summed to provide a total score for fear of crime.

Preference for violent films. The preference for violent films was examined by having participants make a forced choice between a series of 21 pairs of violent and non-violent movies, on the assumption that they could only watch one on any given evening. All attempts were made to provide choices among films which were comparable in interest and quality to viewers, rather than one well-known, popular film and one little heard of film. The number of total violent films chosen provided a score for violent preferences.

Preference for violent films was also examined through questions presented on 7-point scales asking participants which types of films they preferred and how violent content
affected their liking of a film (e.g., "If I have a choice between watching a variety of types of movies, I will choose a violent one"). These separate measures provided a number of ways to examine preference for violence.

Attitudes toward violent movies. Attitudes toward violent movies were assessed through the use of the two-stage process specified by the Theory of Reasoned Action. Modal salient beliefs about both violent and non-violent movies were elicited by having respondents answer the questions "What do you think are the advantages of watching a violent (non-violent) movie?" and "What do you think are the disadvantages of watching a violent (non-violent) movie?". The modal salient beliefs generated are presented in Tables 1 and 2. The top 80% of responses for both types of movies were then used to generate 7 items about violent movies and 8 items about non-violent movies.

In responding to these items, participants first indicated their evaluation of each outcome on a 7-point, good-bad bipolar scale. Next, participants assessed the likelihood of each outcome on a 7-point likely-unlikely bipolar scale.

Reasons for watching violent movies. Reasons for watching violent movies were assessed with open-ended questions asking participants to generate their own answers, and with a checklist of reasons for viewing, for
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Watching violent movies</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>leads people to perform imitative behaviors</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>is exciting, thrilling</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>teaches that violence is acceptable</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>is for entertainment only</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>makes you aware of real life dangers</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>teaches skills to protect yourself</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>causes emotional reactions (nightmares)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>allows for release of pent up feelings</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>increases crime rates</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>distorts the consequences of violence</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>teaches that violence is not acceptable</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>is an escape from reality</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>can be scared but in no real danger</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>helps you become more aggressive</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>can feel better in comparison to the bad guys</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>usually has a good plot, more enjoyable</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Watching non-violent movies</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>boring because of slow pace</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>is relaxing, calming</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>gives false depiction of the world</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>has a good message or example to follow</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>doesn’t give people bad ideas to follow</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>shows a healthy resolution to conflicts</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>is for entertainment only</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>is a realistic view of everyday life</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>appropriate for younger viewers</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>waste of time and money</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>does not cause nightmares</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>aren’t aware of reality and how to protect self</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>compare self to this perfect image</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>may have no lesson</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>15</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>shows the good side of people</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>could become overly sensitive</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
which participants checked as many reasons as applied to them (e.g., to escape, as a diversion, and calms me).

**Media Exposure.** Media exposure was examined by first asking participants to indicate how many hours they had spent watching television the previous weekday and then to indicate their typical amount of weekday viewing. They also indicated total hours of weekend viewing and whether they watched certain types of programs (e.g., comedies, talk shows, crime dramas) often, sometimes, seldom, or never. These questions were modified from previous research (Heath & Petraitis, 1987).

**Movie Exposure.** Movie exposure was assessed by asking participants first to choose from a list of options specifying how often (options ranging from "everyday or almost everyday" to "once a year or less") they viewed movies in general, and then particular genres of movies. Past behavior was examined by providing a listing of 56 movies (27 violent and 29 non-violent) and having participants indicate which ones they had previously viewed.

**Analysis**

Pearson’s product-moment correlations were performed to examine the relationship among preference for violent movies and fear of crime, anxiety, and attitudes about violent movies. Multiple regression was used to predict
preference for violent movies and previous viewing of violent movies using these same variables.
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Descriptives

The overall means and standard deviations, as well as those for participants with a high and low preference for violent movies, are shown in Table 3 for fear of crime, anxiety, preference for violent movies (number chosen in the forced choice), previous violent movies viewed, total number of movies viewed, and media exposure. Contrary to expectations, participants with a high preference for violent movies had lower means on the anxiety and fear of crime scales, and had previously viewed less violent movies than those with a low preference for violent movies. However, participants with a high preference for violent movies did have higher means on all media exposure variables.

Attitudes toward violent movies. The 7 belief items used to assess attitudes toward violent movies and the 8 belief items used to assess attitudes toward non-violent movies were examined to determine the evaluation of each outcome as well as the perceived likelihood of that outcome occurring. A median split was done on the variable indicating preference for violent movies (forced choice
## TABLE 3

