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Cynthia J. Wilhelmi

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The Content of the *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers*

as the Source of

Antisocial and Prosocial Learning

A Thesis

Presented to the

Department of Communication

and the Graduate College

University of Nebraska

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

University of Nebraska at Omaha

by

Cynthia J. Wilhelmi

July 1996

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ABSTRACT

As the youth crime rate continues to climb in the United States, concerned parents and government officials wonder how much television is influencing our nation's children. Research most often reported by the media says that violent action shown on television can cause the same kind of action by children who watch those kinds of programs. *The Mighty Morphin Power Rangers* children's television program has specifically been under attack by parents. CNN estimated that over 100 acts of violence per episode are being shown -- although no research supporting this figure could be found for documentation.

The present study investigates the frequency of antisocial (violent) and prosocial (helpfulness) acts shown on *The Mighty Morphin Power Rangers* television program. The sample consists of 10 episodes, ranging from some of the very first episodes up until the release of the *Power Rangers* movie in 1995.

The number of violent actions (hits, kicks, punches and other physical attacks) recorded in this study were much less than those reported by the media. CNN had reported more than 100 violent acts per episode. This study reports 43.9.

On average, prosocial words/actions, which are rarely reported by the media, occurred 9.1 times per episode; problem-solving actions were shown 4.4 times per episode; conflict showing bad winning over good happened 16.1 times per episode; and conflict showing good winning over bad was shown 5.3 times per episode.

There were more than four times the number of violent actions recorded in this

study than there were prosocial actions. The *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers* appears to have the possibility of being more harmful than helpful to a child's social development.

This study supports the contention that television content may have prosocial as well as antisocial effects on children's behavior.

TABLE LIST

TABLE I -- AVERAGE RECORDED ACTION PER TV EPISODE..... 38

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Chapter 1

Introduction

When television was in its "promotional period" from 1949 to 1952 (Lazar, 1994), high quality, diverse children's programming was offered throughout the broadcast day (Melody, 1973; Lazar, 1995), and families with young children were the biggest purchasers of this "educational" electronic medium (Dorr, 1986; Lazar, 1994). In the early 1950's, one household out of 15 owned a television, and by 1956 nearly three out of every four homes had televisions (Sterling & Haight, 1978; Lazar, 1995). Today, television penetration in households with young children is nearly 100 per cent in this country (Ableman, 1984; Lazar, 1994).

Since television's inception, parents and educators have been wondering how television's images and messages might be influencing children. Research conducted in the early 1960's found television impacting children very little -- other than it might have reduced some of their reading time (Huston-Stein & Wright, 1979). It was also found that "for some children, under some conditions, or for some children under other conditions, it may be beneficial" (Schramm, Lyle, & Parker, 1961; Surgeon General's Scientific Advisory Committee on Television and Social Behavior, 1982). Since the 1960s more than 4,000

scientific research articles and governmental reports on media effects have been published (Harris, 1994; Ableman, 1995).

The Children's Television Act of 1990 declared that "television can assist children to learn important information, skills, values, and behavior, while entertaining them and exciting their curiosity to learn about the world around them" (Public Law 101-437, Oct. 17, 1990). When violent action has been shown on children's television programming, adults have wondered if children might be learning to incorporate it into their lives.

On August 13, 1994, Federal Communications Commission Chairman Reed Hundt asked the American Psychological Association in Los Angeles to speak out against violence on children's television. At that time lawmakers shelved several bills which would have regulated television violence. This gave broadcasting and cable operators the opportunity to end violent programming on their own, and both industries employed independent "monitors" to measure and analyze the content of television violence (Jessell, 1994).

The children's television program the *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers* is one of several programs which has been under attack in the media for reportedly "violent" content in the United States.

The *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers* aired for the first time in September of 1993 (Freeman, 1993). In a mere five weeks it had become the number one

children's television show in the United States (Davis, 1994). By November of 1994, 60 per cent of all children aged two to 11 watched it as it reportedly aired over 100 acts of violence per episode (CNN television, November 25, 1994). As of April 1995, the *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers* was broadcast in 80 countries.

Produced for children in the two to 11-year-old category, *Power Rangers* is a science fiction program that dubs its action from "Dai Rangers" -- a Japanese television program. The *Los Angeles Times* reported on one child development study that compared the playground antics of children who did and did not watch an episode of *Power Rangers*, and concluded that the program "transmitted specific forms of violence." The viewers in this study were reportedly six times more aggressive than the nonviewers (Davis, 1994). Children, however, do much "acting out" in play, and no research studies have been found which have looked at children's "violent actions" as possible "play."

In this children's program, the *Power Rangers* always manage to defeat any band of "monsters" causing trouble. They also give lessons in self-esteem, and suggest helpful ways to cope with difficult situations children may encounter. The *Power Rangers*' bodies dematerialize in the show as they become frightened, then rematerialize only when they start believing in themselves again (Bellefante, 1993). Whenever the *Power Rangers* are in battle, each wears a weapon, which appears to be similar to a laser gun.

International concern

The concern for violence shown in the *Power Rangers* has not been limited to United States viewers. At the end of August 1994, many Canadian cable and broadcasting outlets removed the *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers* television program from the air following a ruling by the Ontario Regional Council of the Canadian Broadcasting Standards Council (CBSC), saying the show was too violent for young children. The council's scrutiny of the show was instigated, in part, by four letters from local residents. The CBSC said the show was objectionable because it contained violence which had no physical consequences and that is prohibited under the rules a voluntary Canadian national violence code introduced in January 1994 by the commercial broadcast industry (Farnsworth, 1994; Tobenkin, 1994).

In Scandinavia, the *Power Rangers* and several other children's programs were banned by a regional cable channel after the beating death in 1994 of a five-year-old girl in Norway. The three boys who were accused of the crime were said to be acting out scenes from children's television action programs. The station later said that *Power Rangers* played no role in the incident, and stated that the program would return later in the 1994 season (Tobenkin, 1994).

Television has a powerful hold on children's attention, and programs which are created to sell advertising to children for commercial profit can create

conflicts between what is best for children and what is best for the advertiser (Head & Sterling, 1982). According to Lazar (1994, p. 13), "business cannot be entrusted with children's welfare." FOX television targets children and young adults, and hosts the *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers* six days a week.

Social learning research

Comstock's 1977 study on types of portrayal and aggressive behavior discusses the specific attributes which may play a negative or positive role in affecting aggressive behavior. He says that laboratory-type settings which study violence typically have artificial surroundings; the amount of television is out of context and is brief; and the measurement of the study situation does not usually have factors which may prevent specific performance -- like scolding. Many experiments involving initiative effects of violence use an object originally designed for playful violence -- such as the Bobo punching doll -- as the target for real, observed aggression (Surgeon General's Scientific Advisory Committee on Television and Social Behavior, 1972). It has been said that we should look carefully at the evidence we have available from studies on violence. However, in most cases, there may be only one or two studies we may be able to look at. This increases the risk that those findings may be artifacts of the population studied, the design used, the instruments used in measuring, or the result of

something else.

Some scientific evidence has suggested that both live and cartoon portrayals can lead to aggressive behavior by the child viewer; new exposure to violence (after seeing repeated exposures of violence) may increase aggressive acts by the viewer; and, the implication of how TV violence helps to contribute to anti-social aggression still remains.

It has been found that three to five-year-olds from many backgrounds have gained simple as well as complex skills after watching the children's television program *Sesame Street* (Coates, Pusser & Goodman, 1976). Watching *Sesame Street* has been shown to increase positive reinforcement of social contacts with adults and children in the preschool. However, these results only held for preschool children below the group median (low) in a specific behavior noted during the baseline period (Coates & Pusser, 1975). *Sesame Street* had no appreciable behavioral effect on those children who were high in a behavior during that baseline period. It has also been shown that *Sesame Street* can increase different kinds of behavior, such as young children giving positive reinforcement to others (Coates & Pusser, 1975).

Mister Rogers' Neighborhood, another children's television program, has been shown to increase prosocial interpersonal behaviors only for lower-socioeconomic-status children (Coates & Pusser, 1975). This program has been

shown to increase positive reinforcement only for high socioeconomic-status children, and to increase a child's social contact with adults and other children in preschool (Coates & Pusser, 1975). Prosocial skills by this same group were exhibited in real-life and fantasy situations, however, the amount of prosocial behavior gained depended on the role-playing and verbal labeling training the children got after they watched this one-hour-a-day program for a nine-month period (Coates, Pusser, & Goodman, 1976).

Many kinds of actions, as well as numbers of actions, seen on television, have been shown to influence children (Roberts, 1981; Peterson & Peters, 1983; Eron, 1986; Lin, 1993). In order to see how a particular program (especially a very popular one) may be influencing our children through their continued watching, it is important to note the kinds and numbers of actions being shown over time (Gerbner, Gross, Signorielli, Morgan, & Jackson-Beek, 1979; Morgan & Rothchild, 1983).

