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The subjective meaning of shared representations: Television characters and self

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THE SUBJECTIVE MEANING OF SHARED REPRESENTATIONS: TELEVISION CHARACTERS AND SELF

by

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A central issue in cultural analysis is the relationship between external social forms and private mental events (cognitive representations as well as affective significances). The classic contextual question in developmental psychology concerns the role of culturally transmitted technologies in intellectual growth (Cole & Bruner, 1971; Greenfield & Bruner, 1969). Implications for non-cognitive psychological processes may be no less profound. Technologies may be conceptualized as mediators between human action and the world, providing new codes and posing new tasks that require changes in the organization of social relations and cognitive activity. Relationships between psychological processes may also change, leading to new forms of psychological activity (Luria, 1976).

The current research focuses on a particular aspect of technological society, the images presented by electronic media of mass communication. Television is arguably the most ubiquitous of the mass media. McLuhan (1964) contended that electronic media, unlike print, allow for an immediate involvement due to both the nature of the medium and its immediacy of conveying message content. The video mode of presentation and the images it conveys have changed the boundaries of the world individuals experience, as well as the relative significance of direct experience; this is especially the case for developing individuals.

Television provides a unique environment for the acquisition of culture that brings to the fore a number of issues about the relationship between social forms and mental events. In particular, comprehension of televised narrative will serve as a locus for examining the relation between cognitive representation and affective significance. Television characters embody symbolic values within a larger dramatic and affective framework. It is proposed that television's parade of images is more than "cold" information. Television's parade of images embodies cultural significances, and semiotic qualities of the medium amplify the affective tonality of events.

The perspective taken here is that affect is not a special event; rather, affect is ingredient to the meaning of everyday things and events. A primary assumption is that there is a dialectical relationship between meanings and expressive forms. Experience is represented in symbolic forms. Yet the forms themselves also enter into the construction of what is expressed through them (Cassirer, 1955; Langer, 1942; Werner & Kaplan, 1963). Often the individual encounters pre-existing socio-cultural symbols which serve as representations through which people understand their own experience and their social world. Although such cultural symbols may serve as encodings of, or materials for encoding, personal experience, it is not simply a matter of appropriation. There is a dialectical

relationship whereby socio-cultural forms can be transformed by individuals expressing meanings through them. It will be argued that individuals appropriate cultural symbols and transform them to yield an understanding that is neither wholly personal nor social.

EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL FORMS

What is humanly knowable is a mediated reality; on a quotidian plane there is no natural order of things (Berger & Luckman, 1966; Douglas, 1970; Durkheim, 1950; Marx, 1964; Weber, 1947). Much of what is known is not immediately presented to our senses at all. Rather, we "know" representations of things. Cognitive mediation implies that what we know exists as either something tangible in the world that carries some symbolic representational weight, or as a symbolically embodied form that has been interiorized. Naive realist assumptions suggest that there is an objective reality which is simply encoded into the conventional (socio-cultural) categories of language. However neither language nor any other representational system simply and transparently captures "what is." Any representational system or medium transforms what it represents, even if only in terms of selectivity. Symbolic representations serve as one form of the embodiment of culture in the mental activity of individuals.

Three essentially different relationships between

social forms and mental events may be distinguished; each has implications for the type of psychological explanation which will be sought and acknowledged as adequate. One stance contends that mind has an ordered form independent of the social world (e.g., Chomsky, 1972). Within developmental psychology, a common analytical tactic has been to characterize cognitive development as more or less independent of particular social and cultural conditions and then to examine how the logic of a given developmental level is applied to social phenomena. The significance of external media is that they provide tokens for expression of the organization of mind.

A second stance is that the world is ordered and this order is reflected in media which are structured; external configurations provide an organization for mind. A variety of possible external loci of coherence have been posited, including the language (e.g., Sapir, 1949; Whorf, 1956), configurational-perceptual-functional factors (e.g., Gibson, 1966), the organization of functional activity (e.g., Abelson, 1975; Nelson, 1974, 1985; Vygotsky, 1978), social convention (e.g., Higgins, 1980), and the surface features of social behavior (Bandura & Walters, 1963; Mead, 1934).

A third stance characterizes the relationship of the social world and mind as interactive in some way; cognitive structure and social structure stand in a relationship to one another. The relationship can be characterized as

either interactive or dialectic.

If the relationship between the cognitive structure or knowledge base of the individual and the characteristics or structure of the external world is characterized as an interaction, both are assumed to be independently formed entities. The separate contributions of each party to an interaction influence each other insofar as each entity takes on some features of the other or one acts differently when in the presence of the other.

In contrast, a dialectical stance minimizes the subject-object differentiation which is characteristic of interactional analyses. Neither party in the relationship is considered as a fully formed entity which can be adequately characterized independently of the relationships into which it enters. Dialectical relationships between the internal and external worlds have been given a central place in theories of how individuals represent a linguistically-coded reality (Payne, 1968; Vygotsky, 1962).

The distinction between "external" social symbol systems (Foucault, 1972; Hodge & Kress, 1988) and "internal" mental representations (cf. Fodor, 1980; Kosslyn, 1980; Mandler, 1983; Scholnick, 1983; Shepard & Metzler, 1971) is frequently made. The former de-emphasizes individual members of a culture, while the later localizes events in the head of an individual. The dichotomization of internal and external, despite being a familiar way of talking about

things, obfuscates by creating a split where there is none. Rather than being two different kinds of things, socio-cultural symbols and psychological representations are different levels of talking about phenomena. Interacting individuals reciprocally influence each other through actions and symbols. On the other hand, language and other symbol systems are instantiated as something other than merely abstractions only in use within human communities. A viewpoint will be developed which focuses on where cultures and individuals meet.

Symbolic processes have most often been conceptualized in dualistic terms that dichotomize public and private, subject and object, and rational and emotional. Traditional paradigms for studying how language is meaningful have been concerned with the relation of statements to the observed world, internal relations within the language system itself, or with the basis of meaning in use. Except for the latter paradigm, most approaches to studying how language is meaningful have assumed both the symbol and its referent are independent entities that are linked by some external mechanism of conjunction such as temporal, spatial, or situational contiguity; there is nothing intrinsic to either the symbolic vehicle or its referent that relates one to the other. The acquisition of meaning has usually been considered separate from the affective significance of things or events.

