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MEDIA EXPOSURE'S IMPACT ON LATITUDE OF MORAL  
SANCTION FOR VIOLENT REPRISAL: THE ROLE OF  
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**MEDIA EXPOSURE'S IMPACT ON LATITUDE OF MORAL SANCTION FOR  
VIOLENT REPRISAL: THE ROLE OF DISPOSITION AND MOTIVE**

**By**

**Kenneth A. Lachlan**

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **MEDIA EXPOSURE'S IMPACT ON LATITUDE OF MORAL SANCTION FOR VIOLENT REPRISAL: THE ROLE OF DISPOSITION AND MOTIVE**

**By**

**Kenneth A. Lachlan**

Studies of media violence suggest that exposure to violent television can increase the approval and/or acceptance of aggressive behavior in real life (Paik & Comstock, 1994). Moreover, several experimental studies show evidence that the presentation of violence as justified increases the likelihood of resultant aggression (Berkowitz & Geen, 1967; Berkowitz & Powers, 1979; Meyer, 1972), while exposure to unjustified violence may actually reduce aggressive tendencies (Geen, 1981). However, conceptual ambiguity remains concerning the characteristic features delineating justified from unjustified violence, the relationship of perceived justification to specific attributes of the source and target of violence, and the underlying psychological processes responsible for subsequent aggressive behavior.

The current research begins by developing a logic explicating processes through which appraisals of justification are based on equal exchanges, moderated by dispositional and motivational concerns. Based on predictions from this logic, 225 college students were exposed to a violent film clip, using a fully crossed 3 X 3 design comparing responses to violence committed by liked, disliked, and neutral perpetrators with sanctioned, unsanctioned, or unknown motives. The results indicate that violence committed by liked characters, regardless of the apparent motive, can facilitate hostile responses and perhaps impact attitudes that govern habitual aggressive behavior.

Additionally, random acts of violence, those which contain no clear dispositional or motivational considerations, may also be harmful, as they seem to be met with great approval. In contrast to predictions, enjoyment of the observed film clip was in no way related to perpetrator disposition or motive for aggression. Finally, the specific combination of liked characters committing aggressive acts for reasons that are normatively unacceptable may be particularly problematic in its contribution to attitudes that facilitate aggressive behavioral. These results are discussed in terms of the availability of such socially problematic content, its potential long term effects on viewers, and the need for further research investigating the roles played by disposition and motive in moderating the effect of media violence on moral reasoning.

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## **Media Exposure's Impact on Latitude of Moral Sanction for Violent Reprisal: the Role of Disposition and Motive for Violence**

Studies of media violence suggest that exposure to violent television can increase the approval and/or acceptance of aggressive behavior in real life (Paik & Comstock, 1994). Moreover, several experimental studies show evidence that the presentation of violence as justified increases the likelihood of resultant aggression (Berkowitz & Geen, 1967; Berkowitz & Powers, 1979; Meyer, 1972), while exposure to unjustified violence may actually reduce aggressive tendencies (Geen, 1981). This line of research has been interpreted to suggest that perceived justification moderates the relationship between exposure to television violence and viewer aggression.

While evidence from these prior investigations supports claims that justified media violence impacts resultant aggressive behavior, conceptual ambiguity remains concerning characteristic features delineating justified from unjustified violence, the relationship of perceived justification to specific attributes of the source and target of violence, and the underlying psychological processes responsible for subsequent aggressive behavior. Moreover, issues concerning the extent to which the features of justified violence in early experimental research are represented in the content of televised violence today raise questions concerning the ecological validity of earlier research.

This paper begins by developing a logic explicating processes through which content features of justified violence moderate the impact of exposure to television violence on aggressive behavior. Based on predictions from this logic, a study is developed to evaluate shifts in attitudes toward violence that may occur through repeated

exposure, with the understanding that attitudinal shifts may predict aggressive behavior. Central in this regard is an attempt to differentiate specific attributes of justification which, though confounded in previous media research, are taken as evidence that justification shapes the impact of violence on subsequent aggression. Specifically, this study considers the media cues associated with motivations for violence and with dispositions toward victims and perpetrators in an attempt to isolate their potential impact on attitudes facilitating aggression.

#### *Concern over justified violence*

Previous research on television content has identified a number of contextual features associated with the representation of violence that contribute to its influence on viewer aggression. One critical feature identified by this research is the presence of information signifying justification for acts of violence. Research in this area suggests that when acts of violence are presented as being justified they pose a more serious risk to audiences by reducing inhibitions that prevent aggressive behavior, while unjustified acts of violence do not appear to have the same effect on viewer aggression and may even inhibit aggressive response (Berkowitz, 1962; Geen 1981). Provoked subjects who have seen justified violence are more likely to demonstrate heightened aggression both in their attitudes toward others (Berkowitz & Rawlings, 1963) and in actual behaviors such as the administration of shocks to a confederate (Berkowitz & Geen, 1967; Hoyt, 1970).

While the results of work in this area have proven invaluable by helping to identify the critical role played by justification cues in determining the outcomes from exposure to media violence, most of this research has been based on a narrow conceptualization of justification that imposes limits to our understanding of its potential

influence. Across this research violent acts are considered justified only when they are committed by liked protagonists who have experienced some previous provocation or are acting in self-defense. Correspondingly, unjustified acts of violence are those committed by disliked perpetrators and those committed without any apparent provocation or need for self-defense. As such, justified acts are always committed by characters toward which the audience has a positive disposition, while unjustified violence is always committed by those toward which the audience has a negative disposition.

The limitations imposed by this conceptualization become evident when we recognize both that it appears inconsistent with the presentation of violence in mainstream television and that our expectations of resultant aggression may change with a different conception. The National Television Violence Study (Wilson, et al 1997) revealed that almost half of all acts of violence on mainstream television are portrayed as justified, because they are committed as retaliation for a previous act or out of self-defense. Moreover, they found that most violent acts on television are committed by antagonistic characters. Taken together, if most violence is committed by antagonists and half of this is justified, it is reasonable to assume that many justified violent acts on American television are committed by “bad guys.” In addition, and perhaps more importantly, there is a strong likelihood that many unjustified acts are being committed by protagonists. Since both of these portrayals differ considerably from the stimuli traditionally used in experimental research on the effects of justified violence, important gaps remain in our understanding of justification’s role in shaping the effects of exposure to the violence found in television today.

In effect, much of the evidence differentiating the influence of justified and unjustified violence is based on studies potentially lacking any ecological validity to the media's portrayal of characteristics associated with the justification of violence. By confounding justification with portrayals of the perpetrator as a liked protagonist, research in this area may not only fail to accurately represent justified violence as it appears in media, but may do so in a way that alters our expectations about the way justified violence influences viewer behavior. While this research leads us to believe that justification is driving subsequent aggressive behavior, the confound in existing research prevents us from determining if the cause for resulting aggressive behavior stems from content portraying violence as justified, content portraying violence as perpetrated by a liked protagonist, or a combination of the two. For example, instead of concluding that unjustified violence inhibits aggressive behavior while justified violence facilitates it, perhaps we might find that despite its nefarious motives, even unjustified acts have a disinhibiting effect on viewer aggression when they are committed by a liked protagonist.

This more alarming potential seems highly plausible if we use logic from combinatorial theories on the integration of new information with prior attitudes or even simple affective process theories on attitude formation (cf. Eagly & Chaiken, 1993) to reason that viewers may draw associations between the desirable qualities of a liked protagonist and the performance of unjustified violence. Perceptions of what constitutes acceptable use of aggression may change through repeated exposure; shifting attitudes to increasingly legitimizing the use of aggression under any situation. Moreover, we might expect such shifts in the range of behaviors thought acceptable to increase the use of aggressive behavior.

### *Conceptually defining justified violence*

The notion of perceived justification is inherently linked to study on issues of morality, and what one considers “right” and “wrong”. Essentially, when we say that something is justified, we are saying that we perceive it to be morally sanctioned – it is the right thing to do under the given circumstances. While several perspectives have been offered in this regard, the conception of justification adopted here is based on an understanding of moral appraisals offered by Kohlberg and others (Colby & Kohlberg, 1987).

At the most fundamental level of moral appraisal, Kohlberg (1958) asserts that notions of justice are determined by considering whether or not the inherent qualities of a reprisal constitute literal reciprocity or are strictly equal to the provoking act. While for children these simple determinations can be superceded by the evaluation of some authority figure (e.g. “it’s wrong because my Dad said it’s wrong to hit people”), absent this authority influence, the essential feature of justification is strict equivalence. An act of violent reprisal is just if its inherent qualities are equivalent to the violence that preceded it, and unjust if violence in the reprisal falls below or exceeds the initiating violent act.

Notably, there is no consideration of actors involved or the context predicated behavior at the most basic level of appraisal. Appraisals are made solely on the face value of the act itself. However, many determinations of justice do not occur at primitive levels and are considerably more complex. Kohlberg posits that more complex appraisals of justice are moderated by consideration of the actors involved and an examination of the circumstances surrounding the exchange. At these higher levels of complexity, judgments

based on “strict equality and literal reciprocity are modified by reference to shared norms or to motives that indicate a good or bad person or deservingness” (Colby & Kohlberg, 1987 p. 27). In other words, most moral appraisal is made based on construal of whether or not an act falls within a set of behaviors that we consider to be socially acknowledged as equitable given the provocation preceding it, and this appraisal is moderated by the observer’s disposition toward the actors involved and perception of their motives.

*Justified violence and latitude of moral sanctions.* While philosophers may posit that decisions of right and wrong stem from the existence of formal moral systems (Bentham, 1948; Kant, 1785/1922), there is reason to believe that most perceptions of justice are not governed by strict adherence to or deviations from an exacting set of rules prescribing specific behaviors, but are spontaneous appraisals shaped by basal reactions to witnessed events.

Zillmann’s (2000) moral-sanction theory of delight and repugnance distinguishes the more deliberate process of forming “moral judgments” from less contemplative “moral sanctions.” While moral judgment can be characterized by comparatively formal thought processes which may prescribe specific rewards and punishments for particular acts, moral sanctions are thought of more simply as a “readiness to accept, in moral terms,” the observed outcomes of events (p. 59). In this sense, moral sanctions include any and all behaviors one is ready to accept. Thus, instead of a clear-cut judgment of an act’s morality based on its deviating from specific retribution called for by an exacting moral code, the comparatively impulsive “readiness to accept” nature of moral-sanction appraisals allows for broader latitude in determining which acts are deemed morally acceptable or justified. Indeed, it seems likely that this readiness-to-accept results in most

appraisals of justification being governed by a somewhat vaguely-defined “latitude of moral sanction,” with relatively few appraisals resulting from the type of deliberate contemplation characteristic of moral judgment.

*Attitude structures and sanctioning violence.* The understanding of attitude structures adopted for the current study is based on research by Sherif and others (Sherif, 1962; Sherif & Sherif, 1965). While Sherif’s theorizing on attitude change has been questioned for its inability to accurately predict, his thinking on attitude structure is considered a useful approach to observing and understanding the composition of attitude judgments (Petty & Cacioppo, 1981). This model posits that attitudes held by individuals toward a person, place, event, or object are generally not limited to one position, but instead encompass a range of positions held by the observer to be acceptable.

Fundamentally, Sherif asserts that attitudes exist along a continuum that represents different points of view toward an issue or object. Attitudes can be understood as the range of positions along this continuum that people find acceptable, unacceptable, or neither. These different ranges are called the latitudes of acceptance, rejection, and noncommitment. The latitude of acceptance contains the individual’s most preferred position along with others deemed acceptable. Similarly, the latitude of rejection includes the position one finds most objectionable, as well others deemed objectionable. Positions found neither acceptable or objectionable form the latitude of noncommitment.

This understanding of attitudes works well with the application of Kohlberg’s model of moral reasoning adopted in the current study. In this model, the appraisal of an act as morally just is based on the perception of equality, moderated by disposition towards the actors involved and perceived motives for the behavior. Here, equality can be

thought of as those positions falling within as a certain range of acceptable behaviors under given circumstances of disposition and motivation. The latitude is expected to move up and down along the continuum contingent upon dispositional and motivational concerns. For example, the extent of violent response within the latitude of acceptance may increase if the target is disliked, and reprisal is motivated by socially sanctioned reason. By contrast, when violent reprisal comes from by a disliked perpetrator with unsanctioned cause, we may expect the amount of violence within the latitude of acceptance to diminish.

Understood this way, the perception of justified violence can be conceptually defined as an appraisal of violent retribution based on its relationship to the normatively determined range of retribution acts an individual deems morally acceptable – or one's latitude of moral sanctions for violent reprisal. Without consideration of the social validation processes that might shape the content and boundaries of an individual's latitude of moral sanctions, the approach to understanding justice in terms of a range of acts that are deemed morally acceptable can be traced to work on Balance Theory (Heider, 1958).

*Cognitive consistency, justice, and latitude-of-moral-sanction.* Heider (1958) argues that humans prefer situations in which relative harmony exists between their feelings toward an object (i.e., person or event) and circumstances surrounding the object – a condition called cognitive consistency. Disharmony is an unpleasant state that motivates people to act in ways that restore cognitive consistency by producing circumstances consistent with their disposition, or a disposition consistent with the situation. For example, people hearing a message with which they strongly disagree from



somebody whom they respect may attribute more credibility toward the message in order to create harmony between their perceptions of the message source and the events under consideration. Similarly, they may change their attitude toward the speaker to consider him/her less credible. In either case, people are fundamentally motivated to create a balanced cognitive state.

Heider explicates justice in terms of the cognitive consistency between our thoughts about observed events and people involved in the events. Justice is perceived when there is a match between the outcome of events observed and the latitude of events considered appropriate by the observer given the person and the circumstances involved. Notably, the critical circumstantial features in most perceptions include dispositions toward the person under observation or the situation in which the person is involved. In terms that foreshadow Zillmann's (2000) discussion of disposition's role in forming moral sanctions, Heider (1958) argues that, on the whole, harmony and perceived justice occur when observers see reward, happiness, and fortune fall upon those who are judged as "good," and correspondingly when ill fortune, punishment, and discord fall upon those who are judged as evil. If any of these outcomes were observed, they would fall within the observer's latitude of appropriate outcomes and be experienced as harmonious states. Such harmonious states are seen as instances of justice, and disharmonious states are considered unjustified.

Applied to the study of media violence, the principle behind Heider's work suggests that if viewers experience incongruence between their attitude toward a perpetrator and their attitude toward an act of reprisal (comprised of the specific violent act and its associated motive) this incongruence might motivate a viewer to change their

attitude toward the actor, their attitude toward the act itself, or both. This logic suggests that if viewers draw associations between the desirable qualities of a liked protagonist and an act of violent reprisal that might otherwise be considered unacceptable, attitude change should occur to restore a balanced state. In addition to the potential for a decrease in one's like for the perpetrator, we might expect an increase in the level of violent reprisal thought acceptable given the motive. This important outcome is in conflict with earlier claims. While the logic here suggests that unjustified violence should increase aggressive tendencies, due to the aforementioned confound in earlier violence research, this form of unjustified violence was not considered in previous studies.

*Cognitive consistency and enjoyment of crime drama.*

While no attempts have been made to consider how incongruity in attitudes toward reprisal acts and the perpetrators who perform them can impact the acceptability of violence, the rationale underlying this model has been tested in research on the enjoyment of crime drama. Raney and Bryant (2002) apply logic from work on cognitive consistency and latitudes of moral sanction to their theoretical model of moral judgment in crime-drama enjoyment. They assert that the evaluation of crime drama is based on observation of a "justice sequence" comprised of some act of provocation and subsequent retribution. Each person views a justice sequence with an idea of appropriate retribution defined by the range of behaviors falling within their "latitude of moral sanction." This range is based on consideration of audience inputs (individual differences in readiness to accept) and message inputs (content related to provocation and reprisal). According to the model, the degree to which message inputs are consistent with audience inputs will effect appraisal of reprisal as just or unjust. When the level of violence contained in the act of

reprisal falls within the latitude of moral sanction that results from the combination of message and audience inputs, viewers will appraise the reprisal as justified and enjoy the observed violence.

Raney and Bryant's (2002) discussion of audience and message inputs that impact viewer perceptions of the justice sequence point to factors that moderate perceptions of justified violence, a position consistent with the definition of justified violence that is adopted for use here. In submitting that perception of justified violence is best understood as the range in levels of violence one is ready to accept as moral, I maintain that one's readiness-to-accept is moderated by critical audience and message factors: the audience member's disposition toward perpetrator and victim, and the motivations for retribution made implicit by the message.

Motivation and dispositional concerns can broaden or narrow the range of behaviors one is ready to accept. In terms of disposition, we might expect that the level of violence one considers as literal reciprocity is elevated by liking the perpetrator or disliking the victim, while by contrast this level is lowered by disliking the perpetrator and liking the target. Similarly, we might expect that the level of violence considered to be equal retribution is a function of whether or not motivations for the act are perceived to be normatively acceptable reasons for aggression. Motivations perceived to be normatively accepted reasons for using violence should broaden the range of behaviors one is ready to accept, while motives perceived to be outside the norms of acceptable reasons for using violence should narrow that range of behaviors.

*Motivational and dispositional factors in research on justified media violence.*

A cursory look at media research may leave the impression that justified violence has been carefully explicated; however, close inspection suggests that its treatment may be inadequate for the development of theoretical reasoning in some areas of media violence and aggression. By and large, though making reference to issues of morality, this work fails to detail the role of moral appraisal identified in other literature. While motivational and dispositional factors have been considered individually in several prior investigations on justified media violence and aggression, previous research fails to consider all aspects of their combined impact. Making this disentanglement even more difficult is the fact that while conceptual definitions of justification are explicitly stated in some studies, in others they can only be inferred from the operational features of research.