Means and Standard Deviations for Groups with Low and High Preference for Violent Movies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Anxiety</strong></td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2.9)</td>
<td>(2.9)</td>
<td>(2.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fear of Crime</strong></td>
<td>50.5</td>
<td>51.5</td>
<td>49.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(8.6)</td>
<td>(7.6)</td>
<td>(9.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Violent Movie Preference</strong></td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>13.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3.9)</td>
<td>(2.3)</td>
<td>(2.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Violent Movies Previously viewed</strong></td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(4.9)</td>
<td>(4.3)</td>
<td>(5.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total # of Movies Previously viewed</strong></td>
<td>31.8</td>
<td>32.6</td>
<td>30.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(8.1)</td>
<td>(7.5)</td>
<td>(8.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hours of TV Watched yesterday</strong></td>
<td>1.66</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.6)</td>
<td>(1.6)</td>
<td>(1.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hours of TV Watched on Weekdays</strong></td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3.2)</td>
<td>(3.9)</td>
<td>(4.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hours of TV Watched on Weekends</strong></td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3.8)</td>
<td>(3.9)</td>
<td>(3.7)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: numbers in parentheses are standard deviations
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OUTCOME EVALUATIONS</th>
<th>BELIEF STRENGTH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watching Violent Movies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is exciting</td>
<td>2.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leads people to imitate behaviors</td>
<td>-.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is for entertainment value only</td>
<td>1.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaches protective skills</td>
<td>2.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makes one aware of dangers in society</td>
<td>2.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaches that violence is acceptable</td>
<td>-2.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Causes nightmares</td>
<td>-2.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watching Non-violent Movies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makes me bored or lose interest</td>
<td>-1.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relaxes or calms me</td>
<td>2.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gives a false depiction of the world</td>
<td>-2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gives a realistic view of daily life</td>
<td>1.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides a message or moral to the story</td>
<td>2.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not promote negative behaviors</td>
<td>2.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shows a healthy way to resolve conflict</td>
<td>2.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is purely for entertainment</td>
<td>1.60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
between movies), and the means for each group on each outcome evaluation and belief strength are presented in Table 4.

Those participants with a greater preference for violent films had higher means for all evaluations about violent films except for one, that they teach protective skills. When examining the strength of these beliefs, those with a higher preference for violent movies thought it was more likely that watching a violent film was exciting, that it leads people to perform imitative behaviors, that it is purely for entertainment value, that it makes one aware of real dangers in society, and that it teaches that violence is acceptable. However, they found it highly unlikely that it would cause nightmares.

These two groups had more similar responses on the beliefs about non-violent movies. However, those in the high preference group were more likely to say that non-violent movies could lead to boredom and that this is a likely outcome of watching such movies. They also were less likely to say that non-violent movies calm viewers.

Reasons for watching violent movies. The most frequently endorsed reasons for watching violent movies were: nothing else to do (90%), bored (74%), and to escape (61%). The reason suggested by this study, that a violent movie is watched as a way to reduce anxiety, was less
frequently endorsed (38%). The most frequently endorsed responses for what makes a movie good were: makes me laugh (94%), good acting (92%), unpredictable (87%), suspenseful (86%), realistic (69%), and provides a resolution to conflict (53%).

**Media Exposure.** Twenty-two percent of participants reported watching television for two hours the previous day, while 20% reported watching only one hour. The majority of participants (53%) reported regularly watching 2 or less hours of television on weekdays. The average amount of television watched over the weekend was 4 or less hours (42% of respondents). Means and standard deviations for these variables are found in Table 3.

**Movie Exposure.** Participants reported watching movies an average of once a week (41.9%). The majority of respondents reported watching violent movies once a month (35%) or once a week (22%). Past behavior was examined by asking respondents to indicate the number of movies they had previously viewed. Means and standard deviations are found in Table 3.

**Correlations among variables**

Pearson Product Moment Correlations were performed on the main variables of interest to determine the interrelationships among them. The correlation matrix is presented in Table 5. As expected, preference for violent
TABLE 5
Correlation Matrix of Main Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Anxiety</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Fear of Crime</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Preference for violent movies</td>
<td>-.21*</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Previous violent viewing</td>
<td>.18*</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>-.44**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Attitudes toward violent movies</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.34**</td>
<td>-.14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Attitudes toward non-violent movies</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.19*</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.28**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = p < .05

** = p < .001
movies was positively related to attitudes toward violent movies, and fear of crime and anxiety were also positively related (although not significantly so). However, contrary to hypotheses, preference for violent movies was negatively related to anxiety, fear of crime, and to the number of violent movies previously viewed. Because the sample was skewed for gender, the correlation matrix for each gender was also examined. No meaningful differences were found.

**Multiple Regression**

**Preference for violent movies.** Multiple regression was performed to determine whether the preference for violent movies could be predicted by fear of crime, anxiety, attitudes toward violent movies, attitudes toward non-violent movies, and the previous viewing of violent movies. As a group, these variables accounted for about 32% of the variance in preference for violent movies ($R^2 = .322$), which was significant ($F(5,121) = 11.52, p < .0001$). Three of these variables had a unique contribution to the regression equation. The previous viewing of violent movies was negatively related to preference ($Beta = -.373, p < .0001$), as was anxiety ($Beta = -.198, p < .01$).

Attitudes toward violent movies were positively related to preference for violent movies ($Beta = .305, p < .0002$). Fear of crime was not a significant predictor of preference ($Beta = -.021, ns$).
Previous viewing of violent movies. Multiple regression was also conducted to determine whether the previous viewing of violent films could be predicted by these same variables. These variables accounted for about 9% of the variance in previous viewing scores ($R^2 = .088$), which was significant ($F(4, 123) = 2.97, p < .02$). The variable which had a unique contribution to this equation was attitudes toward violence, which was negatively related to previous viewing of violent movies (Beta = -.216, $p < .02$). Anxiety approached significance as a predictor (Beta = .172, $p < .051$), while fear of crime was not a significant predictor (Beta = .108, ns).