Similarly, affect is not usually considered central to the meaning of social events. The predominant model of emotion (after James, 1890/1983) contends that cognitive assessment of the physiological response to an event is essential for experiencing an emotion (e.g., Lazarus, 1982, 1984; Schacter & Singer, 1962). Extending this paradigm to symbolic representations, affective significance is an inferential product which stands alongside conventional denotative terms, which are neutral. This confers the status of psychologically meaningful experience only upon products of information processing which are available to the awareness of the subject. Therefore emotion becomes predicated upon explicit cognition. Affect is acknowledged only on special occasions of occurrence and is considered a source of contamination of rational process. Affective significance is treated as an added-on and secondary aspect of meaning.

Current dialogue on how affect is represented is concerned with the status of affect as either a primary (Zajonc, 1980, 1984) or a "post-cognitive" (Lazarus, 1982, 1984) process. In contrast to the classic James-Lange versus Canon-Bard controversy, which focused on whether biological changes precede or follow thought, the current controversy is posed in terms of representation and processing. Two kinds of mental processes are posited, one that is rational, linear, cognitive processing that usually

yields an explicit product and the other that is a more immediate, nonlinear, affective processing that yields an implicit product.

Television, as a largely iconic medium, may accentuate the importance of processes suggested by the affective primacy position. The semiotic characteristics of expressive communication on television exemplify instances where cognitive appraisal is not a necessary prerequisite for affective experience. It may be hypothesized that qualities of the input are not independent of the process of its reception, retention, and subsequent use; an iconic/symbolic medium need not always be "translated" into another form for psychological processing.

The affective primacy model may be enriched by an anthropological model that highlights the importance of cultural symbol systems. Sperber (1974, 1980) contended that a symbolic primacy position is the model underlying most anthropological work on myth. The classic example of this position is Levy-Bruhl's work (1935, 1949/1975) on the "primitive mind." He spoke of experiential "participation," referring to a fusion between mystical experience and ordinary experience. Levy-Bruhl was describing instances where symbolic culture affords a greater emotional element in thought; affectivity is encouraged by the culture. Levy-Bruhl thought this was not in opposition to logical thought, but indifferent to it.

Sperber considered this model problematic and attempted to "rethink" the nature of symbolism. It is ironic that Sperber considered the predominant psychological model as a better alternative to anthropology's model, whereas the symbolic primacy model may be a better alternative to psychology's exclusive reliance on the rational model. The psychological compliment to anthropology's symbolic primacy model may emerge from work by diverse researchers concerned with non-intentional thought and automatic processes (Langer, 1978; Uleman & Bargh, 1989) as well as Zajonc's (1980, 1984) theoretical writings. The current formulation may be distinguished by its emphasis on the affinity between symbolic and affective processes. A parallel, based on similarities in models of process, can be made.

In psychological terms, the central claims of a symbolic/affective primacy model are: (a) Neither the input nor the processing is in primarily propositional terms. (b) Propositional statements are produced as a secondary process. The latter claim inverts the order from that of paradigms for emotion as the explanation of unexplained physiological arousal or as a distortion of rational process. Beyond this, it is argued that psychological meaningfulness is the product of an ongoing construction of an individual's engagement-with-the-world in relation to available means of symbolic representation.

THE DIALECTICS OF EXPERIENCE

Investigators working from a variety of perspectives consider it axiomatic that experience is contradictory (cf. Garner, 1962--if there is no indeterminacy, there is no information; contradiction may also be considered a reflective process, Kosok, 1972; or a logical process, Rescher, 1973). The specific questions or contradictions posed by experience emerge from the intentionality (cf. Heider, 1958; Piaget, 1952) or functional orientation (Leont'ev, 1978) of the individual in relation to ecological exigencies--they define each other in a reciprocal manner. Contradictory experience is transformed into momentary stable structures (Riegel, 1976). The subject adjusts to the object and the object changes (phenomenally; i.e., in the experiential moment) in a mutual (contradictory, complimentary) dependency. Piaget (1952, 1970) designated these functional invariants of constructive activity assimilation and accommodation, respectively, and considered them the basic process for the acquisition of knowledge (cf. Langer, 1980). The growth of knowledge requires mutual assimilation of cognitive operations, which creates interstructural relationships, and equilibration of the relationships (Piaget, 1985). Non-Piagetian constructivist approaches (i.e., Soviet and Wernerian) portray cognitive activity as less abstracted from its context and the internal dialectical processes they cite do not emphasize

equilibration.

Experience can be represented in various ways, ranging from "concrete" to "abstract." Concreteness is typically equated with stimulus-boundedness and extreme particularism, and abstraction with field independence. The Piagetian position, as well as information processing and other cognitive approaches, places a premium on the ability to think "objectively" (cf. Riegel's, 1975a, critique).

The premium placed on abstract thought has been critiqued as a cultural bias. Non-technological societies may have a more personalized (non-alienated) basis of economic exchange value than do Western societies (Buck-Morrs, 1975; cf. Luria, 1976). Imposing a rational overlay on all aspects of mind and human activity probably reflects contemporary technological society (Shweder, 1984); our theories of mind are products of the predominant analytic tools (e.g., statistics, computers) developed within such a society.

The abstract character of cognitive theories is largely due to the ways in which symbolic meaning is treated. Within computational models, symbols serve as place-holders with certain defined values or meanings. Piaget's depiction of mind is more interactive in character, and so, superior for depicting a developing individual in a dynamic context. Yet Piaget distinguished the figurative aspects of thought, imagery, and language, as products of cognitive operations

and objects of general coordination and transformation. Although the figurative aspects of thought may be enriched by operative structures, Piaget minimized the role that the process of representation has on operative thought.

In contrast, a dialectical stance highlights mutual definition, so that elements cannot be adequately characterized independently of the relationships into which they enter. Within this paradigm, Riegel (1975b) proposed that language acquisition involves abstraction of the meaning of words from the intersection of relations; in complimentary fashion, the relations that define elements also constitute a grammar of interrelationships between the linguistic symbols (Riegel, 1975b). Other dialectical approaches have emphasized that symbols are tools that lend their distinctive flavor to thought (Vygotsky, 1962; cf. Werner & Kaplan, 1963), shifting attention to the interrelatedness of process and product, form and content, structure and function.