The general view and concern of citizens and policy makers is that violence shown on television is harmful. The children's television program *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers* has been used as a reference point for violent television content viewed by young children (Davis, 1994; Farnsworth, 1994; Simon, 1994; Tobenkin, 1994). However, no studies have been found that specifically mention content found in this television program.

This thesis will consider the content of 10 selected, televised episodes of the children's television program the *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers* through adult interpretation and coding.

The purpose of this study is to determine whether conventional wisdom is correct -- whether the kinds of actions and behavior shown on the *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers* could only be influencing young children in a negative way. Besides determining the number and kind of anti-social/violent actions portrayed on this program, kinds of pro-social behavior, as well as their quantity, also need to be recorded. It has been shown that individual differences in aggression due to the effects of media violence are the result of cumulative learning during childhood (Huesmann, 1986). The more a child fantasizes and acts out an observed scene, the more likely it is to be used later in a social problem-solving situation (Huesmann, 1986).

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Television ownership among families with young children is nearly 100 percent in this country. Parents reportedly use TV to quiet their infants, and by the time babies are six months of age, many are busily engaged in “watching” television. The average preschool age child (two to five-year-old) watches between 26 and 28 hours a week (Ableman, 1984; Lazar, 1994).

Children as young as two years of age have been shown to be very good at imitating televised behaviors, and some imitation has been observed in even younger children (Comstock, 1978; Eron & Huesmann, 1987). Even at this young age, children apparently have some understanding of what they view (Stroman, 1991). Since TV is being consumed by children at very young ages, a comprehensive look needs to be taken to see how television content may be influencing their lives.

It has been shown that boys watch television more than girls (Brown, Childers, Bauman, & Koch, 1990); gifted children watch more than children of average intelligence and may be less likely to ask their parents questions about TV than nongifted children (Ableman, 1984); and children in lower grades at school preferred more aggressive programs than did older children (Spafkin & Rubinstein, 1979). Roberts (1981, p. 559) found that the more hours of

television the parents watched and the less educated they were, “the more likely the child was to report a high level of viewing.” In 1984, it was reported that only four percent of all commercial television programming was child-oriented, and children’s programs accounted for only 11 percent of the total viewing time for children aged two to 11 (Ableman, 1984). In a conversation with Steve Rabb of a FOX-affiliated station (May 22, 1996), he said, “It is considered difficult to quantify the amount of TV programming designed just for children today due to cross-over (child and adult-oriented) programs such as *Full House*.” If a child has a choice of watching either a favorite adult program or children’s programming, a majority of children have been found to watch the adult program (Comstock, 1978; Webster & Coscarelli, 1979).

What holds children’s attention on TV? The biggest attention-grabber is something that is auditory, something other than dialogue, such as frequent changes of speaker, lively music, sound effects, peculiar voices, and non-speech vocalizations. Next is a high level of physical activity or action, then changes in scene, auditory events or character themes (Huston-Stein & Wright 1979).

Television has been shown to provide a variety of roles and environments from within and without a child’s experience, which may then be used to interpret and structure his or her own self-identity (Surgeon General’s Scientific Advisory

Committee on Television and Social Behavior, 1972; Peterson & Peters, 1983; Ableman, 1984; Eron & Huesmann, 1987).

Fantasy versus reality

Children in the first grade were more likely to accept television characters as being “true-to-life” than were sixth and 10th graders, and young children did not easily discriminate between different types of television characters (Quarfoth, 1979). The amount of television watching by children has been found to increase until he or she reaches the age of eight. During that time, the programs’ contents getting the child’s attention are cartoons, funny situations, chases, heroes and heroines. At around age nine, a great majority of program choices made by children consist of adult-oriented programming, and the belief that television is realistic sharply decreases (Greenberg & Reeves, 1976). The younger the television viewer is, the more likely he or she is to act like the television character shown (Eron & Huesmann, 1987). Research conducted in the last several decades assumes that by the time children reach adolescence, they will have acquired an “adult discount” which will enable them to distinguish fantasy from reality (Potter, 1992; Lin, 1993), but previous research has defined the word “fantasy” from an adult’s perspective, not a child’s (Snow, 1974).

Television has been shown to be a “window into the world” of social actions

from which children learn about societies' norms. Children with limited resources have gained information about how people in other parts of the world dress and behave. Those children from homes with older siblings, who have parents with higher levels of education, higher incomes and occupational status have been shown to rely less on television for their world view of society (Greeson & Williams, 1986; Eron & Huesmann, 1987; Potter, 1992).

Meanings, values, attitudes, norms and roles of everyday situations form the basis of our social interactions, and much of the controversy over television is centered around the degree of accuracy in TV's portrayals of society (Peterson & Peters, 1983).

Television and the behavior of children

Television has been shown to be a chosen, influential, socializing agent in the life of a child, and it has been shown to have the possibility of affecting many kinds of behavior (Surgeon General's Scientific Advisory Committee on Television and Social Behavior, 1972; Huston-Stein & Wright, 1979; Ellis, 1983; Peterson & Peters, 1983; Alexander, 1985; Greeson & Williams, 1986; Rowe & Herstand, 1986; Eron & Huesmann, 1987; Hawkins, Pingree & Adler, 1987; Luker & Johnson, 1988; Potter, 1990; Stroman, 1991; Potter, 1992; Atkin, 1993; Lin, 1993).

Children who are unable to gain confidence and competence in social interactions with others may be the ones who will be most affected by television (Morgan & Rothchild, 1983; Luker & Johnson, 1988; Brown, Childers, Bauman, & Koch, 1990; Stroman, 1991).

Parents are very important socializing agents as their children assess and use television. It has been shown that children's behavior can be modified by the presence of an adult who mediates by making comments, either approving or disapproving, about what was being watched (Roberts, 1981; Eron, 1986). It has also been shown that girls, children who are high academic achievers, and children of relatively well-educated parents have been more often shown to behave in prosocial ways in classrooms than boys, children of less well-educated parents, and children who are low academic achievers (Sprafkin & Rubinstein, 1979).

Television and futuring

Mentally imagining how an action might be projected into the future, and how an action might be used, interpreted and/or accepted is referred to as futuring. Television may help the older child mentally rehearse role expectations from the standpoint of relationships he or she has not yet encountered. These roles can then be evaluated before they are incorporated into the options of behavior for

the child (Surgeon General's Scientific Advisory Committee on Television and Social Behavior, 1972; Peterson & Peters, 1983; Lin, 1993).

Television has the potential to present examples such as helping and sharing. It also has the ability to explain to children how to handle fearful events, and demonstrate that certain situations, like going to the dentist, may not be as terrible as they expect (Stroman, 1991). Many researchers have ignored the fact that children may see a world on television where there are many criminals, but they may also see many police and private detectives who are very successful in finding and stopping those criminals (Potter, 1990).

Television may help children mentally rehearse role expectations (Peterson & Peters, 1983; Lin, 1993). Sprafkin and Rubinstein (1979) found that when "prosocial" behavior (defined in this study as "potentially socially desirable") was shown on television, it took only one viewing to produce cooperative behavior from those who saw it.

Cultivation research

"Cultivation analysis" research shows that those viewers who spend large amounts of time viewing television are likely to express the same assumptions, views and beliefs as the television portrayals they watch (Gerbner, Gross, Signorielli, Morgan, & Jackson-Beek, 1979; Morgan & Rothchild, 1983).

Frequently-watched television programs may have direct behavioral modeling implications (Lott, 1989). The more frequently a child rehearses a sequence by continued viewing of an antisocial or prosocial act, the more likely it is to be remembered and reenacted by that child when she or he is in a situation perceived to be similar (Eron & Huesmann, 1987) -- or in play (Snow, 1974). When adolescents were asked if they had imitated something on television, 43 percent said they had, and 57 percent said they had not (Collins, 1992). No studies were found asking the same information of young children.

Intervention and role-taking experimentation

Studies show that intervention by parents and peer-groups affect how much television influences children (Eron, 1986; Brown, Childers, Bauman, & Koch, 1990; Walker & Morley, 1991; Austin, 1993), but a 1989 Gallup poll reported that parents are seven times more likely to change the channel they disapprove of than discuss the offending content (Austin, 1993).

Austin (1993) found that parents and peer-groups can help with three processing tasks: categorization (showing whether and how the television world reflects the real world), validation (endorsing or condemning the accuracy and representativeness of the people and situations shown on television), and supplementation (showing how television can be used in the real world by

supplying additional information). Practically all children belong to some group, and children with a close family and good friends can explore new roles and behaviors with confidence.

Role-taking is a function of abstract cognitive ability. It involves the ability to anticipate responses of another person who is being observed or with whom social interaction is taking place, and is a vehicle through which children learn roles and become responsive to the expectation of others (Ellis, Streeter & Engelbrecht, 1983; Peterson & Peters, 1983; Lin, 1993). Role and behavior-learning processes within close-knit family or peer groups may lead the child to counteract stereotypical portrayals seen on television, and resultant “cancellation” of media effects may occur during conversations, games, or play. Children who are more socially integrated should have wider opportunities and availabilities for such exchanges, experiences and resources (Morgan & Rothchild, 1983).