Attitudes as a Mediating Variable. Because it was found that the preference for violent movies was negatively related to fear of crime and anxiety, yet positively related to attitudes toward violent movies, multiple regression was used to test the model that attitudes mediate the relationship between anxiety, fear of crime and preference for violent movies. This was first tested by conducting a regression with attitudes predicting preference for violent movies. Attitudes did significantly predict preference ($F(1,131) = 16.79, p < .0001$), and accounted for about 11% of the variance in scores ($R^2 = .1136$). In the second equation, anxiety and fear of crime were found to be significant predictors of preference for
violent movies \((F(2, 126) = 3.11, p < .03)\). Together, these variables accounted for about 5% of the variance \((R^2 = .046)\). The next step to test this model was to conduct a hierarchical regression with attitudes about violent movies entered at the first step and both anxiety and fear of crime entered at the second step. When examining the change in the amount of variance accounted for, we can determine whether these variables are independent or if attitudes mediate the relationship of fear of crime and anxiety to preference for violent movies. If there is not a significant increase in the amount of variance accounted for, then attitudes mediate the effect of fear of crime and anxiety. However, if the change in the amount of variance accounted for is significant, then these variables have independent effects on the preference for violent movies.

When testing this model, it was found that fear of crime and anxiety did have a unique contribution above and beyond attitudes \((F_{\text{change}} = 5.81, p < .004)\). They accounted for an additional 7% of variance \((R^2_{\text{change}} = .075)\). Since they did account for a unique amount of variance when the effect of attitudes toward violence were removed, this suggests that attitudes do not mediate the relationship and that these variables are independent of one another.
CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION

There was mixed support for the hypotheses of this study. As predicted, the preference for violent movies was positively related to attitudes toward violent movies. However, contrary to expectations, preference was negatively related to the other variables of interest: anxiety, fear of crime, and amount of violent movies previously viewed. While these relationships were in the reverse direction of expectations, fear of crime, anxiety, attitudes toward violence, and previous viewing of violent movies were an important group of predictors of the preference for violent movies. With information about these variables, we could predict whether a given individual is more or less likely to prefer violent movies.

Preference and Anxiety

Participants with a stronger preference for violent movies did not have higher anxiety scores. Rather, participants with a low preference for violent movies had higher anxiety scores than those with a high preference. Also, the mean scores on the anxiety measure were lower for the high preference group than for the low preference group. These findings are in the opposite direction of
previous research (Zillmann & Wakshlag, 1985), and suggest that anxious individuals actually have less of a preference for violent movies.

Preference and Fear of Crime

Preference for violent films was also negatively related to fear of crime. Participants with a low preference for violent films had higher fear levels than those with a high preference. They also had lower means on the fear of crime scale than those with lower preferences. While preference was negatively related to fear of crime, previous viewing was positively related to fear of crime (although non-significantly), which is more consistent with previous research (Gerbner et al., 1977; Gebotys et al., 1986; Heath & Petraitis, 1987; Berkowitz, 1984).

Preference and Previous Viewing of Violence

Again contrary to expectations, participants with a high preference for violent movies indicated watching less violent films in the past than those participants with a low preference for violent movies. When looking at the total number of movies previously viewed, those with a high preference had previously viewed less movies in general than those in the low preference group. This could suggest that these individuals simply watched less movies, but the means differ by roughly two movies out of twenty, so this does not seem like a likely explanation. Examining another
aspect of viewing behavior, participants with a high preference for violent movies did watch more television than those in the low preference group, which was consistent with previous research.

Preference and Attitudes

The expected relationship was found for preference and attitudes toward violent movies. Those individuals with more positive attitudes about violent movies were more likely to prefer to watch such movies. When compared to those with a low preference, participants with a high preference for violent movies found them to be more exciting and found non-violent movies to be less calming and more boring.

Explanation of Findings

The expected relationships were not found for most of the variables examined. However, some of the results do seem to make intuitive sense. That is, it may be more plausible that individuals who prefer violent movies have less rather than more anxiety and fear of crime. It may be that individuals who feel too anxious or fearful are not comfortable watching violence, while having lower anxiety and fear levels makes violent movies more acceptable. If one does not feel personally threatened, there may be more of a desire to watch violent movies. It may also be that individuals high in anxiety had previously viewed violence,
yet had not found that it resulted in a lessening of anxiety, so they did not show a preference for violent movies in the future. This seems plausible since there was a positive correlation between previous viewing and anxiety and fear of crime. If these individuals attempted to selective exposure themselves to violent movies (Zillmann & Wakshlag, 1985), but found that there was not a reduction in anxiety, such movies may not have been deemed preferable to watch again.

Methodological Concerns

The major methodological concern of this study had to do with the definition of violence. It is not clear that all participants were considering the same thing when answering questions about violent movies. Due to the problems inherent in providing a definition which all participants may not use consistently, participants used their own definition of violence. When asked to provide examples of what they considered to be violent films, it appears that most participants used a similar definition, because most responses were similar. Also, with this relatively homogeneous sample of college students, it was assumed that they had similar notions of violence. So, an inconsistent definition of violent movies does not seem to explain the results.

It is also possible that the movies which participants
made decisions about did not show a restoration of justice, which is an important factor for anxious individuals. However, as suggested by Zillmann & Wakshlag (1985), most violent dramas do show that good triumphs over evil and will show justice restored. Most popular movies do show that the "good guys" win, so this restoration of justice was most likely present in the movie options given to participants.