The best known non-dialectical example of a more direct relation between mode of cognitive representation and the nature of thought itself appears in Bruner's early cognitive work (Bruner, 1966). Within this theory enactive and iconic modes of representation stand in contrast to the propositional form and grammatical or logical inter-connections of symbolic (linguistic/conceptual) representation. For example, although either iconic or

symbolic representation can also be involved in monitoring one's own behavior, enactive knowing is specially suited for and delimited by the possibilities of action and its coordinations. Modes of representation differ functionally and in terms of the cognitive activity they afford.

Yet the formative nature of representation may be more fundamental than was recognized by Bruner's functional perspective. Reflection upon, or representation of, experience is recursive in nature.

> Reflection is therefore a generating process in which an initially unformed elements <u>becomes</u> formed, making reference to the element impossible without reference to the act of reflection. The activity of reflection becomes an integral aspect of the element reflected, and a process of continual reflection amounts to <u>self</u>-reflection--the initial element embodying reflection as its form. (Kosok, 1972, p. 239)

This recognition that the process of representation is embedded in the constructed representation highlights the uniquely human aspect of the enterprise.

AFFECT AND CULTURAL SYMBOLS

A dialectical constructivist stance requires reformulation of the relation of affect to symbolized meanings. Broadly stated, a person's active engagement in

the world (including participation in symbolic activities ranging from rituals to contemplation) is the basis of meaning acquisition and retention, and, reciprocally, human thought and action occurs within a matrix of relational meaning. Werner and Kaplan (1963) conceived of symbol meaning as arising from and retained only through active participation in such a matrix of meaning ("dynamic schematizing activity"). Various aspects of experience (as well as concrete entities) can be differentiated and articulated in juxtaposition to each other and in relation to available means of expression. In the course of the microgenesis of expression, affect and cognition become separable. Werner and Kaplan's theory emphasizes the way people experience and represent the world is essentially connotatively structured. Experience is a stew; rationality is separated out from it just as emotion may be--it has greater warrant only because of the value society places on it. Werner and Kaplan's theory is commensurate with Zajonc's affective primacy position; they enrich each other by suggesting implications. The symbolic field is not structured by propositional relations between symbols. Rather, affective relations are the basis of symbol formation itself. In this way, symbols that have a primary meaning based in affect are the immediately available unit mediating experience.

Individuals encounter pre-existing socio-cultural

symbols; these serve as representations through which people understand their own experience and their social world. Experience is represented in symbols (Cassirer, 1955; Langer, 1942/1957) that give form to the individual's relationship to a thing or event; the formation of a symbolic representation enters into the construction of the significance of the event itself. More than being merely examples of behavior, television portrayals provide a rich symbolic field. This symbolic field communicates expectations regarding social life, expressions of unspoken desires, and articulations of vague and unformed feelings. Individual experience is inextricably defined in terms of cultural representations (Harre, 1984; Moscovici, 1981). Yet personal significance should not be confounded with the external socio-cultural meaning. Whether the theoretical model for the maintenance of meaning relies on a mental locus or a socially located process of construction, there is a tendency to suggest, obliquely or not, that socio-cultural forms and personal experience are isomorphic.

A constructive perspective on the relation between experience and symbolic representation allows for full recognition that while affect is personal, it is also social and cultural. Symbols are not static (Glick, 1983; Vygotsky, 1962; Wertsch, 1985). Rather, their meaningfulness depends on an ongoing constructive process between an individual's engagement-with-the-world and the

available means of symbolic representation. Meaning is constructed and enriched by individuals in conversations and other interactions with the social system, as well as by internal dialectics. The interplay of semiotic cues that offer multiple bases for interpretability and individuals' constructive processing of information allow for transformation of the significance of socio-cultural symbols. Socio-cultural symbols are transformed by individuals expressing meanings through them. In this way, the significance of events is constructed by individuals from culturally available material but is not identical to their cultural significance.

TELEVISION AS A DEVELOPMENTAL INTERFACE

Accounts of folklore and great heroes and heroines--real and imagined--date back to time immemorial. Contemporary mass media share in this tradition, if not in their art, by presenting a range of locales and situations outside the viewer's own experience. In this respect, television is the contemporary mass medium par excellence. Television may also be characterized by the sheer number and constant repetition of images it presents. Consequently, television characters need not have an impact in the same way as do the protagonists of great drama; Bart Simpson and Dr. Huxtable do not exhibit the same pathos as King Lear or Blanche Dubois. Rather than being overtly moving,

television's version of reality insidiously permeates contemporary consciousness (cf. McLuhan, 1964).

Television programming embodies symbolic values within a larger dramatic and affective framework; individuals and cultures meet in the process of television viewing. Paradoxically, creators of television programs, as well as viewers, are immersed in a context of popular conceptions and mythologies that television programming both reflects and helps to create. The characterizations, milieus, and scenarios of television programming have become tokens of social discourse. At other times, they are simply there, as an unspoken subtext to life in contemporary society.

A peculiar depiction of the relationship between mind and external symbolic forms has predominated in discussions about television. Public policy debate often tends to imply that mass culture has a singular and pervasive voice. This has appeared as the contention that television programming has a detrimental influence vis a vis violence and drugs (e.g., Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1980; Surgeon General's Scientific Advisory Committee on Television and Social Behavior, 1972; U.S. Congress, Senate Committee on the Judiciary, 1955); certain versions of this stance have also expressed concern about sexuality (Attorney General's Commission on Pornography, 1986) and materialistic values (e.g., Action for Children's Television, 1971; Englehard, 1986; Mander, 1978). In a more global humanistic

perspective, television has been implicated as contributing to the homogenization of culture (cf. Levi-Strauss, 1967) and diminution of the possibility of rich inner experience (Mander, 1978).

The accepted wisdom and major indictments of television are that viewing is a passive activity and the content banal. A good deal of what follows is an argument to the contrary, emphasizing that comprehension of television narrative requires active construction on the part of the viewer. Furthermore, the programs themselves are multilevel texts with a great deal of meaning as social and psychological phenomena.

