TELEVISION VIEWING HABITS OF CHRISTIANS

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This dissertation examines possible differences in media habits and tastes between Christians and non-Christians. The study utilizes data from singles Internet personal advertisements to determine whether or not Christians, especially those with high levels of religiosity or who may be part of the Christian Right, have different television viewing patterns. Three models were developed using multivariate data analysis and logistic regression to examine Christians’ television viewing habits regarding reality shows, soap operas, and news. The first model looks at the viewing habits of Christians, the second model examines the viewing habits of Christians attending religious services at least monthly, and the third model analyzes the viewing habits of Christians attending religious services at least monthly and having conservative political views.

No significant differences were found in viewing habits between Christians and non-Christians for any of the three models. Although the results of this study cannot be generalized to Christians as a whole, they suggest that Christians in this sample might have adopted secular practices with regard to their television viewing habits.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. INTRODUCTION: TELEVISION VIEWING HABITS OF CHRISTIANS</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. LITERATURE REVIEW OF CHRISTIANS AND MEDIA HABITS</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. THEORIES CONCERNING CHRISTIANS AND MEDIA HABITS</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. METHODS: TELEVISION VIEWING HABITS OF CHRISTIANS</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. CONCLUSION: TELEVISION VIEWING HABITS OF CHRISTIANS</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLES</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFERENCES</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION: TELEVISION VIEWING HABITS OF CHRISTIANS

“Does a fish know it’s wet?” influential cultural and media critic Marshall McLuhan would often ask. The answer, he would say, is “No.” The fish’s existence is so dominated by water that only when water is absent is the fish aware of its condition…So it is with people and mass media. (Baran, 2008, p. 4)

At the writing of this dissertation, my hometown of Tulsa, Oklahoma, still is remembering the effects of a devastating December ice storm that altered not only its physical environment, but its media environment as well, making it suddenly long for its normal state of media saturation. The storm left 246,000 homes and businesses without power (Tulsa World, 2007) and toppled enough of “Green Country’s” celebrated trees to make the city look like what many residents described as “a war zone.”

The city was eerily dark, and even daytime activities had a surreal quality about them. Staying warm, safe, healthy, and nourished were obviously residents’ major concerns. Hospitals and businesses needed to function. Yet looking back on the devastation and major changes that the ice storm thrust upon Tulsa’s individuals and businesses, a point is worth making for the sake of this dissertation. I experienced first-hand how in the midst of turmoil, many Tulsans missed their normal communication and electronic media habits that previously had saturated them with information, breaking news, and entertainment. Even some residents with self-professed “power guilt” that their power either had not gone off or was restored lamented their dismay that “cable is
out.” They missed television and realized how much a part of their daily lives it had become.

Marshall McLuhan himself made reference to a New York power outage which his reprint of the November 10, 1965, front page of *The New York Times* proclaimed affected 80,000 square miles, caught 800,000 people in subways, caused a snarl in rush hour that covered nine states, and caused the city to grope in the dark. McLuhan commented that “Were the Great Blackout of 1965 to have continued for half a year, there would be no doubt how electric technology shapes, works over, alters – massages – every instant of our lives” (McLuhan & Fiore, 1996, pp.148-149).

Baran (2008) summarized numerous annual studies and predictions about America’s interaction with mass media by calling the time we spend with media “enormous” (p. 17). Americans in 2006 were expected to spend more than 9½ hours a day with the media and $888 for media options, according to forecasts by Veronis Suhler Stevenson (Lindsay, 2006, p. 22). The breakdown included 4.3 hours of television, 2.7 hours of radio and satellite radio, and 30 minutes each of newspapers, music CDs, and the Internet. Watching DVDs, reading books and magazines, and the use of other media products are being squeezed in, as well. By 2009, Americans will add another 10 minutes a day with the media (Lindsay, 2006, p. 22).

In addition, the American Time Use Survey, sponsored by the Bureau of Labor Statistics and conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau, documented that for 2006, television viewing was the leisure activity that occupied the most time. On the average, it represented about half of leisure time for both men and women (U.S. Department of Labor, 2007).
Media and Culture

Thus, the mass media are an integral part of our culture. As such, they have numerous effects upon it. The press has been called “the fourth branch of government.” Although it has no authority to coerce us, it can influence opinion, a critical role in a democracy. This is not a new idea, as illustrated by Abraham Lincoln’s statement about the press over a century ago: “With public sentiment, nothing can fail; without it, nothing can succeed. Consequently, he who molds public sentiment goes deeper than he who enacts statutes or pronounces decisions” (McKenna, 1982, p. 11). While the press officially may not constitute a “fourth branch of government,” it possesses political influence. Yet it is in the social sphere of manners, mores, beliefs, childrearing practices, and cultural tastes that the media influence us most (p. 15).

A prime example of how media, particularly the television medium, influence culture in this social sphere can be found in the popularity and influence of television personality Oprah Winfrey. *The New York Times* (2008) called her “the queen of all media” (Wyatt, 2008) and Taylor (2002) referred to her as one of the most influential spiritual leaders in the country (p. 39). However, both articles included references to the criticism that her focus on the spiritual realm has generated despite her media successes, illustrating that the interaction between culture and the media, as well as its on-air personalities, flows two ways.

Lofton (2006) posed the question of how scholars should interpret “the practices of capitalism that are inflected with spirituality” (p. 599). Since the debut of *The Oprah
Winfrey Show in 1986, Winfrey has reached 10 million viewers worldwide. By the year 2000 she had created a conglomerate of holdings that included a cable network, magazine, and made-for-television movies, as well as her daily television show. Her book club has promoted literacy and her Angel Network has encouraged volunteer work (p. 602-605).

Winfrey’s more recent projects have included “Oprah’s Big Give,” ABC’s philanthropic reality show that attracted 15.7 million viewers its first episode according to Nielsen Media Research; the Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy for Girls in South Africa; a satellite radio show; a network-television Oscar special; and the creation with Discovery Communications of OWN: The Oprah Winfrey Network (Wyatt, 2008).

Of interest to this study is the criticism that Winfrey has attracted for spiritualist leanings that are thought to go against Christian doctrine (Wyatt, 2008). In her Christianity Today article, Taylor (2002) stated that Winfrey’s popularity with so many Americans, especially women, indicates that secular Americans remain spiritually hungry, that Americans are interested in practical spirituality that motivates people to make lasting changes, and that they yearn for hopeful spirituality and dabble in a variety of belief systems. Taylor concluded by calling this brand of spirituality “ultimately unsatisfying” in comparison to Christianity.

How are such mass media endeavors so intertwined with our social sphere? As one perspective, media theorist James W. Carey proposed in his cultural definition of communication that communication and reality are linked (Baran, 2008, p. 9). Carey’s often quoted definition of culture maintained that “communication is a symbolic process whereby reality is produced, maintained, repaired, and transformed” (Carey, 1989, p.
He presented two views of communication in which the transmission view centers on the extension of messages through time for the purpose of transporting information and extending control. The ritual view of communication is not directed toward the extension of messages in space but the maintenance of society in time (pp. 42-43). The ritual view conceives communication as “a process through which a shared culture is created, modified, and transformed” (p. 43).

Carey related that research and scholarship on communication began as a “cumulative tradition” in Ann Arbor, Michigan, in the late 1880s when five people came together – faculty members John Dewey and George Herbert Mead, students Robert Park and Charles Cooley, and journalist Franklin Ford (Carey, 1989, p. 143). The Chicago School as it was called (p. 144), drew upon Herbert Spencer’s organic conception of society to see the relationship between communication and transportation, or the nerves and arteries of society, in the growth of the telegraph and railroad (p. 143). They saw in the developing communications technology the capacity to transform, in Dewey’s terms, a great industrial society into a great community, unified with one culture and a common understanding and knowledge. They saw communications as the key to improving politics and culture, and to turning the country into a democracy of discourse (p. 144).

Baran expanded on Carey’s cultural definition of communication to state that communication is the “foundation” of our culture (2008, p. 9). His analogy to a foundation implies that communication serves not only as a base, but as something to build upon. For the culture to be built and maintained, therefore, the foundation must be firm and strong enough to support the structure of society that is continually being built.
upon it. Mass communication, because of its pervasive nature, is essential in today’s society for building and maintaining that culture.

Carey stated that we create and express our knowledge and attitudes concerning reality through the construction of a variety of symbol systems, including art, journalism, science, common sense, mythology, and religion. He posed the questions not only of how we do this, but how changes in communication technology influence what we can concretely create and apprehend. He further asked how groups in society struggle over the definition of what is real. Those, he contended, are questions that communication studies must answer (Carey, 1989, 30).

Baran pointed out that how we use mass communication has numerous possibilities to benefit society. He believed that mass communication has become a main forum for the debate about our culture, and is only as good, fair, and honest as its participants (2008, p. 17). In McLuhan’s words, “When information is brushed against information, the results are startling and effective” (McLuhan & Fiore, 1996, pp.76-78).

Concerning electronic technology, which includes television, McLuhan made a distinction between the public and the mass in *The Medium is the Massage* (1996). He attributed the creation of the public to print technology and the creation of the mass to electric technology. He saw the distinction as the public consisting of separate individuals walking around with separate fixed points of view, whereas the “new” technology (which he originally described in the 1967 edition) demands abandoning that fragmentary outlook (McLuhan & Fiore, 1996, pp. 68-69).

Recognizing the role that the media play in providing what Baran called a forum for diverse views and perspectives, the numerous groups that make up our society have
an interest in being represented in that forum and having access to the media to share their views and values. They also want to see the media actually represent these views and values as they present a picture of American society as a whole.

In *Cultural Diversity and the U.S. Media*, Kamalipour and Carilli (1998) stated that we live in a “mass-mediated cultural environment” in which the media enhance or destruct images of people, religion, places, or nations in an array of programs including news, sitcoms, talk shows, and soap operas (p. xix). The manufacturing and marketing of these images affect the roles people adapt and the views others have of them (p. xv).

In accordance with “The Social Responsibility Theory of the Press,” the 1947 report of the Hutchins Commission on Freedom of the Press, the media in America must balance freedom from government control with an obligation to serve the public. This includes being pluralistic and providing both access and rights of reply (Baran, 2008, pp. 466-47). Questions arise, however, about how these ideals are to be realized. For example, regarding the potentially offensive nature of media content, Baran points out that where the media draw the line and which groups they aim to satisfy must be considered (p. 475).

One group which has an interest in the mass media and its messages is Christians. Although sources agree that Christians as a group represent a significant segment of society, research varies concerning the percentage of the population who call themselves Christians. Thompson and Hickey (2008) stated that 87% of Americans identify themselves as Christians, and that religious organizations now reach hundreds of millions of viewers across the globe (p. 442). The U.S. Religious Landscape Survey (2008), a survey of more than 35,000 Americans age 18 and older was conducted by
the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life. The study reported that 78.4% of respondents identify themselves as Christian.

Similarly, research varies concerning measures of religious devotion both in terms of measurements used and results found. The U.S. Religious Landscape Survey (2008) found that 15% of respondents attend services more than once a week, 24% attend once a week, 15% attend once or twice a month, 18% attend a few times a year, 16% seldom attend, 11% never attend, and 1% didn’t know or refused to answer. Nationwide surveys conducted between 1982 and 1996 by the Barna Research Group, Ltd., a Christian-oriented organization, indicated that church attendance declined from 49% in 1991 to 42% in 1995. About one-third of respondents attend weekly, one-third attend one to three weekends a month, and the other one-third never attend except for special occasions (Barna, 1996, p. 33).

Another measure used by researchers to examine religiosity is frequency of prayer. The U.S. Religious Landscape Survey (2008) stated that 58% of respondents pray daily, 17% pray weekly, 6% pray monthly, 11% seldom pray, 7% never pray, and 2% didn’t know or refused to answer. Barna (1996) stated that prayer is probably the religious activity which most Americans engage in with 89% of adults reporting that they pray to God and 78% stating that they pray during a typical week. Of people who pray, 52% pray several times a day (p. 61).

Barna also indicated that 92% of American households own at least one copy of the Christian Bible, although the proportion of adults who read the Bible during the week other than in church services has declined from 47% in 1992 to 34% in 1996 (p. 55). Also, 67% of adults said that they have made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ
that is still important in their lives, with 41% of Christians reporting being "absolutely committed" to Christianity and 44% "moderately committed" (p. 3).

Regarding individuals’ views and beliefs, Barna (1996) reported that the factor that has the greatest impact is religion, mentioned by 42% of respondents, followed by attitudes and opinions by family and friends, mentioned by 32% (p. 103). Concerning religious groups, Johnstone (2007) stated that one feature of religion is the moral dimension by which a religious group makes a judgment about which thoughts and ideas are good and should be reinforced, and which are harmful and should be rejected. It seeks to influence the behavior of others even in ordinary situations (p.12). It follows that because of the influence of religion in people’s lives, coupled with the strong influence that the media have in building and shaping our culture and promoting certain values, Christians would have an interest in the media and their messages from a moral standpoint. They also would want access to the media to promote their own Christian values.

Therefore, Christians are making their voices heard concerning a number of media products. For example, complaints to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) related to indecency jumped from 111 in 2000 to more than a million in 2004 following “the split-second baring of Janet Jackson’s breast at the 2004 Superbowl football game and rocker Bono’s spontaneous award show utterance of an expletive later that year” (Baran, 2008, p. 458). However, the FCC documents that 99.9% of the complaints, most identically written, came from the conservative Christian Parents Television Council (p. 458).
The relationship between religion and the mass media is not limited to interactions within our current society (Thompson & Hickey, 2008, p. 442), as demonstrated by the printing of the Gutenberg Bible and the first broadcast of a human voice, a 1906 Christmas service (p. 442). Yet taking into account the size of the current Christian population in America, the growth in Christian media, especially broadcasting, and the interaction between Christians and the media and its offerings in general, the need to study this group with regard to its media habits becomes apparent. Although numerous studies have been conducted concerning various groups, less research has been done on Christians and their media habits in general and their television viewing habits in particular.

Rationale for Media Studies

The presumption that the mass media have effects in our society is undeniable. Advertisers spend billions of dollars a year believing that the media do have effects, and the First Amendment of our Constitution seeks to protect the freedoms of the media because of their consequences in society. However, views of these effects might vary among individuals and groups (Baran, 2008, p. 407).

Marshall McLuhan posed a strong view of media influence in 1967 in which he argued that “all media work us over completely” because they are so pervasive in their political, economic, aesthetic, psychological, moral, ethical, and social consequences (McLuhan & Fiore, 1996, p. 26). As the name of his book states, “The medium is the massage” (p. 26).

Numerous studies have addressed various social issues in relation to the mass media and their effects and a body of media theories has emerged from the research.
For example, George Gerbner and his associates developed cultivation theory, which looked at how the media shape and sometimes distort people's perceptions of the world. The theory grew out of national concern with the effects of violence in the 1960s and 1970s, including intense studies of televised violence. Gerbner and associates conducted an annual assessment for a yearly Violence Profile during the 1970s and 1980s, developing a theoretical framework and empirical strategy for studying effects of televised violence on people's beliefs. They then expanded their scope to include other forms of televised behavior (DeFleur & Ball-Rokeach, 1989, p. 263).

A study by Dowler examined the influence of media consumption on fear of crime, as well as on punitive attitudes, and perceived police effectiveness. The sample was derived from the 1995 National Opinion Survey on Crime and Justice (NOSCJ). In looking at the relationship between fear of crime and media consumption, the study found that respondents who were regular viewers of crime dramas were more likely to fear crime, although the relationship was weak (Dowler, 2003, p. 109). This was true even when Dowler controlled for age, gender, race, income, education, marital status, perceived police effectiveness, and perceived neighborhood problems. However, the study found that hours of television and newspapers as major sources of crime news were not significantly related to fear of crime (p. 116).

A July 2000 edition of the broadcasting industry publication Broadcasting & Cable reported that four major public health groups maintain that violent entertainment encourages violence among children. The American Medical Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Psychological Association, and the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry claimed in a joint statement that there is a
“causal connection” between children’s behavior and their consumption of violent television programs, video games, movies, and music. They stated that prolonged viewing of media violence can lead to “emotional desensitization” toward real-life violence. The issue had been addressed earlier in July 1997 when the entertainment industry added content-based ratings to television programs, but was again scrutinized after the Columbine school shootings (Albinia, 2000, p. 14).

The mass media also are studied in terms of their effects on socialization, especially that of children. Thompson & Hickey (2008) stated that the media help us form our identities and aspirations, while promoting traditional cultural values and helping maintain the status quo. They listed children’s identifying with and being influenced by media characters, vicariously experiencing events on television to help them cope with similar events in their lives, and learning to be mass consumers as aspects of the media’s role in socialization (pp. 94-95). They contended that adults are socialized during political elections and through advertising (p. 97), and that the media are sources of racial, ethnic, and gender stereotypes (p. 94).

In her book, *Mommy, I’m Scared: How TV and Movies Frighten Children and What We Can Do to Protect Them*, Joanne Cantor (1998) stated that her continued study of the effects of mass media on children have indicated that frightening media portrayals can cause long-term damage to children (p. xiii). She stated that television and movies introduce children to frightening images and events to which they otherwise would not be exposed (p. 3). Television makes the distinction between fantasy and reality especially complicated for children to sort out (p. 92).
Groups Studied

Mass media research has focused heavily on the uses of mass media and effects of mass media. These areas of focus often are addressed in terms of segments of society rather than of society as a whole.

A number of social groups have been studied in relation to the mass media, with many research articles focusing on children. Anand & Krosnick (2005) looked at demographic predictors of media use. The child’s age and race, parents’ marital status and education were significant, although parents’ employment and age, child’s gender, birth order, and language only had occasional effects (pp.539-562). A study of 4508 middle school students found that both content exposure and time spent with television, movies, and video games had a negative impact on school performance. (Sharif & Sargent, 2006, pp.1711-1713).

A study by Gentile and Walsh (2002) looked at both family media habits and media effects. It found that families that used electronic and print media carefully also scored high in areas such as monitoring children’s media use and being knowledgeable about media effects. In these families, children watched less television. In terms of media effects, children's increased television viewing predicted poorer performance in school. Children with televisions in their bedrooms watched television 5 ½ more hours a week than did children without television in their bedrooms (pp.173-174).

Older persons have been studied, as well, in terms of how they are depicted in the media, how they use media, and the effects that media have upon them. For example, Krueger (2001) found that while coverage of minorities is evident in newspapers, the elderly continue to be underrepresented (pp. 10-13). Gender also has
been studied, often with a focus on media use related to image and eating habits. Vaughan & Fouts (2003) found a relationship between girls’ media exposure between two specific points in time and eating disorder symptomatology. Increased symptomology was related to increased exposure to fashion magazines and decreased exposure to television (pp. 313-321). Racial and ethnic groups also have been the subject of media research. Brown and Pardun (2004) found both racial and gender differences in adolescents’ television diets. The study found that only four of 140 shows listed were watched regularly by more than one-third of the four race/gender groups (pp. 266-279). Nielsen Media Research (2007) found gender differences in television, with women age 55+ watching the most in every daypart, followed by men age 55+. Women age 18+ and working women watch late night television more than men of any age.

In addition, recognizing that the Hispanic, African-American, and Asian populations in aggregate now constitute almost one-third of the U.S. population, Nielsen Media Research monitors television viewing habits of those groups. It has determined, for example, that African-American households view 41% more television than the national average, watching 45 hours and 22 minutes each week compared with 32 hours and 5 minutes for all television households. Their daytime viewing exceeds that of the general market by 41%. Hispanic households tend to be larger and their television usage greater than the general market. Also, prime time continues to attract the most Hispanic viewers than any other time of day.