Peer groups

Peer groups contribute to the construction of reality by making themselves a place for experimenting with many role models conveyed by television and other socializing agents. Peers become important reference groups that shape thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of their members by providing a “proving

ground” for role behaviors that adolescents have observed on television. In the midst of other children, the child may discover roles which are compatible with their developing identities by sharing ideas about role expectations, behavior, and receiving feedback about the “fit” between specific roles and the situation (Peterson & Peters, 1983).

The child who has a loosely-knit association with a peer group, or no association at all, may depend more on television as a source of interactions, companionship, and informal lessons (Luker & Johnson, 1988; Lin, 1993; Morgan & Rothchild, 1993). This increased salience should intensify the impact of information derived from television (Morgan & Rothchild, 1983).

Reality construction

Reality for each child is different, and there is some discrepancy among researchers on just how social reality is constructed. Peterson and Peters (1983) say youth observe, construct and interpret facts seen in social environments, on television, and among peers to create reality for themselves. Research conducted by Hawkins, Pingree and Adler (1987) indicates that social reality does not correspond directly to television at all, but is implied by total patterns. Television’s messages about social reality are made from the accumulation of years of watching. A process gap between months and years of

watching television and resultant beliefs about social reality is also suggested (Hawkins, Pingree, & Adler, 1987).

Television's reality may or may not be defined as "real," based on (a) social peers who confirm or disconfirm TV's portrayals, (b) the maturation level of information-processing capacities, (c) important developmental issues for children who shape their perceptions (dependence on parents, for example), and (d) how critically and attentively adolescents view television's images. Television's representations capture the attention of children and become "real" only if everyday meaning is applied to them (Peterson & Peters, 1983).

When a child is going to do something he or she has not experienced before, he or she may try to imagine what will happen, placing himself or herself in the setting of the actual experience (futuring). Thinking in this way helps the child prepare for the unknown or the unexpected. If a child has had a wide variety of experiences, he or she may use past experiences. If the child has had limited social experience, television programming may provide a wide variety of social experiences to watch and select from (Luker & Johnson, 1988).

Television violence

Violence on television is an easy and cheap way to attract and keep viewers' attention (Eron & Huesmann, 1987). When the average child graduates from

elementary school, he or she will have seen at least 8,000 murders and more than 100,000 other acts of violence (Lazar, 1994). Prime-time acts of violence average eight acts per hour, but the rate of violence on children's programming is even higher -- 25 an hour, and these acts are committed by seven out of 10 characters in nine out of 10 programs (Lazar, 1994). Current action programs typically have "hooks," such as romance and humor, which increase viewership (Rowe & Herstand, 1985). Network executives tell us that viewers prefer programs with heavy doses of violence, erroneously saying that violence is the same as action -- a preference which has been shown to exist (Eron & Huesmann, 1987).

A study conducted in 1981 by Singer and Singer followed a group of three and four-year-olds over the course of one year and found that television violence increased children's aggressiveness at that age. A study of eight and nine-year-olds found that when a violent film was watched, it took longer for the viewer to seek adult help when the viewer was confronted with increasingly violent behavior around him. It was then concluded that violence has a desensitizing role on the viewer (Lazar, 1994).

There are many conflicting findings among researchers who attempt to show how television aggression and violence may relate to children's behavior, which may be due to differences in operational definitions of the words "violence" and

“aggression.” Lazar (1994, p. 4) describes violence as “any overt act or threat to hurt or kill.” Gerbner, Gross, Signorielli, Morgan , & Jackson-Beek (1979, p. 178) describe it as “an overt expression of physical force, with or without a weapon, against self or other, compelling action against one’s will on pain of being hurt or killed, or actually hurting or killing.” Wiegman and Kuttschreuter (1992, p. 147) describe aggression in almost the same way -- “an act (physical or verbal) in which a person harms or injures another person (or persons) such that the actor knows beforehand that his/her behavior will result in negative consequences for the other person(s).”

A large number of studies have said that children with aggressive predispositions tend to watch a greater amount of violence on television (Huston-Stein & Wright, 1979; Eron, 1986; Rosenthal, 1986; Turner, Hesse & Peterson-Lewis, 1986; Eron & Huesmann, 1987). A common conclusion is that watching violence causes the aggressive attitudes, but the direction of causality has not been made clear in correlational field studies (Atkin, Greenberg, Korzenny, & McDermott, 1979; Baarda, 1992).

Young children, more often than older ones, as well as those children who watch a great deal of television, have been found to think it is okay to hit someone when you are angry at them (Roberts, 1981). Some television programs put forth the idea that violence and/or abuse are successful, and even

appropriate responses to conflict (Atkin, Greenberg, Korzenny, & McDermott, 1979).

Arousal theories of TV violence effects imply that viewers who are emotionally excited by aggressive stimuli cause previously learned aggressive behavior patterns to manifest (Eron & Huesmann, 1987; Atkin, 1993). Walker & Morley (1991) found that liking violence on television is more predictive of aggression than viewing violence on television, while researchers Rowe and Herstand (1985) attribute it to personality differences. Stroman (1991) shows that aggressive behavior shown on television is more likely to be imitated by children when it is part of their everyday experience, yet a study conducted in the same year by Walker and Morley (1991) contradicts part of those findings by showing there is no evidence that children of aggressive parents are affected by television violence.

Two variables mentioned in studies, which may determine how much influence the observation of television characters will have on the behavior of the viewer, are: (1) the degree to which the child feels the television portrayal is realistic, and (2) the degree to which the child identifies with the characters. The more the observer believes the action is true-to-life, and that he or she is similar to a television character, the more aggressive the individual is shown to be, and the more resistant to change any intervention will be (Rowe & Herstand,

1985; Eron & Huesmann, 1987; Akin, 1993).

Both realistic and fantasy violence are known to increase aggression above the baseline of a non-exposed control group. However, realistic presentations may attract more intense attention, involvement, and identification, and prolong the heightened state of excitement. Antisocial actions which are seen as real may be perceived as more violent, resulting in a stronger response to the message. Findings show a stronger impact for reality and newscast violence stimulus than for fantasy and entertainment violence stimulus (Atkin, 1993).

It has been shown that disinhibitory effects of television are more likely when the observer perceives that there are many real-life frustrations which justify expression of aggression, and that aggression really achieves desired goals without undesirable retaliation or penalties (Atkin, 1993).

Observation of aggressive sequences on television provide scripts -- a sequence of events which are expected by the individual, involving him either as a participant or as an observer (Lazar, 1994), which, when continually rehearsed by children in play, were easily exhibited when the subjects found themselves in situations bearing some resemblance to the ones seen on television. It was found that more aggressive children: (1) watch more television; (2) prefer programs with greater amounts of violence; (3) identify more with the television characters shown; and (4) perceive violence as more like real life than do less

aggressive children (Huesmann, 1986; Eron & Huesmann, 1987; Lazar 1994).

Prosocial effects

It has been shown in some studies that children, as young as preschool age, can learn new aggressive behavior from as little as one exposure to violence on television (Stroman, 1991). After viewing prosocial behavior, preschoolers have been shown to act prosocially. Aggressive content has been shown to lead them to increased aggressive behavior. In two weeks the effect for both prosocial and antisocial behavior disappeared (Eron, 1986). It has been demonstrated in longitudinal field studies that children who learn and perform prosocial behavior are not likely to engage in aggressive behavior (Eron, 1986).

Rewards and sanctions have been known to affect children's learning. Even nursery school-aged children who observed an aggressor's actions being rewarded were more likely to imitate aggressive behavior than those children who saw the aggressor being punished (Turner, Hesse, & Peterson-Lewis, 1986; Lazar, 1994).

Children's interpretation of violence in play context

The only study found (Snow, 1974, p. 13) which asked children how they interpreted television violence says, "In studies of children the interpretations

and definitions of television content and behavioral effects have come from adults and not the child. None of the major studies has distinguished whether the television content or behavioral effect is a play or a serious situation for the subjects.” Snow goes on to describe how children play at two distinct roles the child can realistically use later in life -- such as a firefighter or a parent; but for “fantastic” roles, or ones that the child cannot be reasonably be expected to perform in later life, such as a race car driver, robot or horse, affects are not clear.

Snow’s study found that all the children in his study agreed there was a difference between non-play and play, and make-believe and real life. However, there was no agreement between the distinction. The children did agree on the adult definitions of real-life and make-believe. The majority of young “children did not interpret so-called violent behaviors in a play context as violence” (Snow, 1974, p. 19). They described the situations as funny and make-believe, and did not look at them as violent. Most children said they would not engage in similar behavior. Those who said they would use similar behavior said they would do so only in self defense.

No studies, other than Snow’s, have been found which have been conducted in this area -- differentiating whether the child’s behavior is “play” or is “serious” in content. Neglecting to take into account the participant’s personal definition

of the action --in this case, the child's -- and may somewhat qualify the findings of past research in this area (Snow, 1974).