Media-specific qualities and conventions of television programming selectively fragment events in terms of time, locale, and point of view (Huston, Wright, Wartella, Rice, Watkins, Campbell, & Potts, 1981; Wright & Huston, 1981). The naturalistic, panoramic view is fragmented into a matrix of images. These images often do not have a coherence attributable to spatial and temporal contiguity. Rather, a nonlinear continuity is achieved by use of various juxtapositions and frequent changes of vantage points in shots (e.g., left-right, high-low, horizontal-vertical), changes in rhythm, changes in the size of the subject (due to changing depth of field), and uses of symmetry and repetition in sequences. These contrasting angles and compositions, as well as manipulation of focal depth,

perceptual qualities (such as lighting, sharp or soft focus, and musical accompaniment), and the pace of events may constitute a medium-specific aesthetic effect that serves to engage or distance the viewer from the action depicted or from the film itself.

Television has been characterized as a medium that must be "seen through" or deciphered. This has led to a research focus on decoding the television message. A developmental perspective suggests that neither are the properties of stimuli simply information available for processing by all individuals nor do individuals remain qualitatively the same (in terms of mental organization and goals of activity) throughout long-term interaction with the environment.

Developmental research on comprehension of narrative presented on television has been concerned with the interface of the viewer's cognitive developmental level and the organization of program content (e.g., Collins, 1970; Salomon, 1979; Smith, Anderson, & Fischer, 1985). The perceptual changes that serve as iconic narrative devices for transitions between scenes or for variation of perspective within a scene have been found to influence children's attention and comprehension. Much of this work has focused on viewers' memory and explicit understanding of sequences of behaviors performed by a televised protagonist (e.g., Collins & Wellman, 1982; Collins, Wellman, Keniston, & Westby, 1978; Zuckerman, Ziegler, & Stevenson, 1978) and

inferencing of characters' intentions and motives (e.g., Collins, Berndt, & Hess, 1974; List, Collins, & Westby, 1983; Paget, Kritt, & Bergemann, 1984).

Studies of television comprehension have offered a limited characterization of the viewer-program interface. Only the child's explicit understanding is acknowledged. Furthermore, the focus has been on socially shared understandings, largely ignoring the fact that social phenomena are potentially interpretable in multiple ways. Perhaps most importantly, the child is requested to respond to an incident presented in the experimental situation, containing persons with whom he or she has no prior involvement. Yet television viewers typically choose what they watch (albeit often from a limited set of alternatives) and have repeated exposure to television characters and situational formats. The viewer-program interface is more than simply communication of information. There is a special significance to the fact that situations and characterizations are not simply stated, but rather, enacted by persons. Other persons serve both as sources of information about behavioral possibilities sanctioned by society (cf. Parsons & Shils, 1951; Sarbin & Allen, 1968) and as sources of information about oneself (cf. Cooley, 1902, Mead, 1934).

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF OTHER PERSONS

The influence of persons presented on film has most often been conceptualized in terms of incidental learning of the observed behavior of a model (Bandura, 1969; Bandura, Ross, & Ross, 1963; Maccoby & Wilson, 1957), focusing on imitation of specific discrete acts such as sharing (e.g., Bryan & Walbeck, 1970) or aggressive acts (e.g., Grusec, 1973). Within this paradigm, identification is a process of verbally encoding a model's performances with desirable outcomes (Bandura, 1969; Bandura & Huston, 1961).

Researchers addressing the issue of identification with television characters more broadly have focused on perceived likeness or desire to be like characters (e.g., Fernie, 1981; Reeves & Miller, 1978). Reeves & Miller (1978) employed a multidimensional scaling technique. Each child made similarity judgments on all possible pairwise comparisons of characters to each other and to oneself ("you"). These (105) comparisons yielded groupings of similarly perceived characters and characters judged to have similarities to oneself. Fernie (1981) presented photographs of characters to boys (aged 5, 8, 11) and asked them to respond to 25 forced choice questions about each character in order to characterize their perceptions of the realism of characters. A second task involved selection of pictures of characters the boy wished to be and perceived himself to actually be like. Findings revealed that at all

ages boys wanted to be like unrealistic characters (e.g., Superman) more often than ordinary people, but that with age boys increasingly selected realistic models as similar to themselves. A final set of questions revealed a developmental increase in knowledge of the relation between television characters, actors, and acting. Other research has indicated that same-gender identifications are most common for both boys and girls, but girls are more likely to identify with male characters than boys with female characters (Maccoby & Wilson, 1957; Miller & Reeves, 1976; Reeves & Greenberg, 1977; Reeves & Miller, 1978). This pattern of cross-gender identification has been corroborated by studies which have demonstrated that boys learn only from male models, while girls learn from both female and male models (Grusec & Brinker, 1972; Perry & Perry, 1975; Slaby & Frey, 1975). These findings indicate that identification with characters is not primarily a matter of perceived similarity; within this research paradigm the primary alternative explanation is a desire to be like a character. This is only a very partial explanation for the vagaries of female identity formation in contemporary society. The issue deserves sustained attention in light of feminist critique and, consequently, will not be treated in the current investigation as a simple between-subjects variable.

A more complete treatment of the process of

identification is provided by the psychoanalytic construct, wherein identification is primarily an emotional tie with another person (Freud, 1933/1964). Within this paradigm, the focus is on total patterns of behavior rather than isolated acts (Bronfenbrenner, 1960). The developmental implications are that identification in middle childhood leads to an internalized representation of parental restrictions upon behavior, contributing to the development of the superego.

What is represented in identification is not the totality of the model's behavior or identity, but rather salient aspects of it. The parameters that are salient are the products of constructive processes involving both cultural systems of meaning and cognitive developmental level. Identifications may be understood as ways to incorporate changing understandings of the social world and one's place in it, especially as these are tested by new expectations and demands at school, at play, and at home. According to the cognitive developmental viewpoint, identification develops from 4 to 10 years of age and subsequently declines with the emergence of adolescence (Kohlberg, 1969). During this period, a great deal of integration of understandings is achieved. Developmental differences have been found in several aspects of the understanding of self and other persons, including descriptions of persons (e.g., Livesly & Bromley, 1973;

Peevers & Secord, 1973; Scarlett, Press, & Crockett, 1971; Selman, 1980) and perspectival vantage points upon self and others (eg., Broughton, 1978; Chandler, 1977; Feffer & Gourevitch, 1960; Flavell, Botkin, & Fry, 1968; Guardo & Bohan, 1971). Processes of identification serve as precursors to, as well as developing in tandem with, the construction of more sophisticated understandings of persons. These, in turn, serve as an impetus for transitions of personal identity (Blos, 1962; Damon & Hart, 1982; Elkind, 1967; Erikson, 1963, 1968). It is likely that understanding of self and social understandings continue to develop throughout the life span in a dialectical process of mutual definition.