In contrast, research has been conducted within the media community itself to examine characteristics of those who produce media fare. Linda and Robert Lichter and Stanley Rothman’s survey of the television creative community indicated that the
creators of television programs are "social reformers who build their political ideas into their scripts," and were largely secular and politically liberal (Vivian, 2003, p. 183). Studies such as these are important because of what is referred to as the agenda-setting function of the media. While the concept initially was related to politics by McCombs and Shaw (1972, p. 176), it has come to encompass the idea that the mass media’s "agenda" tells us what to think about. However, because journalists are individuals, their personal agendas ultimately affect media content, as well (Peiser, 2000, p. 243).

American households also are studied in terms of television viewing habits, primarily by the A. C. Nielsen Company founded in 1923 as a product-testing company. Nielsen now selects 15,000 households to represent the American viewing audience and records data on what people in those households are watching. Nielsen uses a peoplemeter, which requires each household member to press buttons to record his or her viewing. It is currently rolling out the personal peoplemeter with personalized buttons for each viewer (Baran, 2008, p. 240).

The Nielsen Media Research Report on Television (2007) indicated that the number of television households has continued to grow steadily from 60.1 million in 1970 to 110.2 million in 2006. However, reflecting changing population trends, the age 50+ demographic of the television household has grown 17% from 2000 to 2006. The total number of persons in television households has continued to increase, although the number of persons per television household has remained level since 1990.

An exploratory study based on the fact that most data on television viewing addresses practices in multiperson households looked at the television use of what the
researchers termed “lone users.” Data was collected through two rounds of questionnaires to 47 television users who live alone. The researchers looked at learned, gendered domestic behavior, to examine possible guilt when television was used as leisure activity and feelings of discomfort resulting from negotiating leisure and domestic productivity (Gore & Kearney, 1996, p. 50-51). Although this study did look at singles, as does this research, it did not address religion.

Although numerous studies similar to the ones highlighted above have been written concerning the groups mentioned, less research has been done on Christians and their media habits, particularly their television viewing habits.

Purpose of Dissertation

The purpose of this study is to examine possible differences in media habits and tastes between Christians and non-Christians. I will accomplish this by looking at data of singles to determine whether or not Christians, especially those with high levels of religiosity, have different patterns.

My research into the television viewing habits of Christians examines television viewing from a current and sociologically relevant perspective, that of religion. It addresses the basic research of whether Christians react to media differently than others. The study fills a niche in examining how religious identity and religiosity relate to one of the most prevalent leisure activities in our country – television viewing. Although the data set is limited to singles, as the article on “lone users” pointed out, singles can watch whatever they please and are not affected by constraints of others. The data set was selected in large part for its accessibility. It represents a sample of singles and results cannot be generalized to the larger population of Christians.
Chapter two of this dissertation includes a comprehensive overview of the literature and research on both Christians and television. Various authors have presented the distinctions among Christians, such evangelical and fundamentalist, and how those distinctions affect their beliefs and actions. A discussion of the culture war prevalent in our society is presented, as is that of the religious right. Studies looking at the relationship between Christianity and television viewing habits are presented, as well.

Chapter three presents an overview of theoretical perspectives from standpoints of both sociology and communications studies. Theories concerning religion, media use and effects are discussed in light of their relevance to theories regarding Christians and their media habits.

Chapter four describes the methodology used in this dissertation. A data set of singles responding to a questionnaire on an Internet site for personal advertisements was utilized. The study is based primarily upon on responses concerning religious affiliation, attendance at religious services, political views, and television viewing habits. Chapter five presents the findings of this study, followed by a discussion of its implications, limitations, and recommendations for future research.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW OF CHRISTIANS AND MEDIA HABITS

Overview of Literature

The studies highlighted in the introductory chapter of this dissertation deal with various groups in society for which research studies concerning their media habits abound. Children, families, older persons, various races, and ethnicities are among those groups which have been recognized as being worthy of examination in terms of one of the most pervasive and influential components of American culture – the mass media. Yet despite the size of the Christian population in America, the growth in Christian media, especially broadcasting, and the increasing interaction between Christians and the media, less research has been done on Christians as a group in relation to their media habits.

Overall, in researching the literature concerning the topic of Christians and their television viewing habits, I found it necessary to examine the topic from a number of different perspectives. First, concerning television itself, I found that the data supplied by Nielsen Media Research presented a good overview of American television viewing habits in general to use as a basis for discussing a specific group’s viewing habits. A number of articles and studies addressed television viewing habits of Christians themselves, as well as the interplay between religiosity and media habits.

Also, in order to understand how certain characteristics of the Christian population might affect their television viewing habits, I explored literature concerning Christians, Protestants, evangelicals, African American churches, and other distinctive groups within the Christian population. In examining these various groups, I made
connections to the various aspects of culture which generate different reactions of these groups in terms of attitudes, beliefs, morals, and actions. Politics, family, education, and the media are only a few elements of culture for which we see different perspectives among the groups. Key among these elements is television. For example, Gladin (1987) found that many home school families, most of whom identified themselves as evangelical or fundamental Christians, were found not to watch television and encouraged their children to read rather than watch television (pp. 168 & 187).

Taken as a whole, distinctions can be seen through involvement in such groups as the religious right and can become components in what has been widely referred to as the culture war. Other concepts such as otherworldliness, with a greater concern being placed on spiritual rather than earthly matters, are noteworthy in drawing comparisons between worldviews of groups of Christians, as well. Within each of these areas of study, an argument can be made that the media in general and television in particular are important components.

Christians as a Group

Research and literature on Christians as a group provide perspectives from which to learn about Christians and their media habits, primarily their television viewing habits. The main focus of this dissertation is on Christians as a group. However, it will look at other studies concerning various types of Christians, most commonly mainstream Protestants, evangelicals, Catholics, and Black Protestants. The independent variable Christian used in my statistical analysis includes individuals who defined themselves on the question of religion as Christian, Christian/Protestant, Christian/Catholic, and Christian/Other. Christians are thus compared to non-Christians,
or all others who do not profess to being Christians. It also should be understood that this discussion does not describe all of Christianity.

In his book, *American Evangelicalism: Embattled and Thriving*, Smith (1998) discussed who Christians are, although it is important to note that this is not a discussion of all Christians. Rather than relying upon denominational or theological classifications, he devised a set of religious self-identifications and categories based upon how survey respondents identified themselves. The categories have roots in American Protestant traditions and represent four types of Protestants: evangelical, fundamentalist, mainline Protestant, and theologically liberal Protestant (p.19). He drew comparisons between the groups based on dimensions of religious strength, including adherence to beliefs, salience of faith, robustness of faith, group participation, commitment to mission, and retention and recruitment of members (p. 21).

It is important to note that a discussion of Smith is not a discussion of all Christians. Smith refers to evangelicals in his discussion of the types of Protestants. Even though he looks specifically at evangelicals, it is worth noting that the distinctions he makes could apply to Christians as a whole.

Of his four categories of Protestants, evangelicals exhibit the highest degree of adherence to many Christian beliefs. Those include a sinful nature, moral absolutes, and literal interpretation of the Bible as the inspired word of God (pp. 22-25). They also have strong salience of faith in their own lives, a robustness of faith that includes the least amount of doubting, and the highest degree of religious group participation (pp. 26-32).
Smith contended that the main thrust of American Christianity over time has been its activism in trying to improve America spiritually, morally, and socially, and to evangelize the world. Evangelicalism proves strongest in religious expressions of activism and in carrying a new social Gospel (pp. 36-37). In terms of the means to accomplish these changes, evangelicals disproportionately favor living a radically different lifestyle from mainstream America and trying to change the country to better reflect God’s will (pp. 38-39). Evangelicals are “most walking their talk” (p. 39) in terms of giving money to help spread the Gospel, to personally evangelize others, to speak up for a biblical worldview in intellectual conversation, to volunteer in service-oriented church programs, and to set Christian examples (p. 39).

Comparing Christian traditions with nonreligious Americans, evangelicals are most likely to vote, give money to the poor, lobby, and stay politically and socially educated. However, they did not indicate a high level of giving to non-Christian political entities or volunteering in a non-church capacity. Smith stated that most evangelicals have a burden for the state of the world and feel it is their personal responsibility to change society (pp. 39-43).

In his book *Protestantism in the United States: Righteous Empire*, Marty (1986) described Protestants in general as being religious, members of western religious traditions and western Christianity; as having a biblical, God-centered faith; as being monotheistic and distinctive; and as being worshippers and being ethical-minded (pp. 3-8). Yet he made the distinctions that one party, called “private” Protestantism or “evangelical,” had characterized all Protestants early in the nineteenth century. This party accented individual salvation out of this world, personal moral life in line with the
ideals of the saved, and rewards or punishments in a life to come. The second informal group, called “public” Protestantism, was public in its exposure to the social order and the social destinations of people (p. 179).

Marty explained that the word “evangelical” came to describe the first group, while “social” designated the second, who pursued such things as a social Christianity, social gospel, social service, and social realism. They did not lose faith in another world, but complemented it with a focus on earthly endeavors (p. 179).

Luidens and Nemeth’s study drew upon Marty’s argument that private Protestantism or evangelical focused upon personal salvation, living a moral life that would gain rewards or punishment in the life to come (Marty, 1986, p. 179), and Hoge’s examination of the condition of the two parties in the 1970s (Luidens & Nemeth, 1987, p. 450). Luidens and Nemeth replicated these studies through their own examination of the laity of the Reformed Church in America. They utilized Hoge’s “Spiritual-Secular Dualism Index, “ which included a dualist perspective of the world as being divided between spiritual and secular arenas, and a monist dimension which gives equal stress to bodily, spiritual, and material well-being (Luidens & Nemeth, 1987, p. 451). They also included in their Reformed Church study Hoge’s Otherworldliness Index, a three-item scale to measure the degree to which respondents felt that their earthly life was the focus of their Christian efforts or was primarily preparation for life after death (pp. 456-457).

The relevance of otherworldliness to a study of television viewing habits of Christians lies in how the otherworldliness orientation is lived out through a person’s daily activities. An example of a study examining otherworldliness as it relates to a
particular aspect of society looks at religiosity and racial empowerment of African Americans. Criticism has existed that otherworldliness and concern with personal salvation depresses African-American racial orientations and efforts toward improving community by focusing on the justice and solace of the afterlife, individual explanations of deprivation, and personal piety and worship rather than collective action regarding suffering (Calhoun-Brown, 1999, pp. 427-428).

Using data from the National Black Politics Study (NBPS), which includes a measure for otherworldliness, the study found that otherworldly orientation is not incompatible with African-American empowerment (pp. 430 & 436). The study showed a positive relationship between an otherworldly orientation and a desire for institutional autonomy, a belief that churches should be involved in politics, and racial solidarity.

Otherworldliness was associated with only separatist-oriented measures of racial empowerment, which deal with institutional autonomy, including churches’ role in politics and the measure of racial solidarity. Otherworldly orientations were not found to be a major hindrance to integrationist forms of political involvement, revealed by measures of political participation. The effect of otherworldliness on voting and other forms of political participation were not found to be statistically significant, and it did not facilitate political mobilization. Church involvement, however, was associated with only integrationist-oriented measures of racial empowerment (pp. 432-439).

The perspectives from which Smith described evangelicals in comparison to the other major Christian traditions set the stage for discussing how Christians, especially those with high levels of religiosity, might demonstrate different television viewing habits.
from the general population. The distinctions are especially relevant in Hunter's (1991) discussion of evangelicals in his book, *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America*.

The culture war that Hunter depicted includes various areas of society, such as the family, education, and politics. Interests and perspectives regarding these areas are tied into certain values and often involve the media. This is an incentive for Christians, as participants in this culture war, to develop distinctive media habits that reflect their Christian values. Hunter contended that the “personal and human face of public debate is one we rarely if ever see” (p. 33). He related that our sources of information concerning controversies are the media, which only give superficial coverage and present the individuals involved as extremists or opportunists and the events as unrelated (p. 33).

Hunter argued that these events and voices are related and represent a culture war in America that he believed would affect not only public policy, but the ordinary lives of Americans. He saw the stakes as high and affecting how Americans will live our lives together (p. 34). He defined cultural conflict as “political and social hostility rooted in different systems of moral understanding…traced ultimately to the matter of moral authority” (p. 42). Although he saw most Americans as occupying the middle ground within the culture, he described a cultural realignment being formed across faith traditions, with orthodox and progressivist communities. While Protestant Fundamentalism and the New Christian Right, as well as the National Organization for Women (NOW) and attorneys of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) are among the most visible groups involved in the culture war, Hunter said that the culture war includes a variety of other cultural groups (p. 48).
The culture war seeks to control the symbols of public culture, with the conflict crystallizing in the context of social institutions, including the popular media. Television, film art, music, etc., are important because they reflect the culture’s hopes and ideals. The disagreement exists in terms of which hopes and ideals should be reflected. Hunter called the media instruments of cultural warfare because they actually define reality by which events they cover and which they ignore, by the ways in which they depict individuals and groups, and by what they present as acceptable and unacceptable (pp. 173-174).

A number of scholars writing since the publication of Hunter’s book have questioned the status of this culture war over time. McConkey (2001) examined whether in light of several shifts in the political world, evangelicals have softened their moral positions in areas concerning homosexuality, nonmarital sexuality, women’s roles, birth control, suicide, and euthanasia. He determined from data gathered from the 1988 and 1998 General Social Surveys that although evangelicals have capitulated on some areas of morality, the cultural tension has been maintained between evangelicals and religious progressives. McConkey stated that his findings are consistent with Smith’s subcultural identity theory concerning this continuing cultural tension, but he did not believe that the tension would result in cultural warfare.

According to Smith’s (1998) subcultural identity theory of religious strength, a religious movement that involves cultural distinction and heavy social involvement will thrive in a modern pluralistic society. Cultural pluralism and social differentiation actually create an environment in which religious groups such as evangelicals can flourish rather than be diminished (p. 90). Evangelicals use this environment to
construct subcultural distinction, involvement, and tension between themselves and relevant outgroups, building strength from their cultural distinction and engagement with pluralistic modernity (p. 121).

Miller and Hoffman (1999) attempted to resolve the paradox between scholarly research and media discourse concerning divisions among Americans on a number of moral and social issues and empirical studies indicating that differences in attitudes about these issues have remained stable over a 25-year period. They suggested that events of the 1970s and 1980s led to increased salience of these issues while simultaneously redefining the terms conservative and liberal. The authors contended that despite changes in attitudes, orthodox religious denominations increasingly called themselves conservative and progressive denominations called themselves liberal. Both groups developed more negative opinions of each other.

Woodberry and Smith (1998) suggested, however, that although there has been increased scholarly interest in conservative Protestants since the rise of the Religious Right, there is poor understanding of the groups within the conservative Protestant tradition. Combined with imprecise measurement techniques utilized in studies, it has led to unclear statistical results, a lack of theoretical development, and limited areas of analysis.

Various scholars have applied the concept of culture wars to more specific topics, as well. Morone and Kilbreth (2003) cited the culture war as part of the changing social environment that has affected direct citizen action in health policy, which they advocated restoring. Other factors included in this social environment were globalization, immigration, and managed care. Gormly (2003) addressed the issue of
culture and mass media in a study of contemporary Christian music. He identified media and their related cultural attributes as a point of conflict in the culture war and maintained that evangelicals have moved into a new level of national discourse through the growth of contemporary Christian music. He saw putting religious messages into the form of Christian music as increased sophistication and contended that it allows evangelicals to resist a dominant secular society by taking possession of a cultural element and redefining it.

Davis (1996) provided a different perspective on the culture war, claiming that those fighting it actually are only trying to bring about a unified America. He admitted that most Christians want to be good citizens despite their confusion over the demands of the dual citizenship of Heaven and earth. They are torn concerning how their faith affects their politics. Davis addressed Hunter’s idea of the culture war as being between the orthodox and progressives, but formulated his own conception of four groups forming with competing ways of addressing the dual citizenship that Christians maintain.

These groups include Reconstructionists, which see themselves as bound to create a political system based on biblical law, imposing a theocracy upon the country. The Religious Right does not seek this theocracy but a more subtle influence of Christian influence into politics. Davis maintained that these two groups make up the orthodox element in Hunter’s conception of the culture war.

Civil religionists are more accommodating to non-Christian religions and want to find core values to unite all Americans. Many Christians give loyalty to both Christianity and this civil religion that creates a common ground. Pluralists, on the other hand,
affirm that religious pluralism is real and not in itself undesirable. These two groups fit Hunter’s progressive category.

Also, in an effort to clarify differences within the Christian community as they relate to society, Hoge (1976) studied Presbyterians in America in light of Marty’s (1986) distinctions within Protestantism. He examined various aspects of division, including institutional, clergy-laity differences, and theological perspectives. He found that on the theological issues surveyed, the public Protestants reflected the scientific humanistic world view, seeing human nature as unitary, focusing on the impact of social structures on human free will, and focusing on this life rather than the next. Private Protestants view human nature as a dualism of body and soul, believe that people have free will without regard to the impact of social structures, and focus on life after death (pp. 84-85).

Luidens and Nemeth (1987) addressed the emergence of the New Right in religious and political arenas with a study of the private and public parties addressed in Marty’s book Righteous Empire. Their study of the Reformed Church in America suggests that there are three parties. The private Party, born-again believers who interpret the Bible literally and who do not come from the Cosmopolitan eastern region of the denomination, has a dualistic world view, commitment to free will, and a primary concern for life after death. They found the public Party to be detached and in disarray, and a cohesive loyalist Party with theological orthodoxy as a main focus (pp. 461-462).

Drawing upon studies such as these and Smith’s discussion of evangelicals’ concern for and activism toward society, we see that media and evangelicalism indeed are related and are visible within Hunter’s description of the culture war. In addition,
Smith (1998) described how evangelicals think of themselves as outside the mainstream of a culture “that has abandoned them in pursuit of narcissistic, licentious, and self-destructive values and lifestyles” (p. 130). He related that evangelicals see and hear a set of values that are foreign to the culture (p. 130).

The interaction between values of various groups in society, such as Christians, and the creation of what are perceived as social problems is illustrated as the value conflict perspective in Earl Rubington and Martin S. Weinberg's (2003) book, *Social Problems: Seven Perspectives*. The perspective saw social problems as arising from a conflict of values, with competition and types of contacts among groups being the condition for formulation of the conflict. Groups can become polarized, values clarified, and solutions created, ranging from reaching consensus or bargaining to gaining control through power (p. 88).

Fuller and Myers (2003) described a moral problem as a condition for which there is no consensus of opinion about whether the condition is a problem or whether anything should be done about it (p. 93). They also saw stages of a social problem as including awareness, choosing sides, redefining values, proposing action, and success in generating action on behalf of values (p. 95).

within the coalition, and the constituency that the activists sought to mobilize (p. 13). By 1980 the New Christian Right had evolved into a loose collection of around a dozen television evangelists, maverick main-line ministers, lobbies, committees, and members. Yet an organizational structure composed of the Christian Voice, the Roundtable, and especially the Moral Majority had become nationally prominent and drew other religious activists. The first organization, The Christian Voice, blended anti-gay, anti-pornography, and pro-family groups on the West Coast, as well as some well-known fundamentalist ministers, especially Pat Robertson, head of the Christian Broadcasting Network and the “700 Club” (Guth, 1983, p. 31).