Definitions based on motivational concerns take into account the functional use of violence (e.g., the reason or motive for its use). For example, Felson and Ribner (1981) explicitly comment that violence can only be justified if it is intentional, as justification requires some sort of normative reason for an intentional action. While not stated explicitly as the defining feature of justification, several different motivational concerns play a clear role in representations of just and unjust behavior in other studies. Both Hoyt (1970) as well as Geen and Stonner (1973) operationally define justified violence as an act committed in response to a previous attack from an aggressor. Hoyt (1970) presents conditions in which even perception of a credible threat by the perpetrator constitutes justification for an aggressive response. By contrast, an unjust act has been characterized as one lacking clear reason for violence (e.g. Hoyt 1970; Geen & Stonner 1973) or one

offering specific motivations that are normatively inadequate to justify the use of violence, such greed (Berkowitz & Rawlings, 1963; Geen & Stonner, 1974) or the pure enjoyment of watching someone suffer (Berkowitz & Powers, 1979).

Definitions based on simple dispositional concerns involve viewer attitudes toward the target and perpetrator of violence, such as work by Berkowitz and Rawlings (1963) who maintain that acts of violence are inherently just if the victim is a disliked antagonist. In operational procedures, understandings of justification in terms of disposition can be seen in studies by Geen (1981) and Berkowitz and Geen (1967) who represent justified violence as that perpetrated against an immoral scoundrel who is a disliked and therefore, deserving of physical punishment.

Research on disposition theory (Zillmann, 1996) suggests that even beyond simple dispositional concerns, viewers will only enjoy witnessing violent acts if the level of the violence meets some level considered appropriate given the events that surround the act. Audiences for the most part enjoy seeing fair and due punishment to those who deserve it (Zillmann & Cantor, 1977). Viewers as young as seven years of age report enjoying retributive violence that is within a range of appropriateness, but express less enjoyment of aggressive retribution that is too severe or too mild (Zillmann & Bryant, 1975). Indeed, detail on what acts are insufficient or excessive remains vague. However, as previously stated this notion of literal reciprocity seems crucial in the appraisal of violence as just or unjust. Without perceived agreement between the precipitating events and the level of violence observed, just appraisals cannot take place. Behavioral research on the effects of justified violence has largely overlooked this critical theoretical consideration.

While most studies do not consider motivational and dispositional factors in combination, two studies look at limited combinations of these attributes. Both Berkowitz and Powers (1979) and Meyer (1972) combine consideration of reason with disposition to suggest that violence against disliked antagonists are appraised as more just when they are in retaliation for the target's previous wrongdoing. Though they disregard some critical combinations of motivational and dispositional concerns, their work signals that disposition can moderate whether or not the reason is considered just.

*Problems of conceptual ambiguity in prior research on justified media violence*

Taken together, the above discussion on motivational and dispositional concerns offers an understanding that depicts justified violence as an appraisal of the appropriateness of the level of violent reprisal, or the range of behaviors we are ready to accept as moral, moderated by dispositional concerns and evaluations of the motive for violence. Understood in terms of one's latitude of moral sanctions, the perception of whether or not a particular act of violent retribution is socially appropriate is based on it falling within a range of behaviors considered to be inherently equal to the provoking act. While the level one is ready to accept is likely to be culturally determined, this is also thought to be moderated by perceived motivation and dispositional concerns.

I contend that the failure of prior investigations to consider the independent and combined impact of these factors limits our understanding of the process at work. In previous experimental research on justified violence, dispositional and motivational concerns are confounded with one another. All violent acts considered justified are performed by liked protagonists, and all those considered unjustified are performed by disliked antagonist. While this research has been interpreted to indicate that exposure to

justified violence facilitates subsequent aggression and unjustified violence reduces aggression, it is conceivable that unjustified acts facilitate aggression when they are committed by a liked protagonist. For example, while it is logical to hold that aggression increases because showing violence as justified will disinhibit aggressive constraint, it is also plausible that aggression increases because liked protagonists are shown enacting aggressive behaviors.

Since prior research fails to investigate the impact of violent reprisal performed by liked protagonists without motivations perceived as normatively accepted reasons for aggression, it is possible that the dispositional attributes of the retaliators, and not the motivation for violence, are responsible for the earlier observations of justified violence's impact on aggression. As stated above, confounds in prior investigations prevent us from determining if the increase in aggression following exposure to justified violence stems from content portraying violence as initiated by normatively accepted motives, content portraying violence as perpetrated by a liked protagonist, or a combination of the two. Since there is neither evidence nor logic to argue otherwise, I do not contest directly earlier claims that exposure to violence with justifiable motives can facilitate aggressive response. Instead, I modify earlier explanations by considering the role of dispositional influence separate from its conventional association with motivates for violence. I argue that even those acts of violence deemed unjustified by motivational criteria may facilitate an aggressive response if performed by liked protagonists. Based on the reasoning above, a set of hypotheses and research questions related to this research problem is offered, and a study is proposed to investigate the issues represented in the problem statement.

*Problem statement.*

As previously stated, Balance Theory (Heider, 1958) argues that people prefer cognitive consistency to cognitive disharmony, and will attempt to behave or appraise the behavior of others in such a way as to restore consistency. In cases in which there is a cognitive discrepancy between an observed social actor and the circumstances surrounding their behavior, people will be likely to adjust their attitude toward one or the other in order to produce a harmonious state. In this way, appraisals of the actor or the act are equally likely to shift, as long as shifting one contributes to restoring a state of cognitive harmony.

*The impact of incongruity in observed violent reprisal.* When considering potential discrepancy between an attitude toward an observed act of violent reprisal (composed of the act and instigating motive) and a dispositional-based attitude toward the perpetrator of act, there are several potential cognitive outcomes. When the attitude toward an act is positive (i.e., it is perceived as the right thing to do in the given situations) and the attitude toward a perpetrator is negative, either the viewer's attitude toward the act should shift and become less positive (i.e., the violent reprisal will be perceived less acceptable); their disposition toward the perpetrator should become less negative, or both should occur. Similarly, when the attitude toward an act is negative and the attitude toward a perpetrator is positive, either the viewer's attitude toward the act should become less negative (i.e., the violent reprisal will be perceived more acceptable); their disposition toward the perpetrator should become less positive, or both.

The logic leads us to expect change showing more positive attitudes toward unsanctioned acts and disliked perpetrators, or more negative attitudes toward sanctioned



acts and liked perpetrators. However, it is unclear how this will be represented in specific change. While no change or change in the opposite direction clearly inconsistent with the rationale provided, the inability of balance logic to distinguish whether or not resultant change should occur in attitudes toward the perpetrator, the act, or both precludes the use of specific hypotheses in favor of research questions. If we consider the potential change in attitude structure as a shift along a continuum represented by one's latitude of acceptance, rejection, and non-commitment, this problem statement can be represented in terms of the following research questions.

RQ1: How does the incongruity between a negative dispositional set and sanctioned perpetrator motives interact to moderate the acceptability of an observed violent film?

RQ2: How does the incongruity between a positive dispositional set and unsanctioned perpetrator motives interact to moderate the acceptability of an observed violent film?

*The impact of congruity in observed violent reprisal.* When considering situations in which cognitive consistency exists, a slightly different set of predictions occurs. Seminal research by Jordan (1953) aimed at testing the claims of Balance theory that balanced intra-attitudinal structures produce desirable cognitive states showed that while balanced states were perceived as more pleasant than unbalanced states, heightened pleasantness seemed to occur mostly when part of the balanced structure included agreement with liked others. In terms of violent reprisal, this would be represented by the circumstances where a liked perpetrator had sanctioned motives for the act observed.

Disagreement with disliked others, also a balanced structure, failed to produce the same pleasant experience. Here again, this would be represented by cases where a disliked perpetrator had unsanctioned motives for the act. Insko, Songer and McGarvey (1974) argue that in conventional balance “*p-o-x*” attitude triads, people typically reflect on more than the traditional three-pronged structure considered in conventional balance logic. Critical here is their conclusion that balance only occurs in expanded structures when there is agreement with liked others.

The interesting issue here concerns how we would expect these structures to be represented in attitudes toward the acceptability of the observed violence. We might argue simply that no change in attitude should be expected in cases where there is a balanced cognitive state. In this case we should expect that initial attitudes would hold. Acceptability of observed violence should remain constant and high when initial attitudes are positive (i.e., when a liked perpetrator has a sanctioned motive). This is represented in the following hypothesis.

H1: Acceptability for violent reprisal in the observed film will be higher when a violent act is performed by a liked perpetrator with sanctioned motives, than when the dispositions toward perpetrator and motive are neutral.

Similar logic might lead to the prediction that the acceptability of observed violence should remain constant and low when initial attitudes are negative (i.e., a disliked perpetrator with an unsanctioned motive). However, if initial negative attitudes are considered unbalance and understood to create unpleasantness, we might instead expect a shift in attitudes toward an even lower range of acceptability. Though the logic does suggest differences when comparing a situation where the attitude toward the act’s

motive is negative with a situation where attitudes toward both motive and perpetrator are negative, since the present study does not look at motive in isolation, the logic here suggests the following.

H2: Acceptability for violent reprisal in the observed film will be lower when a violent act is performed by a disliked perpetrator with unsanctioned motives, than when the dispositions toward perpetrator and motive are neutral.

*Other research questions.* Though not addressed in research on balance theory, there is great interest in questions concerning the ability of exposure to morally congruous or incongruous acts of violent reprisal to impact attitudes beyond those directly associated with the observed action sequence. In addition to questions concerning attitudes toward the observed reprisal act itself, this following research question is investigated to see if attitude change associated with motivational and dispositional influences generalize to other reprisal situations and acts.

RQ3: How does incongruity between dispositional set and attitude toward perpetrator motive for an observed act of violent reprisal interact to moderate the latitude of acceptability for subsequently observed violent reprisal?

RQ4: How does congruity between dispositional set and attitude toward perpetrator motive for an observed act of violent reprisal interact to moderate the latitude of acceptability for subsequently observed violent reprisal?

Also, while not the central focus of this investigation, other predictions based on entertainment research can be made concerning evaluative outcomes that result from observing congruous or incongruous attitudinal elements in violent reprisal. For example, in research on the enjoyment of violent drama involving a positive dispositional set,

Zillmann and Bryant (1975) demonstrate that drama containing equitable retribution (what might be called just levels of violent reprisal) is enjoyed less than that containing over-retribution or under-retribution. Moreover, inequitable retribution decreases like for the liked protagonist and dislike for disliked target. Since Zillmann and Bryant's work included only a positive dispositional set and looked only at outcomes involving attitudes toward characters and enjoyment of the drama, it did not address the type of issues concerning attitudes toward violent reprisal that are central to the present study. Nevertheless, we might expect to observe outcomes in the present study involving attitudes toward characters and the enjoyment of the drama similar to those observed in this earlier research. These expectations and two additional research questions are represented here.

H3: When perpetrators in a violent film perform sanctioned acts of violent reprisal, observer attitudes toward the perpetrator will become more positive.

H4: When perpetrators in a violent film perform unsanctioned acts of violent reprisal, observer attitudes toward the perpetrator will become more negative.

H5: When perpetrators in a violent film perform sanctioned acts of violent reprisal, observer enjoyment of the narrative will increase.

H6: When perpetrators in a violent film perform unsanctioned acts of violent reprisal, observer enjoyment of the narrative will decrease.

RQ5: How does incongruity between dispositional set and attitude toward perpetrator motive in the observed violent film interact to moderate observer enjoyment and attitudes toward the perpetrator and the target?

**RQ6: How does congruity between dispositional set and attitude toward perpetrator motive in the observed violent film interact to moderate observer enjoyment and attitudes toward the perpetrator and the target?**

### *Method*

#### *Participants*

A total of 225 students from a large Midwestern University were recruited from an undergraduate communication course. The age of the participants ranged between 18 and 30. Of these, 78 were male and 147 were female. Participants were informed that they were participating in a study designed to see how much they enjoyed certain types of programming. The decision to use college students was based on two criteria. First, college students were obviously easily accessible to the current research. Second, there is a growing body of research suggesting that the use of college students in multivariate experimental designs does not threaten the validity of the research, and that underlying psychological processes tend to be consistent across a wide range of sampling frames (see Basil, Brown, & Bocarnea, 2002; Sparks, 1995; Basil, 1996).

#### *Procedures*

Prior to the laboratory procedure, surveys were administered to the participants during class. These asked participants to respond to questions measuring demographic characteristics, and a series of personality traits to be used as controls. Approximately one week after the administration of the pretest, participants returned to the laboratory to take part in an experiment. The researcher greeted the participants and brought them into the lab, administering an informed consent form (see Appendix A) for their perusal and

approval. Participants were asked to read and sign the consent form, indicating that they agreed to participate and understood their rights as participants. The consent form was immediately removed from the laboratory in order to avoid compromising participant anonymity.

In the experiment, participants were randomly assigned to one of nine exposure groups. In a 3 X 3 factorial design, participants first read a brief statement intended to establish a neutral perpetrator toward the target while manipulating both disposition toward the perpetrator (positive, negative, or neutral), and perceived perpetrator motivation (positive, negative, or unknown). Following this, they watched a four minute film clip of an unprovoked attack (see below for discussion of inductions and manipulation checks). The nine conditions were labeled positive perpetrator/positive motive, positive perpetrator/negative motive, positive perpetrator/unknown motive, negative perpetrator/positive motive, negative perpetrator/ negative motive, negative perpetrator/ unknown motive, neutral perpetrator/positive motive, neutral perpetrator/negative motive, and neutral perpetrator/ unknown motive. It should be noted that the conditions contained in the 3 X 3 factorial design were intended to provide different sets of comparisons needed to test specific hypotheses and research questions proffered by the present study. The design was not intended to test any hypothesis or research question involving the simultaneous consideration of all nine cells.

Following exposure to the video clip, all participants were asked to read a conflict scenario and then judge the responses contained in the scenario using a scales designed to measure participants' perceptions of the violent responses that were most acceptable and most objectionable, as well as their perceived latitudes of acceptable violence and

latitudes of objectionable violence. After these judgments were made, they were asked to rate the video segments they viewed prior to reading the scenario on scales measuring enjoyment of the video-clip and liking of both the perpetrator and victim.

Once these responses were completed, participants were asked to read a debriefing statement stating the true nature of the study and the expected results. Participants were then asked if they had any questions, and advised to contact the primary investigator if they wished to inquire further about the study. Following the debriefing procedures, participants were be given credit, thanked for their time, and released.

### *Induction Checks*

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of the stimulus materials in inducing the dispositional and motivational factors under consideration, two separate induction checks were performed. Separate participant samples were drawn for the main experiment and each of the two induction tests. The induction checks were intended to demonstrate that in the absence of other factors, the stimulus materials manipulated independently the dispositions held toward aggressive perpetrators and the appropriateness of the perceived motives for aggression. A brief synopsis of these checks follows.

*Disposition toward perpetrators and target.* Disposition was evaluated using a sample of 36 participants recruited from an undergraduate Communication class at Michigan State University. Participants received class credit for their participation in the manipulation check. The procedure consisted of a survey containing four written disposition inductions (positive perpetrator, negative perpetrator, neutral perpetrator, neutral target) followed by the McCrosky and McCain (1974) Interpersonal Attraction Scale, and a series of items measuring character liability adapted from the work of

Zillmann and Cantor (1977). In order to control for any potential ordering effects, the order in which the different disposition inductions appeared in the survey was rotated in one of four ways. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the four induction-order conditions.

Interpersonal Attraction Scale was measured on a response scale ranging from one (strongly agree) to seven (strongly disagree). The 5 items of the Social Likeability factor of the scale were selected for use here because this factor has been shown to measure accurately the general liking of perceived others in both interpersonal interactions (McCrosky & McCain, 1974) and parasocial interactions with television characters (Rubin & McHugh, 1987). The items are identified in Appendix B. Mean scores for items on this factor were computed for each participant. Reliabilities for this factor were calculated independently for each of the four dispositional inductions. Coefficient alpha was found to be .72 for neutral target, .72 for positive perpetrator, .74 for neutral perpetrator B, and .67 for negative perpetrator<sup>1</sup>.

The Physical Attraction and Task Attraction components of the Interpersonal Attraction Scale were deemed not germane to validating the disposition toward aggressive perpetrators manipulation under consideration. Therefore, they were not included as part of this induction check. In addition, reliability scores computed for the 4 items adapted from Zillmann and Cantor (1977) produced coefficient alphas of .79 for liked perpetrators and .76 for liked targets, but only .55 for disliked perpetrators and .16

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<sup>1</sup> Despite a fairly low reliability for negative perpetrators, the Social Likeability measure was found to be internally consistent across all four conditions under Confirmatory Factor Analysis. Later analyses on the measure yielded higher alphas (p. 34). The reported reliability of .67 is most likely attenuated due to a small sample size.



for neutral perpetrators. The reliability and internal consistency problems apparent with this scale resulted in it being discarded.