Interpersonal influence is largely symbolically mediated and often reciprocal. Perceptions of how one is perceived by others, often embodied in their actions, are important to self-perception (Cooley, 1902). Although regularities may be found in social action (e.g., Abelson, 1975), social roles and situations are not static. The acquisition of social and cultural knowledge is not simply appropriation of pre-formed conventions nor is the individual merely a repository for supplied meanings. Individuals may attempt to enact conventional formulae for social roles, but interaction requires anticipation of the thought and action of others, especially in relation to oneself (Mead, 1934). Individuals are social actors who

participate in constituting their own social reality. Interacting individuals create conditions for each other's action, constraining certain social performances and enabling others by explicitly guiding behavior (e.g., Ninio & Bruner, 1978; Rogoff & Wertsch, 1984; Vygotsky, 1978) or implicitly creating expectations or possibilities for action (Goffman, 1959, 1974; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968). The significance of emotions emerges during mother-infant interaction (e.g., Dore, 1983) and the conduct of everyday life in a given society (e.g., Averill, 1979, Schieffelin, 1983). Such social interactions communicate, among other things, contextual and cultural constraints upon permissible affect (e.g., De Rivera, 1977). Because television viewing requires active construction of interpretations, television is also an interactive context for acquiring socio-emotional knowledge. Television viewing is passive primarily in the literal sense that no overt response is required from the viewer, nor is the message modified by the sender during an encounter.

THE VIDEO ENVIRONMENT

Television is unique in allowing outsiders (whether for developmental, cultural, or other reasons) a sustained look at the social world of initiates. Televised presentations approximate a coherent social world by presenting conventional roles and norms of social behavior, relations

of characters to each other, and the consistency of each character's behavior. Because the social scene observed has no personal consequences for the viewer, something close to objective information seeking can be attained. Television viewing can afford intensely focused attention. At times this allows the viewer to be quite detached. At other times this focused attention allows the viewer to be more involved with both the form and the content of the television message.

Moreover, television portrayals are considerably more structured than actual social life; events have been interpreted and a relatively clear account of them is re-presented (e.g., consider the complications and ambiguities of interpersonal relations during adolescence in comparison to a television movie about coming of age). Because television characters are "packaged" representations, cultural-psychological biases in how social information is understood might be accentuated. The organizing and biasing function of central traits in descriptions of persons has been recognized for quite some time (Asch, 1946; Kelley, 1950); additional information is assessed in a way that is consistent with cultural connotations of the central trait. More recent research has demonstrated that information which does not resemble a prototypic or stereotypic representation of a class of person tends to be discarded (Kahnemann & Tversky, 1972).

The implication of such biasing is that persons are understood in terms of conceptually related characteristics (semantic similarity) rather than actual observed information (D'Andrade, 1974; Shweder, 1977; Shweder & D'Andrade, 1979). There is also evidence that individuals organize knowledge about themselves and process new information in relation to schemas (Hastie, 1981; Markus, 1977; Rogers, Kuiper, & Kirker, 1977). Television proliferates and helps to create cultural concepts of persons, including what it means to be a person and boundaries of worthy endeavor, as well as gender and ethnic stereotypes.

The form, as well as the content, of television's messages can have an affective impact. The research on comprehension and identification with characters discussed earlier emphasizes explicit, denotational, understanding of the narrative information presented. Within these research paradigms television's emotional impact is predicated upon explicit literal interpretation of affect-laden situations, expressive displays, and characters. Yet a large part of what television communicates is non-narrative.

The forms of a symbolic medium may be internalized by individuals as a framework for their own mental activity (McLuhan, 1964, Vygotsky, 1978). Salomon (1979) has empirically demonstrated that television techniques, such as the zoom-in, can carry out transformations that young

children do not spontaneously employ. Usually this is a juxtaposition of information that a child was not previously aware was possible. The camera's tricks-of-the-trade may be internalized by the viewer, enhancing subsequent thought. More subtle and pervasive tactics for communicating emotional messages are afforded by the semiotic features of the medium. Juxtapositions, pacing, lighting, and music are used to create aesthetic effects that viewers experience as having affective significance. Suspenseful moments, for example, are heightened by these semiotic features when used artfully. Facile metaphors for emotion, in this case nonverbal, are a constitutive part of the cultural meaning of emotion. For children such depictions may have a pedagogic value. More often, clumsy usage merely cues an intended effect, marking an incident and the emotion appropriate to it.

Theoretical Summary

The relationship between external social forms and individuals' mental events is a central issue in cultural analysis. Individuals are embedded in a universe of socio-cultural symbols ranging from words for sensory experience to the "language" of fashion to popular television characters. The preceding discussion has focused on how television symbolically embodies culture and how individual experience is given form by such symbols. The major points

are reviewed here.

Television permeates contemporary consciousness, but does not have a singular and pervasive voice. Even the least worthy television programming is a multilevel text. Comprehension of television narrative requires active construction on the part of the viewer. Research has focused on decoding the message, with an emphasis on the interface of the viewer's cognitive developmental level and media specific features and conventions of presenting a story. This has been a limited characterization of the viewer-program interface, with its emphasis on explicit, socially shared understandings and little attention to viewers' prior involvement with characters, scenarios, and milieus.

The influence of persons presented on film has been conceptualized in terms of observational learning, perceived likeness or desire to be like characters, and the psychoanalytic construct of identification. Other persons serve as sources of information about both behavioral possibilities and about oneself. Interpersonal influence is largely symbolically mediated and often reciprocal. Cognitive developmental viewpoints have emphasized incorporation of changing understandings of the social world and one's place in it into a sense of personal identity.

Television portrayals provide a broad array, but yield a simplified sketch of social life, helping to create

cultural concepts of persons. Yet meanings are not simply appropriated. Television viewing requires active construction of interpretations; viewers are social actors who participate in constituting their own social reality in the act of comprehension. Construction of an interpretation requires juxtaposition of personal experience with symbolic representations.