One other finding which raises questions is that there was a negative relationship between preference for violent movies and previous viewing behavior. The opposite pattern would be expected, since past behavior is the best predictor of future behavior. One possible explanation for these findings is that participants may have felt safer reporting on past behavior than admitting to a preference for violent movies over non-violent ones. This explanation becomes more plausible when looking at the attitudes about violent movies, which show the expected relationship with preference for violent movies. One reason that we see the relationship through these questions and not through the other scales may be because these items asked about the outcomes of violent movies in general, while other questions asked for participants to indicate what they would do themselves. Participants may have been hesitant to admit that they would choose violent movies, but found
it more appropriate to talk about such behaviors in general.

Conclusions

The findings from this research counter the suggestion of Zillmann & Wakshlag (1985) and Wakshlag et al. (1983) that the relationship between violent movies and anxiety is positive, such that highly anxious individuals choose more violent movies to watch. While the correlational nature of this research cannot lead to any causal conclusions, the findings were in the opposite direction of previous research. The pattern of results is such that anxiety, fear of crime, and previous viewing are all positively correlated, while each of these variables is negatively correlated with a preference for viewing violent movies. Thus, it may be that people who have seen more violence are more anxious and have more fear of crime, and thus seem to have less of a preference for violent movies. The opposite relationship is shown with attitudes toward violent movies. Attitudes are positively correlated with preference for violent movies, but negatively correlated with previous viewing. Thus, the previous viewing of violent movies is associated with more anxiety, more fear, negative (or less positive) attitudes toward violent movies, and less of a preference for them.

The results of this study suggest that someone who has
lower fear of crime and anxiety levels, has watched less violent movies in the past, and has more positive attitudes about violent movies would be more likely to prefer violent movies. It may be that individuals whose fear of crime and anxiety levels are too high have not found that watching violent movies do anything to combat these negative states. They may therefore have less of a preference because past viewing did not lead to a positive outcome. On the other hand, those individuals who have lower fear of crime and anxiety levels may not find it threatening to watch violent movies and therefore may prefer to watch more in the future. It appears that there are many different reasons for watching violence, and being too anxious or fearful may decrease the likelihood of watching violence. The information obtained from this study helps to describe the types of people who watch violent movies as well as the reasons they provide for doing so. This descriptive information can help to guide further research of a more causal nature.
APPENDIX A

MEASURES
The following statements represent experiences, ways of doing things, beliefs, or preferences that are true of some people but not true of others. These statements are arranged in groups which are numbered consecutively, 1, 2, 3, etc., and there are three statements within each group lettered, A, B, and C. Please read the three statements in each group carefully and decide first which one statement is most true or most nearly true of yourself or your beliefs, and then decide which statement is most false or most nearly false. Consider only one group of statements at a time. Please record the letter corresponding to the statement that is most true of yourself, and the letter corresponding to the statement that is most false of yourself on the lines provided beneath each set of statements.

Make your two judgements concerning the three statements in every group as carefully and honestly as you can. There are no right or wrong answers. We are interested in the way you do things and in the beliefs and preferences you have. Be sure to answer every question and only choose one true and one false statement for each set of sentences.

1.) A. I usually work things out for myself rather than get someone to show me how.
   B. Sometimes when I am not feeling well I am cross.
   C. My hands and feet are usually warm enough.

   Most true ______
   Most false ______

2.) A. Most people make friends because friends are likely to be useful to them.
   B. I have sometimes felt that difficulties were piling up so high that I could not overcome them.
   C. It is not hard for me to ask help from my friends even though I cannot return the favor.

   Most true ______
   Most false ______

3.) A. The man who had most to do with me when I was a child (father, step-father, etc.) was very strict with me.
   B. I have a great deal of stomach trouble.
   C. No one cares what happens to you.

   Most true ______
   Most false ______

4.) A. I dislike to change my plans in the midst of an undertaking.
   B. I am apt to pass up something I want to do when others feel that it isn't worth doing.
   C. I am easily embarrassed.

   Most true ______
   Most false ______

5.) A. I have at times been worried beyond reason over something that really did not matter.
   B. When someone says silly or ignorant things about something I know about, I try to set them right.
   C. My table manners are not quite as good at home as when I am out in company.

   Most true ______
   Most false ______
6.) A. I am not unusually self-conscious.
   B. I love to go to dances.
   C. I usually find that my own way of attacking a problem is best, even though it doesn't always seem to work in the beginning.

   **Most true _____**
   **Most false _____**

7.) A. It makes me nervous to have to wait.
   B. I frequently ask people for advice.
   C. I can remember "playing sick" to get out of something.

   **Most true _____**
   **Most false _____**

8.) A. My mother or father often made me obey even when I thought that it was unreasonable.
   B. I strongly defend my own opinions as a rule.
   C. I hardly ever notice my heart pounding and I am seldom short of breath.

   **Most true _____**
   **Most false _____**

9.) A. My interests tend to change quickly.
   B. I am more sensitive than most other people.
   C. If given the chance I would make a good leader of people.

   **Most true _____**
   **Most false _____**

10.) A. I prefer to stop and think before I act even on trifling matters.
    B. I do not tire quickly.
    C. I am very careful about my manner of dress.

    **Most true _____**
    **Most false _____**

11.) A. I am inclined to take things hard.
     B. Most people will use somewhat unfair means to gain profit or an advantage rather than to lose it.
     C. It is the slow, steady worker who usually accomplishes the most in the end.