The New Christian Right has attacked secular humanism and liberal Christianity in a contest that also included gaining control over key public symbols (Heinz, 1983, p. 133). Television, schools, and family are major symbols and means of access to symbol production. Television evangelists, or the electronic church, has brought evangelicalism in general and the New Christian Right into public consciousness (p. 137). Their increased visibility and power as a group indicate that they would have distinctive television viewing habits keeping in line with their beliefs.

Johnson (1993) contended that the New Christian Right, rather than its frequent depiction as a “revolt against modernity,” actually adapted to and accommodated social and technological change, and depended upon those changes. Its connection with television evangelism illustrates this relationship. By 1977 Christian television and televangelism had developed into full-scale religious television networks. The first, the Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN), was launched on cable television by Pat Robertson of the “700 Club” (Neudorf, 1987, p. 9).
Another theoretical perspective related to the television viewing habits of Christians relates to how some persons view the world and interact with it. Roberts (2004) described a perspective referred to as otherworldly orientation as an important element of the worldview. Otherworldliness is in contrast to being this-worldly (p. 166) or concerned with things of the natural world as opposed to the spiritual. An integral component of the natural world is the mass media, both in terms of their ubiquitous nature within our culture and also of their representation of that culture. Johnstone also describes the dichotomy that exists between the sacred, which involves the supernatural, and the profane, or ordinary, which includes the visible environment of the routine world (p. 13). I suggest in my examination of the television viewing habits of Christians that a lack of concern with earthly matters might affect viewing habits of some Christians to the extent that they do not even own a television.

Christians and Television Viewing Habits

Current research studies concerning Christians and their media habits, specifically television viewing habits, have been exploratory in nature and for the most part are not from national data sets to be generalizable for the nation as a whole. Frederick (2000) investigated the relationship between African American Christian women’s spirituality and the public sphere based upon a year of ethnographic field research in Halifax County, North Carolina. She examined the institutions which affected the religious commitments and political orientations of the women she studied. She found that many of the women, members of different Baptist churches (p. 27), were not only influenced by local pastors and church members, but equally were influenced by the media and information coming from outside their community. Many of the
women also followed television ministries, which Frederick looked at from the perspective of their impact on the black church (pp. iv-v).

In studying the role of spirituality as it relates to activism, Frederick explained that spirituality “conveys creativity, the ability to invent, to reinterpret, to move beyond the limitations of ritual and static notions of religiosity,” motivates the women’s social interactions, and is related to their political and economic realities (p. 11). The women she interviewed focused on the individual in terms of spirituality, not upon the church or its rituals (p. 16). Frederick analyzed the women’s ideas of spirituality in relation to social conditions such as racism, sexism, and classism (p. 18). She addressed three theoretical issues in her research – the relationships between structure and agency, and between accommodation and resistance, as well as the meaning and sustainability of the black public sphere (p. 3). Her field research included participation, observation, and primarily in-depth interviews with women selected based on their willingness to talk and their interest in institutions associated with God (pp. 28-29).

As part of this study, Frederick looked at the black church’s role as an alternative public and what authority its message of liberation carries. She saw the emergence of television ministries as influencing the black church as much as Sunday worship services. It has contributed to the women’s commitment to individual as well as societal transformation (p. 34). Frederick argued that television ministries can potentially challenge the “historic justice-oriented discourse of the black church” (p. 154). Each woman in the study had watched or currently was watching television evangelists (p. 156). In looking at several television ministries watched by these women, she determined that although the programs represented different doctrinal positions, they
shared three common characteristics. They focused on the individual rather than on community and collective experiences concerning race, class, and gender. Frederick related that while more communal activity of a service was not included in the segment, marketing materials and mass conferences lent themselves to market driven appeal to the individual. The programs also promoted prosperity teaching and multiculturalism without a critique of racism (pp.154-155).

The women in this study maintained a critique of structural inequalities and commitment to their community in spite of these messages. Younger women, in particular, balanced viewing of televangelists with other activities (p. 183). Frederick contended that unlike local pastors, televangelists cannot speak to specific local issues such as the economy or education (p. 190).

Hamilton and Rubin (1989) examined the impact of religiosity on television use. For their study, they described religiosity as “a personality attribute that affects social attitudes and behavior” (p. 2) and “reflects piousness or strict, devoted, and traditional religious observance…manifested in beliefs and practices…[and] affects behavior” (p. 3). Related to their hypotheses, they defined “religiosity” as “orthodoxy of Christian beliefs and frequency of religious practice.” Those who practiced their religion frequently and were orthodox in their Christian beliefs were considered conservatives. The authors expected that conservatives and nonconservatives would use television differently, asking the research question of whether they would differ in their motivations to watch television, their viewing of sexual and violent programming, and attitudes about television. Their results revealed differences between the two groups’ viewing habits of
sexually oriented television programs but not of violent programs, and differences for only some of the examined motivations and attitudes toward television (p. 4).

Hamilton and Rubin defined “religious conservative” as “a fundamentalist or evangelical who practices biblical Christianity.” Church affiliation was the indicator of religiosity or Christian conservatism and orthodoxy – conservative, moderate, or liberal. (p. 6). Respondents were asked how often they watched certain television programs, including eight violent and eight sexual programs, as well as eight family-oriented programs. Violent programs were programs rated highest in violence by the National Coalition on Television Violence (NCTV) and sexual programs were those ranked high by the National Federation of Decency (NNFD) (p. 7). Respondents also were asked about their viewing motivations. Factors accounting for 64.3% of the total variance were identified: enjoyment, substitution, spiritual guidance, avoidance, information, and voyeurism (p. 8). The researchers also measured attitudes in terms of how much affinity respondents had with television and how real they perceived television to be (p. 8).

The study found that religious conservatives viewed sexually oriented television programs less often than nonconservatives and perceived television as being less realistic than nonconservatives. Religious conservatives did not have stronger reactionary television viewing motivations than nonconservatives and did not view violent television programs less often than nonconservatives. The study also found some support that conservatives had weaker voyeuristic television viewing motives than nonconservatives and that conservatives had less affinity with television than nonconservatives (p. 5).
Nisbet and Goidel’s (2007) study examined the impact of value predispositions, schema, political knowledge, and forms of mass media in terms of shaping public perceptions concerning science, particularly America’s contemporary debate over embryonic stem cell research. They analyzed nationally representative survey data collected through 407 random telephone interviews, examining how forms of knowledge relate to shaping views of embryonic stem cell and cloning research and how they compare to influences of social values connected to Christian conservatism and social ideology. They compared the influence of knowledge to more generalized schematic views about science and feelings about politically related issues. Concerning the mass media, they examined connections between news media use and television entertainment and opinions of cloning and stem cell research (pp. 421 & 423).

The focus on Christian conservatism and social ideology as the two value predispositions used in the study was selected in part due to the value predisposition of Christian conservatism being made relevant for many persons partly by political activities of conservative Christian leaders opposing human embryo research. The researchers described the conservative Christian movement as including “Evangelical Protestant elites whose concern for public affairs derives from a strict doctrinal religious view, grounded in a politically strategic interpretation of biblical scripture” (p. 425). They believed that these elites mobilize the 30-40 percent of Americans considering themselves to be evangelical or born-again Christians and rely strictly on doctrine in political and everyday activities (p. 425).

Christian conservatism was based on responses to a 10-point scale on how much guidance religion played in political issues, voting, and daily activities. Two other
10-point scales measured attention to newspaper coverage and attention to science fiction television programs, science documentary programs, and Christian television programs. Items exploring political knowledge concerning stem cell and cloning research were included, as were reservations about abortion (p. 429). The study found that Christian conservatism and social ideology are strongly associated with more negative evaluations of the controversial science in question. Attention to newspaper coverage and scientific documentary television viewing are related to more positive evaluations, while Christian television viewing was related to more negative evaluations of embryonic stem cell research (p. 433).

Gladin (1987) included a focus on religion and television viewing in his study of home school families. The study was based on 253 returned questionnaires from a random sample from four diverse regions of the countries. Research questions addressed characteristics, opinions, and activities of the families, including religious convictions and television viewing habits (pp. 82-88). The study found that most respondents considered themselves evangelical or fundamental Christians, and that the average home school family attended religious services two or three times a week (pp. 100-101). Many home school families were found to not watch television. Those who did averaged 1.7 hours a day and watched programs designed for children or that the parents regarded as wholesome. Parents closely monitored what their children watched on television, and encouraged their children to read instead of watching television. The periodical read most frequently was the local newspaper (pp. 168 & 187).
The examination of literature concerning religion and media not only documents the interaction between the two, but sheds light on the variety of ways that they affect each other. Frederick’s (2000) study illustrated the media’s influence upon spirituality and the public sphere, while Hamilton and Rubin (1989) showed an impact of religiosity upon television use. Nisbet and Goidel (2007) found that Christian values and media use both affected evaluations of science. Gladin (1987) demonstrated how Christianity and church attendance, commonly used as a measure of religiosity, relate to family television viewing habits.

Gladin’s study also expanded the focus of religion and television viewing to include viewing practices adopted for the benefit of children, which a number of studies suggest is of particular concern for Christians. Seiter (1999) examined perspectives of teachers employed by fundamentalist churches and fundamentalists running home daycare centers. She found that one means of establishing respectability is to demonstrate seriousness in the moral and religious education of one’s children. Childrearing and media censorship are major draws of the Christian Right (p. 93).

The majority of caregivers and their families watched television, although many of them reported reading the Bible several times a week alone or with family members (p. 95). In many ways the fundamentalist caregivers were no different than the caregivers interviewed in secular settings. For example, both groups were concerned over sexual imagery in children’s texts, although the conservative Protestants expressed concern for submission to the Bible’s authority (p. 99).

Concerns regarding media and children have roots in the process of socialization, particularly that of children. Central to what Gerbner, Morgan, and
Signorielli (1986) called the cultivation process of the media, television cultivates from infancy the predispositions and preferences that once just were learned from other sources, making it the primary common source of socialization and information, often in the form of entertainment. It is the stable and common images in the total programming pattern over time that matter (p. 17-18).

Young people spend an average of three hours a day watching television, close to four hours including videos and prerecorded programs. Television viewing hours are highest among younger children, with 8-to-10 year-olds spending more than four hours a day with television, videos, and recorded programs. On any given day, 69% of all young persons watch cable television. Yet the majority of young people say that their parents do not impose rules on their television, video game, music, or computer use. Only 13% of parents have rules about what television programs their children can watch, compared to 23% who have rules about computer use (Kaiser Family Foundation Study, 2005).

Given the impact that television has been found to make upon the socialization process, as well as the amount of time that many children spend watching television, it follows that Christians might have different practices regarding the television viewing habits of their children as they relate to Christian values. Williams (1988) conducted an investigation of traditional Christian education and home education in the Lynchburg vicinity. She compared the relationships among a child’s social conformity, language development, and parent involvement. Significant differences were found in conformity to parents, perceived importance of individualized educational programs, and in three parental social structuring habits, including television viewing, time in restaurants, and
maternal time with children. Children in traditional Christian education tended to have stronger preferences, nonconforming behavior, visual stimuli, stronger expressive language abilities, and generalities. Home educated children were found to have tendencies toward weaker preferences, conforming behavior, verbal stimuli, stronger receptive language abilities, and details.

Prince (1995) investigated beliefs and practices of home schooling families with respect to development of emergent literacy among home school children. Responses from questionnaires and interview/direct observation of 105 families indicated that among such practices as modeling reading and writing, and motivating children to engage in pretend play, home schooling families limited television viewing. The study also found that curriculum and texts used by home schoolers usually were obtained from Christian religious publishing sources, even among families who did not home school for religious reasons.

Gibson's (1988) study within the United Kingdom looked at the formation and maintenance of young persons' attitudes toward Christianity and the salient factors that might be involved in the attitude formation. The researcher's interest stemmed from concern over the decline in young people's church activity in Scotland and from a questioning of whether the decline could be related to their fundamental attitudes toward Christianity. Empirical research was conducted with 6,838 secondary school pupils between 11 and 17 years of age in nondenominational and independent schools in the Dundee area.

Concerning the formation and maintenance of young people's attitudes to Christianity, Gibson looked at the pupil's sex, age, personal church attendance and
Sunday school attendance, parental church attendance and parental encouragement, social class differences, peer group influence, type of school attended and attitudes to science, as well as the effects of television viewing on young persons’ perceptions, including perceptions of religion on television. The study found that the most important elements in the religious socialization of young people were parental example and encouragement. Peer group influence also was found to be significant, and church attendance was found to have considerable influence on pupils’ attitudes toward Christianity (1988).

A two-year longitudinal study of television viewing patterns examined how a sample of 271 three- and five-year-olds and their families watched television together. Five one-week diaries for all family members were collected every six months (St. Peters, Fitch, Huston, Wright, & Eakins, 1991, p. 1409). Coding was devised for available television programs based on intended audience (child or adult), informative purpose (yes or no), animation utilized (full, partial, none), and program type (news and information, sports, comedy, drama, action-adventure, or variety-game). Eight program categories were selected with two types intended for children, informative and non-informative. Six categories were intended for general audiences, including news and information, sports, comedy, drama, action-adventure, and variety-game (pp.1411-1412).

Encouragement and regulation of program types were addressed in a questionnaire in addition to interviews with parents. Encouragement and regulation varied in relation to the child’s age and categories of parents, which included the Laissez-Faire category that offered little encouragement or regulation, the Restrictive
category of those who regulated but did not encourage, the *Promotive* group of parents who encouraged but did not regulate, and the *Selective* category of parents who both regulated and encouraged (p.1417).

Of interest to this study on the television viewing habits of Christians is that the average parent prohibited some programs based on a variety of reasons, including anti-Christian values and behaviors. Most frequently mentioned reasons included violence (70%), sexual content (62%), scary content (36%), adverse reaction by the child (29%), disapproved values and behaviors (e.g., anti-Christian, shows people treating one another rudely) (27%), bad language (19%), and adult content such as suicide or abortion (15%) (p. 1417).

Parents encouraged and discouraged different types of programs. On the average, parents encouraged educational programs, children’s specials, and nature documentaries. They were neutral about most types of programs, including cartoons, superhero shows, situation comedies, game shows, police shows, sports, movies, musicals, or variety shows. Programs that parents were most likely to discourage were horror shows and soap operas (p. 1418). Despite the fact that they mentioned violence as a main cause for prohibiting program viewing, parents did not discourage programs that contain high degrees of violence (cartoons, superhero shows, police shows) (p. 1421).

Gantz and Kowalewski (1979) examined levels of satisfaction with television programming, awareness of and exposure to religious broadcasts, motivations for exposure to “The 700 Club” (a nationally syndicated Christian program), and potential use of alternatives to traditional television programs provided by the Christian
Broadcasting Network (CBN) (p. 4). Respondents in 308 telephone interviews were asked to describe how satisfied they were with current television programming, ranging from very satisfied to not satisfied at all. They were then asked to evaluate morning shows such as game shows, afternoon programs such as soap operas, and prime time evening programs. Response choices were excellent, good, fair, poor, and terrible. They were asked their perceptions of the amount of violence on television, then rated morning, afternoon, and evening programs with current movie ratings. They were asked their agreement with the statement, “Some people say there should be a lot more censorship of TV to make it more suitable for all viewers,” with responses ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree (p.5).

Concerning religious broadcasting, respondents were asked if they were familiar with types of religious programming, including those with a key religious personality, those with key church leaders, and those resembling talk shows. Those who answered yes were asked if they had ever seen any of the programs. Those who watched “The 700 Club” were asked for their motivations for watching, including entertainment, spiritual guidance and fulfillment, learning about politics, as the only thing worth watching, learning how a Christian should think in today’s world, because someone else there is watching, learning about the Bible, and learning who to vote for or about laws (p. 6).

Findings included a significant dissatisfaction with general television programming. Morning programs like game shows were judged as somewhat higher quality programs, with prime time shows considered the highest in quality. Afternoon shows such as soap operas were thought to be lowest in quality, although one-third of
the sample was unable to assess them. More respondents were aware of religious broadcasting than actually watched it, with the greatest interest in alternative Christian programming being in the area of prime time and early evening news (p. 8).

Most respondents thought that there was too much sex and violence on television. Most rated television programs as suitable for most audiences, yet only two-thirds for morning programs, one-fifth for afternoon shows, and one-fourth for prime time programs rated them as “G” and suitable for all audiences. Also, one in four rated afternoon programming and one in five rated prime time programming as “R” or “X.” Overall, measures of satisfaction with present programming were unrelated to items gauging interest in CBN alternative programming (pp. 9 & 14).

A study conducted by Kim (1986) analyzed uses and gratification sought from regular televangelism viewers and those they actually received from the broadcasts. The research was based on a questionnaire given to 188 regular televangelism viewers in Erie County, New York, chosen by probability sampling. Their degree of involvement with religious television, aspects of their religious experience, which included beliefs, feelings, and practices, and their demographic information, including religious affiliation also were examined.

Separate factor analyses of gratifications (both sought and received) determined common factors of parasocial interaction, entertainment, information seeking, support interpersonal utility, and reinforcement. The study found that the desire for parasocial interaction and maintenance of the belief system were the strongest predictors of watching religious television programming. Viewing religious television was found to be a process of maintaining the belief system that was entertaining, as well. Involvement
with religious television after viewing was strongly positively correlated with all of the factor-based gratifications. Active involvement of respondents and their experience with religious television as a source of information promoted orientation toward televangelism. Active consumption of televangelism was found to be negatively correlated with endorsing orthodox Christian views.

Heavy viewers of religious television were found to be less likely to participate in public religious practices. Kim proposed that results of the study suggest that viewing of televangelism has the potential of becoming a private religious practice “through parasocialization with God and TV ministers and through habituated exposure to religious TV programs.” The study also suggested that the gratification process should be considered as changing before, during, and after viewing.

Chamberlain’s (1987) four-week study utilizing distribution of 294 questionnaires following services in nine California churches examined the relationship between general and religious television viewing preferences, and between levels of religiosity and general television viewing preferences. The study utilized the sampling technique of previous studies by Buddenbaum and Niebuhr in which churches were divided into three categories based on high, medium, and low ritualistic influences. The churches’ economic levels were determined by surrounding neighborhoods (pp. 29-30).

The study also analyzed the relationship between religious television viewing, levels of religiosity, and reasons for perceived distastefulness of general television programs. The research found that general television program preferences did not differ between levels of religiosity, yet the number of hours viewed did differ. A relationship between levels of religiosity or religious television viewing and reasons for
regarding general television as distasteful also was discovered. Respondents with higher levels of religiosity found general television distasteful more often than did respondents with lower levels of religiosity (p. ii.).

Chamberlain’s study indicated that respondents who had a higher level of religiosity determined by a combination of behaviors including reading the Bible, praying, and tithing (p. 80), found general television programs distasteful more strongly than those with lower levels of religiosity. Themes cited were violence (61.4%), adultery (57.7%), sex (57.0%), profanity (47.4%), down play the family (44.7%), anti-religious (40.6%), contrary to religious beliefs (39.2%), and racial discrimination (19.5%) (p. 116).

Chamberlain used religious television viewing as a measure of a respondent’s commitment to God (p. 3). Religious television viewers regarded general television programs distasteful more strongly than non-viewers for the following reasons. Reasons given were adultery (71.7%), sex (67.9%), violence (67.0%), profanity (62.3%), down play the family (52.8%), contrary to religious beliefs (51.9%), anti-religious (50.9%), and racial discrimination (23.6%) (p. 115).

Findings in Chamberlain’s study, which suggested that religiosity did not significantly influence general television viewing preferences have been echoed in the research of the Barna Research Group, known for its studies on Christians and various aspects of society. In one of his numerous books on the Christian community, *Absolute Confusion*, Barna (1993) discussed the findings of the 1993-94 *Barna Report*. He related that Americans have expressed a significant distrust for the media. He cited
television in particular as a source of “ire,” but pointed out that people spend “unconscionable” amounts of time viewing its programs (p. 14).