A large part of what television communicates is non-narrative. The form, as well as the content, of television's messages can have an affective impact. The semiotic characteristics of expressive communication on television exemplify instances where cognitive appraisal is not a necessary prerequisite for affective experience. And so it has served in this chapter as an occasion for examination of how symbolic and affective processes have been thought about. The affinity between Zajonc's hypothesis that affect is a primary process and Levy-Bruhl's explanation of ethnographic observations was noted. The latter cites aspects of symbolic culture that afford a greater emotional element to thought. Both suggest the inadequacy of the predominant framework for the representation of affect, wherein it is largely an impoverished cognitive entity.

Cognitive theories generally have an abstract character; this derives largely from the ways in which symbolic meaning is treated. An alternate framework, drawn

largely from Werner and Kaplan's work on symbol formation but also incorporating Vygotskiian insights, has been sketched. Two premises are central: One is that individual experience is essentially connotatively structured; this is reflected in both the process of representing the world and the constructed representations. The other is that individuals appropriate symbols prevalent in a culture but transform their meaning and affective significance.

Rationale for the Study

The various cultural and developmental aspects of the construction of social understanding form a complex matrix. But to think of their influences as additive, or as variables to be isolated, is wrongheaded. Rather, these multiple influences converge on an issue of representation, namely the relationship between ubiquitously available socio-cultural symbols and individually constructed meaning. The current investigation focuses on one aspect of the relationship between individuals and the symbolic field which culture provides. It is proposed that the relationship is constructive and formative in the sense that both individuals and the subjective significance of cultural symbols change in the interaction with each other.

Such an approach is especially new to research on television, where the focus has been on stable characteristics of viewers and incoming information,

emphasizing socially shared understandings and veridical inference of intentions or traits. Studies of how individuals organize knowledge and process new information about the self have been concerned with either natural language categories or well-defined laboratory situations. Similarly, research investigating affect toward television characters has constrained interpretations by presenting a common set of characters to be rated or described, with parameters of individuals' relationships to them externally defined. In the present investigation, several questioning formats are intended to focus on subjective understandings in various ways.

The current study allows for free selection of characters and the initial inquiries about each character are open-ended. Open-ended question frames are intended to allow for expression of aspects of experience with special significance to the individuals being studied. This is a methodological acknowledgment that (despite television scenarios and characters being "packaged" representations) the social world presents itself to individuals with few clearly applicable contextual constraints on interpretation and offers multiple axes of potential interpretability.

Metaphor productions are intended as an impetus to expression of understandings which differ from conventionally articulated expression and which are not explicit objects of consciousness. In metaphoric expression

the differentiation of cognition and affect may be incomplete (cf. Werner & Kaplan, 1963), revealing some of the affective bases of meaning. Connotation, instead of denotation, becomes the primary context of reference. By giving form to meaning based upon particular situational, purposive, or subjective context, as well as allowing for simultaneous ascription of a number of qualities, an individual's spontaneous metaphors may appear vague or multiply interpretable to others. Yet it is precisely this quality of metaphor which may capture affinities between the individual and the subject of the metaphor and between the subject and modifier. These may be perceived only on an intuitive level. The intent was to capture how the target concepts (i.e., characters) "feel" (cf. Ricoeur, 1978) to the respondent, in other words, the affective tone.

This relationship will also be assessed by means of semantic differential ratings, which are a recognized index of affective dimensions of meaning in relation to a set of concepts. In contrast to the interview and metaphor task, the semantic differential technique requires informants to make direct evaluative ratings of characters in terms of experimenter constrained categories.

These methods, as well as directive interview probes, are attempts to approach affect vis a vis characters in ways requiring different formulations by subjects. Conventional understandings will inevitably be stated, but the varying

contexts for expression are also expected to facilitate expression of idiosyncracies of relationships with characters.

Design

Subjects were selected on the basis of pretest ratings of character preference (Appendix A). Four questioning frames were presented within an extended interview: open-ended descriptions of two liked and two disliked characters and oneself, protocols for directive interview probes, metaphor productions and their elaboration, and semantic differential responses. The questioning frames were intended to encourage various types of elaboration about characters and oneself, but all except the semantic differential were considered conjointly as interview data for the purpose of analyses.

The order of presentation of the directive interview probes, the semantic differential, and the metaphor production task was varied according to a Latin Square Design (see Appendix B). Four subjects at each age received one of six task orders. However, to ensure that the open-ended descriptions of characters and oneself were relatively unconstrained by interviewer-imposed categories of evaluation, these questions preceded more structured inquiry about characters and oneself. The order of liked, then disliked, characters spoken about was determined by

subject preference; the interviews concluded with a focus on "you."

Each subject designated liked and disliked characters that he would speak about. By doing this, the experimental control afforded by a common stimulus set was sacrificed. By allowing for free-nomination of characters, the investigator could be more confident that subjects' interest in and liking of characters was genuine. Therefore, liking, rather than a particular stimulus, may be thought of as the independent variable.

Subjects' open-ended descriptions of characters and oneself were obtained prior to other questioning frames about the person. Unlike more directive formats, such descriptions were relatively unconstrained by the investigator's category system. Metaphor productions, by virtue of being an unusual form of discourse, were also intended to circumvent conventional and formulaic responses, instead capturing the affective tone a character has for the subject.

Different patterns of data would support each of the models of social cognition posed in the introduction: appropriation of social forms, projection of oneself onto the social world, and an interactionism defined as appropriation and transformation of social and cultural symbols. Discussion of these hypothetical patterns of data follow.

Semantic differential ratings of characters allow for comparison of subjects' judgments about themselves and characters using a common set of bipolar descriptors and a common metric of rating. These data are used to address two issues: (1) degree of self-character similarity, and (2) if subjects who rate themselves similarly also rate characters similarly. Different patterns of similarity allow for different inferences about psychological processes. Similarity with liked characters only would indicate a process of identification where positively valued qualities are appropriated. Similarity with both liked and disliked characters, on the other hand, might indicate projection of oneself onto the characters. Developmental "phases" are a possibility, with children moving from an early extreme (cf. Piaget and Vygotsky on egocentric thought) to a more flexible mode where both processes are employed. If both processes were used, they might be expected to be strategically employed for specific purposes (e.g., appropriation of positively valued qualities and projection of one's own psychological issues onto disliked characters). The two processes might also function interactively (cf. assimilation and accommodation), both functioning simultaneously in any instance of social cognition. In this case, we would expect similarity between self and both liked and disliked characters, but differing from projection in that there will be only partial similarity with characters.