     **Most true _____**
     **Most false _____**

12.) A. I have very few fears compared to my friends.
     B. I usually check more than once to be sure that I have locked a door, put out the light, or something of the sort.
     C. I like poetry.

     **Most true _____**
     **Most false _____**
13.) A. I enjoy detective or mystery stories.
    B. I frequently find it necessary to stand up for what I think is right.
    C. I am usually calm and not easily upset.

      Most true ______
      Most false ______

14.) A. My sleep is fitful and disturbed.
    B. I have used alcohol excessively.
    C. I do not try to correct people who express an ignorant belief.

      Most true ______
      Most false ______

15.) A. I dislike to take a bath.
    B. I have diarrhea once a month or more.
    C. I always put on and take off my clothes in the same order.

      Most true ______
      Most false ______

16.) A. I think nearly anyone would tell a lie to keep out of trouble.
    B. I have had periods in which I lost sleep over worry.
    C. I readily become one hundred percent sold on a good idea.

      Most true ______
      Most false ______

17.) A. If I were a reporter I would very much like to report news of the theater.
    B. When I was a child I didn't care to be a member of a crowd or gang.
    C. I am often afraid that I am going to blush.

      Most true ______
      Most false ______

18.) A. I don't quite blame anyone for trying to grab everything he can get in this world.
    B. I worry quite a bit over possible misfortunes.
    C. I like movie love scenes.

      Most true ______
      Most false ______

19.) A. I tend to be interested in several different hobbies rather than to stick to one of them for a long time.
    B. Sometimes I become so excited that I find it hard to get to sleep.
    C. I feel unsympathetic towards people who tend to hang on to their griefs and troubles.

      Most true ______
      Most false ______
20.) A. I enjoy the excitement of a crowd.
   B. My relatives are nearly all in sympathy with me.
   C. I am not unusually self-conscious.

   Most true _____
   Most false _____
This next set of questions has to do with your personal safety. Please circle the number which best represents your answer for the following questions. Once again, there are no right or wrong answers.

1. How safe do you feel out alone on the streets of your neighborhood at night?
   
   Very Safe \hspace{0.5cm} 1--------2--------3--------4--------5--------6--------7 \hspace{0.5cm} Very Unsafe

2. How safe do you feel when you are home alone at night?
   
   Very Safe \hspace{0.5cm} 1-----------2-----------3-----------4-----------5-----------6-----------7 \hspace{0.5cm} Very Unsafe

3. How safe do you think a teenage girl would be alone on the streets of your neighborhood at night?
   
   Very Unsafe \hspace{0.5cm} 1-----------2-----------3-----------4-----------5-----------6-----------7 \hspace{0.5cm} Very Safe

4. What do you think the chances are that someone would try to break into your house when you are not home at night?
   
   Very Low \hspace{0.5cm} 1-----------2-----------3-----------4-----------5-----------6-----------7 \hspace{0.5cm} Very High

5. What do you think the chances are that someone would try to break into your house when you are at home at night?
   
   Very High \hspace{0.5cm} 1-----------2-----------3-----------4-----------5-----------6-----------7 \hspace{0.5cm} Very Low

6. How much of a problem would you say crime in your neighborhood is?
   
   Big Problem \hspace{0.5cm} 1-----------2-----------3-----------4-----------5-----------6-----------7 \hspace{0.5cm} Not Much of a problem

7. Thinking about a typical neighborhood in a big city like New York, how much of a problem do you think crime is there?
   
   Not much of a problem \hspace{0.5cm} 1-----------2-----------3-----------4-----------5-----------6-----------7 \hspace{0.5cm} Big problem

8. How safe do you think a teenage girl would be walking on the streets alone at night in the typical neighborhood in a big city?
   
   Very Safe \hspace{0.5cm} 1-----------2-----------3-----------4-----------5-----------6-----------7 \hspace{0.5cm} Very Unsafe

9. How safe would you feel walking alone at night on the streets of a typical big city neighborhood?
   
   Very Safe \hspace{0.5cm} 1-----------2-----------3-----------4-----------5-----------6-----------7 \hspace{0.5cm} Very Unsafe

10. How much of a problem would you say crime in the United States is?

    Not much of a problem \hspace{0.5cm} 1-----------2-----------3-----------4-----------5-----------6-----------7 \hspace{0.5cm} Big Problem
11. How effective do you think the police are at keeping you safe from crime?

Very Effective

1-----------2-----------3-----------4-----------5-----------6-----------7

Very Ineffective

12. How many crimes would you say police solve?

Most crimes

1-----------2-----------3-----------4-----------5-----------6-----------7

Few crimes

The next questions have to do with violence, both in watching movies and in your community. Again, please circle the number that best represents your answer for each question.

13. How often do you see acts of violence in your community?

Not at all

Very often

1-----------2-----------3-----------4-----------5-----------6-----------7

14. Using violence to solve a problem can never be justified.

Strongly Agree

Strongly Disagree

1-----------2-----------3-----------4-----------5-----------6-----------7

15. The presence of violence in movies does not impact me.

Strongly Agree

Strongly Disagree

1-----------2-----------3-----------4-----------5-----------6-----------7

16. When watching a movie, I sometimes forget that I am watching characters and not real people.

Almost Always

Almost Never

1-----------2-----------3-----------4-----------5-----------6-----------7

17. I get so absorbed in the plot of movies that it often seems real to me.

Almost Never

Almost Always

1-----------2-----------3-----------4-----------5-----------6-----------7

18. Violence is apparent in my every day surroundings.

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

1-----------2-----------3-----------4-----------5-----------6-----------7

19. There are times when using violence to accomplish a goal is necessary.

Strongly Agree

Strongly Disagree

1-----------2-----------3-----------4-----------5-----------6-----------7

20. When watching movies, I become involved with the plot, but still realize that I am watching actors on the screen and not real people.