In order to check the effectiveness of the disposition manipulation, mean scores for the Social Likeability factor were first subjected to analyses testing for possible ordering effects in the presentation of the disposition induction materials. A series of one-way ANOVAs were performed on the mean scores of Social Likeability for each of the four inductions using the order of presentation as an independent variable. No significant differences resulted from order of presentation. For neutral target,  $F(3,32) = 1.58$ ,  $p < .214$ , n.s. For positive perpetrator,  $F(3,32) = 1.93$ ,  $p < .15$ , n.s. For neutral perpetrator B,  $F(3,32) = .885$ ,  $p < .50$ , n.s. Finally, for negative perpetrator,  $F(3,32) = .281$ ,  $p < .84$ , n.s. Since no ordering effect was found, order was collapsed for subsequent analyses testing the effectiveness of the disposition manipulation.

A series of t-tests were first performed on mean scores for Social Likeability in order to examine differences between each induction. Mean scores for each group were 2.70 ( $SD=1.01$ ) for negative perpetrator, 4.30 ( $SD=0.93$ ) for neutral target, 4.31 for neutral perpetrator ( $SD=0.93$ ), and 5.22 ( $SD=0.97$ ) for positive perpetrator. The pattern of means indicates that negative perpetrators were found to be the least liked, followed by neutral targets, neutral perpetrators, and liked perpetrators. Paired comparisons between these means demonstrated significant differences between all paired, with the exception of the two neutral conditions. For neutral target and positive perpetrator,  $t(35) = -6.92$ ,  $p < .001$ , neutral target and negative perpetrator,  $t(35) = 4.04$ ,  $p < .001$ . For positive perpetrator and neutral perpetrator,  $t(35) = -7.59$ ,  $p < .001$ , while for positive perpetrator and negative perpetrator  $t(35) = 4.04$ ,  $p < .001$ , and for neutral target and positive

perpetrator  $t(35) = -6.92, p < .001$ . Comparisons between the neutral perpetrator and neutral target inductions revealed no significant differences,  $t(35) = -.491, p < .627$ , n.s., indicating that these inductions were relatively equivalent. Based on the results of these analyses, these inductions were accepted for use in the laboratory procedure, as they independently manipulated disposition in the absence of motivational considerations.

*Perceived appropriateness of motivation.* Perceived appropriateness of the motivations for violence was evaluated using two scales developed specifically for the current study. The first of these consists of six Likert type items giving statements about the appropriateness of the observed violent behavior (e.g., “Rob Van Dam did the right thing under the circumstances he was in.”) along with response ranges from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Reliability for this scale was found to be .86. The second set of items consisted of 8 semantic differential items with polar opposite descriptors of the aggressive behavior observed (e.g., Good Motives/Bad Motives, Unreasonable/Reasonable, etc.). Subjects were asked to place a check in one of seven boxes that most closely matched their opinion of what they had just seen. Coefficient alpha for this scale was found to be .91. Finally, both scales were combined to produce an index of perceived appropriateness for observed violence. Coefficient alpha for the combined measure was found to be .94 (see Appendix C for items).

A separate sample of 20 undergraduate students was recruited in order to test the effectiveness of the written motive induction. Without any information regarding disposition toward the characters, participants were asked to read a short passage. They were informed that the passage provided background information about the clip they were about to see. The passage contained information designed to produce a perception

of appropriate (positive), inappropriate (negative), or neutral motive for the observed aggression (see Appendix D). Participants then watched the same film clip used in the experimental procedure (see below), and were subsequently asked to respond to the perceived appropriateness for observed violence items regarding the aggressive behavior.

In order to test the effectiveness of the induction in manipulating perceived appropriateness, oneway ANOVA was performed on the perceived appropriateness for observed violence measure, using polynomial contrasts to test for linearity across the three conditions. Both the pattern of means and the significance test for the polynomial contrast are indicative of a linear trend in the perceived appropriateness of retribution across the three conditions. On a scale of 1 (very unacceptable) to 7 (very acceptable), with 4 as a midpoint (neutral), mean scores for perceived appropriateness were found to be 2.75 for the negative condition, 3.66 for the neutral condition, and 4.63 for the good condition, indicating that the negative motive was found unacceptable, the neutral motive somewhat neutral, and the positive motive somewhat acceptable. The global  $F$  test for the oneway ANOVA performed on these means indicated significant differences across the three groups,  $F(2, 19) = 3.84, p < .04$ . However, despite the fact that the means achieved significance on a global  $F$  test, and the existence of substantial differences between the means, post hoc test individual comparisons between means failed to demonstrate significant differences between all means. Acceptability scores for good and bad motives were found to be significantly different ( $p < .03$ ), but significant differences were not found between good and neutral or good and bad motives. The failure of these individual comparisons to reach significance appears on surface to be a product of an underpowered

significance test. Thus, in order to further explore these differences, polynomial contrasts were employed to test for a linear trend in the means.

Tests for linearity found the pattern of means to represent a linear trend in the data from unacceptable through neutral and acceptable,  $F(1,19) = 6.69, p < .02$ . While failing to produce significant post hoc comparisons, I argue that the means found within each of these conditions and the linear associations demonstrated across these means are substantive evidence of the perception of acceptable, neutral, and unacceptable motives for aggression. The results demonstrate that independent of dispositional concerns, participants responded with the intended perceptions of motive. Based on these results, the motivation inductions were included in the experimental materials to represent positive, negative, and neutral motives for aggression.

### *Experimental Materials*

The experimental materials used in the study included three “background information” sheets designed to manipulate disposition and motive, a wrestling video clip, and a conflict scenario text read prior to judging the acceptability of the violent reprisal. The background information sheets appear in Appendix D.

*Disposition manipulation.* Before viewing the violent-assault scene, participants were asked to read a sheet describing the characters they were about to see. The first paragraph of the background information sheet informed the participants that were about to watch a film clip from a televised sport, and that this sheet had been provided in order to give them background information on the characters.

In the positive perpetrator conditions, the sheet describes the perpetrator (“Rob Van Dam”) as being a clean and fair competitor, an honest family man, and a

philanthropic individual who has given a lot of time and money to help the less fortunate. The negative perpetrator induction, on the other hand, describes him as a widely despised cheater who has deliberately injured opponents, has a long history of legal troubles, and faces allegations of substance abuse and domestic violence. The neutral perpetrator disposition describes him in a manner almost identical to that of the target, rephrased in such a way as to not appear to be exactly the same description. The decision was made to use dispositional elements involving behaviors both on camera and in their personal lives in order to ensure that these dispositional considerations would be manipulated, regardless of whether participants draw these inferences from television personas or offstage behaviors.

Across all three perpetrator dispositions, the violent-assault scenario ("Triple H") described the target using the neutral target induction previously discussed. The description specifically states that people in the industry have a "middle of the road" attitude toward him, and that very few seem to strongly like or strongly dislike him. Similar to all perpetrator manipulations, it goes on to describe some of his capabilities inside the ring.

*Motivation manipulation.* Manipulation of apparent motivation was achieved by varying the description of an event that had previously occurred. In the positive condition, the attacking character is described as having been forced to do so by the owner of the company in order to improve ratings and ensure that he and many others do not lose their jobs. In the negative condition, the attacker is described as having been seen bragging about how he is going to beat up another wrestler so that he may gain money

and status. The unknown condition simply states that there is a lot of tension between the two characters at this time, but no one is really sure why.

*Wrestling video clip.* Following the written inductions, participants viewed the violent assault scene. This scene begins with an opening to a wrestling match in which the target, “Triple H,” is introduced to the audience and makes his way to the ring accompanied by loud music, fan noise and pyrotechnics set against a dark background. The commentators inform the audience that Triple H is entering the ring to face an unknown opponent. After a minute or so of posturing on turnbuckles in each corner of the ring, he is attacked from behind by the perpetrator, “Rob Van Dam,” who has entered the ring undetected. As the house lights come up “Rob Van Dam” strikes “Triple H” repeatedly and knocks him sprawling to the ground, while the commentators remark that he cannot be the unknown opponent since he has already competed earlier in the show. Finally, “Rob Van Dam” hits “Triple H” in the face with a title belt, bloodying his mouth and nose, before being forcibly removed from the ringside area by referees and security guards.

*Conflict scenario.* The conflict scenario is adapted from research by Tamborini and Lachlan (2003). The scenario contains a positive dispositional set (i.e., a liked perpetrator and disliked target) with positive motives. A positive dispositional set with positive motive was selected based on the belief that it would provide the best opportunity to observe change in the direction predicted to result from exposure to the type of content under study – i.e., change toward an increase in the latitude of acceptability of aggressive reprisal. While change toward the increased acceptability of aggressive reprisal in circumstances that normally fail to sanction any type of aggression

(e.g., when disliked people have unjust motives for aggressive reprisal) is theoretically consistent with the predictions offered here, this change is believed difficult to observe under conditions where aggression is constrained by deeply ingrained inhibitions. Conditions associated with fewer inhibitions toward the use of aggression should provide a greater opportunity to see the predicted change. The decision to use a positive dispositional set with positive motives was based on Tamborini and Lachlan's (2003) research showing that aggression was generally more acceptable under these conditions.

The scenario reads as follows: "Joe, one of the most likable people you could ever meet at school, walks into a room and sees Tony, a well known and widely despised campus bully. The last time they met, Tony threatened to knock Joe unconscious. Since Tony had always followed through with similar threats to others, Joe was sure that once Tony saw him he would make good on this threat. Joe wanted to protect himself. With this in mind, Joe decided to...." The list of 15 possible perpetrator responses to the circumstances described follows the scenario.

### *Measures*

Two sets of measures were included in this study. The central outcome was obtained with scales administered in the main experiment used to measure the type of response participants' found most acceptable and objectionable, as well as participants' latitudes of acceptance, rejection, and non-commitment for acts of violent reprisal to the threatening circumstances read in the conflict scenario following exposure to the wrestling clip. Outcome measures also were collected on attitude towards the perpetrator and target in the wrestling video clip, and on enjoyment of the video clip. Measures of participant differences were collected in the pretest. These consisted of a demographic

questionnaire and five standard individual difference scales including the Buss-Perry Aggression Questionnaire (Buss & Perry, 1992), the Revised Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (Eysenck et al., 1985) The Kohn Authoritarianism-Rebellion Scale (Kohn, 1972), a Social Justice Questionnaire adapted from Raney and Bryant's (2002) research, and a perceived realism scale adapted from work by Rubin (1981) (see Appendices E, F, G, and H). These measures served as controls for extraneous influence due to preexisting individual trait differences.

With the exception of the central outcome measures of response acceptability and objectionability (which had an ordered alternatives response scale structure that called for different treatment) all outcome and participant attributes measures were evaluated using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (Hunter & Gerbing, 1982) in order to test the internal consistency of the measurement models forwarded. Results of these factor analytic procedures are reported here along with descriptions of the scales themselves.

*Latitude of acceptable violent reprisal.* The main outcome variable was measured with an ordered alternatives questionnaire using procedures established by Sherif (1962) in research on attitude structures. While parts of Sherif's theoretical work have been criticized for its inability to accurately predict attitude change, the procedures used in his research are considered a useful approach to observing and understanding the structure of attitude judgments (Petty & Cacioppo, 1981). The questionnaire used here was developed and shown reliable in work by Tamborini and Lachlan (2003). The instrument presents a list of 15 statements designed to represent the entire range of possible behavioral responses (from the extremely pro-social to the extremely anti-social) to the circumstances presented in the conflict scenario (see Appendix I). Respondents were



asked to identify the positions they found acceptable and unacceptable under the given circumstances.

Following Sherif's (1962) protocol, participants were asked to respond to the scenario four times, each time in a different way. They were asked to indicate on the list of 15 possible responses what they thought was the "most acceptable" response, other "also acceptable" responses, the "most objectionable" response and other "also objectionable" responses. Each response was collected using identical scales. The anchors for the scale were set at extremes in order to minimize the likelihood of basement and ceiling effects.

The list of statements presented 15 potential actions the perpetrator might take under the circumstances given in the scenario. It was intended to represent the entire scope of positions one could take on issues of violent reprisal. The behaviors ranged from those that are extremely helpful and non-violent (1) through neutral (8), through extremely violent and antisocial (15). The 15 attitude statements appear in Appendix I.

For the first response, participants were asked first to "place a check next to the one that you think is the most acceptable thing for him to do in the situation described." The item selected by the respondent served as the measure of "most acceptable" reprisal. Once this was completed, participants were given the same scale and asked to check also all other positions on the scale they find acceptable in addition to the one they find most acceptable. The range of behaviors checked served as a measure of their "latitude of acceptable violent reprisal." For the third response, labeled "most objectionable," participants were asked to check the statement they found most objectionable. In the final

response, labeled “latitude of objectionable violent reprisal” participants were asked to check all other positions on the scale they find objectionable.

*Acceptability for observed violence.* Acceptability for observed violence was measured by loosely adapting a measure of deservedness used by Raney (2002). The items asked the respondent to evaluate the extent to which the victim in the observed violent assault scenario deserved violent retribution. Items were responded to on a numbered scale ranging from 0 (deserved much less punishment) to 11 (deserved much more punishment), with a center point at 6. Raney (2002) reports the reliability of this two-item scale equaled .70. Two additional items were added to the scale in order to meet the minimum criteria for Confirmatory Factor Analysis and to potentially improve the reliability of the scale. Confirmatory Analytic procedures revealed the scale to be internally consistent with ample factor loadings and a reliability of .81.

*Dispositions toward the perpetrator and target.* Dispositions toward the perpetrator and target viewed in the video clip were evaluated using the 15 item McCrosky and McCain (1974) Interpersonal Attraction Scale described in the induction check. The scale evaluates the liking of others along three dimensions: social liking, task attraction, and physical attraction (see Appendix B). Central to the concerns of this dissertation is the social liking dimension; however, the other dimensions were included for additional analyses. Five of the six subscales were found to be internally consistent and reliable. Perpetrator ( $\alpha = .79$ ) and target ( $\alpha = .71$ ) social attraction each required the dropping of one item, as did perpetrator ( $\alpha = .83$ ) and target ( $\alpha = .86$ ) physical attraction. Target task attraction ( $\alpha = .81$ ) was found to be reliable, while perpetrator task attraction

( $\alpha = .62$  maximum) was not, despite several attempts at dropping various combinations of items. Perpetrator task attraction is thusly removed from further analyses.

*Enjoyment of the video clip.* Enjoyment of the video clip was rated using an eight-item scale adapted from Raney (2002). Six items measured participants' evaluation of the video clip by asking them to rate their overall enjoyment, their enjoyment of the genre, and how exciting, suspenseful, good, and well acted they thought it was. Two additional items measured how much they would like to see the entire movie and how likely they were to watch it in the future (see Appendix J). Responses were obtained on an 11-point scale from "0" representing not at all (e.g., "Not at all exciting") to "10" representing extremely (e.g., "Extremely exciting"). Coefficient alpha was found to be .88 (see Appendix J).

*Perceived Realism.* Perceived Realism was measured using a scale developed by Rubin (1981) in an effort to assess viewers' perceptions of general television programming. The decision to include this variable was made based on past studies linking perceived realism with television's impact on learning (Rubin, 1979) and the cultivation of attitudes and beliefs (Perse, 1986). The scale contains five Likert-type items asking for responses of agreement and disagreement to statements about the realism of television programming (see Appendix H). Evaluation of the inter-item correlations and factor loadings for each of these items led to one item being dropped from inclusion in further analyses. Coefficient alpha for the modified scale was found to be .79.

*The Buss-Perry Aggression Questionnaire.* The Buss-Perry Aggression Questionnaire (BPAQ) measures trait aggressiveness through four distinct subtraits, each represented by a subscale on the BPAQ (Buss & Perry, 1992). These subtraits are

physical aggression, verbal aggression, anger, and hostility. The scale contains 29 standard Likert-type items. Items such as "If somebody hits me, I hit back" represent physical aggressiveness, and items such as "I can't help getting into arguments when people disagree with me" represent verbal aggressiveness. Likewise, items such as "Some of my friends think I'm a hothead" and "At times I feel I have gotten a raw deal out of life" measure anger and hostility, respectively (see Appendix E). Buss and Perry (1992) demonstrated a significant relationship between peer nominations of aggressiveness and scores on these four aggression subscales for male college students. In the present study, the hostility ( $\alpha = .74$ ), physical aggression ( $\alpha = .84$ ) and verbal aggression ( $\alpha = .79$ ) subscales were found to be internally consistent in their original forms, while one item was dropped from the argumentativeness subscale ( $\alpha = .80$ ).

*The Revised Eysenck Personality Questionnaire.* The Revised Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (REPQ) contains 48 items measuring four personality "types" - extroversion, neuroticism, psychoticism, and social desirability. The scale has proven reliable in several studies (Eysenck et al., 1985). Extroversion is said to tap an individual's level of social adaptability. Neuroticism involves an individual's level of anxiety, emotionality, and social isolation (see Appendix F). Psychoticism assays an individual's inclination toward a "lack of restraint, responsibility, need for cognitive structure, and willingness to live by society's rules and mores (socialization)" (Zuckerman, Kuhlman, & Camac, 1988, p.104). Social desirability measures an individual's likelihood to participate in acts that may be deemed socially inappropriate. Confirmatory Factor Analyses performed on the psychoticism ( $\alpha = .56$ ) and social desirability ( $\alpha = .67$ ) subscales failed to meet minimum criteria for internal consistency

and scale reliability, thus these scales were dropped from further analysis. Extroversion ( $\alpha = .80$ ) and neuroticism ( $\alpha = .78$ ) were both found to be internally consistent after dropping two items from each subscale.