Different kinds of insights into process can be obtained from identification of subjects who similarly rated semantic differential items referring to oneself and those who similarly rated liked and disliked characters. (This "tracking" data is complemented by correlations of MDS dimensional coordinates for ratings of self and characters.) It was expected that subjects with similar self ratings would also be grouped together on their ratings of the qualities of their most and least liked characters. The underlying assumption of such an expectation is that there is some sort of within-subject consistency. Finding such a pattern can be interpreted in alternate ways depending on the findings regarding self-character similarity. The expectation of this sort of within-subject consistency would be greatest if a process of projection were in play, since subjects would be expected to see self-relevant themes in a wide variety of external stimuli. On the other hand, a process of appropriation would mean that subjects who rate liked characters similarly would also rate themselves similarly, since this process posits identity as an amalgam of internalized aspects of role models. An interactive process does not necessarily prescribe any strong pattern of consistent similarities between individuals who rate themselves or characters similarly.

Descriptive analyses of interview data attempted to discover the psychological bases for the relationship

between individuals and characters. The most general issue is the degree to which self-relevant-themes can be found in talk about characters, or character-relevant themes can be found in talk about self. If the semantic differential data provides evidence of projection, the question becomes one of what aspects of self subjects project onto characters. If the data points to a process of appropriation, it becomes a question of what types of qualities are appropriated. And if the data indicates an interactive process, the data must be examined to identify and characterize parallels between self and character descriptions. Since identification of parallels between self and characters does not provide data about the direction of influence, patterns of such relationship must be determined so that inferences about process (and, by implication, directionality) can be made. Pertinent questions include how frequently such parallels occur in an individuals' interview protocol, if a single self-relevant theme is reflected in only one character or if themes span more than one character, how many themes span more than one character, and if self-relevant themes appear in talk about disliked as well as liked characters.

Patterns of response will be used as an indirect index of processing differences between subjects of different ages. Boys in late childhood were expected to choose characters, rate them, and understand them in terms of surface-features and speak about them as entities entirely

independent of themselves. Adolescents' responses to the semantic differential task were expected to indicate greater variation among subjects than would be evident among the younger boys' ratings. Adolescent responses were also expected to demonstrate greater intra-individual integration, as evidenced by "tracking" and correlation of semantic differential data, as well as identification of parallels in the interview data. Although an age difference might be attributed to general cognitive development, the greater individual differences expected among adolescents would indicate that particular integrations of content are not adequately explained solely in terms of cognitive development. The two types of evidence (individual differences and intra-individual integration), in tandem, would indicate a process of subjective transformation of the significance of these cultural symbols.

METHODS

subjects

Subjects were 24 middle class males at each of two ages: late childhood (10--11) and early adolescence (13--14). Subjects were volunteers from public schools in middle class areas of New York City (Riverdale and parts of Staten Island). Subjects were selected from several different classrooms at each grade level (fifth and eighth

grades).

Selection of subjects who are homogeneous in gender, race, and S.E.S. lessens potential sources of between-subject variability, permitting emphasis on sources of variability which are attributable to individuals. Females and members of various ethnic groups may be expected to differ from the research population in their preferences for particular symbols, as well as the manner in which they serve as representations for understanding their own experience; separate investigations are warranted.

character preference

In the initial phase of the research, nominations of liked and disliked characters were collected from boys in grades six (n=53) and seven (n=41). Each subject could nominate up to five characters. The number of characters nominated by two or more boys in grade six was 102 and in grade seven, 97. No character was mentioned by 25% or more of the subjects in either grade. The most frequently nominated characters were used to generate a preference checklist used in the second phase of the study. Additional characters were added to the list in order to include a greater number and range of characters.

Prior to conducting individual sessions, a brief pre-test was administered in a group session. Subjects were asked to rate a list of 18 characters on a seven-point

Likert scale. Subjects were also asked if there were characters they liked or disliked more than anyone on the list and, if so, to write their names at the bottom of the page and mark the appropriate position on the checklist.

An attempt was made to base subject selection on similar extreme liking or disliking ratings of common characters, in an attempt to ensure a minimum number of different characters across age groups. Since this sort of consensus was not produced within the sample tested, any subject who did not use almost exclusively positive or negative ratings was interviewed. Interviews proceeded until all cells in the design for that age-group were filled. Subjects without complete protocols (e.g., those who could not produce two disliked characters) were not included in filling cells in the design or in analyses. The protocol for this task appears in Appendix A.

open-ended descriptions

Initial questions were open-ended (see Appendix C). This task is ethnographic in the sense that it followed up on topics introduced by the subject and allowed him to express what is meaningful about the character in a manner which was not constrained. Questions about the subject himself substitute "yourself" in the question frames (see Appendix C).

semantic differential technique

A set of semantic differential scales was presented to subjects. The twelve pairs of polar-opposite adjectives which comprise the instrument were primarily selected from sets of semantic differential items previously administered, especially to children (DiVesta, 1965; Osgood, Suci,& Tannenbaum, 1957); several other items were newly constructed. Item selection was made with consideration of: 1) comprehension by the youngest children (normative data provided in Entwisle, 1966, was of assistance in making this determination); 2) potential applicability of the items to television characters or oneself; 3) inclusion of items which were metaphoric or which were indirectly evaluative, potentially capturing some aspects of the affective tone of target concept for the respondent.