The literature review suggests that the coders will find more anti-social actions than pro-social actions in the *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers*. What is the adult perception of the content of the 10 episodes sample of the *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers*? Specifically, answers will be sought to the following research questions:

RQ1: To what extent are these particular episodes filled with pro-social and anti-social actions?

RQ1: Averaging the 10 episodes sample, how many times do adults see the following portrayals occurring:

I. Anti-social actions

- A. Action showing violence (assuming real, bodily hurt has been inflicted)?
- B. Conflict showing bad winning over good?

II. Pro-social actions

- A. Helpfulness (words/actions)?
- B. Conflict showing good winning over bad?

III. Problem-solving skills

Additionally, qualitative descriptions of each of the 10 episodes were performed.

Chapter III

Methodology

Sample

This study is an analysis of a purposeful sample of 10 episodes of the *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers* television program. A purposive sample may be selected to reflect quantitative or qualitative aspects of the sources which are considered important (Holsti, 1991). Stempel (1989) also says that there are cases where one small, carefully selected purposive sample will produce more useful information than a large random sample (Eaton & Dominick, 1991). Since a random sample might not have allowed for the inclusion of female-based plots or the inclusion episodes from the entire span of 1993 to 1995, a purposeful sample was chosen.

The 10 episodes of the *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers* chosen for this study range from the early episodes of the series (1993) up to the *Power Rangers* movie, which was released in the summer of 1995 according to Charles Saxton, a local Music Land manager (June 19, 1996). These episodes are: "High Five," "The Wanna-Be Ranger," "Bloom of Doom," "Goldar's Vice-Versa," "Where There's Smoke There's Fire," "Rocky Just Wants To Have Fun," "Forever Friends," "Lights, Camera Action," "When Is A Power Ranger Not A Power Ranger?," and "Lord Zedd Waves."

Content analysis has been defined by Berelson (1952) as a research technique allowing for objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication. It is an examination of a class of social artifacts (Babbie, 1995), or in this case, an examination of the kinds of action which are shown on the *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers*. Individual incidences of action will be the units of observation, and the individual program will be the unit of analysis. Content analysis studies usually utilize nominal scales, that is, the assignment of numbers or symbols for the purpose of designating subclasses that represent unique characteristics. In this study tallies will be used for recording the number of kinds of action shown.

Coding

Content coding has been the basis of other communication research, such as prime-time studies of gender (Vest, 1992), product-related programming (Eaton & Dominick, 1991), and children's TV ads (Doolittle & Pepper, 1975).

The content analysis was coded by three communication graduate students from the University of Nebraska at Omaha. They were trained -- i.e. they were shown what was to be counted a "kick" and how to record it while using an episode of the *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers* that was not included in the study.

The previously-aired episodes of the *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers* television program were purposefully drawn from a prerecorded and marketed selection at a local music store so samples representing the evolution of the series (1993) until the release of the *Power Rangers* movie (1995) could be obtained, and so female-based plots could be included.

Violence/hurting has had many definitions in past research. Eron and Huesmann (1987) refer only to physical behavior and never actually define it. Wiegman, Kuttschreuter, and Baarda (1992, p. 47) operationalize aggression “as an act in which a person harms or injures another person (or persons) such that the actor knows beforehand that his/her behavior will result in negative consequences for the other person(s),” and they include verbal aggression in that definition. For this study, the term “violence” will be operationalized as meaning an action in which someone (human) or something (robotic in nature) has caused actual/real bodily harm.

Prosocial behavior has been behavioralized as “an act in which a person supports or helps another person (or persons) such that the actor knows beforehand that his/her behavior will result in positive consequences for the other person(s)” (Wiegman, Kuttschreuter, & Baarda, 1992, p. 148). Prosocial behavior has also been defined as physical helping (Baran, Chase & Courtright, 1979), and as “that set of behaviors which is generally accepted by society as

constructive, appropriate and legal” (Potter & Ware, 1989).

For this study, the term “prosocial” will mean actions/words which are done for the benefit of the individual or group.

Wiegman, Kuttschreuter, and Baarda (1992) discuss the longitudinal effects of viewing aggressive and prosocial behavior. In order to identify and compare the number and kinds social contact among characters, social contact will be sorted into two categories: (1) “good” meaning a prosocial outcome is anticipated at the beginning of the social contact, and (2) “bad” meaning an antisocial outcome is anticipated at the beginning of the social contact (with “antisocial” being defined as not wanting constructive behaviors to occur).

Intervention by parents and peer groups have been shown to influence how much television influences children (Eron, 1986; Brown, Childers, Bauman, & Koch, 1990; Walker & Morley, 1991; Austin, 1993). Intervention by peer groups (the Power Rangers themselves) is shown during episodes of the *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers*. The Power Rangers intervene in personal confrontations in the episodes to show non-violent problem-solving skills to the other characters in the program. The recording of each of these problem-solving skills shown in the 10 episodes will be coded as being “present” by a coder making a tally mark on the coding sheet when each incident is seen.

Chapter IV

Results

The *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers* program

As the *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers* series has evolved, the characters and actors have sometimes changed. For purposes here, the major characters and basic story line seen in the coded episodes are very briefly described below. (For more complete descriptions, see Appendix D.)

Once, in a time of great conflict, a mythical being known as Zordon created a group of six exceptional teenagers from the town of Angel Grove to help stop evil. These teenagers have been given the power to transform themselves into unstoppable warriors, called the *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers*.

The Power Rangers are superior problem-solvers and experts in self-defense. They are shown in activities with their friends at school, at the Command Center (located somewhere in a desert), and working as a team to help others who are in danger.

The main characters are:

Kim -- the Pink Ranger; became a Power Ranger on the first episode; when she departs from the Power Rangers (in the third season) she transfers her powers to Katherine.

Billy -- the Blue Ranger, also became a Power Ranger on the first episode

Trini -- the original Yellow Ranger from the very first episode; had her powers transferred to Aisha the second season.

Jason -- was the Red Power Ranger from the first episode, as well as the leader of the first Power Rangers; his powers were transferred during the second season to Rocky.

Tommy -- was first shown on the *Power Rangers* as one of evil Queen Rita's warriors; freed of Rita's control, he became the Green Power Ranger; and now he's the leader of the Power Rangers and known as the White Ranger.

Adam -- created during the second season, he is the Black Power Ranger.

Rocky -- known as the Red Ranger beginning in the second season, got his transferred powers from Jason.

Aisha -- the Yellow Ranger who joined the Power Rangers in the second season; inherited her powers from Trini.

Zack -- became a Power Ranger on the first episode; in the second season his powers were transferred to Adam during this season.

Bulk -- an overweight, not very intelligent Angel Grove High School student who doesn't like to study, spends his time trying to find out who the Power Rangers really are; is usually cast in potentially humorous situations.

Skull -- skinny; not very intelligent; black hair; Bulk's best friend; is usually cast as Bulk's sidekick.

Alpha-5 -- the robot in charge of the Command Center; Zordon's second in command.

Zordon -- the ionized face (shown in black and white photography) in a tube just outside the perimeter of the Command Center, looks out for "good" on the Earth, and is at the head of the Power Rangers.

Rita -- the evil queen who lives on the Moon, the predecessor to Lord Zedd later on in the series.

Lord Zedd -- the evil power who lives on the Moon -- creating monsters to destroy "good" and those who help maintain it on Earth.

Goldar -- part of Lord Zedd's monster-militia sent out to destroy the Power Rangers.

Puttys -- Lord Zedd's army of gray robots sent out as a first offense against the Power Rangers.

The episodes coded were the following: "High Five," "The Wanna-Be Ranger," "Bloom of Doom," "Goldar's Vice-Versa," "Where There's Smoke There's Fire," "Lights, Camera, Action," "When Is A Power Ranger Not A Power Ranger?," and "Lord Zedd Waves."

Each episode involves an evil being (either Rita or Lord Zedd) trying to destroy the Power Rangers as the Rangers work together to do prosocial acts on Earth. The Power Rangers always physically defend themselves from evil, whether in their uniforms or in the clothing they wear to school. No matter what monster is created to destroy them, the Power Rangers are always victorious, but evil always returns.

For the quantification analysis of these shows, "consensus" was attempted among three observers (Krippendorf, 1980). Three graduate students were recruited to code manifest content -- the visible, surface content (Babbie, 1995). Because the coders disagreed and adequate reliability could not be achieved, data from the three coders were averaged.

This study was the first to address counted acts of violence, prosocial words/actions, conflict showing "good vs. bad" and "bad vs. good," and problem-solving skills in the *Mighty Morphin-Power Rangers* children's television program.

These episodes were purchased from a retail music store, and the usual time

reserved for commercials is not part of the recordings, so the 20 minutes of recorded *Power Rangers* is an entire episode. The coders were shown the episodes without stopping the videotape -- using that same condition as if they had been watching an episode on television. Every five minutes the coders were instructed to start recording tallies in the next five-minute-interval segment of their coding sheet. Each episode was recorded on a new coding sheet. The number of actions recorded were tallied for each episode, totaled for the ten episodes, then averaged for the number of actions in each category per half hour. When there is total agreement in a five-minute segment, that whole number is used in the row total. When there was disagreement, the data were averaged.