The study indicated that the typical American adult had spent the equivalent of two entire months watching television during the past year, despite considering television not very enjoyable. They reportedly spent four hours a day watching television while criticizing it for its use of violence, foul language, and explicit sexual activity. Viewing of the popular MTV channel was just as prevalent among Christians. Barna stated that Christians cannot point the finger at others and claim that Christians have had no part in the development of this situation. He argued that Christians are “virtually indistinguishable” from other adults in their media use.

Relevance of This Study

This dissertation seeks to fill the gap that a relatively small body of research concerning Christianity and television viewing leaves. It will employ various theories, such as those concerning the culture war, otherworldliness, and the creation of social problems, to look at Christians with relation to society, using a national data set of singles. It fills a niche in applying these relationships to society as a whole to the more specialized interest of television viewing habits. While the sample itself is limited to singles and does not look at the Christian population as a whole, the study itself furthers the endeavor to look at a prominent group within society, that of Christians, and its interaction with a dominant force within our culture, television.
CHAPTER 3

THEORIES CONCERNING CHRISTIANS AND MEDIA HABITS

An examination of the television viewing habits of Christians is by necessity multi-faceted. The key components of the study, television and Christians, each are part of a larger focus to be presented before theoretical discussion concerning the nature of their interaction can begin. Television itself is worthy of study not only as the pervasive medium that it has become, but as part of a larger, ever-present force in our society – the mass media. Each has generated research and theoretical assertions concerning not only their use by individuals and groups, but their effects on both. Theories abound concerning the mass media, some proclaiming their benefits to society, others bemoaning the consequences of the mass-mediated society itself. But most of these theories, if not all, admit that the mass media have altered our social terrain.

The other component of this study, Christians, must be addressed not only with regard to their place as a distinctive group within society, but also with regard to the overarching social institution that relates to their existence – religion. Again, studies and theories are plentiful concerning religion in general, but are not as numerous dealing with Christians as a group. How religion affects and has been affected by society throughout the ages relates to this study, as does how Christianity differs from other forms of worship.

Broadening the theoretical exploration of this topic to examine how Christians interact with television necessitates mention of the culture in which they both exist. This look at culture involves how the groups within it both co-exist and handle conflict. Thus,
with such a broad array of perspectives from which to approach the topic of the television viewing habits of Christians, this chapter consists of a number of sociological theories and mass media theories regarding these various elements. These theories in turn relate to the narrower focus of this dissertation – whether or not the television viewing habits of Christians differ from those of non-Christians. They also have led to the formation of three hypotheses that have guided my research and are presented at the end of this chapter.

Sociological Theories Concerning Mass Media

The development of theories regarding mass communication draws from a number of disciplines that have contributed to the body of thought now referred to as media theory. Key scholars have provided theoretical insight regarding the mass media, as well as understanding of how more current media theories have both built upon and altered them. Baran and Davis (2003) argued that present-day theories are primarily updated versions of old ideas, so understanding contemporary theories requires an understanding of the theories on which they are based (p. 5).

Although the major portion of my study of Christians and their television viewing habits examines the topic in light of sociological theories, a discussion of a group of theories whose roots also lie in psychology provides added insight into my topic, as well as serving as an example of how mass communications theories develop from the work of social scientists from other disciplines. DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach (1989) traced how mass communication theories of selective influence drew heavily from the area of psychology as well as sociology to examine personal and social influences of the media (p. 168). Three distinct but related formulations emerged from social scientists’
increasing recognition of patterns in individual and group behavior -- the individual differences theory, the social differentiation theory, and the social relationships theory (p. 171).

The individual differences theory developed from a “nature versus nurture” debate concerning personality differences. The nature or instinctive side of human behavior was on one side of the controversy and acquired characteristics were on the other. A new branch of psychology emerged at the turn of the century and focused on the psychology of learning, which would ultimately become central to studying the effects of mass communication. Skinner’s (1938) theories of operant conditioning and Pavlov’s (1927/1960) introduction of classical conditioning theories, both developed from using animals as subjects, were thought to lead to an understanding of how humans learned. It was determined that although certain biological motivations are similar from one person to another, our acquired or learned motivators are products of our social experiences (pp. 172-177). The role of individual differences in the psychological structure of audience members was significant in shaping both their attention to media and their behavior toward what they present (p. 179).

The social differentiation theory developed as both quantitative and qualitative research revealed that members of society could be conceptually divided into social categories that shared a common characteristic, such as social class, ethnic identity, or religion. Study of such categories showed that people in any particular grouping [such as Christians] had many similarities that had an impact on their behavior (DeFleur & Ball-Rokeach, 1989, p.181). Durkheim’s classic study of suicide was a turning point in the transformation of sociology from its broad theoretical formulations concerning
society as a whole to quantitative empirical research on specific behaviors. Statistical comparisons of people’s behavior related to their social categories found that social differentiation led to distinctive patterns of behavior and that people who shared a common identity often behaved similarly (pp. 184-185). Subcultures are still products of social differentiation and play a large role in shaping behavior (p. 186).

The role of group relationships as an intervening variable between media and audience influence within the mass communications process appeared to have been discovered almost by accident (DeFleur & Ball-Rokeach, 1989, p.190). Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet (1940) were among researchers who discovered that informal contacts provided a form of personal influence that modified how individuals selected media content and how they reacted to it. They proposed that a two-step flow of communication exists, first from the media to relatively well-informed individuals referred to as opinion leaders, then through interpersonal channels to persons who had less direct exposure to media and who depended upon others for information (pp. 191-192).

Katz and Lazarsfeld (l955) further examined the role of personal influence. In their book *Personal Influence: The Part Played by People in the Flow of Mass Communications*, they provided another perspective from which to consider the development of mass communications theory. They cited sociologist Robert Park’s idea that people had lost contact with a growing world and that the media would return it to them, as opposed to the view that media would destruct a democratic society (pp. 15-16). Media research grew from some of these ideas, eventually being divided into three major divisions, audience research, content analysis, and effect analysis. The authors
saw all three as addressing the same underlying problem of “what can the media ‘do’?” (pp. 17-18).

They asserted, however, that four variables intervene between the media and the masses to modify anticipated communications effects. The first variable, media exposure, is of particular concern to a study of Christians and their television viewing habits. Exposure could be a product of technological factors, political factors, economic factors, and especially voluntary factors such as simply not tuning in to media. A number of the studies addressed in chapter two of this dissertation have suggested that Christians voluntarily choose not to expose themselves to various types of programs. Other intervening variables are the medium itself, the content of the media, and the individual’s attitudes and dispositions (pp. 21-23).

Baran and Davis (2003) provided another framework for the development of mass communications theory, which is well-suited to guide discussion of the impact that sociologists have made upon this body of research. Rogers and Balle (1985) argued that empirical social science grew directly from the social philosophy of such European scholars as Comte, Tarde, Simmel, and Weber. Communication research could not have gotten under way without adapting their conceptions of the individual and society (pp. 1-2).

Baran and Davis proposed that theories concerning media issues fall within five major eras of development (p.11). They include the era of mass society theory, the emergence of a scientific perspective on mass communications, the era of limited effects, the era of cultural criticism, and the emergence of a belief in moderate effects (p. 12).
Sociological theories weave their way through these various eras of mass media theory. For instance, both German sociologist Ferdinand Tonnies and French sociologist Emile Durkheim are considered originators of the mass society perspective (Baran & Davis, 2003, p. 58). Baran and Davis argued that even although the emerging mass media were not specifically mentioned in their works, they were clearly implicated (p. 57).

Tonnies addressed the differences in late nineteenth century European society and social organization with the dichotomy between Gemeinschaft or folk community and Gesellschaft or industrial society (Baran & Davis, 2003, p. 58). Tonnies (1957/1887) saw relationship and resulting association as either as real and organic life, the essential characteristic of the Gemeinschaft (community), or as the imaginary and mechanical structure of Gesellschaft (society). Private living together is understood as life in Gemeinschaft (community), while Gesellschaft (society) is public life, or the world itself (p. 33).

One becomes part of a religious Gemeinschaft, but religious Gesellschaften (associations or societies) exist among institutions of a political body or as representations of a theory. Gemeinschaft exists in language, folkways or mores, and beliefs, while Gesellschaft exists in business, travel, or science (p. 34). The theory of Gemeinschaft starts from the assumption of perfect unity of human wills as a natural condition and exists in the realm of kinship, locality, and the mind (p. 42).

The theory of Gesellschaft involves artificial construction of an aggregate of persons which resembles the Gemeinschaft in terms of individuals living together peacefully. But in Gemeinschaft they are united even in the face of separation, whereas
in Gesellschaft they are separated in spite of uniting factors. Everyone is isolated and
tension is present toward others. Activity and power spheres are separated and
intrusions are regarded as hostile (pp. 64-65). Individuals are motivated to give only for
the sake of receiving something better (p. 65). Mass society theorists believed that the
emerging mass media interfered with kinship and face-to-face contact (Baran & Davis,
2003, p. 58).

In contrast, Gesellschaft represents people joined by relatively weak social
institutions, which were based on rational choices rather than on tradition (Baran &
Davis, 2003, p. 58). Laws and other regulations made social relationships more formal
and impersonal. Again tying into the mass media, Baran and Davis stated that the
media continually have been accused of breaking down folk communities
(Gemeinschaft) and encouraging the development of amoral, weak social institutions
such as those of Gesellschaft (p. 59).

Durkheim offered another dichotomy with a different interpretation of social
orders. He compared folk communities to machines or to an engine. In folk
communities people were like cogs forced by collective consensus to maintain
to this as mechanical solidarity for which there is a collective or common consciousness
diffused over the society as a whole (p. 39). In contrast, Durkheim also described
another type of solidarity marked by division of labor, one in which the ties that bind
men together are looser than those for mechanical solidarity. The strength of the social
bonds varies according to the relationship between the collective consciousness and
the individual consciousness, the average intensity of the collective consciousness, and the degree of determinateness of these states (p. 105).

Baran and Davis (2003) related that Durkheim’s praise for organic solidarity has been echoed in theories espousing the virtues of new media and new technology, which argue that communication technology will permit important new social bonds to be formed (p. 60). They cited the information superhighway’s ensuring access to society by all citizens, “electronic town halls,” and the “Internet-fueled ‘electronic democracy’” as innovative mediated relationships that would improve upon older forms of representative democracy (p. 60).

Baran and Davis included sociologist Herbert Marcuse in their examination of the roots of mass society theory, listing his views among basic assumptions about individuals, the media, and social change (p. 50). Mass society theorists saw media as symbolic of modernity, representing the best or worst of modern life (p. 64). Marcuse regarded the media as “a malignant, cancerous force within society…” that needed to be eliminated or restructured. He believed that once people’s minds are corrupted by the media, all types of harmful, long-term consequences result, affecting the individual and creating vast social problems, as well (p. 50).

Another era of media theory development, the era of cultural criticism, also is relevant in the discussion of sociologists and their theories concerning the mass media. Cultural criticism refers to perspectives concerned with conflict of interests in society and the ways in which communication fosters one group’s domination of another (Baran & Davis, 2003, p. 18). As American theorists began leaning more toward limited effects perspectives of the mass media and its related empirical studies, Europeans persisted
in their mass society beliefs. This was based on experiences with World War II propaganda and skepticism of American scientific research used in developing social theories (p. 17).

One group who opposed this American influence was that of European neomarxists, who believed that the media are dominated by social elites who seek to maintain their power by promoting worldviews favorable to their interests. They argued the existence of a public arena in which cultural battles are fought and a dominant or hegemonic culture is constructed. Their priorities were to examine media institutions and interpret media content (Baran & Davis, 2003, p. 17).

Neomarxists in Britain during the 1960s developed what is referred to as British cultural studies, which focused on the mass media’s role in promoting a common worldview and in supporting dominant elites. Their work shifted from media effects to audience reception and resistance to media influence. The question of powerful media effects also resurfaced in the 1970s within American universities, primarily in the humanities. This “cultural criticism” gradually became credible among researchers (Baran & Davis, 2003, p. 18).

A dichotomy exists among cultural theories of media. There are cultural studies theories, which are microscopic and interpretive theories concerning individuals and social groups. Political economy theories are macroscopic and structural in nature and look at how economic power affects ideological and political power (Baran & Davis, 2003, p. 223). Some of these theories are referred to as critical theories because they express certain values and use them to evaluate and criticize the status quo and to initiate social change according to their values (pp. 224-225). They raise questions and
provide ways of interpreting media roles in society, with some critical theorists believing that media sustain the status quo and cause a variety of social problems (p. 225).

In Europe, grand social theory persisted while American researchers preferred empirical research and middle-range theories. Alternative European theories replaced mass society theory, with many of them being influenced by Marxist theory (Baran & Davis, 2003, p. 227). For example, British cultural studies are called neomarxist and deviate from classic Marxist theory in their concern for the superstructure issues of ideology and culture rather than Marx’s emphasis on the means of production (p. 229). This perspective sees change as coming with peaceful, ideological reform rather than with the revolution of the working class that Marx described. Some neomarxists call for modest or radical transformation of the superstructure (p. 229).

European cultural studies theories also draw from another source, hermeneutics -- a humanistic criticism of religious and literary texts in terms of their cultural value and civilizing force in society. They sought to raise the level of culture, with more people becoming what they saw as “humane and civilized” (Baran & Davis, 2003, p. 230). Contemporary critical theory, as well as historically important schools of critical theory, combine both neomarxist and hermeneutic approaches (p. 230).

One such historically important school developed at the Institute of Social Research at the University of Frankfurt in the 1930s, and became known as the Frankfurt School. It was headed by Max Horkheimer, with the other most important members being Theodor Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, and Erich Fromm. By the mid-1930s, all had immigrated to America (Wallace & Wolf, 1986, p. 97). The most important younger member of the Frankfurt School is Jurgen Habermas (1986, p. 98).
The two core propositions of the Frankfurt School are that people's ideas are a product of their society and that intellectuals should not try to be objective in separating fact from value judgment in their work (p. 98). Following Marx, they were social and intellectual critics. Yet critical theory is based on the idea that since Marx's *Capital*, capitalism had undergone change and that people were now more influenced by culture than by economy (Ritzer, 2007, p. 104).

The focus of critical theorists was on what they called the culture industry and what has come to be called mass culture, which then was disseminated through newspapers, magazines, and the new media of movies and radio (Ritzer, 2007, p. 105). Critical theorists were concerned because the impact of a largely invisible culture that they regarded as more pervasive and insidious than that of work (p. 105). They believed that people seek out their own domination within that culture (p. 105).

Ritzer (2007) stated that culture came to dominate people in a number of ways, mainly by what Marx called an opiate of the masses, wherein the proletariat would be lulled into semiconsciousness by the culture industry and would not be receptive to revolutionary messages (p. 105). They were affected in the 1930s by Hollywood B-movies and radio programs of comedy, drama, contests, and sports, which caused them to lose any hostility they might have felt toward the capitalist system (p. 105).

The writings of the Frankfurt School criticized mass culture and promoted high culture, such as symphony music, great literature, and art. Horkheimer and Adorno believed that mass media could not communicate high culture. Adorno stated that radio or records could not reproduce an orchestra, magazines could not reproduce great art, and novels could not be condensed or serialized. He claimed that these inferior media...
reproductions kept people from seeking out the “real thing” (Baran & Davis, 2003, p. 231). Critics of the Frankfurt School claimed that it was too elitist and paternalistic, and that its views that mass media should not disseminate high culture was denying most of the population access to it (p. 231).

Adorno and Horkheimer (1947) first used the term culture industry in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Adorno (1991) related that they first used the term “mass culture” but replaced it with “culture industry” to exclude the interpretation that culture arises spontaneously from the masses themselves like contemporary popular art. Products which are tailored for mass consumption are manufactured according to a plan, making the masses an object of calculation and part of the machinery (pp. 98-99).

Movies and radio are business made into an ideology to justify the “rubbish” that they intentionally produce, calling themselves industries. The basis on which technology acquires power over society is the power of those with the greatest economic hold over society. The technology of the culture industry is merely the achievement of standardization and mass production. Resistance to its central control has already been suppressed by control of individuals’ consciousness (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1972, p. 121).

Horkheimer and Adorno argued that the public’s favorable attitude toward the culture industry is part of the system rather than an excuse for it (p. 122). The world itself passes through the filter of the culture industry with reality being indistinguishable from movies (p. 126).

Another aspect of the critical school’s critique of the culture industry is its attack on modern technology, including radio, television, computers, and the Internet. One
critical theorist, Herbert Marcuse was a critic of repression, especially in advanced capitalist society, and believed that technology, primarily television, advanced repression and made it seem pleasant. (Ritzer, 2007, p. 107). Ritzer states that if Marcuse were alive today, he also might have included the computer and Internet.

In his book *One-Dimensional Man* (1964), Marcuse says that television and other technologies make individuals what the technologies tell them to be (Ritzer, 2007, p. 107). He argued that an inner dimension exists that is separate from and even antagonistic to pressing external needs. That inner dimension, which includes the critical power of reason has been invaded by technological reality, turning reason into submission to facts of life. The entertainment and information industry promotes attitudes and habits, thus producing one-dimension thought and behavior (Marcuse, 1964, pp. 11-12).

Like Marx, Marcuse saw a dialectical relationship between people and the larger structure such as technology. People should be getting fulfilled through technology, but instead are being suppressed because of the capitalists’ using technology for the workers’ exploitation (Ritzer, 2007, p.108). He saw the answer as not to eliminate technology, but to take it away from the repressive forces and put it in the hands of free people (p. 107).

Another important critical theorist, Jurgen Habermas, “undoubtedly has been the most prolific descendant of the original Frankfurt School” (Turner, 1998, p. 559). He posed the question of how social theory can avoid retreating into subjectivism of earlier critical theorists, such as Lukacs, Horkheimer, and Adorno, who increasingly focused on states of subjective consciousness *within individuals* and, as a consequence, lost
Marx’s insight that society is constructed from, and must therefore be emancipated by, the processes that sustain social relations among individuals” (p. 559).

Turner also saw Habermas as asking, “How can social theory conceptualize and develop a theory that reconciles the forces of material production and political organization with the forces of intersubjectivity among reflective and conscious individuals?” (p. 559) in a way that avoids what Habermas saw as problematic elements in theories espoused by Max Weber, Karl Marx, and Georg Hegel (p. 559). Habermas’ first major publication, Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere, described what he saw as a public sphere where people can discuss and debate issues and resolve differences rationally. He saw the public sphere as growing out of eighteenth century “forums for public debate,” including public places, such as clubs and cafes, as well as journals and newspapers. He later expanded upon his ideas of free and open communication and rational argumentation to include the idea that emancipation from domination could come through “communicative action,” a concept related to the public sphere (p. 560).

Habermas saw the “theoretical core” of critical theory as communicative processes because emancipation cannot occur without knowing how people communicate and interact. He analyzed the crises of capitalist societies, including those of meaning and commitment, again necessitating a focus on communicative and interactive processes. An understanding of these processes will allow for the restructuring of meaning and commitment in social life (pp. 563-564). In his article “On Systematically Distorted Communication,” he discussed properties of undistorted communication and criticized the social forces that come against this ideal (p. 564).
Habermas saw the basis for societal integration lying in actors communicating and developing mutual understanding and knowledge. If this is limited by the patterns of economic and political organization, a society is limited in its learning capacity. The resolution, therefore, is “the processes of ‘communicative interaction’ that produces and reproduces unifying cultural symbols must be given equal weight with the ‘labor’ processes that generate material production and reproduction” (p. 567).