Strongly Agree

Strongly Disagree

1-----------2-----------3-----------4-----------5-----------6-----------7
21. Sometimes there are no movies without violence to watch, so I have to watch violence.

Strongly Agree 1-2-3-4-5-6-7 Strongly Disagree

22. If I have a choice between watching a variety of types of movies, I will choose a violent one.

Almost Always 1-2-3-4-5-6-7 Almost Never

23. If I watch a violent movie, it is only because there is nothing else to watch.

Strongly Agree 1-2-3-4-5-6-7 Strongly Disagree

24. When watching a movie, some violent content makes me:

Like it more 1-2-3-4-5-6-7 Like it less

25. I am more likely to watch violence which is fictional than that which is realistic.

Strongly Agree 1-2-3-4-5-6-7 Strongly Disagree

26. I tend to watch the types of movies my friends want to watch, even if I would rather watch something else.

Strongly Agree 1-2-3-4-5-6-7 Strongly Disagree

27. I am influenced by what my family wants me to do or see.

Strongly Agree 1-2-3-4-5-6-7 Strongly Disagree

28. I do not like to see any type of violence in movies.

Strongly Agree 1-2-3-4-5-6-7 Strongly Disagree

29. My friends do not like to watch violent movies.

Strongly Agree 1-2-3-4-5-6-7 Strongly Disagree

30. My friends do not approve of my watching violent movies.

Strongly Agree 1-2-3-4-5-6-7 Strongly Disagree
31. My family does not approve of my watching violence in movies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>Strongly Agree</td>
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</table>

32. Watching violence in movies directly impacts my emotions.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Strongly</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
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<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

33. Watching violence in movies gives me nightmares.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Almost</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
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<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>Almost Always</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Almost Always</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
On the following pages, there are a variety of questions about the types of entertainment college students enjoy. Please read the directions for each section carefully.

Please place a check mark next to the answer which most closely represents your viewing habits.

1. I watch movies:
   ___ everyday or almost everyday
   ___ more than once a week
   ___ about once a week
   ___ about once a month
   ___ a few times a year
   ___ once a year or less

2. I watch comedic movies:
   ___ everyday or almost everyday
   ___ more than once a week
   ___ about once a week
   ___ about once a month
   ___ a few times a year
   ___ once a year or less

3. I watch dramatic movies:
   ___ everyday or almost everyday
   ___ more than once a week
   ___ about once a week
   ___ about once a month
   ___ a few times a year
   ___ once a year or less

4. I watch violent movies:
   ___ everyday or almost everyday
   ___ more than once a week
   ___ about once a week
   ___ about once a month
   ___ a few times a year
   ___ once a year or less

5. How many hours of television did you watch yesterday? ______

6. How many hours of television do you typically watch on weekdays? ______

7. How many hours of television do you typically watch on the weekend? ______
8. I watch sitcoms:
   ______ often
   ______ sometimes
   ______ seldom
   ______ never

9. I watch talk shows:
   ______ often
   ______ sometimes
   ______ seldom
   ______ never

10. I watch crime dramas:
    ______ often
    ______ sometimes
    ______ seldom
    ______ never

11. I watch soap operas:
    ______ often
    ______ sometimes
    ______ seldom
    ______ never

12. I watch family shows:
    ______ often
    ______ sometimes
    ______ seldom
    ______ never

13. I watch science fiction shows:
    ______ often
    ______ sometimes
    ______ seldom
    ______ never
Please rate the degree to which each item listed is good or bad by making a check mark on the appropriate line.

1. Being excited or kept on the edge of your seat is:

   good ______ ______ ______ ______ ______ _____________ bad
   extremely quite slightly either/nor slightly quite extremely

2. People imitating behaviors is:

   good ______ ______ ______ ______ ______ _____________ bad
   extremely quite slightly either/nor slightly quite extremely

3. Pure entertainment value is:

   good ______ ______ ______ ______ ______ _____________ bad
   extremely quite slightly either/nor slightly quite extremely

4. Teaching skills that can be used for protection is:

   good ______ ______ ______ ______ ______ _____________ bad
   extremely quite slightly either/nor slightly quite extremely

5. Becoming aware of real dangers in society is:

   good ______ ______ ______ ______ ______ _____________ bad
   extremely quite slightly either/nor slightly quite extremely

6. Teaching that violence is acceptable is:

   good ______ ______ ______ ______ ______ _____________ bad
   extremely quite slightly either/nor slightly quite extremely

7. Causing nightmares or other negative emotional reactions is:

   good ______ ______ ______ ______ ______ _____________ bad
   extremely quite slightly either/nor slightly quite extremely
Please rate the degree to which each event is likely or unlikely to occur by placing a check mark on the appropriate line.