*The Kohn Authoritarianism-Rebellion Scale.* The Kohn (1972) Authoritarianism-Rebellion Scale is a 30 item Likert type scale measuring ranges of agreement and disagreement to statements with both extremely conservative and left-wing political ideologies. The scale also includes items concerning isolationism, religious dogmatism, and tolerance for deviance as additional measures of dogmatic personality characteristics. Despite demonstrating adequate levels of reliability in the current factor analysis, both the Rebelliousness and Authoritarianism factors of the scale fell apart in terms of internal consistency, with factor loadings as low as .09. Subsequently, the scale was dropped from further analyses.

*The Social Justice Questionnaire.* The Social Justice Questionnaire is a 33 item Likert-type scale measuring range of agreement with statements regarding social judgments and empathy. The scale items measure three independent factors, including vigilantism, approval of punishment, and empathic concern for others in need (see Appendix G). Raney and Bryant (2002) report coefficient alphas of .92 for the vigilantism factor, .85 for approval of punishment, and .75 for empathy. Factor analyses performed on the current data revealed similarly acceptable results, with alphas of .89 for vigilantism, .85 for approval of punishment, and .85 for empathy (with one item removed).

In addition to these personality measures, the pretest questionnaire included demographic items such as age, race, sex, and socioeconomic status. It also included a

measure of media use asking amount of time spent watching television, listening to music, playing video games, and using the internet at different times during the week. Initial analyses show that these variables have no impact on hypothesized relations. As such, they were excluded from further analyses.

### *Results*

Analyses began by looking at descriptive statistics to determine respondents overall attitudes toward violent reprisal prior to considering specific hypotheses and research questions. Hypotheses were then examined with *t*-tests to compare the mean scores on the Raney Victim Deservedness Scale, perpetrator attractiveness and enjoyment of the clip across different conditions of disposition and perpetrator motive. Research questions were explored first using oneway ANOVAs and subsequent LSD post hoc comparisons to look for differences between groups in mean scores for acceptability of observed victimization, most acceptable behavioral responses to the described conflict scenario, perpetrator attractiveness, target attractiveness, and enjoyment of the clip in varying combinations of disposition and motive conditions. The research questions were further explored using oneway ANCOVA analyses in order to evaluate the influence of trait personality variables on the observed differences across conditions.

#### *Descriptive Statistics*

Analyses conducted on outcome measures show that the sample as a whole did not favor violent reprisal, neither in the observed violent clip nor the response to the subsequent behavioral appraisal. Perceptions of victim deservedness in the observed clip were rather low,  $M = 2.87$ ,  $SD = 1.28$ , on a scale ranging from one to seven. Interestingly, about 14% of the sample reported a score above the midpoint of 4, indicating that the

observed violence was at least to some degree acceptable. Subsequent measures of most acceptable response to the written conflict scenario for the entire sample produced  $M = 6.74$ ,  $SD = 2.80$ , while the most frequent response was 8 (the neutral mid-point on the scale). However, almost 13% of the sample thought the most acceptable response was some level of violent reprisal above the mid-point. An additional 41% of the sample felt that some sort of violent reprisal would also be acceptable, while 10% stated that enough force to cause temporary disability was appropriate. Not surprisingly, on measures of most objectionable response, most respondents rated the anchor for extremely violent antisocial behavior as most objectionable ( $M = 13.37$ ,  $SD = 3.65$ ). However, it is again notable that approximately 22% of the respondents found something other than this extremely violent response to be the most objectionable position on the scale.

In order to describe the basic pattern of means found across all outcome variables, mean scores for each outcome variable are described within the nine conditions in the current study. These means can be found in Table 1.

**Table 1.****Dependent Variable Means by Condition**

	Victim Deservedness	Most Acceptable	Perpetrator Attractiveness	Target Attractiveness	Enjoyment
+ Disposition + Motive	3.10 (1.20)	6.45 (3.58)	4.17 (1.15)	3.79 (1.25)	2.69 (1.64)
+ Disposition - Motive	2.77 (1.02)	6.88 (2.74)	3.79 (0.98)	2.99 (0.99)	2.66 (1.27)
+ Disposition ? Motive	2.80 (1.24)	6.58 (2.78)	3.85 (0.85)	3.09 (1.37)	2.73 (1.55)
- Disposition + Motive	2.52 (0.94)	6.40 (2.75)	3.55 (0.63)	3.07 (1.17)	1.92 (0.98)
- Disposition - Motive	2.51 (1.28)	7.04 (2.18)	3.47 (0.78)	3.74 (0.87)	2.69 (1.48)
- Disposition ? Motive	2.58 (1.23)	7.04 (2.77)	3.08 (0.76)	3.07 (0.99)	2.51 (1.29)
0 Disposition + Motive	3.38 (1.50)	7.79 (2.30)	4.03 (1.12)	3.22 (1.25)	2.64 (1.36)
0 Disposition - Motive	2.59 (1.24)	5.28 (2.59)	3.53 (0.86)	3.53 (1.50)	2.40 (1.43)
0 Disposition ? Motive	3.58 (1.44)	7.48 (3.01)	3.90 (0.69)	3.48 (1.13)	3.09 (1.96)

**Note:**

+ = positive

- = negative

0 = neutral

? = unknown

Means reported with standard deviations in parentheses.



### *Congruity and Acceptance of Observed Violence.*

Hypothesis one posited that when violence is committed by a positive character with a sanctioned motive, such victimization within the clip would be found more acceptable than when it is committed by neutral characters with unknown motives. In order to test this hypothesis, cases were selected from the positive perpetrator/positive motive and neutral perpetrator/ unknown motive conditions. Scores on the Raney Victim Derservedness Scale were then compared using a simple *t*-test. Results of this *t*-test revealed no significant difference between the two groups on their mean approval of observed film violence,  $t(47) = 1.25, p=.22, n.s.$  Participants in the positive perpetrator/positive motive condition ( $M=3.10, SD=1.20$ ) were no more approving of observed film violence than those in the neutral perpetrator/unknown motive group ( $M=3.58, SD=1.44$ ). Thus, hypothesis one was not supported.

Hypothesis two predicted that when violence is committed by a negative character with an unsanctioned motive, such victimization within the clip would be found more acceptable than when it is committed by neutral characters with unknown motives. In order to test this hypothesis, cases were selected from the negative perpetrator/negative motive and neutral perpetrator/ unknown motive conditions. Scores on the Raney Victim Derservedness Scale were again compared using a simple *t*-test. Results of this *t*-test revealed a significant difference between the two groups on their mean approval of observed film violence,  $t(48) = -2.78, p<.01$  Participants in the negative perpetrator/negative motive condition ( $M=2.51, SD=1.28$ ) were significantly less approving of observed film violence than those in the neutral perpetrator/unknown motive group ( $M=3.58, SD=1.44$ ). This finding serves to support hypothesis two.

### ***Motives for Violence and Attitudes Toward Perpetrators.***

Hypothesis three predicted that characters with positive motives for violence would be liked more than those with unknown or negative motives, while hypothesis four posited that characters with negative motives for violence would be less liked than those with unknown or positive motives. Both hypothesis three and hypothesis four were tested using a series of *t* tests comparing the paired means for perpetrators with positive, negative, and unknown motives. The test comparing scores for positive and negative motives revealed  $t(147) = 2.11, p < .05$ , while the test comparing good and unknown motives found  $t(147) = 2.16, p < .05$ . Characters with good motives ( $M=3.93, SD= 1.02$ ) were liked significantly more than those with bad ( $M=3.60, SD=0.88$ ) or unknown ( $M=3.59, SD= 0.85$ ) motives. No significant differences were found between perpetrators with bad and unknown motives,  $t(147) = .02, p=.98, n.s.$  The analyses lend support to hypothesis three, but only limited support to hypothesis four, as perpetrator likeability did not differ between bad and unknown motives.

### ***Motives for Violence and Enjoyment of Film***

Hypothesis five stated that participants would report greater enjoyment of the observed violent clip when violence was committed by characters with sanctioned motives, while hypothesis six posited that participants would report less enjoyment of the observed violent clip when violence was committed by a perpetrator with an unsanctioned motive. Hypotheses five and six were examined using paired *t* tests to comparing the mean scores for participant enjoyment in the positive and negative motive conditions to those in the unknown motive condition. Paired comparisons between positive and unknown motives,  $t(147) = -1.47, p=.14, n.s.$  and negative and unknown

motives,  $t(147) = -0.79, p = .43$ , n.s., failed to reveal significant differences between the means. Thus, hypotheses five and six are not supported.

### *Incongruity and the Acceptance of Observed Violence*

Research question one asked what the impact of an incongruous presentation of violence, with a negative perpetrator and a positive motive, would have on the acceptability of victimization within the clip. Cases were selected from the negative perpetrator/positive motive, negative perpetrator/negative motive, and neutral perpetrator/unknown motive conditions in order to compare the incongruous condition to both a congruous condition with a negative perpetrator and the completely neutral condition. Responses to the Raney Victim Deservedness Scale were drawn from these three conditions and subjected to a simple oneway ANOVA with LSD post hoc tests.

Results of the global ANOVA revealed significant differences across the three conditions,  $F(2, 72) = 6.05, p < .01, \eta^2 = .07$ . Subsequent post hoc tests using LSD revealed significant differences between the neutral perpetrator/unknown motive condition ( $M = 3.58, SD = 1.44$ ) and both the negative perpetrator/negative motive condition ( $M = 2.51, SD = 1.28$ ),  $p < .01$ , and the negative perpetrator/positive motive condition ( $M = 2.52, SD = 0.94$ )  $p < .01$ .

Research question two asked what the impact of an incongruous presentation of violence, with a positive perpetrator and a negative motive, would have on the acceptability of victimization within the clip. Cases were selected from the positive perpetrator/positive motive, positive perpetrator/negative motive, and neutral perpetrator/unknown motive conditions, again to compare the incongruous condition to both a congruous condition with a positive perpetrator and the completely neutral

condition. Responses to the Raney Victim Deservedness Scale were identified as indicative of perceived appropriateness of violence and were drawn from these three conditions and subjected to a simple oneway ANOVA with Least Square Difference (LSD) post hoc tests.

ANOVA on victim deservedness approached significance,  $F(2, 71) = 2.73$ ,  $p = .07$ , n.s. While the ANOVA only approached significance, post hoc LSD tests revealed a significant difference between victim deservedness in the positive disposition/negative motive condition ( $M = 2.77$ ,  $SD = 1.02$ ) and the neutral disposition/unknown motive condition ( $M = 3.58$ ,  $SD = 1.44$ ),  $p < .05$ . The results also indicate that no differences between these two conditions and positive perpetrator/negative motive ( $M = 2.77$ ,  $SD = 1.02$ ). Observed film violence was more acceptable when committed by a neutral perpetrator with and unknown motive than when it was committed by a positive perpetrator with a negative motive.

#### *Congruity, Incongruity and Subsequent Moral Appraisals*

While the first two research questions examined the effect of film character disposition and motive on an observer's approval of violence directly related to those characters, follow-up research questions examined the impact of these contextual elements on attitudes concerning unrelated events occurring in a subsequent scenario. In order to answer this research question, two sets of analyses were conducted first on the most acceptable position of reprisal. Following this, additional analyses were conducted on the range of acceptable positions from the Tamborini and Lachlan Latitudes of Acceptance for Violence scale.

Research question three asked what effect violence presented with incongruous dispositional and motivational contexts would have on subsequent evaluations of aggressive reprisal. In order to test for the impact of such incongruous portrayals, cases were selected from the positive disposition/negative motive, negative disposition/positive motive, and neutral perpetrator/unknown motive conditions in order to compare the different incongruous presentations of violence to each other and to a completely neutral position. Mean scores for most acceptable position of reprisal were evaluated in a oneway ANOVA across these three conditions. ANOVA revealed no significant differences between the three groups in terms of the most acceptable level of violent reprisal in secondary behavioral analyses,  $F(2, 72) = .91, p = .41, n.s.$  This finding contrasts with earlier findings showing that observed violence with incongruous dispositional and motivational contexts was most approved when performed by positive characters, and provides no evidence that this incongruous presentation of violence differs from neutral presentations in any way in terms of its effect on subsequent moral appraisals regarding the use of violence.

In order to explore the possibility that the lack of differences across these conditions may be a product of individual personality or demographic variables, a second analysis was performed on most acceptable position of violent reprisal using a oneway ANCOVA and controlling for age, sex, socioeconomic status, perceived realism, physical aggression, hostility, verbal aggression, argumentativeness, extroversion, neuroticism, empathy, vigilantism, and punitiveness. Once again, ANCOVA revealed no significant differences across the three conditions,  $F(2, 62) = .38, p = .70, n.s.$  Also worthy of note is the fact that none of the covariates entered into the model were significantly related to the

outcome measure of most acceptable position. The strongest of these covariates, perceived realism, only accounted for 4% of the variance in the model.

Research question four asked what impact congruous portrayals of film violence would have on subsequent behavioral appraisals. In order to first test for the impact of such congruous portrayals on subsequent behavioral evaluations, cases were first selected from the positive disposition/positive motive, negative disposition/negative motive, and neutral perpetrator/unknown motive conditions in order to compare the different congruous presentations of violence to each other and to a completely neutral position. Mean scores for most acceptable position of reprisal were evaluated in a oneway ANOVA across these three conditions. The test across these three conditions failed to reveal significant differences across the cell means,  $F(2, 72) = .96, p = .39$ , n.s. Again, this finding suggests that while observed violence with incongruous dispositional and motivational contexts was most approved when performed by positive characters, there is no evidence that this incongruous presentation of violence differs from neutral presentations in influencing moral appraisals of a second scenario immediately following exposure.

Once again, a second analysis was performed on most acceptable position of violent reprisal, using a oneway ANCOVA and controlling for age, sex, socioeconomic status, perceived realism, physical aggression, hostility, verbal aggression, argumentativeness, extroversion, neuroticism, empathy, vigilantism, and punitiveness. The F test for this analysis revealed no significant differences across the three conditions,  $F(2, 62) = .59, p = .56$ , n.s. None of the covariates included in the model were found to be

significantly predictive of subsequent behavioral appraisals in terms of most acceptable position.

Finally, additional analyses were conducted to inspect the impact of both congruous and incongruous portrayal of violence on the “latitudes of acceptance” for violent reprisal using the technique developed by Sherif (1964). In order to make these comparisons, frequency distributions were first created for each of the fifteen items in the Tamborini and Lachlan (2003) Latitudes of Acceptable Reprisal instrument within each of the experimental conditions. These frequency distributions described the number of participants identifying each response as also acceptable. As described earlier, the latitude of acceptance for any group of respondents is defined as the set of items identified as acceptable by at least 50% of the respondents.

For research question three, comparisons were made between the latitudes of acceptance in both the positive disposition/negative motive and negative disposition/positive motive conditions and the neutral/perpetrator/unknown motive condition in order to determine the impact of incongruous portrayals on latitudes of acceptance for subsequently observed behavior.. For those in the neutral perpetrator/unknown motive condition, the lone latitude position was the midpoint of 8. For those having seen violence committed by a positive perpetrator/negative motive, the latitude included position 5, and positions 7 through 9. Those in the negative perpetrator/positive motive condition indicated latitudes of subsequent acceptance of 7 and 8.

For research question four, comparisons were made between the latitudes of acceptance in both the positive disposition/positive motive and negative

disposition/negative motive conditions and the neutral/perpetrator/unknown motive condition in order to determine the impact of congruous portrayals on latitudes of acceptance for subsequently observed behavior. For those who had witnessed a violent act committed by a liked character with a positive motive, the 50% of sample acceptance level was found for items 4, 5, 7 and 8. Those having seen negative perpetrators with negative motives indicated latitudes of subsequent acceptance of 7 and 8, while those in the neutral perpetrator/unknown motive condition again demonstrated a single latitude point of 8. (see Table 2). Latitudes of acceptance relevant to research questions three and four are also reported in Table 2. Latitudes of acceptance for the other conditions not included in these research questions are also included for descriptive purposes.



**Table 2.**

**Latitudes of Acceptance for Violence in Written Scenario Following Portrayals of Film Violence with Incongruous, Neutral, and Congruous Disposition-Motive Sets**

	Extreme Prosocial			Neutral										Extreme Violence	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
+ Disposition + Motive				X	X		X	X							
+ Disposition - Motive					X		X	X	X						
+ Disposition ? Motive								X							
- Disposition + Motive							X	X							
- Disposition - Motive							X	X							
- Disposition - ? Motive								X							
0 Disposition + Motive								X							
0 Disposition - Motive			X	X			X	X							
0 Disposition ? Motive								X							

**Note:**

+ = positive

- = negative

0 = neutral

? = unknown

X indicates position found acceptable by 50% or more of sub-sample

### *Incongruity, Enjoyment, and Attitudes Toward Characters*

Research question five asked what impact incongruous dispositional and motivational portrayals of violence would have on attitudes toward aggressive perpetrators, attitudes toward targets of violence, and enjoyment of the observed clip. In order to address this question, cases were selected from the positive disposition/negative motive, negative disposition/positive motive, and neutral perpetrator/unknown motive conditions in order to compare the two incongruous conditions to each other and to a neutral control condition. Across each of these three conditions, oneway ANOVAs with post hoc comparisons were conducted on perpetrator social attractiveness, target social attractiveness, and enjoyment of the clip.