Habermas also discussed what he referred to as the lifeworld, a “culturally transmitted and linguistically organized stock of interpretative patterns” (Turner, 1998, p. 570). He expanded upon the interpretative patterns of the lifeworld as they correspond to the functional needs for reproducing the lifeworld, the components of the lifeworld, and the corresponding needs of society. He explained that the lifeworld processes interrelate with system processes such as economic, political, familial, and other institutional contexts, which includes differentiation leading to problems of integration and balance between system and lifeworld (p. 571). He returned to his emphasis upon communicative processes, which he saw as necessary to sustain and reproduce the lifeworld (p. 571).

Habermas’ views carried forth into the British school of cultural studies, led during the 1960s by Stuart Hall, who turned attention to the mass media and its role in modern society. For example, in Hall’s words, ideology is “those images, concepts, and premises which provide frameworks through which we represent, interpret, understand, and make sense of some aspect of social existence” (Baran & Davis, 2003, p. 233). He saw mass media in liberal democracies as a pluralistic public forum that included struggles to shape ideas about social existence. However, unlike Marxists, he
saw this forum as not being controlled by elites but created by the various groups participating in it, admitting that elites do have advantages in defining social reality, which allows them to retain their power (p. 233).

Hall (1975) argued that the predominance of the assembly process of television communication has crucial consequences by highlighting the role and performance of the presenters, who imprint their personalities upon the programs. Thus, television material is mediated to the audience. He saw this as being of critical significance in the cultural domain where social values and attitudes are imprinted onto the cultural material. Television does not give the viewer access to the raw materials of culture without the mediation of cultural-social values (p. 96).

Hall argued that as the television camera guides, selects, and omits material and the presenter guides, selects, omits, and stresses certain elements, the collective values and attitudes that structure and frame these processes of selection and assembly penetrate even content that television appears to “present straight” (p. 97). He regarded television as a totally manipulated medium both technically and socially (p. 97) and contended that administrators rely on the excuse that they are opening a “window on the world” (p. 103) to downplay their determining editorial responsibility. He argued that what is excluded in the process of framing reality is most crucial (p. 103).

Cultural theories of mass communication also have their roots in symbolic interaction theories, which were among the first to question how people use culture to learn. The theories of George Herbert Mead are a prime example of sociological theories that were based on interpersonal interaction and yet contributed to the sociology of mass media through their application. Baran & Davis (2003) contended
that with the strong emphasis that Mead placed on interpersonal interaction and with his disregard for media, “it is not surprising that media theorists were slow to see the relevancy of his ideas” (p. 241).

Consumer researcher Michael Solomon (1983) summarized Mead’s work in a way that is especially relevant for media research. Cultural symbols are learned through interaction and then mediate that interaction. The overlap of shared meaning by people in a culture means that individuals who learn a culture should be able to predict the behaviors of others in that culture. Self-definition is social in nature; the self is defined largely through interaction with the environment. The extent to which a person is committed to a social identity will determine the power of that identity to influence his or her behavior (as cited in Baran & Davis, 2003).

A theoretical perspective related to both symbolic interaction and theories concerning mass communication is the social construction of reality. It implies an active audience that does not just take in information, but actually processes it. Active audience members use the media’s symbols for definitions, but the symbols have little value unless others share them (Baran & Davis, 2003, p. 245). Sociologist Alfred Schutz used phenomenology, which had been developed in Europe, to answer questions about how we can easily make sense of the world to structure and coordinate our daily actions (p. 245).

Schutz and Luckmann (1973) described the everyday life-world as the region of reality in which man engages himself and can change operation in it within a limited realm of possibilities of action. It is human’s fundamental reality. Humans not only experience nature within this life-world, but also the social and cultural world. Each step
of understanding in this world is based on a stock of previous experience, immediate experiences and those transmitted by others, forming a stock of knowledge that serves as a reference schema. Typifications are constituted in the stock of knowledge, indicating a reality that is fundamentally familiar. All experiences in the life-world are brought into relation to this schema (pp. 3, 5 & 7).

Sociologists Berger and Luckmann (1966) elaborated on Schutz's ideas in *The Social Construction of Reality*. Worth noting in a discussion of how sociological theories concerning the mass media have developed is that Berger and Luckmann had an impact with virtually no direct mention of mass communication, and that with the growing interest in the media that accompanied the dramatic social and cultural changes of the 1960s, mass communication theorists and scholars from other disciplines quickly found Berger and Luckmann’s work and identified its value for developing media theory (Baran & Davis, 2003, pp. 245-246).

Berger and Luckmann stated that we attach subjective meaning rather than objective meaning to things in our environments, which they refer to as signs or in their words, “an index of subjective meaning” (Baran & Davis, 2003, p. 246). They adapted Schutz’s idea of typifications into their typification schemes, which Baran and Davis described as collections of meanings assigned to phenomena, coming from our social stock of knowledge to pattern interaction with our environments and those in it (p. 247). Here lies the importance for media theorists and practitioners, especially advertisers, to understand that whoever has the greatest influence over a culture’s definitions of signs and symbols also controls construction of the typification schemes that individuals use to pattern their interactions with their various social worlds (p. 247).
Similar to Schutz, Goffman (1974) saw life as more complicated than it appears. He developed the idea of frames, which are similar to the typification schemes of Berger and Luckmann. Goffman’s theory of frame analysis accounts for how we use our expectations to make sense of situations and people in them. He compared life to a staged dramatic performance in which we move from one social world to another as actors moving between scenes (Baran & Davis, 2003, p. 274).

Goffman (1974) utilized the term “strip” to refer to a sequence of happenings or slice of activity and “frame” to refer to elements involved in definitions of a situation. “Frame analysis” was Goffman’s slogan referring to the examination of the organization of experience in these terms (pp. 10-11). When someone recognizes an event, one implies in the response one or more primary frameworks or schemata of interpretation, turning a meaningless aspect of a scene into something meaningful. Natural frameworks identify occurrences as purely physical, while social frameworks provide background understanding for events, becoming “guided doings” (pp. 22-23).

Combined, the primary frameworks of a social group constitute a main element of its culture, its framework of frameworks become its belief system (p. 27). Goffman’s analysis of groups from this perspective provides insights into the distinct groups within the Christian community and how they see and react to various elements of society. Also, Goffman argued that certain beliefs, including religious ones, can be effectively held even in the face of “evidence” and without apparent reason for choosing them (p. 448).

Baran and Davis (2003) regarded Goffman’s theories as more open-ended and flexible than those of Schutz, Berger, and Luckmann. He found social life constantly
changing yet having great continuity. He argued that although we constantly shift frames, we also choose to live in what we experience as the primary or dominant reality. From Goffman’s viewpoint we are prisoners of primary reality because we only briefly escape into alternative realities (p. 278). Goffman’s microscopic theory of how individuals make sense of their social world can be combined with macroscopic concerns. A conceptual framework can be created to consider framing from a social and political context and long-term social and political consequences of frames learned from the media relating to macroscopic questions about the role of media in politics (p. 278).

Social exchange theory also can be examined in relation to the mass media. Sociologists George Homans and Peter Blau expressed philosophical differences in explaining social institutions and behavior, yet their views on social exchange were complementary. While Homans addressed primarily small groups, Blau examined social institutions and the formal aspects of social organization (Wallace & Wolf, 1986, p.147). Blau, in particular, drew from Georg Simmel’s idea that people were motivated to satisfy their needs and pursue their goals, with their interactions being characterized by some form of reciprocity (p.148). Blau stated that a person must be able to communicate his ideas to influence public opinion. However, in a community as large as America, the individual’s voice is lost and only organized groups are strong enough to be heard (p. 167).

In *Exchange and Power in Social Life*, Blau (1964) was concerned with the “emergent” properties of social structures, or the characteristics that belong to social institutions or communities, but not to individuals (Wallace & Wolf, 1986, p.155). For
example, he discussed common values as media of social transactions that expand social interaction and relations through space and time. Value standards mold the form of social relationships, while common values are the links for large-scale social transactions. He illustrated this principle by using social communication as an analogy, although he admitted that media of communication are not social values (Blau, 1964, p. 264).

Blau argued that all social relations and transactions involve communication. Direct communication requires face-to-face contacts, but it is impossible for most members of large collectivities to be in personal contact. Yet social communication sustains the structure of social relations and social transaction networks that integrate large collectivities into a social unit. So a social mechanism permits the spread of social communication throughout a community and provides mediating links between communicators. This need is filled by media of communication (p. 264).

Blau explained that media of communication increase the range of communication and are dependent only upon social boundaries rather than upon technical considerations and geographical distance. He saw newspapers, magazines, radio, television, books, and movies as conveyors of messages to large audiences regardless of separation in space. He also mentioned letters, telephones, cars, trains, and planes as contributing to expanding communication regardless of distance. Thus media of communication change both the form and nature of communication. For instance, he saw mass media as one-sided, delivering messages to large audiences with limited opportunities for feedback. He cited the lack of contributions to letters to the editor columns as an example (p. 264).
Blau believed that while the main function of media of communication is to broaden social communication, the major function of common values is to broaden the scope of social associations and transactions (p. 264). The mass media change the nature and form of social communication. The complex social structures in communities and societies mediated by social values also are different in fundamental respects from simpler social structures that emerge in the course of direct social interaction. The media of communication serve in part as media or repositories of information transmitted to people and help shape their opinions, as illustrated by newspapers. They serve in part as intermediaries or intervening links for indirect two-way communication between persons, as illustrated by the telephone (p. 265).

Blau also argued that in corresponding fashion, social values partially constitute the medium or context of social life that helps shape people’s thinking and acting, with common culture influencing human conduct. They also partly serve as mediators or links for new social associations, as reflected in the influence of common ideals and opinions on friendship formations (p. 265).

Blau described the functions of written communications as giving people a written heritage, transmitting cultural heritage and knowledge through the generations, and doing these things more accurately than through oral communication. He again turned his discussion to social values, saying that they have an analogous function and play an important role in the institutionalization of social patterns and their historical perpetuation (p. 265).

George Homans (1961), another exchange theorist, looked at exchange in terms of action taken by persons based on propositions dealing with success, similar stimuli,
value, deprivation/satiation, aggression/approval, and rationality (Turner, 1998, p. 266). In his book *Social Behavior: Its Elementary Forms*, he discussed the questions of why people change or fail to change their activity or opinion, and if they do change, why they change in one direction rather than the other. He mentioned the condition of what Leon Festinger called cognitive dissonance, in which some of the facts before a man are incongruent with other facts, producing dissonance which is often painful and its reduction rewarding (p. 97). Motives and motivations, such as cognitive dissonance, are important concepts in the understanding of persuasion, [which occurs in the mass media and in interpersonal communication], as well as in creating persuasive messages that will alter attitudes and behaviors (DeFleur & Ball-Rokeach, 1989, pp. 277-278). These perspectives also can be utilized in examining why Christians might avoid certain types of television programming that is contrary to their beliefs, morals, or value system.

Another noteworthy contribution to the sociology of media came after World War II from social researchers at the University of Chicago, known as the Chicago School (Rogers & Balle, eds., 1985, p. 219). The Chicago School envisioned cities as 'Great Communities' with of hundreds of social groups working together (Baran & Davis, 2003, p. 108). This perspective believed that small, weak, pluralistic groups would be overlooked or denigrated by unregulated mass media that would serve the interests and tastes of large or socially dominant groups, allowing elites to use media as a means of gaining political power (p. 108).

Robert Park, one of the most influential members of the Chicago School from 1904 to 1941, was a former journalist and is considered to have founded the sociological study of mass communication in the U.S. and to have been the first theorist
in the field (Rogers & Balle, eds., 1985, p.221). Park conducted pioneering research on mass communication and public opinion, such as how newspapers and public opinion control each other and how public opinion leads to social change (p. 221).

Park (1923/1978) argued that the press is not the product of any single group, but is the outcome of a historic process in which involved many individuals who could not foresee what the ultimate product of their labors would be (p. 129). He saw the conscious or unconscious motive of the press as reproducing in the city the conditions of the village, a democracy in which persons knew each other and gossip and public opinion were the primary sources of social control. He felt that any improvement in newspapers would come from educating the people and organizing political information and intelligence (p. 138).

Before becoming a sociologist, Park was already doing scientific research in the form of reporting. As a reporter, he collected data and observed social reality for his stories, but was dissatisfied with newspaper work because it did not fulfill his intellectual needs and his interest in social reform. As a sociologist, Park encouraged his students and colleagues to continue the type of research he had done as a reporter, thus developing the research method now known as fieldwork and observation, especially for symbolic interactionists (Ritzer, 2007, p. 136).

Another sociological theorist, C. Wright Mills, turned from empirical social research, which he called “abstracted empiricism,” because it squelched what he referred to as “the sociological imagination” (Baran & Davis, 2003, p. 161). He claimed that its findings were misleading concerning the social order and that it justified the status quo (p. 161).
Mills addressed abstracted empiricism as it relates to the mass media in *The Sociological Imagination*. He stated that advertising, media research, and public opinion are their main subject matter, and saw “the public” as being transformed from the traditional and conventional consensus of medieval society to its present-day form of the “masses” (Mills, 1959, p. 52). He saw the structural relevance of publics declining as men become “mass men” powerless in their surroundings. That may suggest the framework that is required for selection and design to study publics, public opinion, and mass communications (p. 52).

Mills used the example of effects of the mass media as a problem that demands some structural setting to be adequately stated (p. 52). He argued that research should not just look at a population that has been saturated by these media, but should sort out persons with less media exposure from those with more media exposure (p. 52).

In discussing the inherent ideological relevance of social science, Mills stated that the images and ideas produced by social science might not be consistent with the prevailing images of society, in particular those who justify its power system (p. 80). He argued that the demand for ideological justifications has increased due to institutions of power becoming legitimized (p. 81).

In his book *The Power Elite*, Mills (1956) expressed his concern for the transformation of public into mass for its insight into the meaning of the power elite (p. 302). He listed four differences between public and mass, including “the ratio of the givers of opinion to the receivers, which is the simplest way to state the social meaning of the formal media of mass communication” (p. 302). He regarded the shift from one-to-one communication to a spokesperson talking through a network of communications
to millions of listeners and viewers as being key to the problems of the public and public opinion in a democracy (p. 302).

Mills (1956) also saw technical conditions of communication decreasing the opportunity for persons freely answering back, with informal rules governing speech. He stated that in one case, we could imagine a monopoly of communication to pacified media groups whose members cannot answer back (1956, p. 303).

He saw the public and mass as being distinguished by their main modes of communication. Discussion is inherent within a public, with the media enlarging it and linking a primary public with others. The main form of communication in a mass society is the formal media, which turns the publics into media markets. He saw a competition between manipulators of the mass media and the receivers of their messages. Public opinion, therefore, is a reaction of passive individuals open to media suggestions and manipulations (pp. 304-305).

Mills stated that observers first believed that formal means of communication would enlarge the primary public and expand the scope of personal discussion. Instead they have transformed the primary publics into media markets, giving them most of “the pictures in our heads” to the extent that we sometimes do not really believe what we see until we read about it in the paper or hear about it on the radio (p. 311). He said that the media guide our experiences as well as give us information, thereby setting our standards of reality. Yet the exposure must be subject to the stereotypes that underlie beliefs and feelings about symbols or emblems (p. 312). He believed that as long as the media are not monopolized, a person can play one medium against another,
although this is not usually the case due to consistency among media audiences (p. 313).

Mills also saw the media as providing us with new identities, giving us new aspirations and a means of escape. They encroach upon small-scale discussion and interchange of opinion. While they provide information, they do not let the listener or viewer connect to larger realities. He saw the mass media as being at the disposal of wealthy and powerful elites. Propagandists, publicity and public relations persons fall right below these elites (p. 315).

An examination of social science theories regarding the mass media provides a wide variety of perceptions from which to view the topic, shedding light on various aspects such as power, effects, criticism of the media and how we use them. These various approaches taken together provide a solid base from which to explore current issues regarding the media.

As society developed from one consisting of interpersonal relationships and communication, thus fostering a strong collective consciousness, to one of weaker and more impersonal relationships that led to weaker collective consciousness, the importance of mass communication increased. Criticism over the ways in which this communication fosters one group’s domination over another, thus controlling today’s culture industry, raised the question of power behind the media messages that audiences receive. The perspective that the media do have power within the culture leads to the examination of the forces behind individuals’ behavior toward those mediated messages. Theories of selective influence suggest that individuals have different motivations that affect their behavior based on individual differences, social
categories which include religion, and from relationships with others, including opinion leaders. How persons create reality and frame various elements of society can be grounded in religion, as well. For example, the concept of cognitive dissonance suggests that a desire to reduce dissonance from incongruence of facts affects behavior and can be seen when television programming differs from Christian values and is therefore avoided.

Mass Media Theories

Sociologists such as those mentioned above have been among the social science researchers whose work has contributed to an ever-growing body of knowledge referred to as mass media theory. Sociological theories, as well as those of mass media researchers discussed below, have given us a strong base on which to build further research, such as this study on the television viewing habits of Christians.

At the end of the nineteenth century, as Tonnies and Durkheim had addressed, society was changing from a traditional and stable social system wherein people had close ties into a more complex society in which individuals were more socially isolated. Social trends such as contractual social relationships, isolation and alienation of the individual, increase in heterogeneity and individuality, and a decrease in society’s means of controlling members through informal means were thought to be leading to mass society (DeFleur & Ball-Rokeach, 1989, p. 159). Later as Europe and America were plunged into the World War I, the division of labor and related individuality and heterogeneity that had made their industrialized societies possible became a problem. They were no longer the Gemeinschaft societies whose strong bonds and cohesiveness Tonnies had described and which were now needed to unite the people into solidarity.
concerning the war effort. The means for achieving the goals of mobilizing sentiments and loyalties, create fear and hatred for the enemy, and to maintain energy and morale became propaganda through the various forms of mass media (p. 161). Such large-scale persuasion had not been seen before and when former propagandists later made their wartime deceptions known, a general belief in powerful mass media emerged (pp. 161-162).

Early mass media theories were known as the hypodermic needle theory or the magic bullet theory, which envisioned a passive audience who merely waited for a media message to hit them and then reacted to it in relatively the same way for each audience member (DeFleur & Ball-Rokeach, 1989, p.187). These theories had developed by the 1920s and were based on a combination of Freudianism and behaviorism. They formed a simplistic propaganda theory, based on the hypodermic needle model in which propagandists felt that they could control the needle (or magic bullet) to penetrate people’s minds and create positive associations (Baran & Davis, 2003, p. 78). Philosopher John Dewey was openly critical of this early propaganda theory and thought that if people were taught the correct defenses, they could defend themselves (p. 81).

Lasswell rejected the hypodermic needle concept for its simplicity. He believed that propaganda was more than using media to control people, and he thought that they needed to be slowly prepared to accept new ideas. He discussed master or collective symbols that illicit strong emotions and can cause mass action if used correctly (Baran & Davis, 2003, pp. 78-79).
In his book, *Propaganda*, Lasswell described propaganda in the broadest sense as “the technique of influencing human action by the manipulation of representations” (Dennis, Ismach, & Gillmor, eds., 1978, p. 20). Lasswell made the connection between mass media and values, claiming that techniques have value implications, but values do not necessarily depend upon technique (p. 20). The processes by which value dispositions such as hatred or respect are organized may be called propaganda. The inculcation of traditional value attitudes is generally called education, while the term *propaganda* refers to spreading subversive, debatable, or novel attitudes (Dennis, Ismach, & Gillmor, eds., 1978, p. 20).