1. My watching a violent movie and being excited or on the edge of my seat is:

   likely ______ ______ ______ ______ ______ ______ ______ unlikely
   extremely quite slightly either/nor slightly quite extremely

2. My watching a violent movie and imitating behaviors is:

   likely ______ ______ ______ ______ ______ ______ ______ unlikely
   extremely quite slightly either/nor slightly quite extremely

3. My watching a violent movie purely for the entertainment value is:

   likely ______ ______ ______ ______ ______ ______ ______ unlikely
   extremely quite slightly either/nor slightly quite extremely

4. My watching a violent movie and learning skills that can be used for protection is:

   likely ______ ______ ______ ______ ______ ______ ______ unlikely
   extremely quite slightly either/nor slightly quite extremely

5. My watching a violent movie and learning that violence is acceptable is:

   likely ______ ______ ______ ______ ______ ______ ______ unlikely
   extremely quite slightly either/nor slightly quite extremely

6. My watching a violent movie and becoming aware of real dangers in society is:

   likely ______ ______ ______ ______ ______ ______ ______ unlikely
   extremely quite slightly either/nor slightly quite extremely

7. My watching violence and having nightmares or other negative emotional reactions is:

   likely ______ ______ ______ ______ ______ ______ ______ unlikely
   extremely quite slightly either/nor slightly quite extremely
Please rate the degree to which each item listed is good or bad by making a check mark on the appropriate line.

1. Being bored or losing interest because of slow pace is:

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>extremely</th>
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<th>either/nor</th>
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2. Being relaxed or calmed is:

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<th>good</th>
<th>extremely</th>
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3. Giving a false depiction of the world today is:

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<tr>
<th>good</th>
<th>extremely</th>
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<th>slightly</th>
<th>either/nor</th>
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4. Providing a realistic view of daily life is:

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5. Providing a message or a moral to a story is:

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6. Not promoting negative behaviors to imitate is:

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7. Demonstrating a healthy resolution to conflict is:

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</table>

8. Pure entertainment value is:

<table>
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<th>good</th>
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<th>slightly</th>
<th>either/nor</th>
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</tbody>
</table>
Please rate the degree to which each event is likely or unlikely to occur by placing a check mark on the appropriate line.

1. My watching a non-violent movie and being bored or losing interest because of slow pace is:

   likely ______ ______ ______ ______ ______ ______ unlikely
   extremely quite slightly either/not slightly quite extremely

2. My watching a non-violent movie and being relaxed or calmed is:

   likely ______ ______ ______ ______ ______ ______ unlikely
   extremely quite slightly either/not slightly quite extremely

3. My watching a non-violent movie and seeing a false depiction of the world today is:

   likely ______ ______ ______ ______ ______ ______ unlikely
   extremely quite slightly either/not slightly quite extremely

4. My watching a non-violent movie and seeing a realistic view of daily life is:

   likely ______ ______ ______ ______ ______ ______ unlikely
   extremely quite slightly either/not slightly quite extremely

5. My watching a non-violent movie and seeing a message or a moral to a story is:

   likely ______ ______ ______ ______ ______ ______ unlikely
   extremely quite slightly either/not slightly quite extremely

6. My watching a non-violent movie and not seeing negative behaviors to imitate is:

   likely ______ ______ ______ ______ ______ ______ unlikely
   extremely quite slightly either/not slightly quite extremely

7. My watching a non-violent movie and seeing a healthy resolution to conflict is:

   likely ______ ______ ______ ______ ______ ______ unlikely
   extremely quite slightly either/not slightly quite extremely

8. My watching a non-violent movie purely for entertainment value is:

   likely ______ ______ ______ ______ ______ ______ unlikely
   extremely quite slightly either/not slightly quite extremely
1. My friends think that:

   I should ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ I should not watch violent movies

2. My family thinks that:

   I should ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ I should not watch violent movies

3. My boyfriend/girlfriend thinks that (if applicable)

   I should ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ I should not watch violent movies

4. In general, how much do you want to do what your friends think you should do?
   
   ______ Not at all
   ______ Slightly
   ______ Moderately
   ______ Strongly

5. In general, how much do you want to do what your family thinks you should do?
   
   ______ Not at all
   ______ Slightly
   ______ Moderately
   ______ Strongly

6. In general, how much do you want to do what your boyfriend/girlfriend thinks you should do?
   
   ______ Not at all
   ______ Slightly
   ______ Moderately
   ______ Strongly
Following is a list of movies. Please place a check mark next to each movie which you have seen (whether in the theater, on TV, or on tape).

- Ace Ventura: Pet Detective
- Nixon
- Pulp Fiction
- Forrest Gump
- Star Wars
- Clerks
- The Last of the Mohicans
- The Truth About Cats and Dogs
- Sleepless in Seattle
- While You Were Sleeping
- Reality Bites
- Apollo 13
- Leaving Las Vegas
- Casino
- The Brady Bunch: The Movie
- Strange Days
- The Scarlet Letter
- Copycat
- City Hall
- Barb Wire
- How to Make an American Quilt
- Toy Story
- Father of the Bride
- Sense and Sensibility
- Crimson Tide
- Clueless
- Terminator 2
- Mr. Holland's Opus
- White Squall
- The American President
- Waterworld
- Rumble in the Bronx
- The Birdcage
- The Craft
- Primal Fear
- Speed
- Flirting with Disaster
- Jane Eyre
- When Harry Met Sally
- Back to the Future
- City Slickers
- The Usual Suspects
- Assassins
- Get Shorty
- Showgirls
- Desperado
- Fargo
- Seven
- Brothers McMullen
- Waiting to Exhale
- Sabrina
- Die Hard
- Congo
- Batman Forever
- Broken Arrow
- Happy Gilmore
Following are some reasons people may choose to go see movies. Please check all reasons that may lead you to see a movie at any particular time. (check all that apply)