The results of the one way ANOVAs showed a significant main effect for enjoyment,  $F(2, 72) = 4.04, p < .05, \eta^2 = .10$ . Post hoc LSD comparisons for enjoyment revealed that aggressive acts committed by positive perpetrators with negative motives ( $M = 2.66, SD = 1.27$ ) was found less enjoyable than those committed by neutral characters with unknown motives ( $M = 3.09, SD = 1.96$ ). No significant differences were detected for perpetrator social attractiveness  $F(2, 72) = 1.29, p = .28$ , or attitudes toward the target of violence,  $F(2, 72) = 1.72, p = .25, n.s.$

In order to explore the impact of individual difference variables on attitudes and enjoyment, oneway ANCOVAs were also conducted on perpetrator social attractiveness, target social attractiveness, and enjoyment. When controlling for demographics and personality variables, no significant differences across the three conditions emerged for perpetrator attractiveness,  $F(2, 62) = 1.66, p = .20, n.s.$  Perpetrator attractiveness was positively related to perceived realism,  $F(1, 62) = 10.02, p < .01, \eta^2 = .12$ , verbal

aggressiveness,  $F(1, 62) = 7.39, p < .01, \eta^2 = .07$  argumentativeness,  $F(1, 62) = 9.37, p < .01, \eta^2 = .15$ , and extroversion,  $F(1, 62) = 8.97, p < .01, \eta^2 = .14$ , and negatively related to empathy,  $F(1, 62) = 6.93, p < .01, \eta^2 = .07$ .

Controlling for the same variables, no significant differences emerged for target social attractiveness,  $F(2, 62) = .793, p = .49$ , n.s., and none of the included covariates were found to be significant predictors of target likeability. For enjoyment, the previously reported differences found across condition did not emerge when controlling for relevant covariates,  $F(2, 62) = 1.54, p = .23$ , n.s. However, perceived realism,  $F(1, 62) = 7.84, p < .01, \eta^2 = .12$ , verbal aggressiveness,  $F(1, 62) = 10.49, p < .01, \eta^2 = .02$ , and argumentativeness  $F(1, 62) = 7.79, p < .01, \eta^2 = .02$  were positively related to enjoyment, while empathy was negatively related to enjoyment,  $F(1, 62) = 14.61, p < .001, \eta^2 = .09$ .

#### *Congruity, Enjoyment, and Attitudes Toward Characters*

Research question six asked what impact congruous dispositional and motivational portrayals of violence would have on attitudes toward aggressive perpetrators, attitudes toward targets of violence, and overall enjoyment of the observed clip. In order to address this question, cases were selected from the positive disposition/positive motive, negative disposition/negative motive, and neutral perpetrator/unknown motive conditions in order to compare the two congruous conditions to each other and to a neutral control condition. Across each of these three conditions, oneway ANOVAs with post hoc comparisons were conducted on perpetrator social attractiveness, target social attractiveness, and enjoyment of the clip.

The results of the one way ANOVA for perpetrator social attractiveness revealed  $F(2, 71) = 3.88, p < .05, \eta^2 = .10$ . Subsequent LSD comparisons showed that perpetrators

in the positive disposition/positive motive condition ( $M=4.17$ ,  $SD=1.15$ ) were significantly more attractive than those in the negative disposition/negative motive ( $M=3.47$ ,  $SD=0.78$ ),  $p<.05$ , while neither differed significantly from neutral perpetrators/unknown motive. Significant differences were not found for attitudes toward the target of violence,  $F(2, 71) = .575$ ,  $p=.57$ , n.s. or enjoyment  $F(2, 71) = .452$ ,  $p=.64$ , n.s.

Oneway ANCOVAs were also conducted on perpetrator social attractiveness, target social attractiveness, and enjoyment. Results of these analyses indicated no differences across any of the outcome variables when controlling for demographic and psychographic measures. For perpetrator social attractiveness,  $F(2, 61) = 2.30$ ,  $p=.11$ , n.s., target social attractiveness,  $F(2, 61) = 1.65$ ,  $p=.20$ , n.s., or enjoyment  $F(2, 61) = .647$ ,  $p=.53$ . Target social attractiveness was positively related to physical aggressiveness,  $F(1, 61) = 7.16$ ,  $p<.01$ , and argumentativeness,  $F(1, 61) = 4.03$ ,  $p<.05$ . Enjoyment was positively related to physical aggressiveness,  $F(1, 61) = 6.17$ ,  $p<.05$ , verbal aggressiveness,  $F(1, 61) = 4.67$ ,  $p<.05$ , and argumentativeness,  $F(1, 61) = 9.78$ ,  $p<.01$ .

### *Discussion*

An initial examination of the results reported above reveals both expected and unexpected findings concerning manner in which disposition and motive shape the influence of exposure to violent media on aggression. These analyses show that viewers found violence committed by bad characters less acceptable than violence committed by good or neutral characters, were generally less approving of violence with incongruous disposition and motive, and found acts committed with good motives more acceptable

than those with bad or neutral motives. Analyses of enjoyment of the film clip found no differences across the conditions examined, but attitudes toward the perpetrator were more favorable when he was described as a good character with good motives. The analyses performed on acceptance of violence in a subsequent scenario indicated no differences across disposition or motive for the position found most acceptable, but indicated that the range of behaviors considered acceptable may include mild aggression after watching good characters aggress with bad motives.

Notably, the analysis plan used to address the specific hypotheses and research questions posed in this study was limited to *t*-tests, oneway ANOVAs and oneway ANCOVAs. What's more, these analyses are unable to explore some associations suggested in the data but not established in my hypotheses. Several fully crossed post-hoc ANOVAs and ANCOVAs were conducted to further examine the manner in which disposition and motive are associated with perceptions of the aggressive behavior in the violent clip. These analyses are reported below. While the findings here are only preliminary, they suggest the potential for changing social attitudes toward aggression that would generally be considered problematic.

#### *Incongruity between disposition and motive*

Incongruous presentations featuring negative characters with unsanctioned motives were first evaluated by comparing them to both negative characters with negative motives and neutral characters with unknown motives. In the case of disliked perpetrators, motive for violence does not appear to be an important factor. The mean acceptability scores for disliked perpetrators with sanctioned (2.51) and unsanctioned (2.52) motives were almost identical. Regardless of perceived motive for violence,

audiences were less approving of violence committed by disliked characters than that committed by neutrals.

Comparing liked perpetrators with unsanctioned motives to liked characters with sanctioned motives revealed no differences between the two matching dispositional conditions, while both were less accepted than the neutral disposition/unknown motive condition. Again, the implication here is that audiences may make determinations about the appropriateness of observed violence based on their dispositions toward the characters and not on consideration of the motive for violence. Perhaps more alarmingly, it appears as though acts that are committed without dispositional or motivational considerations are those met with the least amount of disapproval.

Next, the analyses on incongruous portrayals turn our attention to enjoyment of the observed clip and attitudes toward perpetrators and motive. While significant differences between conditions did not emerge for attitudes toward perpetrator and target, substantive differences were observed for enjoyment. Film clips showing good perpetrators with unsanctioned motives were loathed in comparison to the other conditions. This is consistent with previous work by Tamborini and Lachlan (2003), who found that ranges of acceptability for good characters with bad motives was actually lower than bad characters, regardless of their motive. One plausible interpretation of these findings is that some sort of expectancy violation takes place among viewers in the positive perpetrator/negative motive condition. In other words, while we dislike scenes showing bad characters with bad motives, aversion for these scenes is not as pronounced as it is for good characters with bad motives, because good characters *are not expected to aggress under such conditions*.

Perhaps most central to the current research, the analyses examining incongruous portrayals also went on to explore their immediate impact on subsequent moral reasoning. In terms of the ideal level of reciprocity in a subsequent conflict scenario, the results indicate that disposition and motivational features of observed violence have no impact on the positions considered ideal. This finding is consistent with previous work identifying moral judgments of violence as fairly consistent and stable over time (Zillmann, 2000; Raney & Bryant, 2002)

However, there is evidence that the range of acceptable behaviors may be malleable. In analyses on latitudes of acceptable reprisal, or range of responses approved of by the viewer, all but one condition met its upper limit at the neutral point of 8. Participants having observed a violent act committed by a liked character with an unsanctioned motive, however, reported latitudes of acceptance that extended over the midpoint into the mildly aggressive (9). As mentioned earlier, this condition was enjoyed the least by participants, and past research has also demonstrated that audiences tend to respond negatively to this particular combination of disposition and motive (Tamborini & Lachlan, 2003). In line with early work by Heider (1958), audiences may experience some sort of cognitive dissonance upon witnessing aggressive acts committed by liked protagonists with socially unacceptable motives. Heider's (1958) work posits that in instances in which there is cognitive inconsistency in attitudes toward the actor and the act, observers will change their attitude toward the actor or toward *the observed act* itself in order to ratify such inconsistency. It follows that in the current research, observing an act of violence associated with a positive character may have led to an attitudinal shift in the acceptability of violence as a means of conflict resolution. When asked to appraise

the proper course of action in a subsequent scenario, this attitudinal shift may have manifested in an increase in the range of behaviors considered acceptable under the circumstances, as observers would be more approving of violence in general.

It may also be plausible that some sort of social comparison process is taking place, consistent with earlier work by Sherif (1968). In this process, audiences may make comparisons between the acts they are asked to evaluate (good perpetrator/sanctioned motive) and the one they have just seen (good perpetrator/unsanctioned motive). Contrasting this observed (and likely disapproved) event with one in which a liked character has a normative reason for aggressing may make more aggressive responses appear acceptable. This suggests that when faced with a behavioral decision immediately following such exposure, viewers may be more likely to engage in aggressive behaviors, as their own sense of justification may be inflated through comparisons to the observed act. In the long term, individual viewers may develop, through repeated exposure, an increase in the level of violence they view as appropriate under a given set of circumstances.

#### *Congruity between disposition and motive*

Further analyses explored the impact of congruous dispositional and motivational portrayals of violence on acceptance of observed aggression, enjoyment and attitudes toward characters, and secondary moral appraisals of subsequent acts. While congruent conditions are consistent with previous research examining the impact of “justified” violence on audience responses, the consideration of both a neutral disposition/unknown motive control group and multiple dependent measures provides insight into some of the more subtle cognitive processes involved in such responses.



The first of these is the appearance of more positive attitudes toward perpetrators in the positive disposition/positive motive condition than the negative disposition/negative motive condition. However, this difference disappears when controlling for individual personality differences. In these ANCOVA models, physical aggressiveness and argumentativeness were significant predictors of perceived perpetrator attractiveness, while condition was not. This suggests that individuals with more aggressive personalities may be more likely to find perpetrators attractive, regardless of the context of violence. This finding is of particular importance in light of other research suggesting that the relationship between observing violence and engaging in aggressive behavior is moderated by perpetrator attractiveness.

Of equal interest is the lack of differences between the congruous conditions in viewer attitudes toward victims. Victims in the positive disposition/positive motive condition were not found to be any more or less attractive than those in the negative disposition/negative motive group, failing to indicate empathic responses by the viewer. However, ANCOVA analyses revealed that victim social attractiveness was positively associated with physical aggressiveness and argumentativeness. Thus attitudes toward victims of violence may be the product of individual personality differences and not the context of presentation.

#### *Hypothesized outcomes*

Finally, a series of analyses sought to test hypotheses drawn from previous research both in cognitive consistency and in responses to liked and disliked media characters. Hypotheses concerning the impact of congruous dispositional and motivational portrayals on the acceptance of observed violence produced mixed results.

These hypotheses were based on earlier work (Insko, Songer, & McGarvey, 1974; Jordan 1953) claiming that situationally balanced stimuli would produce no attitudinal change toward the perpetrator or observed act. While this logic held for portrayals of violence with negative characters and unsanctioned motives, violence committed by good characters with good motives were not found to be more acceptable than that committed by neutrals. In fact, the pattern of means indicates that violence committed by these neutral characters may be more accepted than that committed by liked characters with good motives.

Failure to support this hypothesis suggests the need to expand upon earlier work in Disposition Theory, in particular the consideration of acts committed by neutral characters (Zillmann & Cantor, 1977, Zillmann 1996). While the previously found differences between good and bad characters with matching motives are evident, violence committed by neutral characters with unknown motives was met with the greatest amount of approval. This suggests that simply assigning any type of disposition or motive to a violent behavior may reduce the readiness with which one accepts the observed act, and that random violence with no apparent motive or dispositional characteristics may be met with the least amount of moral repugnance. While previous research on Disposition Theory indicates that violence committed by liked characters with good motives may weaken inhibition against violence (Zillmann & Cantor, 1977), the current data suggest that violence without these contextual features may produce an even stronger tendency for viewers to behave aggressively when provoked.

Four additional hypotheses also made predictions concerning enjoyment of the observed clip and attitudes toward perpetrators and targets based on earlier work by

Zillmann and Bryant (1975). Previous research into the impact of violent reprisal on attitudes toward violence and observed characters indicated that excessive violence produces negative attitudes toward perpetrators and the film on the whole, while appropriate levels of violence would produce favorable attitudes toward both the perpetrator and the film. Hypotheses concerning attitudes toward the perpetrator were generally supported, as characters with good motives were liked more than characters with bad or unknown motives. The hypotheses for enjoyment, however, went totally unsupported. No differences were detected across sanctioned, unsanctioned, or neutral motives in terms of the respondents' reported enjoyment of the clip. This finding may be an artifact of the genre chosen for the stimulus material (professional wrestling); one which has a small dedicated fan base and that tends to produce polarized opinions among viewers.

#### *Post Hoc Analyses*

Beyond the planned analyses used to test specific hypotheses and research questions by comparing responses in particular experimental conditions, additional post hoc analyses were performed to explore emergent patterns in the data. In order to further explore hypotheses one and two, a fully-crossed ANOVA procedure was first performed to examine the impact of disposition and motive on perceptions of appropriateness of the aggressive behavior in the violent clip. The 3 X 3 ANOVA revealed a main effect for disposition,  $F(2, 224) = 7.87, p < .007, \eta^2 = .05$ . Post Hoc LSD comparisons conducted on the marginal means for disposition revealed that acts committed by bad characters ( $M = 2.53, SD = 0.15$ ) were perceived as less appropriate than those committed by neutral characters ( $M = 3.18, SD = 0.15$ ),  $p < .002$ . No significant main effect was found for

motive,  $F(2, 224) = 3.43$ , n.s., nor an interaction effect between disposition and motive found,  $F(4, 224) = 2.15$ , n.s.

In addition to this analysis, a 3 X 3 ANCOVA was performed on acceptance of observed aggression, controlling for age, sex, and socioeconomic status, as well as for the personality characteristics of perceived realism, physical aggression, hostility, verbal aggression, argumentativeness, extroversion, neuroticism, empathy, vigilantism, and punitiveness. Once again, a main effect for disposition emerged in this analysis,  $F(2, 222) = 4.38$ ,  $p < .02$ ,  $\eta^2 = .04$ . Additionally, a significant effect was detected for the covariates of physical aggression ( $F(1, 222) = 11.05$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .05$ ) and for sex ( $F(1, 222) = 9.39$ ,  $p < .002$ ,  $\eta^2 = .05$ ). No effect was found for motive or the interaction between disposition and motive.

The interaction between disposition and motive may indicate that audiences generally do not approve of violent reprisal that is committed by characters with incongruous dispositions and motives. It appears as if the key contextual element in making these determinations is disposition held toward the perpetrator, as neither main effects for motive nor an interaction between disposition and motive emerged as statistically significant.

Next, attitudes toward perpetrators and targets in the observed violent film clip were further evaluated in terms of social likeability. Hypotheses three and four and research questions five and six asked how congruity and incongruity between disposition and motive would affect attitudes toward perpetrator and target. To further explore these hypotheses and research questions, 3 X 3 ANOVAs were first performed on perpetrator and target social attractiveness. For violent perpetrators, main effects were found for both

disposition,  $F(2, 224) = 8.64, p < .001, \eta^2 = .08$ , and motive,  $F(2, 224) = 3.10, p < .05, \eta^2 = .03$ . No significant interaction effect was detected for the disposition by motive interaction,  $F(4, 224) = 1.18, n.s.$  Post hoc LSD comparisons performed on the marginal means for both disposition and motive indicate that perpetrators with positive disposition ( $M = 3.92, SD = 1.01$ ) were liked more than those with neutral ( $M = 3.83, SD = .09$ )  $p < .002$  or negative dispositions ( $M = 3.37, SD = .75$ ),  $p < .001$ , while those with positive motives ( $M = 3.92, SD = 1.01$ ) were also liked more than those with neutral ( $M = 3.60, SD = 0.88$ ),  $p < .028$  or negative motives ( $M = 3.59, SD = 0.88$ ),  $p < .03$ . (see Table 3). The subsequent ANCOVA analysis detected a significant main effect for disposition,  $F(2, 222) = 9.00, p < .001, \eta^2 = .09$ , but no main effect for motive and no interaction effect between the two. In terms of significant personality differences that were predictive of perpetrator likeability, perceived realism ( $F = 5.38, p < .02, \eta^2 = .03$ ) and argumentativeness ( $F = 4.27, p < .04, \eta^2 = .02$ ), were positively associated with liking of the observed perpetrator. Males liked the perpetrators more than females ( $F = 4.56, p < .04, \eta^2 = .02$ ). Based on these results, it appears as if viewers may strongly dislike good characters with bad motives, but do not experience such repulsion when bad characters have motives that are consistent with their disposition.