During the 1940s there was a recognition that cognitive variables and subcultures had important roles, and that individual differences and social differentiation for behavior related to mass communication. Given these realizations, the audience could no longer be thought of as passive (DeFleur & Ball-Rokeach, 1989, p. 187).

An approach to studying the effects of mass communication in line with this new perspective was uses and gratification theories, which are especially relevant to the discussion of the television viewing habits of Christians. Uses and gratifications theories focus on the uses to which people put media and the gratifications they seek from them (Baran & Davis, 2003, p. 256).

The origin of uses and gratifications theories can be traced as far back in media research theory as the 1930s, during which time studies used this perspective to examine books, radio soap operas, films, newspapers, and recorded music. A body of research findings concerning why people attended to various media and the rewards the media provided had been accumulated by World War II (DeFleur & Ball-Rokeach,
Herzog (1944) is given credit for originating the uses and gratifications approach. Her article, “Motivations and Gratifications of Daily Serial Listeners,” was the first published research that dealt with gratifications gained from the media. Findings from interviews with 100 radio soap opera fans identified three types of gratification—dealing with emotional release, wishful thinking, and advice received. Researchers Lazarsfeld and Stanton also demonstrated interest in studying an active, reward-seeking audience during the 1940s (Baran & Davis, 2003, p. 257).

Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch offered a detailed description of uses and gratifications theories. Their essay, “Utilization of Mass Communication by the Individual,” served as a preliminary overview to Katz and Blumler’s (1974) book, The Uses of Mass Communications: Current Perspectives on Gratifications Research. They pointed out elements that studies in the 1940s concerning uses and gratification had in common, such as methodology that employed open-ended questions about media functions. They sorted gratification responses into categories, although they did not explore the links between the gratifications and needs and did not address interrelationships between media functions (p. 20).

They noted a revival of uses and gratifications theories in the 1970s, which taken together include the logical ordering of social and psychological origins of needs leading to expectations of media and related exposure and, therefore, gratification and unintended consequences (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974, p. 20). Each major work concerning usages and gratifications had a different scheme of audience functions. They addressed the interpretation of Lasswell (1948) and later Wright (1960) that the media serve four functions—surveillance, correlation, entertainment, and cultural
transmission or socialization. They noted the proposition of Katz, Gurevitch, and Haas (1973) that mass communication is used by individuals to connect or disconnect themselves from others (Katz, et al., 1974, p. 22).

Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch (1974) saw that audience gratifications can come from three sources – media content, exposure to the media per se, and the social context surrounding the exposure. Their essay addressed the need to go beyond the emphasis on sorting and profiling of the research of their day and proposed a division of labor among the media for satisfying audience needs. The division of labor could occur on two levels, starting with attributes that media share or vary in, or using individual’s needs as the starting point to be served by the same media. Perceptions of the media need to be considered in relation to their intrinsic qualities (p. 26).

They expressed the need for looking at social and environmental circumstances that draw people to the mass media to satisfy their needs and saw a combination of personal dispositions, social factors, and environmental conditions as determining media use. Gratifications studies based on media content have shown that the same set of media materials can serve a variety of audience needs (Katz, et al., 1974, pp. 26-28).

The goals of early uses and gratifications researchers were two-fold. The first was to point to the relevance of studying an audience’s needs, a goal that was realized. The second, which were seen as not yet having been reached, treats audience needs as intervening variables in studying media effects. The authors also drew a connection between media functions of the individual and the media’s functions or dysfunctions
upon broader levels of society, which they saw as essential to studying the media’s role in society (Katz, et al., 1974, pp. 28-29).

Baran and Davis (2003) contended that uses and gratification theories had two revivals, the first occurring in the 1970s in response to effects research and based on the dominant limited effects paradigm. This revival can be traced to three developments, including new research strategies concerning audience uses and gratifications which could be employed based on new survey research methods and data analysis techniques. Some media researchers also realized that audience's active use of media might make media effects more or less likely, and some thought that too much emphasis was being put on unintended, negative media effects rather than on positive uses of media (p. 262).

The second revival is the product of the popularity of the Internet and World Wide Web, in large part due to their interactivity. The uses and gratifications approach has been helpful in studying new media, especially email, and might prove to be important in determining why older media are being supplemented or replaced by wireless services (Baran & Davis, 2003, pp. 261-264).

In *Journalism and New Media*, Pavlik (2001) saw the relationship between audiences and news organizations as changing, with audiences being redefined, boundaries being removed, and relationships being reinvented. He explored how the new media, especially online journalism, have contributed (p. 126). He saw a new form of journalism emerging, causing what he saw as the most fundamental transformation of journalism "since the rise of the penny press of the mid-nineteenth century" (p. xi).
Qualities of this new form of journalism include information that can be accessed globally, instantaneous reporting, multimedia content, customization, and interactivity. Economic, regulatory, and cultural forces, all driven by technological change, are converging to bring about this transformation. Authenticity, verification, and truth are considered when anyone with a computer can publish globally (p. xi).

The relationship between the audience and the news media has deteriorated steadily for nearly 30 years, and newspaper readership has been declining since the end of World War II. Younger audiences are showing less trust in television news (Pavlik, 2001, p. 126). Pavlik contended that the new media applications to journalism will produce not only better journalism, but a better informed citizenry, perhaps slowing or stopping the decline in media credibility. He saw the new media having a profound role in the democratic process through the Internet, World Wide Web, and interactive new media such as digital television and broadband wireless communication. Effects include the growth of civic journalism in which the press actively participates in its community, public access to information and government services via the Internet, and those with political causes being able to communicate directly through the Internet without the traditional filter of the press (pp.131-133).

Pavlik also argued that from a uses and gratifications perspective, new media technologies might help people satisfy a range of social and psychological needs, such as much of the development and use of new media technologies for erotic communications possibly being derived from audience sexual drives or needs. Also, the use of electronic mail and online communications might serve the need of
maintaining social bonds over distances and political boundaries, especially for virtual communities that exist across geographic regions linked in cyberspace (1996, p. 343).

He discussed television journalist, critic, and author Les Brown’s conclusion that television is the least intellectual of all media and the most emotional. Brown suggests that radio is somewhat more intellectual, and is the future of news due to its low cost and portability. Newspapers, news magazines, and especially the computer are more intellectual. Whereas active information-seeking is the norm for computers, television usage is much more passive (Pavlik, 1996, p. 343).

McQuail and Gurevitch (1974) discussed the action/motivation perspective of audience behavior from which uses and gratifications researchers draw. They saw the perspective as best explained through phenomenological sociology, especially that of Schultz. Schultz’s distinction between “conscious behavior” and “unconscious behavior” is applied by those who see media use as rational and goal-directed. According to Schultz, an action is conscious because we have a picture in our mind of what we are going to do before we carry out the action – the “projected act” (p. 368).

McQuail and Gurevitch felt that while not all media use fit this conception of behavior, this perspective would apply where media use is purposeful and where an actor can explain choices. Assumptions include that human action implies choice of action and attached meanings, only actions that can be described by the actor are considered, and the essence of a motivated action is meaningfulness to the future (p. 368).

The decline in acceptance of early mass media theories, which assumed that all audience members reacted in similar ways to media messages, led to the belief that the
audience no longer consisted of passive recipients. Thus the study of factors that affected audience reactions began. Uses and gratifications theories are especially valuable in exploring the television viewing habits of Christians in that they discuss not only functions of the media such as socialization and entertainment which could affect television viewing habits, but also factors such as personal dispositions, social factors, and environmental conditions. These theories form a base for looking at how individuals might draw from their Christian faith in determining their use of and rewards gained from television viewing.

Sociological Theories Concerning Religion

Although the numerous theories of sociologists and mass communication researchers regarding the mass media provide us with a firm foundation upon which to conduct related research, those theories alone are not adequate for guiding an examination of Christians and their television viewing habits. Religion, mass media, and various other aspects of the culture which contains them both weave an intricate tapestry of relationships within society. It is only when one adds theoretical perspectives on such societal elements as religion, culture, and group interests that a more complete focus begins to emerge to guide this study.

Roberts (2004) stated that sociology does not offer the entire truth about religion or aspects of human life, but sociological investigation can contribute to a holistic understanding of human experience, of which religion is a part (p. 400). Theories concerning the religious experience have become among the most famous within the body of sociological theory, with classical theories providing the foundation and more contemporary versions being developed with the changing times.
Max Weber, one such classical theorist, examined the nature of religion as it relates to economics. Giddens (1970) proclaimed in the book’s introduction that *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* ranks as one of the most renowned, although controversial, works of modern social science (p. 1). The book provoked a critical debate which still lingers. Giddens related that several elements of Weber’s work are questioned, including his perception of a lack of “affinity” between Catholicism and entrepreneurial activity (p. 12).

Weber (1904/1958) saw a unique form of capitalism that had not developed anywhere else, which he called “the rational capitalistic organization of (formally) free labour” (p. 21). He examined the influence of certain religious ideas on the *ethos* of an economic system and defined asceticism as a “rationalization toward an irrational mode of life” (p. 194). He made a distinction between the ascetic character of Catholicism and that of Protestantism, with the otherworldliness of Catholicism and the Protestants’ materialistic joy of living (pp. 40-42).

He argued that there was an observable difference in Baden, Bavaria, and Hungary in the type of higher education which Catholic parents, as opposed to Protestants, gave their children. The percentage of Catholics in higher education lagged behind their proportion of the total population. The percentage of those graduating from institutions preparing for technical studies and industrial and commercial occupations lagged even farther behind Protestants. Weber contended that Catholics preferred the type of training of the humanistic Gymnasium (p. 38).

Weber also noted a smaller proportion of Catholics among skilled laborers of modern industry. Catholics preferred to become master craftsmen, whereas
Protestants were attracted to factories to become skilled laborers and administrators. He argued that the explanation of these differences was that the mental and spiritual attributes acquired from the environment, such as the type of education favored by the religious atmosphere of the home and community determined the choice of occupation and professional career (pp. 38-39).

The fact that there were fewer Catholics in Germany’s modern business life ran contrary to the observed tendency of national or religious minorities who were excluded from political influence to be driven into economic activity. Weber looked to the permanent intrinsic character of their religious beliefs to explain the difference. He noted the greater other-worldliness of Catholicism, “the ascetic character of its highest ideals,” must have encouraged a greater indifference toward the good things of the world. While Protestants might criticize the Catholic’s ascetic ideals, Catholics might answer that materialism results from Protestant secularization of ideals (pp. 39-40).

This lack of affinity between Catholics and entrepreneurial activities is in direct contrast to what Weber saw in Calvinism, a combination of an extraordinary capitalistic business sense and an intensive form of piety that dominates their lives (p. 71).

Giddens (1958) pointed out that The Protestant Ethic is a “fragment” (p. 5) and is much less detailed than Weber’s studies of other world religions, including ancient Judaism, Hinduism and Buddhism, and Confucianism (and a planned study of Islam). He noted Weber’s emphasis on Hinduism with its doctrines of reincarnation and compensation (Karma), both tied to a caste system and an otherworldly asceticism directed toward escaping encumbrances of the material world. Weber saw in China preconditions of the development of capitalism in Europe – a high level of trade, craft
guilds, a monetary system, and a framework for law. He described Confucianism as a “this-worldly” religion without ascetic values (p. 6).

Roberts (2004) applied the perspective of Weber and Parsons that religion is not necessarily otherworldly in his discussion of definitions of religion and data on social trends. He countered the claims of numerous scholars who believe that religion is on the decline in today’s world with the argument that the survey data is based on the idea that religion must be otherworldly, with those who do not believe in life after death considered less religious. He contended that a decline in otherworldliness does not necessarily indicate a decline in religiosity (p. 319).

Durkheim (1984/1893) contended that religion extends over an ever diminishing area of social life (p. 119). He stated that originally religion and social were synonymous until political, economic and scientific became separate entities (p. 119). In mechanical solidarity religion pervaded all of social life because that life was made up almost entirely of common beliefs and practices, although the collective consciousness weakened and became vaguer as the division of labor developed (pp. 130, 226).

Dahrendorf’s (1994/1959) theories add to those of Weber, Durkheim, and other theorists studying religion by providing insight into conditions in which interest groups, such as those of Christians, might form. He used Ginsberg’s definition of a quasi-group to describe aggregates of incumbents of positions with identical role interests, while stating that the quasi-group can be a recruiting field for interest groups. Dahrendorf examined how a “class in itself” can become a “class for itself,” such as the existence of persons who take the lead and organize for the group. The articulation and codification of interests is necessary and a system of ideas, or ideology, must be available. Also, a
political permissibility of organization is required, as well as social conditions of organization, such as conditions for communication among “members” of quasi-groups (pp. 74-76).

The formation of organized interest groups is possible only when a structural pattern of recruitment to quasi-groups exists. A lack of technical, social, and political conditions of organization can deter the operation of interest groups. Contrary to Marx’s view of “suppressed classes,” Dahrendorf argued that members of a subjected group can belong to the dominating group of another association (p. 76).

Weber’s discussion of the differences in religious groups sets the stage for examining whether or not Christians might vary from other groups in terms of their television viewing habits. For example, the concept of otherworldliness, addressed in subsequent works as well, provides a perspective from which to explore whether or not some Christians have an otherworldly focus that would result in their not being concerned with television as part of the natural world. Dahrendorf’s discussion of interest groups and the importance of leaders and organization provides a basis for looking at segments of Christianity such as the New Christian Right.

Theories Concerning Christians’ Television Viewing

From the literature and theoretical perspectives addressed above, I devised three theories concerning what would be expected to be seen in my research on the television viewing habits of Christians. These theories represent conventional or received views that I am not only skeptical about, but that I believe warrant further testing. I drew upon Dahrendorf’s description of interest groups and Hunter’s discussion of the culture war to address how Christians, especially those with a high
level of religiosity, would differ from non-Christians in their television viewing of news. Hunter (1991) stated that the culture war touches various aspects of society, such as the family, education, and politics (p. 33). As a group with specific interests that differ from mainstream society in terms of values, Christians not only would have an interest in this culture war, but would want to participate in it. In this process, it would be necessary to maintain a level of knowledge of events that relate to the culture war. Thus, Christians would be more likely to engage in an active news habit that would include watching television news.

In addition to the culture war, which relates directly to Christians and the interaction between their religious values and the media, other aspects of the news media would indicate that Christians would have an interest in watching news. McCombs and Shaw’s (1972) study of the 1968 presidential campaign gained support for what has been termed the agenda-setting function of the mass media (p. 176). Viewers and readers not only learn about a given issue, but are led to determine how much importance to attach to the issue. Through day-to-day selection of news stories and how to display them, editors and producers give us cues about what are the important issues of the day. Prominent issues on the news agenda are perceived by the public to be important and often become priority issues on the public agenda (McCombs, Einsiedel, & Weaver, 1991).

Television news also is important in the formation of public opinion. Dewey (1927) pointed out that a private conflict has to be publicized to be recognized by a broader public. So individuals or groups can exert major effort to gain publicity through the news media. As an issue is covered, more discussion occurs and some people may
seek out more information or try to do something concerning the issue (Dewey, as cited in McCombs, Einsiedel, & Weaver, 1991).

Alexander (1990) argued that media emerge with social differentiation, being divided into expressive (entertainment) and cognitive (news) components with different social functions. A major function of the news media is actually to produce “bias” and create certain non-empirical evaluations through the framework of cognitive statements. News stories and commentaries continually process raw information that makes society comprehensible through the use of general categories. These categories come from previously articulated norms and general values about social expectations. The news media provide the normative dimension of society while dealing with social strains (Alexander & Colomy, 1990, pp. 324, 326). Therefore, it follows that as participants in the culture war, Christians would want to be aware of media fare and participate in the process it represents by watching television news.

Hypothesis #1

Christians watch more television news than do non-Christians.

HYPOTHESIS #1a

Christians who are in the religious right watch more television news than do non-Christians.

Related theories concerning Christians and their interaction with the mass media, television in particular, include those dealing with values. As Hunter (1991) argued, the culture war seeks to control the symbols of culture, as reflected on television and through other forms of popular media. The media are important in this war because they reflect the culture’s hopes and ideals. A problem arises over whose values, hopes,
and ideals should be reflected in the media. The media actually define reality for a culture by the persons and events that they choose to portray (Hunter, 1991, pp. 173-174).

The interaction between various groups in society, with their different value and belief systems, is related to the creation of what are perceived to be social problems (Rubington & Weinberg, 2003, p. 88). This concern over values and how they are depicted on the media would cause Christians to regard some aspects of television programming to be offensive or at least undesirable in terms of their viewing habits, and they would, therefore, avoid such programming.

Soap operas and reality shows are two such types of programming that would contain material that Christians would find objectionable often due to sexually-oriented content. Krcmar (2008), who conducted interviews with persons living without television, found that conservative Christians or born-again Christians expressed concern over sex more than over any other issue. Those who mentioned that they were conservative Christians or born-again Christians made negative references to sex on television four times more often during the first interview than those who did not mention their religion or claimed to be non-religious (p. 89).

Television has provided a steady diet of soap operas to viewers since the early days of network television (Katzman, 1972) and a recent influx of dating reality shows whose content is specifically and often explicitly sexual has joined them. The number of reality dating programs has grown from three in 1997 to over 30 in 2004. They include numerous and diverse programs that range from sexually-driven blind dates to semiserious competitions for marriage proposals. These programs profess to depict
“reality” and could thus have stronger effects than scripted programs such as soap operas (Zurbriggen & Morgan, 2006).

Zurbriggen & Morgan reported correlations between viewing reality dating programs and several problematic attitudes toward dating, suggesting that respondents might model their attitudes toward dating, sex, and relationships on program depictions.

Zurbriggen and Morgan’s (2006) research on reality dating programs such as *Who Wants to Marry a Millionaire?* found that for their sample of 18- to 24-year-olds, viewing of these programs was positively correlated with several problematic attitudes toward sex, suggesting that respondents might model their attitudes toward dating, sex, and relationships on the programs. Viewing was positively correlated, for both men and women, with adversarial sexual beliefs, endorsement of a sexual double standard, beliefs that men are sex-driven, that dating is more than a game, and that looks matter when it comes to dating. However, these relationships were mediated through viewer involvement. There were few correlations with sexual behaviors, although both men and women who watched the programs tended to be less sexually experienced.

**Hypothesis #2**

Christians watch fewer soap operas and reality shows than do non-Christians.

The concept of otherworldly orientation that Weber (1958/1904-5) used to describe Catholics and other world religions has been addressed in numerous works by other authors. Roberts (2004) described otherworldly orientation as an important part of the worldview and as being concerned with the spiritual world as opposed to the natural. Hoge (1976) and Luidens and Nemeth (1987) addressed the perspective, as well.
Drawing from the concept of otherworldliness, it follows that television, being a part of the natural world as opposed to the spiritual, would be of less concern to Christians, even to the extent that they would not own a television.

Krcmar’s (2009) book, *Living Without the Screen*, lends support to this theory. Krcmar conducted in-depth interviews and in-home observation, and had participants complete questionnaires and fill out time-use diaries. Participants included 83 television viewers and 120 nonviewers (p.15). She considered the uses and gratifications approach to analyze why nonviewers give up television, and suggested that the gratification that nonviewers get from television is different from that of viewers (p. 29).