____ to escape
____ nothing else to do
____ I identify with the characters
____ so I can see that my life is better than that of others
____ psychologically thrilling

____ Other (please specify) _______________

What factors do you look for in a movie for you to consider it a "good" movie? (check all that apply):

____ unpredictable
____ action-packed
____ conflict resolution
____ intricate plot
____ not a forced ending

____ Other (please specify) _______________

__________________________________________
On any given night, if you had to choose which movie to see, please check which of each pair you would prefer to watch. If you do not recognize the movie, make your best guess from the title. Be sure to make *one* choice in each set of movies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Movie 1</th>
<th>Movie 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ace Ventura</td>
<td>From Dusk to Dawn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The American President</td>
<td>A Few Good Men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copycat</td>
<td>Grumpier Old Men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get Shorty</td>
<td>Mighty Aphrodite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dumb and Dumber</td>
<td>Goldeneye</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philadelphia</td>
<td>Leaving Las Vegas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Net</td>
<td>Mr. Holland's Opus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cutthroat Island</td>
<td>Two If By Sea</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dead Man Walking</td>
<td>Dead Poets Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Monkeys</td>
<td>Tin Cup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reservoir Dogs</td>
<td>Sleepless in Seattle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Brady Bunch Movie</td>
<td>Casino</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heat</td>
<td>Sense and Sensibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pulp Fiction</td>
<td>Forrest Gump</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When Harry Met Sally</td>
<td>Speed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silence of the Lambs</td>
<td>Nixon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indiana Jones</td>
<td>Four Weddings and a Funeral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jurassic Park</td>
<td>Apollo 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Before and After</td>
<td>Up Close and Personal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emma</td>
<td>The Fugitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father of the Bride</td>
<td>Natural Born Killers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Now we would like you to consider any reasons you may have for choosing to watch violent movies or television. Please list as many reasons as you can think of, as well as specific events or feelings which may lead you to choose to watch violent movies or television.

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

How do you decide whether a movie is "too" violent to watch? What factors determine when violence in films is acceptable and when it is not?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
Have you, or someone close to you, ever been the victim of a **property** crime like theft or burglary?

Yes □ No □

If yes, **who** did that happen to?

You □ Someone else □ Both □

Have you, or someone close to you, ever been the victim of a **personal** crime like robbery, assault, rape, or murder?

Yes □ No □

If yes, **who** did that happen to?

You □ Someone else □ Both □

Your age: ______

Your housing situation (check the appropriate line):

_____ I live at home with my family

_____ I live in a residence hall here on campus

_____ I live in an off-campus apartment

_____ Other Please specify: __________________________

Before enrolling at Loyola, you lived:

_____ In a large urban environment (like Chicago)

_____ In a suburb

_____ In a city (at least 50,000 people)

_____ In a small town

_____ In a rural community

_____ Other Please specify: __________________________

Thank you for your participation.
APPENDIX B

DEBRIEFING FORM
Some Information About the Study

The study in which you have just participated attempts to further our knowledge about why people choose to watch violence in the media. There has been some research suggesting that watching violence may in some cases reduce levels of anxiety in anxious people, as long as the violence which is shown is resolved in a satisfactory manner. However, much of this research has focused on correlational methods and has looked at movie attendance records after a much publicized brutally violent incident. If there was an increase in attendance at violent movies, this was taken as confirmation that people are watching violence in order to reduce their own anxiety. Little attention has been paid to the reasons that people give on their own for why they choose to watch violence.

The present study attempted to examine some of the reasons that people give for choosing to watch or not watch violent movies, and what factors may be related to this, such as prior mood, level of anxiety, feelings about crime, and feelings about movies in general. We hope to uncover some of the reasons for watching violence and what viewers feel they get from it. This will help to guide future research in this area.

If you would like any further information concerning this study, please feel free to contact Bess Anderson (DH 667, 508-3072). If you are interested in this area of research, the references below will provide further information for you. Thank you for your participation.


REFERENCES


VITA

Elizabeth Marie Anderson was born in Milwaukee, WI, and attended St. Robert Grade School and Shorewood High School, both in Shorewood, WI. Upon graduation from high school in 1989, Anderson attended Marquette University in Milwaukee, WI, the graduate alma mater of both of her parents. At Marquette, she majored in Psychology and minored in Criminal and Law Studies, earning a Bachelor of Arts in 1993.

In 1994, Anderson enrolled in the Applied Social Psychology PhD program at Loyola University Chicago. She is currently a research assistant for Dr. R. Scott Tindale. She has also worked at the National Opinion Research Center as part of her internship experience and will be a teaching fellow in the next academic year.

Anderson's research interests include fear of crime, the effects of media exposure, aggression, and program evaluation. Anderson currently resides in Chicago, IL.
The thesis submitted by Elizabeth M. Anderson has been read and approved by the following committee:

R. Scott Tindale, Ph.D., Director
Professor of Psychology
Loyola University Chicago

Linda Heath, Ph.D.
Professor of Psychology
Loyola University Chicago

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated and that the thesis is now given final approval by the committee with reference to content and form.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

4/7/97
Date

Director's Signature