Table I (page 38) indicates the average number of actions in the four five-minute time periods for each episode, as well as the average number of actions, over the ten episode sample, per episode.

The research questions and their answers are as follows:

RQ 1: To what extent are these particular episodes filled with pro-social and anti-social action?

On average the *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers* program has 43.9

anti-social acts (violence) per episode, and 9.1 pro-social acts (helpfulness) per episode.

RQ 2: Averaging the 10 episodes sample, how many times do adults see the following portrayals occurring:

I. Anti-social actions

A. Action showing violence (assuming real, bodily hurt has been inflicted): kick, punch, hit or other

An action showing violence occurs on the average of 43.9 times per episode.

B. Conflict showing bad winning over good

An action showing bad winning over good occurs on the average of 16.1 times per episode.

II. Pro-social actions

A. Helpfulness (pro-social words/actions)

A pro-social action which shows pro-social words/action (helpfulness) occurs on the average of 9.1 times per episode.

B. Conflict showing good winning over bad

Conflict showing good winning over bad occurs on the average of 5.3 times per episode.

III. Problem solving skills

On average, problem-solving skills occur 4.4 times per episode.

The largest number of actions per half hour were in the violent category (kick, punch, hit or other) for a total of 43.9 per episode, with the most "violent" time period being the 10:01-15:00 minute time period after the episode began (15.9).

Conflict showing bad winning over good was the next category most frequently recorded, with an average 16.1 actions recorded per episode, and most of those occurred in the 00:01-05:00 minute category (6.4).

The third largest category showing the largest number of actions per episode

Table I

"Mighty Morphin Power Rangers" Average Recorded Action Per TV Episode

	00:01-05:00	05:01-10:00	10:01-15:00	15:01-20:00	Row Total
Each violent action: kick, punch, hit, or other	4.2	13.1	15.9	10.7	*43.9
Each conflict showing bad winning over good	6.4	5.9	2.3	1.5	16.1
Pro-social words/actions (helpfulness)	2.4	2.1	1.4	3.2	9.1
Each conflict showing good winning over bad	0.6	0.6	1	3.1	5.3
Problem-solving skills being shown.	1	1	1.3	1.1	4.4

Key: * This averaged more than two hits or punches per minute.

was the pro-social words/actions (helpfulness) category -- showing a 9.1 average per episode. Most of these actions occurred in the 15:01-20:00 minute time period of the episodes (3.2).

Conflict showing good winning over bad occurred on an average of 5.3 times an episode, with most of them occurring in the 15:01-20:00 minute time period (3.1).

Problem-solving skills were recorded as occurring 4.4 times per episode.

Although all three coders were given exactly the same coding instructions, and agreement on what constituted a physically hurtful kick, etc. was agreed upon before the actual coding began, the coding results show a sometimes wide disagreement on the numbers of specific actions portrayed. Only eight times (out of 200) was there total agreement in a five-minute category by the three coders.

Research indicates that television has been shown to have the possibility of affecting many types of behavior (Huston-Stein & Wright, 1979; Ellis, 1983; Peterson & Peters, 1983; Alexander, 1985; Greeson & Williams, 1986; Rowe & Herstand, 1986; Eron & Huesmann, 1987; Hawkins, Pingree & Adler, 1987; Luker & Johnson, 1988; Stroman, 1991; Collins, 1992; Potter, 1992; Lin, 1993).

Greenberg and Reeves (1976) show that young children up to the age of eight are drawn to programs with chases, heroes and heroines. The younger

the viewers, the more likely they are to act like a television character (Eron & Huesmann, 1987). The Power Rangers are depicted as heroes and heroines, it may be possible that young children will imitate what they see the Power Rangers doing.

This study groups all violent acts (kicks, punches, hits or other physically hurtful acts) together, whether they are defensive or offensive -- and both kinds of action exist in this program.

Putting violent actions on the *Power Rangers* is an inexpensive and easy way to keep viewers (Eron & Huesmann, 1987), but research has shown it can cause increased aggressiveness in three and four-year-olds (Singer & Singer, 1981). Violence has been shown to have a desensitizing effect on eight and nine-year-olds (Lazar, 1994), and the most common conclusion is that watching TV violence is related to aggressive attitudes, but directional causality has not yet been established (Atkin, Greenberg, Korzenny, & McDernott, 1979; Baarda, 1992). Research reports the younger the television viewer is, the more likely he or she is to act like the television character shown (Eron & Huesmann, 1987). This could indicate that a young child could act like a Power Ranger, a Putty, or a Lord Zedd -- with the same behavioral characteristics.

Conflict showing bad winning over good has been shown in this study to be more prevalent than good winning over bad. A child's peers are important

reference groups, shaping feelings, thoughts, and behaviors of their members (Peterson & Peters, 1983). If a child uses “evil character behavior” among peers and that behavior is rewarded, it may reinforce that behavior (Peterson & Peters, 1983). It is also possible that a young viewer will be influenced by intervention from a positive peer group and/or a close-knit family -- cancelling out the “media effects” of antisocial action (Morgan & Rothchild, 1983).

The prosocial behavior shown on the Power Rangers may influence its young viewers to imitate it. According to Sprafkin and Rubinstein (1979) only one viewing of such behavior produced similar behavior by those viewing it. There are more than four times as many violent actions shown than prosocial actions in this study, however, and it would appear the violent actions would have greater chance to be replicated than the prosocial ones.

Children who are unskilled in social interactions are the ones who will most likely be affected by television (Brown, Childers, Bauman, & Koch, 1990; Lin, 1993; Luker & Johnson, 1988; Morgan & Rothchild, 1983; Stroman, 1991). The children most needing positive behavior modeling will see more antisocial modeling on the *Power Rangers*.

CHAPTER V

Discussion

This present study has sought answers to questions regarding the average number of prosocial and antisocial actions contained in a single episode of *The Mighty Morphin Power Rangers*. Research shows that young children do not easily discriminate between different types of television characters (Quarfoth, 1979).

Limitations

This study did not separate the recorded “violent acts” into offensive and defensive categories. If they had been, the defensive actions might have been categorized as prosocial rather than antisocial actions -- with the possibility of dramatically changing the results found in the amount of antisocial behavior found in these episodes.

When the coders for this study were first given the operational definitions and practice in coding for the antisocial and prosocial action to be recorded in these episodes, there was consensus among their tallies. When they were left on their own, however, they reverted to using their own views and definitions of what they construed as “violent” and “prosocial” behavior. The findings show consensus occurring on the coding sheets in a five-minute segment only eight

times out of 200. Looking for additional ways to establish coder reliability would be of great help to researchers.

The gender of the coders may also have had an impact on the findings in this study. Generally speaking, the single male coder found more violent actions in the episodes than the two female coders did. He also found more prosocial actions than the female coders did. It appears there could be a possibility of gender-based “action” interpretation embedded in these results.

It was noted that some coders paid more attention to the videotape being shown than others. Children’s shorter attention spans may make a difference in how much of a television episode they actually “absorb” compared to that of an adult. The way to address this possible difference might be to compare the differences in coding between adults and children using the same sample.

Episodes from the beginning of the *Mighty Morphin Power Ranger* series until the release of the *Power Rangers* movie were grouped together in one sample for coding purposes. This time frame limits our look into whether negative public opinion to the violence shown on these episodes has caused a decrease in antisocial action shown on these episodes over time.

Implications

When the average child graduates from elementary school, he or she will

have seen at least 8,000 murders and more than 100,000 other acts of violence (Lazar, 1994). Prime time acts of violence average four acts per episode, yet the rate of violence on children's programming is even higher -- averaging 12.5 per episode (Lazar, 1994). This study's results indicate the *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers* program showing 43.9 acts of violence per episode -- more than three times the average violence found on other children's television programs.

There are more than four times as many violent actions shown than prosocial actions shown in this study. The mere volume of violent actions shown on the *Power Rangers* indicate they have a greater chance of influencing a child's behavior than the prosocial ones shown.

This study also records "bad" winning over "good" more than twice as often as "good" winning over "bad." Since television has been reported to be a chosen, influential, socializing agent in the life of a child (Huston-Stein & Wright, 1979; Ellis, 1983; Peterson & Peters, 1983; Alexander, 1985; Greeson & Williams, 1986; Rowe & Herstand, 1986; Eron & Huesmann, 1987; Hawkins, Pingree & Adler, 1987; Luker & Johnson, 1988; Potter, 1990; Stroman, 1991; Collins, 1992; Potter, 1992; Atkin, 1993; Lin, 1993) these many negative social outcomes may have a harmful effect on our children.