**Table 3.****Marginal Means for Perpetrator Likeability**

	Positive	Negative	Neutral
Disposition:	3.92 <sup>a</sup> (1.01)	3.36 <sup>b</sup> (0.75)	3.83 <sup>a</sup> (0.92)
Motive:	3.92 <sup>a</sup> (1.01)	3.60 <sup>b</sup> (0.88)	3.59 <sup>b</sup> (0.86)

**Note:**

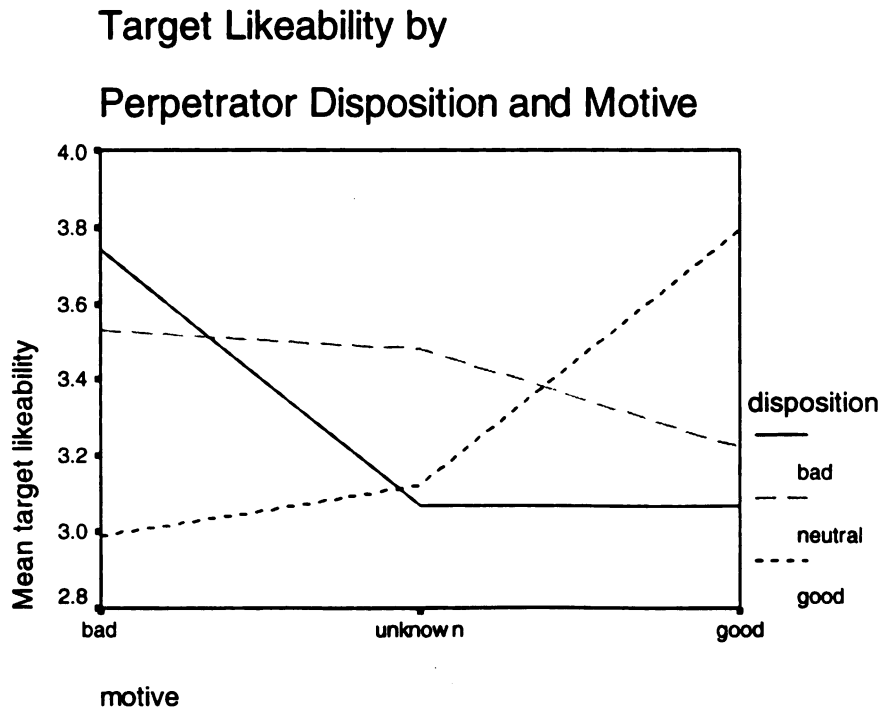
Means reported with standard deviations in parentheses.

Comparisons are horizontal only.

Paired with no superscript letter in common differ significantly at  $p < .05$  by LSD test.

In a 3 X 3 ANOVA analysis for targets of violence in the observed film, main effects were not detected for disposition,  $F(2, 224) = .25$ , n.s., nor motive,  $F(2, 224) = .59$ , n.s. on target likeability. However, a significant interaction effect was detected for disposition and motive,  $F(4, 224) = 2.91$ ,  $p < .02$ ,  $\eta^2 = .05$ . Targets of violence that were attacked by good characters were most liked when there was a positive motive, while targets that were attacked by bad characters were most liked when the perpetrator had negative motives (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1.**



This analysis was again repeated in an ANCOVA model, controlling for individual personality differences. Once again, no main effects were found for perpetrator disposition or motive on the likeability of the target, but a sizable interaction effect did emerge,  $F(2, 222) = 2.89, p < .02, \eta^2 = .06$ . It should also be noted that physical aggressiveness ( $F(1, 222) = 6.01, p < .02, \eta^2 = .03$ ), and argumentativeness ( $F(1, 222) = 4.58, p < .04, \eta^2 = .02$ ) were also positively related to target likeability. Males liked the targets of aggression more than females ( $F(1, 222) = 6.96, p < .03, \eta^2 = .03$ ) (see Table 4).

**Table 4.**

## Corrected Means for Target Likeability

	Positive Disposition	Negative Disposition	Neutral Disposition
Positive Motive	3.76 (0.24)	3.23 (0.24)	2.94 (0.25)
Negative Motive	3.10 (0.24)	3.80 (0.24)	3.55 (0.24)
Unknown Motive	3.21 (0.24)	3.16 (0.25)	3.47 (0.24)

Note:

Means reported with standard errors in parentheses

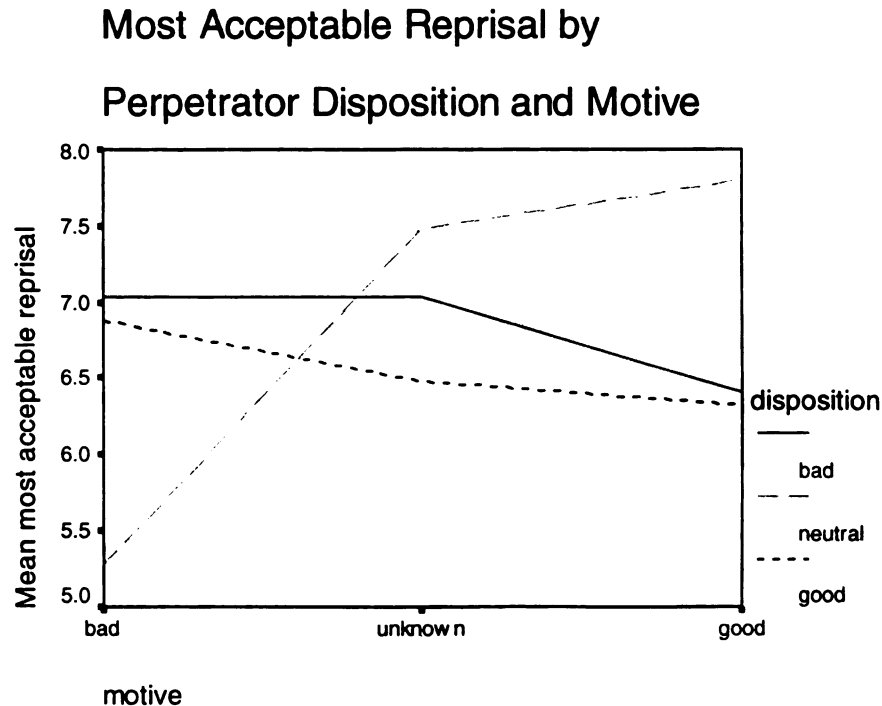
Finally, research questions five and six also asked what impact congruous and incongruous dispositional and motivational portrayals would have on enjoyment of the observed clip. A 3 X 3 ANOVA was performed on overall enjoyment of the observed clip. Main effects were not detected for disposition,  $F(2, 224) = 1.29$ , n.s., nor motive,  $F(2, 224) = 1.09$ , n.s. There was also no interaction effect between disposition and motive,  $F(4, 224) = 1.07$ , n.s. The absence of motivational or dispositional influence also held up under a 3 X 3 ANCOVA, with no significant main effects or interaction between the two. Based on these findings, it appears as though disposition toward perpetrator and motive for violence have little or no impact on enjoyment.

With regard to research questions three and four, ANOVA and ANCOVA analyses performed on subsections of the sample demonstrated no differences between neutral, congruous, or incongruous contextual presentations of violence. In order to



further explore these critical research questions, a 3 X 3 ANOVA analysis was first performed on the most acceptable position of violent reprisal. No main effects were detected for disposition,  $F(2, 224) = .126$ , n.s., or motive,  $F(2, 224) = 1.07$ , n.s. However, a significant interaction effect did emerge for the combined effect of disposition and motive,  $F(4, 224) = 2.78$ ,  $p < .03$ ,  $\eta^2 = .05$ . The pattern of means across acceptability for subsequent reprisal suggests an interaction effect between disposition and motive that differs across the three dispositional sets. For both good and bad characters, ideal reprisals were highest after watching violence that was committed with a bad motive, and were slightly lower after watching violence committed for normative reasons. However, a distinctly different pattern is evident for neutral characters. For characters with neutral dispositions, subsequent indications of ideal reprisal were lowest after watching violence with bad motives, and highest after viewing aggressive acts with good motives (see Figure 2).

**Figure 2.**



Controlling for demographic and personality variables, main effects on the most acceptable position of violent reprisal were again not detected for disposition or motive. The interaction effect between the two was reduced to a non-significant result, though the degree to which this interaction accounted for the variance in most acceptable position did not differ greatly from the ANOVA analysis,  $F(2, 222) = 2.24, p < .07, \eta^2 = .04$ .

One interpretation of these findings is that the interaction between disposition and motive may lead to some sort of social comparison effect whereby the viewing of a violent film clip creates a cognitive anchor against which subsequent appraisals of violence are made. Consistent with the logic offered by Sherif (1962; Sherif & Sherif, 1965), this would once again suggest that contrasts are made between the second

observed act and the act that preceded it. As a result, the same observed act of violence will be found to be more acceptable when juxtaposed against an act containing morally unacceptable elements than when contrasted with an act that is normatively sanctioned. This logic does, however, depart from the work of Zillmann (2000) and Raney and Bryant (2002) in that it moves beyond the assumption that latitudes of moral sanction are inherently fixed and stable to the notion that the far ranges of acceptability may be situationally construed and influenced by surrounding stimuli. This suggests that individuals witnessing an aggressive act with mixed dispositional and motivational characteristics can experience short-term shifts in their moral reasoning to include the approval of behaviors normally outside their latitude of acceptance, and raises questions about the possibility of long-term changes resulting from repeated exposure.

### *Limitations*

Several limitations to the present study can be identified in order to help inform future research in this area. The first of these concerns the sample used in the current study, which consisted entirely of college students. Given the age restriction, a different sample may reveal different outcomes. For example, younger audiences may be more cognitively malleable and susceptible to aggressive responses.

Additionally, the strength of the disposition induction may be a limiting factor to the current findings. While it was demonstrated through pre-testing that disposition was successfully manipulated, close scrutiny of the mean scores for social likeability indicate that liked and disliked perpetrators deviated from neutral perpetrators by less than two points on a seven point scale. As a result, some of the findings may be attenuated, and

stronger disposition manipulations may lead to stronger observable differences between groups.

Finally, the failure to include certain personality variables as covariates may limit our understanding of the role of individual differences on the observed effects. In particular, the failure of the measurement models for psychoticism and authoritarianism and their subsequent removal from the analyses limits our understanding of two potentially important personality characteristics that may moderate the processes under observation.

### *Conclusions*

The primary focus of the current research was to study the impact of incongruous presentations of disposition toward perpetrator and motive for violence on the acceptability of observed violence, enjoyment of the observed film, attitudes toward victims and perpetrators, and latitudes of acceptance for violent behavior in situations immediately following exposure. For the most part, the results support previous research on the independent impact of disposition and motive on audience responses to violence. Violence committed by bad characters was met with less approval than that committed by good characters, and bad characters engendered more negative attitudes than did good characters. Violence committed with bad motives was found to be less approved than that committed with sanctioned motives, though motive did not have an effect on likeability.

However, further investigation into incongruous combinations of disposition and motive reveals unexpected findings. First, the fact that violence was most approved among neutral characters with unknown motives raises concerns that have not previously been addressed. The results suggest that different types of psychological processes may

take place for characters with and without distinct dispositional valences. While previously discovered findings were replicated comparing characters with positive and negative motives and dispositions, the impact of violence in neutral contexts was met with greater approval, indicating that audiences may rely on other cognitive processes (e.g. other contextual elements) when disposition and motive are absent. The exact nature of this process is, however, largely unknown.

Further, an examination of the experimental conditions reveals main effects for disposition but not for motive in evaluations of observed violence. Based on these results, it may be the case that disposition toward perpetrators is a more critical determinant of acceptance of aggression than the reasons given for aggression. If this is the case, it calls into question previous research on “justified” violence in which justice was operationally defined as violence committed by liked characters. In this corpus of research, it may be disposition that accounts for observed behavioral differences and not the inherent moral acceptability of the observed act. If this is the case, our understanding of the effects of “justified” violence on viewer responses may be largely incomplete, and confounded with already documented literature on Disposition Theory. Consistent with early work by Kohlberg (1958), consideration of justice as a cognitive function of perceived equality, disposition, and motive for behavior may better inform us of the impact of these violent presentations.

Perhaps most alarming is the observed impact of mixed portrayals on subsequent moral evaluations. While ideal positions on violent retribution remain stable across all conditions, the range of acceptable behaviors crosses into aggression only after watching acts committed by positive characters with negative motives. When such acts are

associated with positive characters, the current data suggest that violent acts with negative motives may produce a short term effect on moral evaluations that includes the acceptability of aggression. As a result, violent content previously thought to be benign may in fact be problematic if such a short term fluctuation in moral evaluation translates into differences in behavior. A careful understanding of the process suggested here has considerable implications for social behavior.

The findings here suggest that the viewing of violent content with this particular set of motivational and dispositional characteristics produces a set of disturbing cognitive and behavioral responses. While the immediate impact on the individual is likely to be minimal, at its worst the potential for enduring social harm is considerable. In the short-term, exposure can alter the threshold for aggressive reprisal that exists prior to exposure. Whether it is one that requires extreme or minimal circumstances to justify the use of aggressive behavior, exposure to portrayals of liked characters engaging in aggression for socially non-normative reasons can broaden the acceptance of violence as a means of conflict resolution.

If provoked soon after such exposure, this momentary attitudinal shift may promote aggressive behavior a little beyond that which is one's normal response. In all likelihood this shift will be fleeting, and its immediate impact trivial. On the other hand, it is not difficult to imagine more significant problems resulting from a steady diet of this content. Repeated exposure to these violent portrayals and the recurring transitory shift that occurs in one's threshold for aggressive reprisal may lead to a permanent shift in acceptability of violence and latitudes of violent reprisal. If viewers are constantly conditioned to believe that a particular level of violence is appropriate under socially

non-normative circumstances, the potential for these viewers to routinely engage in stronger levels of aggressive reprisal is heightened. In this manner, violence portrayed in the context of liked perpetrators with non-normative motives may, in the long term, lead to the development of aggressive personality traits. When we consider the prospect for these changes to occur across the massive audience for violent media, we see a troubling potential for heightened interpersonal violence, domestic abuse, and destruction of property. While these portrayals have been dismissed as non-problematic in previous research, the potential exists for considerable social harm not only in a viewer's immediate reactions, but more importantly in terms of habitual behavioral responses.

#### *Further Research*

As with any initial inquiry, the findings of the present study present the need for additional empirical investigation concerning the observations herein and the underlying processes that may have produced them. First, the chosen stimulus material for the observed violence was professional wrestling, a genre with unique actor and plot characteristics. While this genre was chosen because it is one that contains a large number of incongruous violent portrayals (Lachlan, Tamborini, Skalski, & Westerman, 2003), there nonetheless exists the need to verify the observed effects in more mainstream television content. Thus, further research is called for examining the effects of congruous and incongruous violent portrayals in mainstream television drama. For example, the prime time police drama *The Shield* depicts Los Angeles police and tactical operations units fighting crime in Southern California. While the main characters are largely portrayed as likable protagonists, they often resort to forms of violence that exceed all standards of police procedure in order to intimidate, capture, and even

eliminate criminal offenders. They use extreme violence in circumstances that would not normally dictate strong force, such as face-saving or reputation preserving endeavors. One can easily think of other prime time and cable dramas (*NYPD Blue*, *The Sopranos*, *24*, *L.A. Dragnet*, etc) where violent portrayals by liked characters with socially unacceptable motives for violence are common. The prevalence of these portrayals and their impact on viewers is, however, largely unknown and begs the need for further scientific inquiry. Thus, there exists the need for future content analytic research examining the prevalence of congruous and incongruous portrayals of disposition and motive associated with television violence.

Next, additional research is needed to examine the finding that violence with socially unsanctioned motives may actually *disinhibit* aggressive responses if committed by a liked protagonist. Of all the results reported here, this one offers the most serious cause for alarm. While there is no evidence in the present research of a short term shift in ideal response, the level of aggressive retribution one is willing to accept in subsequent moral evaluations appears higher under circumstances where good guys aggress with unjust cause. Maybe this stems from a comparison process between initial scenarios and subsequent observed acts, or perhaps the presentation of a violent situation reduces dissonance created by exposure to clips with incongruent dispositional themes. Additional research is needed to replicate the observed shift in latitudes of acceptance, and investigate the underlying psychological mechanisms driving the observed changes.

Dovetailing from this area of investigation, a need exists for further exploration of the combined impact of dispositional and motivational features of both the observed clip and the subsequent evaluation that must be explored. The subsequent behavioral



evaluation concerned a conflict scenario involving the behavior of a good character with sanctioned motives for aggression, based on the knowledge that this condition often engenders aggressive attitudes (Tamborini & Lachlan, 2003). Responses to different subsequent scenarios may change contingent upon the contexts in which they take place. For instance, someone asked to evaluate aggressive responses in a situation in which a neutral character has no motive for aggression may not provide an opportunity for dissonance reduction, or may present a social comparison that is not all that different from what has just been observed. Regardless, the combined effect of dispositional and motivational concerns in both observed violence and in subsequent behavioral evaluations must be investigated.

Additionally, there exists a need to further explore the role played by individual personality characteristics in the processes identified in the present research. Of particular note is trait psychoticism, which was dropped from the analyses due to measurement problems. Given the substantial corpus of research identifying psychoticism as an important moderator in the relationship between media use and aggression (e.g. Zillmann & Weaver, 1997), future research should examine the role of this and other personality traits.

Finally, the unexpected finding that neutral characters with unknown motives are met with the least amount of opposition is a troubling one. It may be possible that a different set of psychological processes takes place with characters that have definite dispositions and/or motives, than when violence is presented as random and without apparent reason. If this is the case, then there are unique implications for desensitization associated with random violence, as opposed to violent presentations that have tangible

dispositional and motivational contexts. The potential difference between random and valence aggression and its effects on audiences is certainly one that begs for future inquiry.