Her research found that one of the similarities between subgroups of nonviewers was that of being a conservative Christian. Nonviewing was related not to television viewing per se, but to belief systems that some nonviewing families embraced. A number of nonviewing families described themselves as politically liberal, but of the 72 adult participants, 32 persons or 43% called themselves conservative. Many of these expanded their self-description with religious terms such as conservative Christian or conservative Bible-believer. Some of these families did not own televisions at all and a few owned sets to watch videotapes or to aid with home schooling. It was their religiosity and in some cases their political ideology that determined their decision to live without television (p. 41). Therefore, I formulated the following hypothesis.

**Hypothesis #3**

More Christians than non-Christians do not own a television.
CHAPTER 4

METHODS: TELEVISION VIEWING HABITS OF CHRISTIANS

Sample

The previous chapter presented a theoretical overview of various aspects related to television viewing habits of Christians. I drew from three major categories of theories, sociological theories regarding the mass media, mass communications research, and the sociology of religion to guide my own theoretical perspectives and subsequent formulation of hypotheses.

In this chapter I will present the methodology used to conduct my research. I will describe my data collection methods, providing a detailed description of Yancey’s (2007) study of Yahoo! Personals Internet advertisements from which I drew my data set. I will provide frequencies of the data set in terms of sex, race, education, age, and city size. My description of measures will include independent and dependent variables with coding, dummy variables, and analytic strategy used to conduct the research. Results will be presented, including frequencies and a description of logistic regression models run to test my hypotheses. I will conclude with a discussion of the implications of these findings.

Data Collection

Research for this dissertation entitled The Television Viewing Habits of Christians was based on Yancey’s (2007) study of Yahoo! Personals Internet singles advertisements. The purpose of Yancey’s original study was to examine interracial dating in terms of who is willing to interracially date, with an emphasis on religion and politics as possible factors. Yancey’s research found that sex is an important factor in
whether a person will interracially date, with racial effects being noted, as well. He found that political ideology and religiosity both affect interracial dating, although in different ways. Conservative political ideology is inversely related to willingness to date regardless of race and willingness to date Blacks, while religiosity, as measured by church attendance, is positively related to willingness to date only one’s own race. Yancey also looked at city size, age, and education (pp. 924-926). This dissertation utilizes Yancey’s data set and examines different variables in relation to the television viewing habits of Christians. A single population, however, poses an interesting implication for this study. There could be less likelihood that singles would have impressionable children at home who provide a reason for parents’ concern for undue influence of their television and a powerful reason for not having a television at all.

Yancey gathered data for his project in June 2005 from the Yahoo! Personals website. He limited his research to respondents within the United States with no restrictions upon potential daters selected, including those with or without a photo. The Yahoo! website allows advertisers to search as far as 250 miles from a given city. The website does not allow for a random sample of the United States, so Yancey used a stratified sampling technique rather than a random probability sample. He utilized GSS categories to create nine regions – Pacific, Mountain, West South Central, West North Central, East South Central, East North Central, New England, South Atlantic, and Middle Atlantic. He divided the rest of the cities into those with more than 25,000 inhabitants and those with less than 25,000 inhabitants. This cutoff was used for convenience based on Census data listing cities over 25,000 (pp. 918-919).
Yancey randomly chose three cities in each region from the first group of cities and five in each region from the second group, thus choosing nine cities from each region and allowing for regional and city size diversity. He chose forty dater profiles (20 men and 20 women) from the largest city in the region, 10 profiles (five men and five women) from each medium size city (more than 25,000 inhabitants, but not the largest city in the region), and four profiles (two men and two women) from each small city (less than 25,000 inhabitants). He selected a replacement city of appropriate size in the region if a particular city did not have any dater profiles on the website (p. 919).

Yancey used only respondents seeking heterosexual relationships to avoid confounding any possible findings with sexual preference differences, although he notes that the advertisements might include bisexuals. He collected an over-sample of Blacks, Hispanics, and Asians to gain enough advertisements of those groups to make cross-racial comparisons. He randomly chose two members of each racial group (one male and one female) from each large city, then randomly chose a medium size city in each region and selected two members of each racial group from that city. He used the same procedure for small cities, although he could not always find all six daters in the regional group of small cities. His over-sample was done in January of 2006, only six months after the original sampling, and it added 48 Black, 46 Hispanic, and 41 Asian daters to the sample. Respondents who did not indicate their race or the races of those they sought to date were excluded, then respondents were divided into four major racial groups (Whites, Blacks, Hispanics, and Asians). The same questionnaire was used at the time the over-sample was collected. The sample thus consisted of 1060 individuals (p. 919).
Data Weaknesses and Strengths

The data set of singles used in this study has weaknesses in that it deals only with singles and cannot be generalized to Christians as a whole. It does not provide insights into the television viewing habits of married persons, although it does give indications of personal viewing choices. A strength of the data is that it is a national data set. It was accessible and had a wide variety of information, such as attendance at religious services and political viewpoints, collected from the survey to allow for inclusion of variables reflecting a Christian right and religious right.

Sample Characteristics

Using data weighted by city size and region of the country, this sample is 51.3% male and 48.7% female. Over half (67.9%) were White, 15.0% were Black, 7.4% were Hispanic, and 4.9% were Asian. The remaining respondents were East Indian (.1%), Middle Eastern (.1%), Native American (1.9%), Pacific Islander (.5%), and Other (.2%). Most of the daters had some college (37.4%) or were college graduates (26.7%). Others reported high school graduate (17.9%), post-graduate (10.6%), and some high school (2.9%). In terms of age, 22.3% were age 18-25, 32.3% were 26-35, 33.5% were 36-50, and 11.9% were 51-76. Over half of the respondents (63.6%) were from small cities, 29.9% were from medium sized cities and 6.5% were from large cities (Yancey, 2007).

The percentage of females in the sample was slightly lower than that for the entire U.S. population (50.7%). There were fewer Whites in the sample than in the population (80.1%,) and more Blacks (12.8%). The U.S. population also consisted of
1.0% American Indian and Alaska Native persons, 4.4% Asians, and .2% Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006).

In addressing the missing values on all variables, the sample size dropped to 149 left for analysis. I compared the included and excluded cases on all of the variables to check for potential bias. Analysis showed that those included were from small cities, were more likely to be non-White, and were part of the Christian Right. Bivariate models with the Christian variable and the television variables were analyzed using all cases that could be kept in the analysis. Although in the final analysis, none of the religious variables were found to be significant, at the bivariate level only one, NEWS, was found to be significant, suggesting that there is no bias in my results due to missing cases.

Measures

Independent variables included SEX (0=male, 1=female), WHITE (in years), and city (1=small, 2=medium, 3=large). RACIAL categories were African American (Black), Asian, Caucasian (White), East Indian, Hispanic/Latino, Middle Eastern, Native American, Pacific Islander, Interracial, and Other (0=not White, 1=White).

Other independent variables included EDUCATION (1=some high school, 2=high school graduate, 3=some college, 4=college graduate, 5=post-graduate) and ATTENDANCE AT RELIGIOUS SERVICES (1=never, 2=rarely, 3=only on holidays, 4=monthly, 5=weekly, 6=more than once a week). The ATTENDANCE AT RELIGIOUS SERVICES variable was used as a measure of religiosity. The variable POLITICAL VIEWS was used to measure political conservative orientation (1=very liberal, 2=liberal,
3=middle of the road, 4=conservative, 5=very conservative). Those who indicated the response of not political were excluded due to the ordinal nature of the variable. The POLITICAL VIEWS variable was divided into two variables, LIBERAL and CONSERVATIVE, with LIBERAL consisting of those who indicated that they were either liberal or very liberal and CONSERVATIVE consisting of those who indicated that they were either conservative or not conservative (0=not conservative, 1=conservative).

The independent variable CHRISTIAN was created to represent those individuals who selected the Christian, Christian/Protestant, Christian/Catholic, Christian/Other responses to the Religion question (0=non-Christian, 1=Christian). Respondents could check any, with other responses including Buddhist/Taoist, None/Agnostic, Not Religious, Spiritual but not religious, Scientology, Hindu, Jewish, Islam, Atheist, Christian/LDS, and Other. Christian/LDS was not included in the variable CHRISTIAN because although it is a controversial issue, many other Christians do not consider Christian/LDS as the same.

Two dummy variables were created to measure religiosity and the Christian Right. CHRISTIAN ATTENDING RELIGIOUS SERVICES AT LEAST MONTHLY was used to distinguish those respondents who selected one of the four categories of Christian included above and indicated a high level of religiosity based on attendance at religious services. CHRISTIAN ATTENDING RELIGIOUS SERVICES AT LEAST MONTHLY AND HAVING CONSERVATIVE POLITICAL VIEWS represents those Christians who attend religious services at least monthly and indicated either conservative or very conservative political views. This variable was used to measure the Christian Right. Dummy variables for CHRISTIAN ATTENDING RELIGIOUS SERVICES AT LEAST MONTHLY AND HAVING CONSERVATIVE POLITICAL VIEWS

97
SERVICES AT LEAST WEEKLY and CHRISTIAN ATTENDING RELIGIOUS SERVICES AT LEAST WEEKLY AND HAVING CONSERVATIVE POLITICAL VIEWS were created, as well.

Control variables of CITY, AGE, EDUCATION, RACE, and SEX were included to make sure that the relationship between Christians and the type of television shows used in the models were not due to those demographic factors. For example, one might expect that women would be more likely to watch soap operas. Younger persons might be expected to watch more reality shows, whereas older persons or persons with more education might be more likely to watch more news.

Dependent variables were selected from among the TV Watching Habits question, for which individuals could check any responses. Responses included Couch Potato, Reality show addict, News Junkie, Sports Nut, Sitcoms, Dramas, Movies, and Soaps, soaps, soaps. Other responses to the question included I want to be on a game show too, Documentaries, Channel Hopper, I don’t own a TV, and TiVo is my best friend. Four were chosen as dependent variables based on my hypotheses. NEWS JUNKIE (0=no, 1=yes) was used for the hypotheses that Christians, especially those with a high level of religiosity, watch more news than do non-Christians. This was based primarily on theories concerning the culture war and Christians’ desire to stay informed and participate in it (Hunter, 1991). SOAP OPERAS (0=no, 1=yes) and REALITY SHOWS (0=no, 1=yes) were used for the hypothesis that Christians watch fewer soap operas and reality shows than do non-Christians, formulated primarily from the idea that those shows represent values contrary to those of Christians. The variable I DON’T OWN A TV (0=no, 1=yes) was used for the hypothesis that more Christians
than non-Christians do not own a television, drawing mainly from the concept of otherworldliness and Christians concern for the spiritual as opposed to the natural world (Roberts, 2004). The dependent variable I DON’T OWN A TV was dropped when it was discovered that so few individuals had checked that response that it did not lend itself to statistical analysis.

The fact that so many respondents had television sets that it necessitated dropping the variable indicates that my hypothetical prediction that more Christians do not have a television than do non-Christians would not be supported.

Analytic Strategy

I utilized multivariate data analysis for this study and chose logistic regression due to the dichotomous dependent variables. I ran three separate models using the computer program SPSS Version 16 to examine the television viewing habits of Christians. Model 1 included the independent variables FEMALE, CITY, AGE, EDUCATION, ATTENDANCE AT RELIGIOUS SERVICES, POLITICAL VIEWS, WHITE, and CHRISTIAN. Model 2 replaced the independent variables CHRISTIAN and ATTENDANCE AT RELIGIOUS SERVICES with a new dummy variable CHRISTIAN ATTENDING RELIGIOUS SERVICES AT LEAST MONTHLY to test for a religiosity effect. Model 3 replaced the original model’s variables of CHRISTIAN, ATTENDANCE AT RELIGIOUS SERVICES, and POLITICAL VIEWS with a new dummy variable CHRISTIAN ATTENDING RELIGIOUS SERVICES AT LEAST MONTHLY AND HAVING CONSERVATIVE POLITICAL VIEWS to test for a Christian Right effect. Models also were done to test for the effect of attending religious services at least weekly and a religious right effect, although they yielded no significant effects.
and are not included in this discussion. All of the models used the dependent variables of REALITY SHOWS, NEWS, SOAP OPERAS, and DON'T OWN A TV, although DON'T OWN A TV was dropped because only one respondent indicated not owning a television. Levels of significance used were at the .05, .01, and .001 levels.

Results
Frequencies

Of the 840 individuals responding to the religion question, 627 were Christian. Of the 753 respondents indicating attendance at religious services, 36.4% indicated that they rarely attend, 20.6% attend weekly, 13.8% attend monthly, 12.5% attend only on holidays, 12.1% never attend, and only 4.6% attend more than once a week.

In terms of political views, of the 568 respondents 56.7% described themselves as middle of the road, 21.1% as liberal, 15.3% as conservative, 4.0% as very liberal, and 2.8% as very conservative. The variable indicating conservative political views included 18.1% of the 568 respondents. Of 786 respondents, 32.6% were Christian attending religious services at least monthly. Of 475 respondents, 22.3% were Christian attending religious services at least monthly and having conservative political views.

Multivariate Analysis

Based on existing literature and theoretical perspectives I proposed the following. Hypothesis #1 stemmed primarily from Hunter’s account of the existing culture war between orthodox and progressivist communities. This culture war seeks control over the symbols of popular culture and social institutions, including the media. Hunter calls the media instruments of cultural warfare because they define reality through what they
cover or depict (Hunter, 1991, pp. 173-174). It was hypothesized that Christians watch more television news based on this culture war, Christians’ engagement in it, and their desire to stay current on issues to participate in it.

Hypothesis #1a also drew from Smith’s descriptions of Christians, especially evangelicals (Smith, 1998), to maintain that those Christians who are in the religious right are even more likely to exhibit this culture conflict and therefore keep up with current news. This was determined by using interaction variables of attendance at religious services and political views.

Hypothesis #2 deals with the perspective presented in literature by Smith (1998), Hunter (1991), and other researchers that indicate that Christians have a set of values that affect the way they live their lives. It was hypothesized, therefore, that Christians watch fewer soap operas and reality shows than do non-Christians based on a conflict between Christian values and values commonly expressed in shows of this nature.

Hypothesis #3 draws from the concept of otherworldliness described by Roberts (2004) as a worldview concerned with things of a spiritual nature as opposed to those of the natural world. The concept was also addressed by Marty (1986), Hoge (1976), and Luidens and Nemeth (1987). An otherworldly orientation would include television as part of the natural world, which would make it of less concern to Christians. Therefore, it was hypothesized that Christians would be less likely to not own a television than would non-Christians.

Three separate models were run to test the hypotheses. Each model used the dependent variables of REALITY SHOWS, NEWS, and SOAP OPERAS. The dependent variable DON’T OWN A TV was dropped from the models because nearly all
respondents indicated that they owned televisions. Additional tests were run for weekly
effects and for a religious right effect. Findings of the study did not support any of the
hypotheses.

The first model (Table 2) shows logistic coefficients and odds ratios for television
viewing habits on FEMALE, CITY, AGE, EDUCATION, ATTENDANCE AT RELIGIOUS
SERVICES, POLITICAL VIEWS, WHITE, and CHRISTIAN. The independent variable
AGE (odds ratio 1.058) was found to be related to the viewing of television news at the
p<.01 level. The variable WHITE (odds ratio .257) was negatively related to the viewing
of television news at the <p.01 level. None of the variables were found to be significant
for viewing of reality shows and soap operas.

The second model (Table 3) shows logistic coefficients and odds ratios for
television viewing habits on FEMALE, CITY, AGE, EDUCATION, POLITICAL VIEWS,
WHITE, and CHRISTIAN ATTENDING RELIGIOUS SERVICES AT LEAST MONTHLY.
The independent variable AGE (odds ratio 1.060) was found to be significantly related
to the viewing of television news at the p<.01 level and the variable WHITE (odds ratio
.259) was negatively related at the p<.01 level. None of the independent variables were
significantly related to the viewing of soap operas.

The third model (Table 4) shows logistic coefficients and odds ratios for television
viewing habits on FEMALE, CITY, AGE, EDUCATION, WHITE, and CHRISTIAN
ATTENDING RELIGIOUS SERVICES AT LEAST MONTHLY AND HAVING
CONSERVATIVE POLITICAL VIEWS. The variable AGE (odds ratio 1.059) was
positively related to the viewing of television news at the p<.01 level. The variable
WHITE (odds ratio .266) was negatively related to the viewing of news at the p<.01
level. None of the independent variables were found to be related to the viewing of soap operas.

Table 2 presents logistic coefficients and odds ratios for television viewing habits on FEMALE, CITY, AGE, EDUCATION, ATTENDANCE AT RELIGIOUS SERVICES, POLITICAL VIEWS, WHITE, and CHRISTIAN. Dependent variables are REALITY SHOWS, NEWS, and SOAP OPERAS. The sample size was 149 for each. None of the independent variables were significant in predicting television viewing habits for REALITY SHOWS and SOAP OPERAS. The independent variables AGE and WHITE were significant in predicting viewing television NEWS. For every one-unit increase in age, the odds of viewing television news increases by 1.058. (b of .056, odds ratio of 1.058, p=<0.01). The odds of watching television NEWS is 25% lower for whites than for non-whites (b of -1.360, odds ratio of .257, p=<0.01).

The Nagelkerke R-square for REALITY SHOWS was .158, indicating that the independent variables account for 15.8% of the variance in the probability of viewing reality shows. The Nagelkerke R-square for NEWS was .205, indicating that independent variables account for 20.5% of the variance in the probability of viewing news. The Nagelkerke R-square for SOAP OPERAS was .455, indicating that independent variables account for 45.5% of the variance in the probability of viewing soap operas.

Table 3 presents logistic coefficients and odds ratios for television viewing habits on FEMALE, CITY, AGE, EDUCATION, POLITICAL VIEWS, WHITE, and CHRISTIAN ATTENDING RELIGIOUS SERVICES AT LEAST MONTHLY. The sample size was 149.
None of the independent variables were found to be significant in predicting viewing of REALITY SHOWS and SOAP OPERAS. The odds of viewing NEWS increases by nearly 6% for a one-unit increase in AGE (b of .059, odds ratio of 1.060, p<0.01). The odds of viewing NEWS is nearly 26% lower for WHITE than for non-white (b of -1.350, odds ratio of .259, p=<0.01). The Nagelkerke R-square for REALITY SHOWS is .135, indicating that the independent variables account for 13.5% of the variance in the probability of viewing reality shows. The Nagelkerke R-square for NEWS is .209, indicating that the independent variables account for 20.9% of the variance in the probability of viewing news. The Nagelkerke R-square for SOAP OPERAS was .478, indicating that the independent variables account for 47.8% of the variance in the probability of viewing soap operas.

Table 4 presents logistic coefficients and odds ratios for television viewing habits on FEMALE, CITY, AGE, EDUCATION, WHITE, CHRISTIAN ATTENDING RELIGIOUS SERVICES AT LEAST MONTHLY AND HAVING CONSERVATIVE POLITICAL VIEWS. The sample size was 149. None of the independent variables were significant in predicting viewing of REALITY SHOWS and SOAP OPERAS. The odds of viewing NEWS increases by 6% for a one-unit increase in AGE (b of .057, odds ratio of 1.059, p=<0.01). The odds of viewing NEWS is 26% lower for WHITE than for non-white (b of -1.324, odds ratio of .266, p=<0.01). The Nagelkerke R-square for REALITY SHOWS is .128, indicating that the independent variables account for 12.8% of the variance in the probability of viewing reality shows. The Nagelkerke R-square for NEWS is .187, indicating that the independent variables account for 18.7% of the variance
in the probability of viewing news. The Nagelkerke R-square for SOAP OPERAS is .303, indicating that the independent variables account for 30.3% of the variance in the probability of viewing soap operas.