Why is there so much violence and negativity in the *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers*? Perhaps because violence provides a chance to have heroes and

heroines, which has been shown to attract young audiences (Greenberg & Reeves, 1976). Since children have been shown to increase the amount of television they watch until they reach the age of eight (Greenberg & Reeves, 1976), any way to keep a young audience watching will increase the program's rating and increase its profits.

The younger the TV viewer is, the more likely it is that watching this program may produce negative effects. The FOX network schedules the *Power Rangers* six days a week, giving it the chance to make an almost daily impact in a child's life, at a time of day when many parents are still at work and unable to mediate what their children see on TV.

Ellis (1983) gives another perspective on the importance of television to children, saying, "Being 'television wise' brings prestige on the playground just as being skilled at electronic games wins deference in the arcades." Could the "play" enactment of the *Power Rangers* be a social value deemed important to a child?

Recent issues

On April 22, 1996, a six-year-old boy from Martinez, California reportedly broke into a residence with eight-year-old twin boys to steal a Big Wheel tricycle. A four-week-old baby was in the same room as the tricycle, so the six-

year-old threw the baby from his cot, then kicked and beat him with a stick. Arrested and charged as an adult for attempted murder, the six-year-old was put into juvenile hall. It was reported that he had a *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers* figure on a table near his bed at home. A California judge ruled that a six-year-old boy is not competent to stand trial. "He was totally disconnected and certainly not conscious of what was going on," defense attorney Burris argued (CNN, May 4, 1996). Now kept in a group home, the six-year-old will be reviewed every six months for the next three years to see if he is capable to stand trial on the reduced charges of assault -- for which he could face up to seven years in jail if he is convicted (CNN, July, 13, 1996).

Future research

Future research needs to focus on coder reliability. Teaching coders to look at something in a specific way does not mean they will continue to exhibit that learned meaning in coding. A pony, horse, cow and llama might be described using the same words, but riding them could provide quite different experiences.

It appears that the early *Power Rangers* episodes are more violent than later episodes. Perhaps negative media attention towards violence on this program has had an impact on the program's contents. Future study might group each

season of episodes together so their violence might be tallied, then their results might be compared. Within the past 22 years, only one study (Snow, 1974) in the area of violence on television and children's viewing has been conducted from a child's perspective. Snow found that in studies of children, interpretations and definitions of television's content and behavioral effects have come only from the researcher, not the child. It has been shown that when a child is playing, he or she jumps from one situation to another for no apparent reason. The kinds of play the child uses (fantastic play or anticipatory socialization play) are important because it reveals what kind of situations the child will most likely take seriously (Snow, 1974). When a child uses fantastic -- defined as the "escapist or the avoidance of reality" (Snow, 1974, p. 14) -- play, he or she has no commitment to the future in that kind of play. Snow also found that adult-defined violent behaviors do not affect the child viewer adversely when seen in a play context. Could a child's action, which may have been coded as "violent" in a past study, actually have been child's "play?" In conversation, Dr. Robert Snow (Feb. 13, 1996) has suggested that future research into media effects needs to widen its scope to include the child's opinion of his or her actions -- without a parent visibly present when the child's opinion is solicited. This possible difference between adults' and children's perspectives on violent-looking actions may tend to qualify past research into television's "violent"

influence.

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APPENDIX A
Coder Training
Introduction

What

A content analysis of children's television network programming. Specifically, 10 programs will be examined for the identification and frequency of: action showing real, bodily hurt; words/actions showing helpfulness; conflict showing "good" winning over "bad"; conflict showing "bad" winning over "good," and the exhibition of future problem-solving skills. The *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers* program was selected because it has been a highly-rated television program, and because it has sparked controversy about the number of violent actions portrayed during the episodes.

APPENDIX B
Coding Instructions

1) The videotape will be loaded into the VCR for you.

For this study:

“Good” will mean a prosocial outcome is anticipated at the beginning of the social contact, i.e. offering to help someone.

“Bad” will mean an antisocial (not wanting constructive behaviors to occur) outcome is anticipated at the beginning of the social contact, i.e. telling a lie that will get someone else in trouble.

“Violence” will mean someone (human) or something (made of fantasy) has caused actual/real bodily harm by kicking, punching, hitting, or another act.

“Prosocial” will mean words/action which are done for the benefit of the individual or group, i.e. defensive actions by the Power Rangers to defend the city.

“Problem-solving” will mean non-violent resolution of a problem.

2) With coding sheets and pencil in hand, the videotape will be started for you. You will be recording the above actions in 5-minute segments by making tally marks in the appropriate box for each category for each episode. At the end of each segment, you

will be told to continue coding in the box reserved for the next 5-minute segment. You will be given one coding sheet for each of the ten episodes on the videotape.

3) Please return your coding sheets to me.

THANK YOU!

Cynthia Wilhelmi

APPENDIX C

Mighty Morphin Power Rangers Coding Sheet

	00:01-05:00	05:01-10:00	10:01-15:00	15:01-20:00
Please record each violent action: kick, punch, hit, or other				
Please record each conflict showing bad winning over good				
Please record pro-social words/actions (helpfulness)				
Please record each conflict showing good winning over bad				
Please record the problem-solving skills being shown.				

Note. One tally mark will be entered in the appropriate cell for each action noted.

APPENDIX D

Episode and Character Descriptions

For purposes here, all major characters seen in the coded episodes are described, and each basic story line is described below.

Once, in a time of great conflict, a mythical interdimensional being, known as Zordon, created a vanguard in the town of Angel Grove to help stop the never-ending struggle against evil. Alpha 5, a robot, Zordon's trusted assistant, helps seek out six exceptional teenagers and gives them the power to transform themselves into unstoppable warriors. When these young warriors required extraordinary power, they could call upon "Zords" (huge assault vehicles) for assistance. Guarding their secret identity, the teenagers' courage became what legends are made of, and they became known as "The Mighty Morphin Power Rangers" -- the Earth's only hope against evil space aliens.

The Power Rangers are six teenagers who attend Angel Grove High School. They look like and act like normal teenagers, but when trouble threatens they "morph" into super-human beings -- who are superior problem-solvers and experts in self-defense. We see them in activities with their friends at school, at the Command Center (located somewhere in a desert), and working as a team to help others who are in danger.

The main characters are:

Kimberly Hart -- the Pink Ranger; became a Power Ranger on the first

episode; Zordon has given her the power of Pterodactyl and command of Pterodactyl DinoZord; the second season saw her DinoZord given the power of thunder and changed into the Firebird ThunderZord; when she departs from the Power Rangers (in the third season) she transfers her powers to Katherine.

Billy Cranston -- the Blue Ranger, also became a Power Ranger on the first episode; given the power of Triceritops and command of Triceritops DinoZord -- given the power of thunder in the second season (like all the Zords, his DinoZord is changed into the Unicorn ThunderZord).

Trini Kwan -- the original Yellow Ranger from the very first episode; has the power of the Sabertooth Tiger, and commands the Sabertooth Tiger DinoZord, which could transform into Griffin ThunderZord; had her powers transferred to Aisha the second season.

Jason Lee Scott -- was the Red Power Ranger from the first episode, as well as the leader of the first Power Rangers; was in command of Tyrannosaurus DinoZord and had the power of Tyrannosaurus; his powers were transferred during the second season to Rocky.

Tommy Oliver -- was first shown on the *Power Rangers* as one of evil Queen Rita's warriors, and battled the Rangers for a five-part mini-series; freed of Rita's control, he became the Green Power Ranger, but his power was drained by a magical green candle;

Zordon gave Tommy some of his own power -- which Lord Zedd finally destroyed; returned to the program as the White Ranger (created from goodness and light), he's the leader of the Power Rangers.

Adam Park -- created during the second season, he is the Black Power Ranger; the powers he received were a transfer from Zack; has the power of the Mastadon DinoZord, the Lion ThunderZord, is pilot of the Frog NinjaZord, and has command of the Black ShogunZord.

Rocky DeSantos -- known as the Red Ranger beginning in the second season, got his transferred powers from Jason; given command of the Red Dragon ThunderZord and the Tyrannosaurus DinoZord.

Aisha Campbell -- the Yellow Ranger who joined the Power Rangers in the second season; inherited her powers from Trini; received command of the Griffin ThunderZord and the Sabertooth Tiger DinoZord.

Zack Taylor -- became a Power Ranger on the first episode; had power of the Mastodon; had control of the Mastodon DinoZord. In the second season he was given the ability to transform into the Lion ThunderZord; his powers were transferred to Adam during this season.

Bulk -- an overweight, not very intelligent Angel Grove High School

student who doesn't like to study, spends his time trying to find out who the Power Rangers really are; is usually cast in potentially humorous situations.

Skull -- skinny; not very intelligent; black hair; Bulk's best friend; is usually cast as Bulk's sidekick.

Alpha-5 -- the robot in charge of the Command Center; Zordon's second in command.

Zordon -- the ionized face (shown in black and white photography) in a tube just outside the perimeter of the Command Center, looks out for "good" on the Earth, and is at the head of the Power Rangers.

Rita -- the evil queen who lives on the Moon, the predecessor to Lord Zedd later on in the series.