### *Summary*

The data in the current study present disturbing social implications concerning forms of violent media content. It suggests that conventional understandings of “justified” violence as problematic and “unjustified” violence as benign may be limited and ultimately inaccurate. The data imply that violence committed by liked characters, regardless of the apparent motive for violence, can facilitate hostile responses and perhaps impact attitudes that govern habitual aggressive behavior. Additionally, random acts of violence, those which contain no clear dispositional or motivational considerations, may also be harmful, as they seem to be met with more approval than seems appropriate. Finally, the specific combination of liked characters committing aggressive acts for reasons that are normatively unacceptable may be a particularly problematic in its contribution to attitudes that facilitate aggressive behavioral. As a result, across the universe of television programming we might expect many more presentations of violence containing dangerous behavioral models than previously believed.

The identification of this potentially harmful content calls for further scientific study to examine presence of this content its potential for influence. Investigating these issues is needed to inform parents, teachers, and policy makers about media content that may be psychologically and behaviorally harmful, especially to younger audiences. It is the hope of this researcher that scholars in the field will continue to investigate the

processes initially outlined in this work, in order to help paint a clearer picture of the complex roles played by disposition and motive in shaping the effect of media violence on moral reasoning.

## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

### Consent Forms and Disclosure

Pre-test Consent Form:

#### **TELEVISION AND SOCIAL BELIEFS**

You are being asked to participate in a study conducted by the Department of Communication Michigan State University. The purpose of the study is to examine your beliefs and your media use.

Participation in this study is strictly voluntary and involves filling out this questionnaire and a questionnaire to be administered in a few weeks. You may skip questions if you want and may stop participation at any time.

All information you provide will be kept completely confidential. Do not write your name or any other information anywhere on the form. Your privacy will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law. By signing below and returning the questionnaire, you indicate your voluntary agreement to participate in the study. This form will be kept separate from your survey in order to ensure that your responses will be kept anonymous.

Contact Dr. Ron Tamborini at 517-355-0178 (tamborin@msu.edu) if you have any questions or concerns regarding this study. The researchers can answer any questions you may have about the study to help you decide whether or not to participate. If you have any questions about your role and rights as a subject of research, feel free to contact Dr. Ashir Kumar, the Chairperson of the University Committee of Research Involving Human Subjects, at (517) 355-2180.

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Signing below indicates your voluntary agreement to participate in this study.

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Participant's Signature

Date

---

Participant's Name (Please print clearly)

Thank You

**Post-test Consent Form:**

**TELEVISION AND SOCIAL BELIEFS**

You are being asked to participate in a study conducted by the Department of Communication Michigan State University. It is intended to help us understand what social norms are concerning the acceptability of different behaviors.

Participation in this study is strictly voluntary. Today you will be asked to watch a short film clip, followed by a brief questionnaire. The questionnaire should take no more than 10 minutes to complete. You may skip questions if you want and may stop participation at any time.

All information you provide will be kept completely confidential. Do not write your name or any other information anywhere on the form. Your privacy will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law. By signing below and returning the questionnaire, you indicate your voluntary agreement to participate in the study. This form will be kept separate from your survey in order to ensure that your responses will be kept anonymous.

Contact Dr. Ron Tamborini at 517-355-0178 (tamborin@msu.edu) if you have any questions or concerns regarding this study. The researchers can answer any questions you may have about the study to help you decide whether or not to participate. If you have any questions about your role and rights as a subject of research, feel free to contact Dr. Ashir Kumar, the Chairperson of the University Committee of Research Involving Human Subjects, at (517) 355-2180.

Signing below indicates your voluntary agreement to participate in this study.

---

Participant's Signature

Date

---

Participant's Name (Please print clearly)

Thank You

**Laboratory Disclosure Statement:**

**TELEVISION AND SOCIAL BELIEFS**

**Disclosure Statement**

This concludes the study you have been participating in. Before you go, please read the following statement carefully, as it explains the nature of the study and the anticipated results.

You were assigned to one of nine groups that watched an act of aggressive behavior. Aggressive scenes were portrayed by good, bad, or neutral characters, whose motives were normative, non-normative, or neutral. Those in the neutral groups served as a control groups to compare scores against. The survey you filled out regarding behaviors that you consider acceptable or unacceptable was intended to measure your attitudes following exposure to the film clip. It is the belief of the researchers that differences in good or bad perpetrators with good or bad motives will have different effects on viewers' attitudes toward aggressive behavior. Additionally, it is believed that differences in the way different people view the world may contribute to the differences associated with dispositions and motives.

Please do not tell others about the nature or intention of the study, as it may interfere with their responses. Contact Dr. Ron Tamborini at 517-355-0178 (tamborin@msu.edu) if you have any questions or concerns regarding this study. The researchers can answer any questions you may have about the study to help you decide whether or not to participate. If you have any questions about your role and rights as a subject of research, feel free to contact Dr. Ashir Kumar, the Chairperson of the University Committee of Research Involving Human Subjects, at (517) 355-2180. This form is yours to keep.

Thank you very much for your time and participation.

## APPENDIX B

### McCrosky & McCain Interpersonal Attraction Scale

Social Attraction:	Perp Factor Loading	Target Factor Loading
I think he could be a friend of mine.	.77	.76
It would be difficult to meet him.	.55	.35
He would not fit in with my circle of friends.	.76	***
I could never be friends with him.	***	.61
I'd like to have a friendly chat with him.	.69	.78

Note: \*\*\* indicates item dropped.



## APPENDIX C

### Perception of Victim Deservedness Scale

	Factor Loading
(Victim name) got what he deserved when he was attacked by (perpetrator name)	.76
(Perpetrator name) was too brutal in the way he attacked (victim name)	.67
People like (victim name) should get beaten that badly under those circumstances	.62
The actions of (perpetrator name) went too far.	.80

## APPENDIX D

### Disposition and Motive Inductions

#### **Positive Disposition-Positive Motive:**

This page contains information designed to better help you understand the characters and events that are taking place in the film clip you are about to see. Please read this information carefully. When you are done, please wait until everyone has finished. We will then watch the first film clip. Following the film clip you will be asked a series of questions.

Triple H is a well-known character generally thought of as an average performer within the industry. Some people like him, some don't, but very few seem to feel strongly one way or the other. He has been a successful character with a long history of taking center stage through his on-air talents. His reputation as a technically solid athlete has led him to play a major role in many television shows of this type. Throughout the industry he is known for his unusual combination of high-flying acrobatic abilities and pure strength. He tends to become a more formidable opponent as time goes on. Triple H is somewhat reclusive in his private life. His peers admit that they know very little about his offstage personality. He tends to keep to himself and live quietly when the cameras are turned off. Little is known about his family, except that he lives with his wife in a small suburban town.

Rob Van Dam is a well-known character within the industry. He has gained popularity for his attempts to promote fair play and clean competition in a sport known for being corrupt. In fact, he is known for his repeated attempts to support and help other performers even on occasions when it was a disadvantage to him. His real-life story is as highly regarded as his on-screen personality. He has been married for over twelve years and is the devoted father of two young boys. The former construction worker spent years struggling to support his family financially before getting his first break in the sport. Since then, he has dedicated himself to giving back to his community. Over the course of the last five years, he has donated over two million dollars to a soup kitchen he founded in his hometown of Grand Rapids, Michigan, helping the less fortunate get back on their feet.

Prior to this scene, we learn that Vince McMahon, owner of the company that controls professional wrestling, told Rob Van Dam that TV ratings are falling. In order to improve ratings, McMahon wants Van Dam to commit a shocking act of violence against the unsuspecting Triple H. Van Dam refuses, but McMahon says he will fire Triple H along with many other wrestlers and staff people unless Van Dam does this. Van Dam becomes totally enraged. This type of behavior is against his personal beliefs, but others will suffer if he doesn't do it. He hates himself because he doesn't know what else to do. He is furious with the situation, but knows he must do this for everybody's good.

We are now about to see Triple H enter the ring to face an unknown opponent.

**Please do not turn the page until the film clip has been shown.**

### **Positive Disposition-Negative Motive:**

This page contains information designed to better help you understand the characters and events that are taking place in the film clip you are about to see. Please read this information carefully. When you are done, please wait until everyone has finished. We will then watch the first film clip. Following the film clip you will be asked a series of questions.

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Prior to this scene, Rob Van Dam has been in a discussion with some other wrestlers. We have found out that Rob Van Dam wants to become more respected. He believes that he would gain great respect from the other characters if he beat-up somebody in public, and that this respect would help him get a shot at the heavyweight title belt. Another character mentions Triple H, who isn't with the group at the time. Rob Van Dam starts talking about how he plans to destroy Triple H so he can get the greater notoriety he wants. He begins to brag to the other characters about what he is going to do to Triple H when he sees him.

We are now about to see Triple H enter the ring to face an unknown opponent.

**Please do not turn the page until the film clip has been shown.**

### **Positive Disposition-Unknown Motive:**

This page contains information designed to better help you understand the characters and events that are taking place in the film clip you are about to see. Please read this information carefully. When you are done, please wait until everyone has finished. We will then watch the film clip. Following the film clip you will be asked a series of questions.

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Rob Van Dam and Triple H have a heated rivalry that goes back a number of years. In recent weeks there has been an exceptional amount of friction and animosity between the two. The source of this most recent hostility is completely unknown to those on the outside. It seems that one of them has suffered some sort of injustice at the hands of the other, but no one is really sure who has been wronged or in what way. It is difficult to tell if the events that follow show another unjustified act or a justified act of retaliation. All we really know is that there is a lot of tension between them right now.

We are now about to see Triple H enter the ring to face an unknown opponent.

**Please do not turn the page until the film clip has been shown.**

## **Negative Disposition-Positive Motive:**

This page contains information designed to better help you understand the characters and events that are taking place in the film clip you are about to see. Please read this information carefully. When you are done, please wait until everyone has finished. We will then watch the first film clip. Following the film clip you will be asked a series of questions.

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Rob Van Dam is an equally well-known character, but with a different reputation in the industry. His television personality is widely despised by others in the sport. He is generally acknowledged by his peers as a detestable character that will use any means to get ahead of the competition. In the past, his corrupt behavior has resulted in deliberate injury to other performers in order to upstage them. Rob Van Dam's offstage life is also rather checkered. Reports portray him as a reckless youth who was constantly in trouble with the law, and legal trouble has continued to haunt him in his adult life. His legal problems have included a conviction for drug possession in the state of California, and pleading no contest to charges of sexually assaulting a 12 year old minor. Recent charges have also been filed accusing him of intention to distribute illegal steroids, along with allegations of spousal abuse by his wife of two years.

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## **Negative Disposition-Negative Motive**

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Rob Van Dam is an equally well-known character, but with a different reputation in the industry. His television personality is widely despised by others in the sport. He is generally acknowledged by his peers as a detestable character that will use any means to get ahead of the competition. In the past, his corrupt behavior has resulted in deliberate injury to other performers in order to upstage them. Rob Van Dam's offstage life is also rather checkered. Reports portray him as a reckless youth who was constantly in trouble with the law, and legal trouble has continued to haunt him in his adult life. His legal problems have included a conviction for drug possession in the state of California, and pleading no contest to charges of sexually assaulting a 12 year old minor. Recent charges have also been filed accusing him of intention to distribute illegal steroids, along with allegations of spousal abuse by his wife of two years.

Prior to this scene, Rob Van Dam has been in a discussion with some other wrestlers. We have found out that Rob Van Dam wants to become more respected. He believes that he would gain great respect from the other characters if he beat-up somebody in public, and that this respect would help him get a shot at the heavyweight title belt. Another character mentions Triple H, who isn't with the group at the time. Rob Van Dam starts talking about how he plans to destroy Triple H so he can get the greater notoriety he wants. He begins to brag to the other characters about what he is going to do to Triple H when he sees him.

We are now about to see Triple H enter the ring to face an unknown opponent.

**Please do not turn the page until the film clip has been shown.**

### **Negative Disposition-Unknown Motive:**

This page contains information designed to better help you understand the characters and events that are taking place in the film clip you are about to see. Please read this information carefully. When you are done, please wait until everyone has finished. We will then watch the film clip. Following the film clip you will be asked a series of questions.

Triple H is a well-known character generally thought of as an average performer within the industry. Some people like him, some don't, but very few seem to feel strongly one way or the other. He has been a successful character with a long history of taking center stage through his on-air talents. His reputation as a technically solid athlete has led him to play a major role in many television shows of this type. Throughout the industry he is known for his unusual combination of high-flying acrobatic abilities and pure strength. He tends to become a more formidable opponent as time goes on. Triple H is somewhat reclusive in his private life. His peers admit that they know very little about his offstage personality. He tends to keep to himself and live quietly when the cameras are turned off. Little is known about his family, except that he lives with his wife in a small suburban town.

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Rob Van Dam and Triple H have a heated rivalry that goes back a number of years. In recent weeks there has been an exceptional amount of friction and animosity between the two. The source of this most recent hostility is completely unknown to those on the outside. It seems that one of them has suffered some sort of injustice at the hands of the other, but no one is really sure who has been wronged or in what way. It is difficult to tell if the events that follow show another unjustified act or a justified act of retaliation. All we really know is that there is a lot of tension between them right now.

We are now about to see Triple H enter the ring to face an unknown opponent.

**Please do not turn the page until the film clip has been shown.**

**Neutral Disposition-Positive Motive:**

This page contains information designed to better help you understand the characters and events that are taking place in the film clip you are about to see. Please read this information carefully. When you are done, please wait until everyone has finished. We will then watch the first film clip. Following the film clip you will be asked a series of questions.

Triple H is a well-known character generally thought of as an average performer within the industry. Some people like him, some don't, but very few seem to feel strongly one way or the other. He has been a successful character with a long history of taking center stage through his on-air talents. His reputation as a technically solid athlete has led him to play a major role in many television shows of this type. Throughout the industry he is known for his unusual combination of high-flying acrobatic abilities and pure strength. He tends to become a more formidable opponent as time goes on. Triple H is somewhat reclusive in his private life. His peers admit that they know very little about his offstage personality. He tends to keep to himself and live quietly when the cameras are turned off. Little is known about his family, except that he lives with his wife in a small suburban town.

Rob Van Dam is an equally well-known character with a very similar reputation to Triple H. People throughout the industry seem to have mixed feelings about him, but no one seems to like or dislike him all that much. Like Triple H, he is known for his successes and his track record of exciting the fans with his abilities. His strong and consistent athletic talents have earned him a lot of air time. While not quite as strong as Triple H, he is more talented when it comes to acrobatic ability. Much like Triple H, he is someone that you want to defeat early, as he seems to get more determined when he takes a lot of punishment. Rob Van Dam keeps a close circle of friends, and not many of his coworkers know very much about him. He lives a quiet life offstage, where he prefers to spend his spare time relaxing with his family in more private settings.

Prior to this scene, we learn that Vince McMahon, owner of the company that controls professional wrestling, told Rob Van Dam that TV ratings are falling. In order to improve ratings, McMahon wants Van Dam to commit a shocking act of violence against the unsuspecting Triple H. Van Dam refuses, but McMahon says he will fire Triple H along with many other wrestlers and staff people unless Van Dam does this. Van Dam becomes totally enraged. This type of behavior is against his personal beliefs, but others will suffer if he doesn't do it. He hates himself because he doesn't know what else to do. He is furious with the situation, but knows he must do this for everybody's good.

We are now about to see Triple H enter the ring to face an unknown opponent.

**Please do not turn the page until the film clip has been shown.**



## **Neutral Disposition-Negative Motive**

This page contains information designed to better help you understand the characters and events that are taking place in the film clip you are about to see. Please read this information carefully. When you are done, please wait until everyone has finished. We will then watch the first film clip. Following the film clip you will be asked a series of questions.

Triple H is a well-known character generally thought of as an average performer within the industry. Some people like him, some don't, but very few seem to feel strongly one way or the other. He has been a successful character with a long history of taking center stage through his on-air talents. His reputation as a technically solid athlete has led him to play a major role in many television shows of this type. Throughout the industry he is known for his unusual combination of high-flying acrobatic abilities and pure strength. He tends to become a more formidable opponent as time goes on. Triple H is somewhat reclusive in his private life. His peers admit that they know very little about his offstage personality. He tends to keep to himself and live quietly when the cameras are turned off. Little is known about his family, except that he lives with his wife in a small suburban town.

Rob Van Dam is an equally well-known character with a very similar reputation to Triple H. People throughout the industry seem to have mixed feelings about him, but no one seems to like or dislike him all that much. Like Triple H, he is known for his successes and his track record of exciting the fans with his abilities. His strong and consistent athletic talents have earned him a lot of air time. While not quite as strong as Triple H, he is more talented when it comes to acrobatic ability. Much like Triple H, he is someone that you want to defeat early, as he seems to get more determined when he takes a lot of punishment. Rob Van Dam keeps a close circle of friends, and not many of his coworkers know very much about him. He lives a quiet life offstage, where he prefers to spend his spare time relaxing with his family in more private settings.

Prior to this scene, Rob Van Dam has been in a discussion with some other wrestlers. We have found out that Rob Van Dam wants to become more respected. He believes that he would gain great respect from the other characters if he beat-up somebody in public, and that this respect would help him get a shot at the heavyweight title belt. Another character mentions Triple H, who isn't with the group at the time. Rob Van Dam starts talking about how he plans to destroy Triple H so he can get the greater notoriety he wants. He begins to brag to the other characters about what he is going to do to Triple H when he sees him.

We are now about to see Triple H enter the ring to face an unknown opponent.