[Table 4 about here]

Although none of the variables CHRISTIAN, ATTENDANCE AT RELIGIOUS SERVICES, CHRISTIAN ATTENDING RELIGIOUS SERVICES AT LEAST MONTHLY, and CHRISTIAN ATTENDING RELIGIOUS SERVICES AT LEAST MONTHLY AND HAVING CONSERVATIVE POLITICAL VIEWS were significant in predicting television viewing habits for REALITY SHOWS, NEWS, and SOAP OPERAS. However, a brief discussion concerning the religious variables is included.

Although not significant, for Table 2, the odds of viewing REALITY SHOWS for CHRISTIAN is .396 times lower than the odds of viewing REALITY SHOWS for non-Christian (b of -.927, odds ratio of .396). The odds of viewing NEWS is .697 times lower for CHRISTIAN than the odds of viewing NEWS for non-Christian (b of -.360, odds ratio of .697). The odds of viewing SOAP OPERAS for CHRISTIAN is 9748065.588 times higher than the odds of viewing SOAP OPERAS for non-Christian. The odds of viewing REALITY SHOWS decreases by .905 for every one unit increase in ATTENDANCE AT RELIGIOUS SERVICES (b of -100, odds ratio of .905). The odds of viewing NEWS decreases by .862 for every one-unit increase in ATTENDANCE AT RELIGIOUS SERVICES (b of -.149, odds ratio of .862). The odds of viewing SOAP OPERAS increases by 1.900 for every one-unit increase in ATTENDANCE AT RELIGIOUS SERVICES (b of .642, odds ratio of 1.900).
For Table 3, although not significant, the odds of viewing REALITY SHOWS is .484 times lower for CHRISTIAN ATTENDING RELIGIOUS SERVICES AT LEAST MONTHLY than the odds of viewing REALITY SHOWS for those who are not Christian and attending religious services at least monthly (b of -.727, odds ratio of .484). The odds of viewing NEWS is .470 times lower for CHRISTIAN ATTENDING RELIGIOUS SERVICES AT LEAST MONTHLY than for those who are not Christian and attending religious services at least monthly (b of -.756, odds ratio of .470). The odds of viewing SOAP OPERAS is 4.361E7 times higher for CHRISTIAN ATTENDING RELIGIOUS SERVICES AT LEAST MONTHLY than for those who are not Christian and attending religious services at least monthly (b of 17.591, odds ratio of 4.361E7).

For Table 4, although not significant, the odds of viewing REALITY SHOWS is .354 times lower for CHRISTIAN ATTENDING RELIGIOUS SERVICES AT LEAST MONTHLY AND HAVING CONSERVATIVE POLITICAL VIEWS than the odds of viewing REALITY SHOWS for those who are not Christian and attending religious services at least monthly and having conservative political views (b of -1.039, odds ratio of .354). The odds of viewing NEWS is .663 times lower for CHRISTIAN ATTENDING RELIGIOUS SERVICES AT LEAST MONTHLY AND HAVING CONSERVATIVE POLITICAL VIEWS than the odds of viewing NEWS for those who are not Christian and attending religious services at least monthly and having conservative political views (b of -.411, odds ratio of .663). The odds of viewing SOAP OPERAS is 1.851 times higher for CHRISTIAN ATTENDING RELIGIOUS SERVICES AT LEAST MONTHLY AND HAVING CONSERVATIVE POLITICAL VIEWS than the odds of viewing SOAP
OPERAS for those who are not Christian and attending religious services at least monthly and having conservative political views (b of .616, odds ratio of 1.851).

[Table 5 Internet questions at end]

Implications of Findings

The findings of my research indicate that for this sample of Christian singles, being Christian does not affect television viewing habits. Even when variables were added to test for a Christian right effect and a religious right effect, none of the religious variables were significant in predicting television viewing habits of reality shows, news, and soap operas. Therefore, none of my hypotheses were supported. These results tell me that the respondents' television viewing habits are being determined by factors other than religion.
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION: TELEVISION VIEWING HABITS OF CHRISTIANS

This study has explored the relationship between two distinctive and influential elements of American society – religion and the mass media. This relationship has been addressed in various other studies and as part of numerous books with no real consensus on exactly how the two interact. The word interact implies a reciprocal relationship wherein one affects and is affected by the other – a situation that I believe few people would deny exists between the two. Yet the relationship between them is calling for continued study given the fact that both exist in a culture that is constantly changing and evolving, a culture that not only affects religion and the mass media, but is in turn affected by both. Again we see a reciprocal relationship.

When we begin to narrow the focus of study to Christianity specifically and television in particular, we find additional variation in the types of research done and the perspectives from which they have been approached. For example, what sets Christians as a group apart from the non-Christian public? Numerous authors have provided a description of Christians and their beliefs and lifestyles, but others have focused on variations within the Christian population. What is distinguishable about Protestants? What differences might exist within the unity of the Christian faith? Do Christians’ varying beliefs, values, and lifestyles have any bearing on their daily activities?

Carrying the examination a step further, we find that research has looked at how distinctions within the Christian faith are visible in specific aspects of everyday life such as social involvement, politics, and even mass media habits. Thus considering the
many ways of exploring the two important components of our culture – religion and
mass media -- the study takes on both micro and macro proportions.

My work has sought to fill a niche for which relatively little research has been
carried out, that of the television viewing habits of Christians. I utilized a data set of
singles taken from Yancey’s (2007) Internet study on Yahoo! personal advertisements
partly because of its accessibility. While Yancey’s research focused on interracial
dating, I looked at the relationships between respondents’ religious affiliation,
attendance at religious services, political views, and television viewing habits. Although
this sample cannot be thought of as representing the entire Christian population, and
research results cannot be interpreted to reflect the television viewing habits of
Christians as a whole, what has been learned from the study provides new insights and
serves as a springboard for future research.

The purpose of this study has been to examine possible differences in media
tastes and habits between Christians and non-Christians. Based on respondents’
answers to categories of questions describing themselves, I examined how religious
affiliation, attendance at religious services, and political views affected their viewing
habits of television news, soap operas, and reality shows, as well as whether or not they
owned a television at all.

Discussion

In general, findings of the study indicate that for this sample of singles, being
Christian does not significantly affect television viewing habits. Overall, this research
indicates similar findings to those of several of the studies cited, many of which used
measures of religiosity to examine differences. Hamilton and Rubin (1989) used church
affiliation – conservative, moderate, or liberal – to indicate religiosity. They found that religious conservatives did not have stronger reactionary television viewing motivations than nonconservative and did not view violent television programs less often than nonconservatives.

Chamberlain (1987) determined religiosity from reading of the Bible, praying, and tithing. General television program preferences did not differ between levels of religiosity. Barna (1993) found that viewing of MTV was as prevalent among Christians as non-Christians.

However, my findings that Christianity does not affect television viewing habits for my sample of singles contradicts those of several studies, as well. Hamilton and Rubin (1989) found that religious conservatives perceived television as less realistic than nonconservatives and viewed sexually oriented television programs less often. They also found that conservatives had less affinity with television and had weaker voyeuristic television viewing motives than nonconservatives.

Gladin’s (1987) study of home school families found that most families considered themselves evangelical or fundamental Christians and attended religious services two or three times a week. Many families did not watch television, and those who did averaged 1.7 hours a day [lower than the 4.3 hours projected for the average American] and watched either programs designed for children or those they considered wholesome.

The longitudinal study of families conducted by St. Peters, Fitch, Huston, Wright, and Eakins (1991) noted that the average parent prohibited some programs for a variety of reasons, including anti-Christian values and behaviors. Although Chamberlain (1987)
found that levels of religiosity among Christians did not affect television viewing preferences, they did affect the number of hours watched. Her findings also indicated that levels of religiosity and religious television viewing were each related to respondents regarding general television as distasteful for reasons such as violence, sex, adultery, profanity, down-play the family, contrary to religious beliefs, anti-religious, and racial discrimination.

My study has built upon those which test religiosity as a possible factor in determining television viewing habits. It has added to the body of research concerning the relationship between Christianity and television viewing and has filled a niche by using a national data set and by studying a sample of singles. It illustrates that the study of Christians and television is multi-faceted and should be further explored as the cultural environment continues to change.

Weaknesses

Several weaknesses exist in this study within the context of the topic of Christians and television viewing that it addresses. The sample itself, although it was accessible and a national data set, deals only with singles and cannot be generalized to Christians as an entire group. It does not address the viewing habits of married persons or those with children. Accommodating someone else’s interests and monitoring television viewing of children might affect how a person describes his or her habits, whether or not they find some programs appealing or objectionable on a personal level. Also, persons who want to spend time with their children might select programs that they could enjoy together.
The sample consists of singles that place personal advertisements on an Internet site. While sites such as these are popular among singles, whether or not singles who are more religiously conservative in a way that is not measured by church attendance do not participate in them is a possible consideration.

The measure for religiosity was based on answers to the question concerning attendance at religious services. While it is a valid distinction to make, other measures of religiosity have been employed in the studies cited and present other aspects related to Christianity such as reading the Bible, tithing, watching religious television, and belonging to a denomination considered through some measures to be conservative, moderate, or liberal.

The basis for determining religious right was found by combining responses to the variables of attendance at religious services and political views. Although other measures could be used, as well, this provides an adequate basis for determining religious right in light of the topic of television viewing.

This study is an effort to add to a body of knowledge that has not been addressed enough considering the number of persons in America who profess to being Christians and the immense popularity of television as a medium for news, general information, and entertainment. It looks at some of the major themes that exist in literature discussing Christians and tests them with regard to a specific activity commonplace to everyday life, television viewing. The fact that the hypotheses constructed from a review of this literature were not supported raises a number of questions asking, "Why not?"
For example, do the findings that Christians in this sample, even those with high levels of religiosity, do not watch significantly more news than do non-Christians indicate in any way that concern over the culture war that Hunter depicted in 1991 has waned over the years? Do they indicate a belief that portrayals on the news are contrary to respondents’ worldviews and present a picture of the world and events that they find inaccurate and or not worth watching? Are they getting their news from alternative sources such as religious broadcasts?

Similarly, do the findings that Christians do not differ significantly in their viewing of soap operas and reality shows, which often portray situations that are contrary to Christian values, indicate a difference in individual values or perhaps other factors that affect whether or not a person’s attitudes and values are reflected in their actions? For example, it is often suggested that the growing level of violence depicted in American media has desensitized persons to that violence. Has the same thing happened in terms of sex, adultery, profanity, and other aspects of programming that might have been perceived as more objectionable in earlier decades? Or has television become such a pervasive medium in our lives that as Marshall McLuhan suggests, our saturation by it is not perceived as an influence to be reckoned with in our daily existence? The fact that nearly all respondents said that they own a television indicates that cultural pervasiveness.

Implications of Findings

The findings of this study indicating that the television viewing habits of Christians in my sample do not differ from non-Christians challenge the ideas put forth by Hunter (1991) and other researchers who have proclaimed the existence of a culture
war among orthodox and progressive communities. Hunter argued that since the culture war seeks to control the symbols of public culture and the conflict crystallizes in the context of social institutions, the popular media are key components of that war. The media, including television, are instruments of cultural warfare because they define reality by what they cover and the images they project.

It is becoming apparent in light of these findings that other forces might be at work in regard to Christians and their television viewing habits. The lack of evidence found for my hypotheses suggests an open door for other possibilities. One such possibility is that of secularization.

Secularization has been described in a variety of ways and disagreement exists over its status as a theoretical concept. Chaves (1994) presented a view of secularization not as declining religion, but as declining religious authority. Shiner (1966) argued that there is a lack of agreement as to what secularization is and how to measure it. Hadden (1987) argued that secularization is an orienting concept grounded in an ideological preference rather than a systematic theory (p. 587).

Thus Christians may be more secularized than as suggested by culture war literature. Christians may have secular taste for both news and reality shows even though culture war literature suggests that they should have a higher desire for news and distaste for reality shows.

Armfield and Holbert (2003) illustrated how secularization theory, as well as the uses and gratifications approach, could be utilized in examining what leads individuals to use emerging technology. They looked at the relationship between religiosity and
media use, studying media activity and making reference to the influence of religiosity on television viewing. Religiosity was found to be negatively related to Internet use.

Suggestions for Future Research

Although adopting the viewpoint that the Christians in my sample are secularizing concerning their television viewing habits, this study creates questions in my mind that beg for further scrutiny. Literature and cultural discourse still suggest that Christians do have different television viewing habits, so what further study needs to be done to reveal who these Christians might be and how they might differ from other Christians and from this sample of Christian singles? For example, Chamberlain’s 1987 sample drawn from several different denominations, and Hamilton and Rubin’s 1989 research on utilizing conservative, moderate, and liberal categories of churches bear repeating to see if a difference can be perceived based partly on church affiliation. Studies such as theirs also bear repeating in light of the changes in television programming that have occurred since those questionnaires were administered.

Further examination of Christians using various other measures of religiosity might shed more light on their television viewing habits, as well. Do personal convictions to the faith, praying, reading the Bible, being educated in applications of Biblical principles through sermons and classes, dedication to other principles such as tithing, and participating in Christian activities have an effect on other life habits such as television viewing?

And as another approach, otherworldliness would be an interesting focus to apply to exploring differences in television preferences, viewing habits, time spent viewing, etc. While the application of theories of otherworldliness were applied in this
study only to whether or not a respondent owned a television, distinctions concerning this perspective might be more visible through an examination of actual viewing habits.

Overall, this study should be considered as a springboard for further research and a compilation of information to generate ideas on how best to answer the numerous questions the findings have raised. Considering the continuous interaction among religion, television, and an ever-changing cultural climate, I perceive this study as the beginning of a long-term research endeavor on my part rather than as the culmination of an isolated study.
# TABLE 1

SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

(N = 2,309)

## SEX

(Weighted %)

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>51.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>48.7</td>
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## RACE

(Weighted %)

<p>| | |</p>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>White</td>
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<tr>
<td>Black</td>
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<td>Asian</td>
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<tr>
<td>East Indian</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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<td>EDUCATION</td>
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<td>--------------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
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<td>Some high school</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Some college</td>
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<tr>
<td>College graduate</td>
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<td>Post-graduate</td>
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<tr>
<td>26-35</td>
<td>32.3</td>
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<td>36-50</td>
<td>33.5</td>
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<td>51-76</td>
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<table>
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<th>(Weighted %)</th>
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<td>Medium</td>
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<tr>
<td>Large</td>
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<td>Independent Variables</td>
<td>Reality Shows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Education</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(.236)</td>
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<td>Political views</td>
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<td>(.444)</td>
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<tr>
<td>White</td>
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<td>(.663)</td>
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<td>Christian</td>
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<tr>
<td>N</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nagelkerke R²</td>
<td>.158</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*p<.05;**p<.01;***p<.001

NOTE: Numbers in parentheses are standard errors.
### TABLE 3
Logistic Coefficients and Odds Ratios for Television Viewing Habits on FEMALE, CITY, AGE, EDUCATION, POLITICAL VIEWS, WHITE, and CHRISTIAN ATTENDING RELIGIOUS SERVICES AT LEAST MONTHLY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>Reality Shows</th>
<th>News</th>
<th>Soap Operas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Odds Ratio</td>
<td>Odds Ratio</td>
<td>Odds Ratio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>.948 (.670)</td>
<td>-.719 (.425)</td>
<td>-.733 (1.942)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City</td>
<td>-.305 (.413)</td>
<td>-.074 (.277)</td>
<td>.677 (1.617)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-.058 (.036)</td>
<td>.059** (.021)</td>
<td>1.060 (.160)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>.120 (.330)</td>
<td>.337 (.239)</td>
<td>2.182 (1.668)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political views</td>
<td>-.343 (.418)</td>
<td>-.080 (.297)</td>
<td>.528 (1.252)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>-.089 (.645)</td>
<td>-1.350** (.452)</td>
<td>-17.652 (3477.641)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian attending religious services at least monthly</td>
<td>-.727 (.737)</td>
<td>-.756 (.438)</td>
<td>17.591 (3251.545)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nagelkerke $R^2$ | .135 | .209 | .478

*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001

NOTE: Numbers in parentheses are standard errors.
TABLE 4
Logistic Coefficients and Odds Ratios for Television Viewing Habits on FEMALE, CITY, AGE, EDUCATION, WHITE, CHRISTIAN ATTENDING RELIGIOUS SERVICES AT LEAST MONTHLY and HAVING CONSERVATIVE POLITICAL VIEWS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>Reality Shows</th>
<th>News</th>
<th>Soap Operas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b</td>
<td>Odds Ratio b</td>
<td>b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1.123</td>
<td>3.075</td>
<td>-0.720</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.645)</td>
<td>(.417)</td>
<td>(1.590)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City</td>
<td>-0.284</td>
<td>0.753</td>
<td>-0.115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.416)</td>
<td>(.273)</td>
<td>(1.267)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-0.057</td>
<td>0.945</td>
<td>0.057**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.036)</td>
<td>(.021)</td>
<td>(.118)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>0.160</td>
<td>1.174</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(.322)</td>
<td>(.229)</td>
<td>(1.139)</td>
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<tr>
<td>White</td>
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<td>0.961</td>
<td>-1.324**</td>
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<td>(.630)</td>
<td>(.448)</td>
<td>(4083.185)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Christian attending religious services at least monthly and having conservative political views</td>
<td>-1.039</td>
<td>0.354</td>
<td>-0.411</td>
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<tr>
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<td>(.832)</td>
<td>(.445)</td>
<td>(1.604)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nagelkerke R²</td>
<td>.128</td>
<td>.187</td>
<td>.303</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001
NOTE: Numbers in parentheses are standard errors.
¹Cross-tabulation of soap operas by Christian attending religious services at least monthly and having conservative political views indicated a split in the number of persons watching soap operas. Compared to the other models, one person watching soap operas was Christian attending monthly but did not have conservative political views. The effect was a lower odds ratio.
TABLE 5

Yahoo! PERSONALS INTERNET QUESTIONS

SEX

I’m a _______ seeking a _________

AGE

(18-99)

CITY

(within _______ miles of ________)

ETHNICITY

(Check any)

_____ African American (black)
_____ Asian
_____ Caucasian (white)
_____ East Indian
_____ Hispanic/Latino
_____ Middle Eastern
_____ Native American
_____ Pacific Islander
_____ Inter-racial
_____ Other

EDUCATION LEVEL AT OR BEYOND

(Check any)

_____ Postgraduate
_____ College graduate
_____ Some college
_____ High school graduate
_____ Some high school

TV WATCHING HABITS ARE
(Check any)
_____ Couch Potato
_____ Reality show addict
_____ News Junkie
_____ Sports Nut
_____ Sitcoms
_____ Dramas
_____ Movies
_____ Soaps, soaps, soaps
_____ I want to be on a game show too
_____ Documentaries
_____ Channel Hopper
_____ I don’t own a TV
_____ TiVo is my best friend

RELIGION
(Check any)
_____ Buddhist/Taoist
_____ Christian
_____ None/Agnostic
_____ Christian/Protestant
_____ Christian/Catholic
_____ Not Religious
_____ Spiritual but not religious
_____ Scientology
_____ Hindu
_____ Jewish
_____ Islam
_____ Atheist
_____ Christian/LDS
_____ Christian/Other
_____ Other

RELIGIOUS SERVICES
(Check any)

_____ More than once a week
_____ Weekly
_____ Monthly
_____ Only on holidays
_____ Rarely
_____ Never

POLITICAL VIEWS
(Check any)
_____ Very conservative
_____ Conservative
_____ Middle of the road
_____ Liberal
_____ Very liberal
_____ Not political
REFERENCES