Lord Zedd -- the evil power who lives on the Moon -- creating monsters to destroy "good" and those who help maintain it on Earth.

Goldar -- part of Lord Zedd's monster-militia sent out to destroy the Power Rangers.

Puttys -- Lord Zedd's army of gray robots sent out as a first offense against the Power Rangers.

The episodes to be coded were the following:

1. “High Five”

As Jason climbs to the top of a rope (hung from the ceiling for that purpose) at Angel Grove High School, Trini confronts an old fear of hers, saying, “You’ll never catch me climbing something that high!”

Billy shows up and stands under Jason (not having seen him), who then slips down the rope and lands on top of Billy’s shoulders. The two stagger around for a few moments, then both fall down.

Bulk and Skull arrive on the scene, and Bulk is challenged to climb to the top of the rope -- after he makes fun of Billy and Jason for falling down. He tries twice, then the rope and ceiling collapse on top of him.

Rita sees what is happening and decides to trap the Power Rangers in a time warp - the same way she did to Zordon -- and she says when she has that accomplished, “the world will be mine.”

Billy creates a communication device using microwaves, which he says will give the Power Rangers connections to Zordon and Alpha in the Command Center. “They (the communication devices) respond to tactile pressure followed by auditory stimulus,” Billy says, but instead they end up transporting the Rangers to the Command Center, where Alpha offers to adjust them.

Rita has made a Time Device, which is able to fly down to Earth and open up a “hole” in time. The hole is designed to trap the Rangers, and it will cause them to be gone -- forever. Rita then chooses a monster named “Bones” to help her evil plans

along. "The Power Rangers will be helpless against him," she says.

The Time Device is launched (it looks like a mini Space Shuttle). It lands on Earth, stops, and the nose cone drops down -- creating a noise to irritate the Rangers' ears.

Zordon tries to analyze the Time Device, and when the Power Rangers return to Angel Grove, they find they must defend themselves from the Puttys.

Billy and Trini run away from the rest of the Power Rangers and the Puttys, then split up to make themselves harder to find. Trini hides and the Puttys go right past her. She sees Billy climbing up a cliff, and yells, "Billy, you're too high!" The Puttys force Billy to the edge of the cliff. Trini watches what is happening, and climbs towards Billy, saying, "I'm afraid; I can do this -- Billy needs me."

Billy reaches for his Power Morphin (his watch-like invention), but drops it over the edge of the cliff.

Meanwhile, the band of Rangers left behind are surrounded by Puttys, and are held prisoners.

Trini continues to climb up the rocks to help Billy. She tries to distract the Putty who is almost ready to drive Billy off the edge of the cliff. Standing in front of Billy, she says, "Come on" to the Putty. As the Putty runs towards them, Billy and Trini move out of the way at the last minute, and the Putty runs off the cliff's edge. Trini and Billy then return to help the other Power Rangers.

The Power Rangers join together to break free from the Puttys, and the Puttys end up with pieces of cactus stuck to them as they run away.

Trini is congratulated by Zordon for overcoming her fear "in the face of an

emergency.”

Rita sends Bones (who can send energy volts from his eyes, jump long distances, make himself disappear, and controls the Time Device) to an amusement park to “do his stuff.”

Bones makes a whirlwind of air that sucks up the Power Rangers and transports them to an unknown place. A battle ensues between Bones and the Power Rangers. A bomb is brought in to explode so a time freeze will be created. The Power Rangers see it and attempt to put out the lit fuse. Bones recognizes what the Power Rangers are trying to do, and creates a crack in the ground to separate the Rangers from the bomb.

The Power Rangers turn their knives into lazer guns and they all shoot at Bones. He falls apart, but rematerializes farther away. The Power Rangers steal his head and throw it down the crack in the ground Bones has created. Bones destructs, but Rita says, “I’m not done yet.”

Zordon creates DinaZord power for the Rangers, and the enemy is defeated -- but not forever.

Trini remarks, “I guess what they say is true -- you don’t know what you can do until you’re forced to do it.” Trini then gets scared by Zack in a skull mask and immediately scales the rope in front of her (at Angel Grove High School) without even thinking about it.

2. “The Wanna-Be Ranger”

The Power Rangers are playing basketball, and Zack shows up in a white ape

costume. He takes it off to begin playing basketball with the other Rangers, but Lord Zedd has already seen their actions from a distance.

Once a millennium Zordon de-ionizes, and is useless-- and it happens now. Alpha is left in charge of the Command Center until Zordon can return. While in charge, Alpha sees a young boy named Dillon on Earth who has lost his mother at the park, and he leaves his post to help him. Alpha tells Dillon, "The best thing to do when you are lost is to stay where you are."

Meanwhile, Lord Zedd decides this is the perfect time to destroy Zordon and the Power Rangers forever.

Billy sees Alpha at the park and tells him to immediately return to the Command Center -- but before that can happen, Lord Zedd creates the Primator monster out of Zach's white ape costume, and tries to capture Dillon -- who then stomps on Primator's foot, and Dillon is able to escape. Primator paralyzes and activates Alpha's destruction mechanism.

In the park, Kim and Aisha have to defend themselves from the Puttys. The Power Rangers soon discover things aren't normal, and head for the Command Center. Zordon is re-ionized and chastises Alpha, saying, "You should have informed the Power Rangers you were leaving the Command Center."

Primator turns himself into a Power Ranger look-alike, and soon the Rangers discover that Primator can't maintain his impersonation when he sees his own reflection, so they give him a mirror.

Lord Zedd makes Primator even larger and more powerful, but the Power Rangers

create their MegaZord monster and Primator is defeated.

Alpha's self-destruct mechanism is de-activated, and Dillon and his mother are happily reunited.

3. "Bloom of Doom"

Kimberly tries hard to get students to sign up for her Garden Club at school, but it appears no one wants to join. Many students sign up for Trini's volleyball club, and Kimberly is very jealous -- and Bulk and Skull make fun of that fact.

Lord Zedd goes to work turning Kimberly against Trini with a jealousy potion. As Kim touches a cactus spike, it injects the potion into her, and her jealousy greatly increases. Lord Zedd then creates a plant monster called Bloom of Doom to destroy the Rangers. Zordon warns Alpha that a fire storm could result from the pollen of that flower monster.

The Power Rangers tell Bloom of Doom, "As a team, we will destroy you." Bloom of Doom says, "I have some friends too, you know," and the Puttys appear. Pollen falls over the Rangers, and they feel as if they will spontaneously combust.

Kim has been placed in another dimension by Bloom of Doom, but is still reachable. Trini ignores Kim's jealousy and arrives to help release Kim.

The Rangers create a Power Blaster from all their weapons to stop Lord Zedd's monster, and the Power Rangers prevail over evil.

Back at the high school, the principal tells Kim he accidentally put the wrong location in the school paper, and now many students show up for Kim's club.

Kim apologizes to Trini for being jealous, and they are still friends.

4. "Goldar's Vice-Versa"

Angel Grove's Vice-Versa Dance is planned, and Adam doesn't have a date. He hears that Sarah likes him but she doesn't have a date either -- only he is afraid to ask her out. On his way to watch her volleyball practice (and "accidentally" run into her) he meets the Puttys and must defend himself singlehandedly. By the time he reaches the volleyball area, practice is over and Sarah is gone.

Sabrina is a new girl who shows up at school and gives a demonstration of her karate ability. She tries to get Adam to notice her, then shoves her duffle bag at Aisha so Adam can show her around the school. As the three head off to the park, Sabrina turns into Lord Zedd's monster, Scorpina -- their "worst nightmare." Aisha and Adam are restrained against a tree with a light ray from Goldar, so Scorpina can continue Lord Zedd's evil plans.

Back at Angel Grove High School, Billy and Kim find out Sabrina lied and there are no new students at their school. The Rangers head for the Command Center to solve the problem (with their minds), then return to Angel Grove to battle the Puttys, Goldar and Scorpina.

Tommy battles Goldar and Scorpina, and Zordon offers the Rangers the extra power of ThunderoverZord if they need it. All the Rangers' robots are called to action, and frightened Goldar leaves, saying, "He who fights and runs away will fight to win another day."

Back at the dance, Adam finds Sarah (who has come alone), and she dances with Adam.

5. "Where There's Smoke There's Fire"

Aisha is chosen Fire Captain during Fire Safety Week at school because of an excellent essay she wrote as an assignment. Bulk and Skull interrupt her class presentation on the danger of overloaded circuits to give their own presentation, and end up causing an electrical fire. Aisha tells the class that when there is an electrical fire, water shouldn't be used to put it out (the use of a dry extinguisher is demonstrated).

The Angel Grove High School students are sent out to do a fire safety check at the school, but the Puttys appear, trying to prevent good actions from occurring, and the Rangers must defend themselves.

Lord Zedd (intent on destroying the Power Rangers) tries to burn down Angel Grove with the Flame Head monster he creates.