**Please do not turn the page until the film clip has been shown.**

### **Neutral Disposition-Unknown Motive:**

This page contains information designed to better help you understand the characters and events that are taking place in the film clip you are about to see. Please read this information carefully. When you are done, please wait until everyone has finished. We will then watch the film clip. Following the film clip you will be asked a series of questions.

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Rob Van Dam and Triple H have a heated rivalry that goes back a number of years. In recent weeks there has been an exceptional amount of friction and animosity between the two. The source of this most recent hostility is completely unknown to those on the outside. It seems that one of them has suffered some sort of injustice at the hands of the other, but no one is really sure who has been wronged or in what way. It is difficult to tell if the events that follow show another unjustified act or a justified act of retaliation. All we really know is that there is a lot of tension between them right now.

We are now about to see Triple H enter the ring to face an unknown opponent.

**Please do not turn the page until the film clip has been shown.**

## APPENDIX E

### Buss-Perry Aggression Questionnaire

	Factor Loading
Hostility:	
When people are especially nice, I wonder what they want.	.44
I am suspicious of overly friendly strangers.	.40
Other people always seem to get the breaks.	.61
I wonder why sometimes I feel so bitter about things.	.70
I am sometimes eaten up with jealousy.	.51
At times I feel I have gotten a raw deal out of life.	.55
I know that "friends" talk about me behind my back.	.54
Physical Aggression:	
Given enough provocation, I may hit another person.	.76
If somebody hits me, I hit back	.61
I can think of no good reason for ever hitting a person.	.61
I get into fights a little more than the average person.	.56
Once in a while I can't control the urge to strike another person.	.50
There are people who pushed me so far that we came to blows.	.42

I have become so mad that I have broken things	.60
I have threatened people I know.	.73
If I have to resort to violence to protect my rights, I will.	.64
Verbal Aggression:	
My friends say that I'm somewhat argumentative	.73
I often find myself disagreeing with people.	.68
When people annoy me, I may tell them what I think of them.	.69
I tell my friends openly when I disagree with them.	.55
I can't help getting into arguments when people disagree with me.	.64
Argumentativeness:	
I flare up quickly but get over it quickly.	.46
I am an even-tempered person.	.57
I sometimes feel like a powder keg ready to explode.	***
When frustrated, I let my irritation show.	.43
Some of my friends think I'm a hothead.	.78
Sometimes I fly off the handle for no good reason.	.89
I have trouble controlling my temper	.83

**Note:** \*\*\* indicates item dropped.

## APPENDIX F

### Revised Eysenck Personality Inventory

Neuroticism:	Factor Loading
Does your mood often go up and down?	***
Do you ever feel "just miserable" for no reason?	.47
Are you an irritable person?	.57
Are your feelings easily hurt?	***
Do you often feel "fed-up"?	.54
Would you call yourself a nervous person?	.62
Are you a worrier?	.56
Would you call yourself tense or "highly-strung?"	.60
Do you worry too long after an embarrassing experience?	.49
Do you suffer from "nerves?"	.54
Do you often feel lonely?	.44
Are you often troubled about feelings of guilt?	.54

**Extroversion:**

Are you a talkative person?	.56
Are you rather lively?	.55
Do you enjoy meeting new people?	.55
Can you usually let yourself go and enjoy yourself at a lively party?	.50
Do you usually take the initiative in making new friends?	***
Can you easily get some life into a rather dull party?	***
Do you like mixing with people?	.46
Do you like plenty of bustle and excitement around you?	.59
Do other people think of you as being very lively?	.58
Can you get a party going?	.44
Do you tend to keep in the background on social occasions?	.72
Are you mostly quiet when you are with other people?	.61

Note: \*\*\* indicates item dropped.

## APPENDIX G

### Raney & Bryant Social Justice Scale

Empathy:	Factor Loading
I sometimes try to understand my friends better by imagining how things look from their perspective.	.67
I believe there are two sides to every question and I try to look at them both.	.58
When I'm upset at someone I usually try to put myself in their shoes for awhile.	.64
I often have tender, concerned feelings for people less fortunate than myself.	.54
I sometimes don't feel very sorry for people who are having problems.	***
Before criticizing someone, I try to imagine how I'd feel if I were in their place.	.67
Other people's misfortunes do not disturb me a great deal.	.50
I sometimes find it difficult to see things from the other person's point of view.	.64
I am often touched by things that I see happen.	.58
I try to look at everyone's side of a disagreement before I make a decision.	.77
I would describe myself as a pretty soft-hearted person.	.54

## **Vigilantism:**

<b>Victims of crime and/or their families should be allowed to determine how long the criminal should be in jail.</b>	<b>.59</b>
<b>If someone is murdered and a family member later has an opportunity to physically harm the assailant, he/she should have the right to do so.</b>	<b>.77</b>
<b>No punishment inflicted by a private citizen is ever too severe for a murderer.</b>	<b>.55</b>
<b>When I hear that a victim's family has gotten revenge on a criminal, I feel that justice is finally served.</b>	<b>.42</b>
<b>If someone's child is sexually assaulted and a parent later has an opportunity to physically harm the assailant, he/she should have the right to do so.</b>	<b>.70</b>
<b>Justice is served only after the victim and/or the victim's family is/are satisfied.</b>	<b>.71</b>
<b>If someone is car-jacked and later has an opportunity to physically harm the assailant, he/she should have the right to do so.</b>	<b>.77</b>
<b>Victims should have a say-so in the punishment of a criminal because only they know what it is like to be wronged by that individual.</b>	<b>.71</b>
<b>The law is designed to let criminals off too easily; for that reason, I think private citizens should take action themselves</b>	<b>.77</b>
<b>No punishment inflicted by a police officer during the arrest of a spousal abuser is ever too severe.</b>	<b>.55</b>
<b>I favor a criminal justice system where the victim's family is allowed to determine the punishment for the criminal.</b>	<b>.88</b>
<b>No punishment inflicted by a police officer during the arrest of a murderer is ever too severe.</b>	<b>***</b>



If a private citizen has an opportunity to enact justice on a criminal before law enforcement agents arrive, he/she should have the right to do so. \*\*\*

Victims of crime and/or their families should be allowed to sentence criminals. \*\*\*

Since too many criminals get off on technicalities, private citizens should bring about justice in situations if they have a chance. \*\*\*

Private citizens acting alone can better ensure that a criminal gets what he/she deserves than they can serving on a jury. \*\*\*

Punitiveness:

Capital punishment is morally wrong. .65

The death penalty is a good idea since it prevents the criminal from harming anyone else. .82

If an individual intentionally kills someone (except for in self-defense), he/she should be put to death. .76

Punishment for a crime should involve physical pain. .60

The more horrific the crime, the more horrific the punishment should be. .91

The death penalty is the only way to ensure that a murderer will never murder again; for that reason, I favor the death penalty. \*\*\*

Note: \*\*\* indicates item dropped.

## APPENDIX H

### Perceived Realism Scale

	Factor Loading
Television presents things as they really are in life.	.77
If I see something on TV, I can't be sure it really is that way.	.75
TV lets me really see how other people live.	***
TV does not show life as it really is.	.60
Television lets me see what happens in other places as if I was really there.	.65

Note: \*\*\* indicates item dropped.

## APPENDIX I

### Tamborini & Lachlan Latitude of Acceptable Violent Reprisal Measure

We would like you to judge the acceptability of behavior described in the following situation. Please read the following account as if you had seen it occur. Think about the situation and the two people involved in the interaction that is described.

After you have read the description below, turn to the first page in the answer booklet. Read the instructions there and respond in the described manner. You will be asked to give your opinion about the acceptability of different behaviors described. Imagine that you were a witness to the event portrayed. You are not involved in it in any way, you just happened to see it. What would you think about the different behaviors described?

In order to help you remember the interaction described while you respond to the questions in the answer booklet, we have copied the description given below and included it on the page opposite each set of questions. First read the description here. Then open the booklet and answer the questions on the following pages. A copy of the interaction described will be available on the accompanying page while you respond to the questions. Here is the situation we want you to think about.

Imagine that you observe the following event:

Paul, one of the most likable people you could ever meet at school, walks into a room and sees Dave, a well known and widely despised campus bully. The last time they met, Dave threatened to knock Paul unconscious. Since Dave had always followed through with similar threats to others, Paul was sure that once Dave saw him he would make good on this threat. Paul wanted to protect himself. With this in mind, Paul decided to....

Below is a list of possible things that Paul might do under the conditions described. Please read all the statements *carefully* first before making any marks on this page.

Now that you have carefully read all the statements, place a **check** next to the **one** that you think is the **most acceptable** thing for him to do in the situation described. When you finish, turn to the next page.

Paul decides to do something he knew would ....

- |   |                           |
|---|---------------------------|
| 1. give physical and emotional support to Dave that not only had lasting benefit, but would <u>surely</u> give great joy to both him and his family     | 1. _____ most acceptable  |
| 2. give physical and emotional support to Dave that not only had lasting benefit, but would <u>surely</u> give him great joy                            | 2. _____ most acceptable  |
| 3. give physical and emotional support to Dave that not only had lasting benefit, but could potentially give him great joy                              | 3. _____ most acceptable  |
| 4. give both physical and emotional support to Dave that had lasting benefit  | 4. _____ most acceptable  |
| 5. give emotional support to Dave that had lasting benefit and physical support that was <u>only</u> temporary  | 5. _____ most acceptable  |
| 6. give both physical and emotional support to Dave that was <u>only</u> temporary, and had no potential for lasting benefit of any type                | 6. _____ most acceptable  |
| 7. give emotional support to Dave that was <u>only</u> temporary, and had no potential for physical benefit of any type                                 | 7. _____ most acceptable  |
| 8. have no physical or emotional impact on Dave   | 8. _____ most acceptable  |
| 9. cause emotional harm to Dave that was <u>only</u> temporarily disabling, and had no potential to cause physical harm of any type                     | 9. _____ most acceptable  |
| 10. cause both physical and emotional harm to Dave that was <u>only</u> temporarily disabling, and had no potential to cause permanent harm of any type | 10. _____ most acceptable |
| 11. cause physical harm to Dave that was <u>only</u> temporarily disabling but emotional harm that was permanently disabling                            | 11. _____ most acceptable |
| 12. cause both physical and emotional harm to Dave that was permanently disabling, but had no potential to result in death                              | 12. _____ most acceptable |
| 13. cause both physical and emotional harm to Dave that was permanently disabling, and could potentially cause death                                    | 13. _____ most acceptable |
| 14. cause certain death, but would not deface Dave's corpse   | 14. _____ most acceptable |
| 15. cause certain death, and mutilate Dave's corpse   | 15. _____ most acceptable |

Below is the same list of possible things that Paul might do under these conditions. Once again, think *carefully* first before making any marks on this page.

This time, in addition to the most acceptable behavior, we would like you to **check** next to **all** of the things you think are **also acceptable** in the situation described. When you finish, turn to the next page.

Paul decides to do something he knew would ....

- |   |                      |
|---|----------------------|
| 1. give physical and emotional support to Dave that not only had lasting benefit, but would <u>surely</u> give great joy to both him and his family     | 1. _____ acceptable  |
| 2. give physical and emotional support to Dave that not only had lasting benefit, but would <u>surely</u> give him great joy                            | 2. _____ acceptable  |
| 3. give physical and emotional support to Dave that not only had lasting benefit, but could potentially give him great joy                              | 3. _____ acceptable  |
| 4. give both physical and emotional support to Dave that had lasting benefit  | 4. _____ acceptable  |
| 5. give emotional support to Dave that had lasting benefit and physical support that was <u>only</u> temporary  | 5. _____ acceptable  |
| 6. give both physical and emotional support to Dave that was <u>only</u> temporary, and had no potential for lasting benefit of any type                | 6. _____ acceptable  |
| 7. give emotional support to Dave that was <u>only</u> temporary, and had no potential for physical benefit of any type                                 | 7. _____ acceptable  |
| 8. have no physical or emotional impact on Dave   | 8. _____ acceptable  |
| 9. cause emotional harm to Dave that was <u>only</u> temporarily disabling, and had no potential to cause physical harm of any type                     | 9. _____ acceptable  |
| 10. cause both physical and emotional harm to Dave that was <u>only</u> temporarily disabling, and had no potential to cause permanent harm of any type | 10. _____ acceptable |
| 11. cause physical harm to Dave that was <u>only</u> temporarily disabling but emotional harm that was permanently disabling                            | 11. _____ acceptable |
| 12. cause both physical and emotional harm to Dave that was permanently disabling, but had no potential to result in death                              | 12. _____ acceptable |
| 13. cause both physical and emotional harm to Dave that was permanently disabling, and could potentially cause death                                    | 13. _____ acceptable |
| 14. cause certain death, but would not deface Dave's corpse   | 14. _____ acceptable |
| 15. cause certain death, and mutilate Dave's corpse   | 15. _____ acceptable |

The statements listed below are the same as those on the two preceding pages. Please read all the statements again first before making any marks on this page.

Now that you have read the statements again, place a **check** next to the **one** that you think is the **most objectionable** thing for him to do in the situation described. When you finish, turn to the next page.

Paul decides to do something he knew would ....

- |   |                              |
|---|------------------------------|
| 1. give physical and emotional support to Dave that not only had lasting benefit, but would <u>surely</u> give great joy to both him and his family     | 1. _____ most objectionable  |
| 2. give physical and emotional support to Dave that not only had lasting benefit, but would <u>surely</u> give him great joy                            | 2. _____ most objectionable  |
| 3. give physical and emotional support to Dave that not only had lasting benefit, but could potentially give him great joy                              | 3. _____ most objectionable  |
| 4. give both physical and emotional support to Dave that had lasting benefit  | 4. _____ most objectionable  |
| 5. give emotional support to Dave that had lasting benefit and physical support that was <u>only</u> temporary  | 5. _____ most objectionable  |
| 6. give both physical and emotional support to Dave that was <u>only</u> temporary, and had no potential for lasting benefit of any type                | 6. _____ most objectionable  |
| 7. give emotional support to Dave that was <u>only</u> temporary, and had no potential for physical benefit of any type                                 | 7. _____ most objectionable  |
| 8. have no physical or emotional impact on Dave   | 8. _____ most objectionable  |
| 9. cause emotional harm to Dave that was <u>only</u> temporarily disabling, and had no potential to cause physical harm of any type                     | 9. _____ most objectionable  |
| 10. cause both physical and emotional harm to Dave that was <u>only</u> temporarily disabling, and had no potential to cause permanent harm of any type | 10. _____ most objectionable |
| 11. cause physical harm to Dave that was <u>only</u> temporarily disabling but emotional harm that was permanently disabling                            | 11. _____ most objectionable |
| 12. cause both physical and emotional harm to Dave that was permanently disabling, but had no potential to result in death                              | 12. _____ most objectionable |
| 13. cause both physical and emotional harm to Dave that was permanently disabling, and could potentially cause death                                    | 13. _____ most objectionable |
| 14. cause certain death, but would not deface Dave's corpse   | 14. _____ most objectionable |
| 15. cause certain death, and mutilate Dave's corpse   | 15. _____ most objectionable |

The statements listed below are the same as those on the preceding pages. Once again, think *carefully* first before making any marks on this page.

This time, in addition to the most objectionable behavior, we want you to **check all** of the things you think are **also objectionable** in the situation described. When you finish, close the survey and wait.

Paul decides to do something he knew would ....

- |   |                         |
|---|-------------------------|
| 1. give physical and emotional support to Dave that not only had lasting benefit, but would <u>surely</u> give great joy to both him and his family     | 1. _____ objectionable  |
| 2. give physical and emotional support to Dave that not only had lasting benefit, but would <u>surely</u> give him great joy                            | 2. _____ objectionable  |
| 3. give physical and emotional support to Dave that not only had lasting benefit, but could potentially give him great joy                              | 3. _____ objectionable  |
| 4. give both physical and emotional support to Dave that had lasting benefit  | 4. _____ objectionable  |
| 5. give emotional support to Dave that had lasting benefit and physical support that was <u>only</u> temporary  | 5. _____ objectionable  |
| 6. give both physical and emotional support to Dave that was <u>only</u> temporary, and had no potential for lasting benefit of any type                | 6. _____ objectionable  |
| 7. give emotional support to Dave that was <u>only</u> temporary, and had no potential for physical benefit of any type                                 | 7. _____ objectionable  |
| 8. have no physical or emotional impact on Dave   | 8. _____ objectionable  |
| 9. cause emotional harm to Dave that was <u>only</u> temporarily disabling, and had no potential to cause physical harm of any type                     | 9. _____ objectionable  |
| 10. cause both physical and emotional harm to Dave that was <u>only</u> temporarily disabling, and had no potential to cause permanent harm of any type | 10. _____ objectionable |
| 11. cause physical harm to Dave that was <u>only</u> temporarily disabling but emotional harm that was permanently disabling                            | 11. _____ objectionable |
| 12. cause both physical and emotional harm to Dave that was permanently disabling, but had no potential to result in death                              | 12. _____ objectionable |
| 13. cause both physical and emotional harm to Dave that was permanently disabling, and could potentially cause death                                    | 13. _____ objectionable |
| 14. cause certain death, but would not deface Dave's corpse   | 14. _____ objectionable |
| 15. cause certain death, and mutilate Dave's corpse   | 15. _____ objectionable |

## APPENDIX J

### Raney Media Enjoyment Scale

	Factor Loading
Exciting	.86
Suspenseful	.81
Good	.94
Well performed	.58
How much do you enjoy this genre?	.68
Overall, how much did you enjoy this film?	***
How much would you like to see the rest of this episode?	***
How likely would you be to watch this genre on your own?	***

Note: \*\*\* indicates item dropped.



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