The Puttys are sent in to defeat the Rangers, and at one point Aisha tries to defeat all the Puttys herself. The Rangers tell her that acting by yourself can be a very dangerous thing to do, and say many situations arise which require clear thinking and the help of others. They say teamwork is the only way to defeat the forces of evil, and remind her they are there to help each other. Aisha listens, and tells the Rangers to join hands to create a barrier, which will turn back the flames of the Flame Head monster. Her plan works.

The Rangers invoke their ThunderZord power weapon, and the Flamehead Monster is defeated.

Aisha gets a cake (with lit candles) as a reward for all her hard work.

6. “Rocky Just Wants To Have Fun”

Billy and Rocky are studying for an advanced math test at Ernie’s Juice Bar. Rocky discovers the new Pachinko (a game popular in Asia) machine and decides to play it. When Lord Zedd notices this, he decides if the Power Rangers are playing Pachinko, they will be at less than full strength so it will be easier to destroy them (Rocky will be a “mindless Earthling”).

Lord Zedd turns the Pachinko machine into a Pachinkohead monster, and zaps Rocky so all he wants to do is play Pachinko. Billy tries to convince him to study, but Rocky calls him a “brainiac.” Rocky tells his karate student that he thinks karate is too much work – he just wants to have fun.

Billy goes to the park and tells the other Rangers what has happened. Lord Zedd sends in the Puttys to destroy the Rangers. (The background music for this battle has words saying, “We keep dreaming of a world where good is all we find.”) The Rangers fight the Puttys (wearing school clothing) and although Rocky is ordered to help them, he says, “Buzz off,” then changes his mind as he decides he can have fun there, too.

The Pachinkohead monster is transported to the park, and he changes the Rangers into Power Ranger balls, which are turned into a game called “Kick the Rangers” by the monster and Rocky.

Tommy heads to the Command Center, who calls for ThunderZord power. The Pachinkohead monster is defeated, and the Power Rangers are completely restored.

7. "Forever Friends"

Shawna, Aisha's friend from the past, comes to a gymnastic event in Angel Grove and will compete against Kimberly. Shawna is very jealous of Kimberly, telling Aisha she will be competing for a lot more than the gymnastics title.

Lord Zedd decides to try to split up the friends and make them useless. Goldar appears and teleports Shawna and Kimberly away to his hideout, leaving Aisha by herself. Lord Zedd then turns a hand saw into a monster named the Jaws of Destruction in order to destroy the Power Rangers.

Shawna depends on Kim to get them out of trouble. Kim tells Shawna she knows how Shawna feels about possibly losing an old friend to someone new. Kim says that just because the person you care for happens to be away from you, it doesn't mean the relationship has changed.

Aisha goes to the Command Center to get help for Shawna and Kim. The Power Rangers fight the Puttys and invoke ThunderZord power. Tommy defeats the Puttys singlehandedly where the girls are being held captive, and helps set them free. Goldar is then sent to destroy Tommy.

Kim goes to help the other Rangers while Tommy battles Goldar. ThunderZord power is invoked (MegaZord is crafted so the Jaws of Destruction can be defeated).

Meanwhile, Tommy still battles Goldar, but doesn't kill him -- instead he tells him to

leave, and says the next time he won't be so easy on him.

Kim and Shawna return to the gymnastics competition, and both are finalists. They have become good friends, and their gymnastics scores tie them as co-winners of the competition.

8. "Lights, Camera, Action"

On behalf of the International Education Counsel, the Power Rangers will be appearing on the Harvey Garvey TV show to help spread the word about the power of education. Lord Zedd decides to create a monster who can change into the image of any Ranger he chooses so he can put his own message on TV. As the Rangers walk through the park discussing their upcoming TV show, the Puttys are sent by Lord Zedd to try to stop them.

On the Harvey Garvey show the Rangers say, "The way to be cool, is to stay in school...its the only way to get ahead...you can't be a Power Ranger without first developing your mind." They continue to emphasize the importance of trying to get good grades, saying all their actions first require using their minds. Harvey Garvey then tries to imitate a Morphin kick on TV, but ends up on the ground -- telling his audience not to try it at home.

Lord Zedd turns a TV camera into a Show Biz monster -- a monster who can change his appearance into any Power Ranger he chooses.

The Rangers hear of Lord Zedd's plan and are commanded to teleport to the Command Center from the middle of the Harvey Garvey show. Zordon describes the

Show Biz monster's mission to the Rangers, and the Rangers return to Angel Grove.

The Rangers must quickly defend themselves against the Puttys, and Goldar threatens to destroy the White Power Ranger (Tommy). Needing to summon a great deal of power, the Rangers invoke their ThunderZord weapon power, and win the battle against Lord Zedd's warriors.

Back at school, the Rangers (as students) tell their classmates that education is the single most important stepping stone to world-wide peace, and say that TV can help make the world a better place.

9. "When Is A Power Ranger Not A Power Ranger?"

Lord Zedd watches from a distance as Adam gives his class report on kaleidoscopes. Lord Zedd decides that a Power Ranger is not a Power Ranger when his image is scattered to bits and his memory is gone, which will give Lord Zedd more power.

The Rangers have fun looking through the kaleidoscope. The Puttys arrive -- determined to destroy them. The Rangers defend themselves (in their school clothing), and the Puttys are stopped.

The kaleidoscope is then turned into a Scatterbrain monster by Lord Zedd. The Rangers "morph" into their uniforms, but the Scatterbrain monster scatters their images, then reassembles their human images -- without leaving them any memory of who they are.

The Power Rangers at the Command Center are sent back to Angel Grove to

transport the “scattered” Rangers back to the Command Center. Goldar tries to convince the scattered Rangers to go with him (so he can destroy them), but they listen to the Power Rangers instead, and go the Command Center with them. (It is explained that without memory, the scattered Rangers do not have the “experience, skills and character it takes” to be Power Rangers, because “it takes knowledge to solve problems.”)

The Rangers go to Billy’s lab to get his prisms, which will focus light rays back to the “scattered” Rangers so they can be restored to their full power. But while defending themselves, the Rangers lose the prisms. Bulk and Skull, however, quickly discover them and hide the prisms behinds their backs – challenging the Scatterbrain monster to a showdown. Bulk and Skull are “scattered” by the Scatterbrain monster’s power, but the prisms get knocked into the air -- reflecting the Rangers’ scattered rays back to them.

The Rangers invoke ThunderZord power, and the Scatterbrain monster is defeated.

Bulk and Skull brag to the Angel Grove High School students about how they pulled the Scatterbrain monster’s teeth out to help save the Rangers. When asked to produce the teeth which go with this tall tale, they can’t -- so they aren’t believed. Aisha and Kim tell the two that they do believe they are heroes.

10. “Lord Zedd Waves”

At the start of the Stone Canyon Triathlon, Billy, recognized for his academic achievement, is told by his friends that he may be picked to represent Angel Grove in the World Team Peace Conference.

As Lord Zedd focuses on their action and vows to quietly enslave the world with mind control waves so the Earth's population will obey his every command. He creates a Beam Caster monster who begins to cast a spell, which takes over human brain waves. As soon as humans are affected, they will wander aimlessly around saying, "Hail, Lord Zedd. Hail, Lord Zedd."

Back at the triathlon, three Puttys arrive to destroy the Power Rangers watching the event. Zordon sees what is happening and lets the Power Rangers know of Lord Zedd's latest scheme. The triathlete Power Rangers see the action and jump from their bikes to help their friends. The Puttys are defeated and the triathletes go on with the competition.

In order to stop Lord Zedd's destructive plan, the Power Rangers must reverse the waves put out by the Beam Caster's baton, so Zordon requests the Power Rangers immediate presence in the Command Center.

Meanwhile, the Beam Caster travels to the triathlon to cast a spell over all the spectators -- including the watching Power Rangers. Zordon transports the triathlete Rangers to the Command Center where a Frequency Reverser is being made (to undo Lord Zedd's mind-zapping waves) and it returns the affected Rangers in Angel Grove to normal.

Upset, Lord Zedd escalates his plan, and the Rangers are forced to make their MegaZord weapon, which destroys the Beam Caster, and those humans affected by the Beam Caster are once again in complete control of their minds.

The Power Rangers lose the triathlon, but say the sport is about finishing -- not

winning, and being able to help their friends in trouble was worth the effort it took.

APPENDIX E

IRB Exemption

June 11, 1996

Cynthia Wilhelmi
807 Chisholm Trail
Papillion, NE 68046

IRB #: 169-96-EX

TITLE OF PROTOCOL: The Mighty Morphin Power Rangers - A Content Analysis

Dear Ms. Wilhelmi:

The IRB has reviewed your Exemption Form for the above-titled research project. According to the information provided, this project is exempt under 45 CFR 46:101b, category 2. You are therefore authorized to begin the research.

It is understood this project will be conducted in full accordance with all applicable sections of the IRB Guidelines. It is also understood that the IRB will be immediately notified of any proposed changes that may affect the exempt status of your research project.

Sincerely,



Ernest D. Prentice, PhD
Vice Chairman, IRB

EDP:jlg