Subjects were asked to respond with the same set of scales to the two liked and two disliked characters and "you". Each item contrasts polar opposites within a semantic category and requires a response on a seven-point Likert scale. The three points nearer either pole on the seven-point Likert scale signify a perceived affinity to that pole and its relative strength. The midpoint on the scale indicates the two poles are perceived to be equally applicable to the character being evaluated. The protocol for this task appears in Appendix D.

metaphor production task

The two liked and two disliked television characters and "you" served as the topics of the metaphors. Three sentence frames for metaphoric attribution to each character and oneself were presented by the interviewer, one at a time. These frames require that the informant propose an analogic relationship between some quality of the character or themselves and some particular kind of animal, color, and food. Follow-up inquiries focused on the character or oneself as an exemplar of the metaphoric vehicle. The interviewer proceeded with probes suggested by the informant's response in order to obtain elaboration on each metaphor which contributes to understanding its subjective bases and qualities of the relation constructed with the character. The protocol for this task appears in Appendix E.

directive interview probes

The directive interview probes focused primarily on the subject's understanding of and relation to the character. These questions attempted to emphasize dynamic aspects of persons rather than reified traits by addressing the following topics: how the character differs from ostensibly similar characters, if the character has a unique way of doing things, how the character would deal with a problem confronting the subject, and things the character can do

that the subject would like to do. Probes about oneself ("you") corresponded to those about characters wherever it made sense. The probes about characters included a number of questions which refered to self in relation to a character; analogous question frames were not repeated. At the end of the interview the subject was asked to assess the influence of television characters on himself. The interview protocol appears in Appendix F.

RESULTS

Both statistical analyses and descriptive comparisons were performed. Statistical description and analyses were performed upon data provided by the semantic differential task. Descriptive analyses were performed with data provided by the various sections of the interview.

Subject Ratings of Characters and Self

Semantic differential ratings of characters and oneself were analyzed in two ways, each offering different kinds of information about subject ratings. The first set of analyses were tabulations to determine how closely subjects rated themselves and liked and disliked characters. In previous studies explicit subject ratings of similarity frequently constituted the empirical basis for the construct of identification with a character. To approximate that kind of judgment, the first pass at the data focused on the

number of times self and liked characters were rated the same on semantic differential items (scales). Each subject rated the two liked characters on 12 items, so there were 24 potential opportunities for rating oneself and a character the same. The mean number of items rated exactly the same for self and characters (combining both liked characters) was relatively low. For fifth grade subjects the mean was 7.38, with a standard deviation of 4.91. Eighth grade subjects had a mean of 7.17 exact matches, with a standard deviation of 3.76.

A second set of tabulations which was sensitive to degree of similarity was conducted. The difference between a subject's ratings of oneself and each character was calculated for each semantic differential item. Aggregate data from these tabulations is presented in Table 1. Fifth grade subjects rated themselves and their first mentioned liked characters more similarly than self and second liked character; disliked characters were rated less similar to self than liked characters. Eighth grade subjects rated themselves equally similar to first and second liked characters; disliked characters were rated more different from self than liked characters, but the difference was not as great as for fifth grade subjects. It is also notable that eighth grade subjects' ratings of their second liked characters were notably lower than fifth grade subjects' ratings of second liked characters.

Table 1

Differences between self and character ratings on semantic differential items

	self and:							
	1st liked		2nd liked		1st disliked		2nd disliked	
	M	sd	M	sd	M	sd	M	sd
grade								
5	20.50	8.96	23.29	8.54	31.21	11.35	30.29	13.02
8	18.88	5.66	17.79	7.21	27.54	7.08	25.21	7.71

In order to determine if subjects rated liked character as more similar to themselves than disliked characters, group difference scores were compared. Since these differences are "separate but not independent" (Seigel, 1956, pp. 74), the Wilcoxon matched-pairs signed-ranks test was used. The difference between self and first liked characters was (smaller) than the difference between self and first disliked characters for (both) grade 5 (N = 12, T = 0, $p \leq .01$) and grade 8 (N = 12, T = -7, $p \leq .01$). A similar pattern was found for both grades for the difference between self and second liked characters and the difference between self and second disliked characters; liked characters were more similar to self for subjects in grade 5 (N = 12, T = -7, $p \leq .01$) and grade 8 (N = 12, T =-1, $p \leq .01$).

This data begins to reveal something about the relationship between individuals and cultural symbols. There was more similarity between ratings of self and liked characters, but there were also similarities between ratings of self and disliked characters. The similarity with disliked characters indicates that there is not a simple process of appropriation of the qualities of liked characters. The difference in degree of similarity between self and liked and disliked characters indicates that subjects do not indiscriminately project themselves onto external stimuli.

Tabulations for each semantic differential item

indicate where there is the greatest self-character similarity and where there is the greatest dissimilarity; these differ for the two grades. On any given item the difference between self and character ratings can range from 0 to 6; totals per item can range from 0 to 144. These data are summarized for grades 5 and 8 in Tables 2 and 3, respectively. For grade five subjects, high differences between self and both liked characters were found for real:fake, and low differences were found for second liked and first disliked characters for cold:hot. Curiously, ratings of relaxed:tense tended to be different for self and first disliked characters and similar for self and second disliked characters. For grade eight subjects, dangerous:safe was rated similarly for self and both first liked and second disliked characters; sad:happy was rated similarly for self and both disliked characters. Ratings were different for self and both disliked characters on real:fake. And relaxed:tense was rated differently from self for second liked characters and similarly to self for first disliked characters.

Real:fake emerged as important for fifth grade subjects in distinguishing themselves from both liked characters and from the first disliked character; for grade eight subjects it was important for distinguishing oneself from both disliked characters. Sad:happy was an important aspect of similarity between fifth grade subjects and first liked

Table 2

Self:character similarity by item for fifth grade subjects

Most similar item ratings:

Character	Item	Mean Difference
First liked	sad:happy	M = 1.04
Second liked	cold:hot	M = 1.0
First disliked	cold:hot	M = 2.18
Second disliked	relaxed:tense	M = 1.75

Least similar item ratings:

First liked	real:fake	M = 2.61
	familiar:strange	M = 2.54
Second liked	real:fake	M = 3.17
First disliked	real:fake	M = 3.30
	relaxed:tense	M = 3.04
	sweet:sour	M = 2.67
Second disliked	hard:soft	M = 3.43
	fast:slow	M = 3.25

Table 3

Self:character similarity by item for eighth grade subjects

Most similar item ratings:

Character	Item	Mean Difference
First liked	sweet:sour	M = 1.29
	familiar:strange	M = 1.38
	dangerous:safe	M = 1.61
Second liked	hard:soft	M = .88
First disliked	sad:happy	M = 1.17
	relaxed:tense	M = 1.46
Second disliked	sad:happy	M = 1.50
	dangerous:safe	M = 1.63

Least similar item ratings:

First liked	honest:dishonest	M = 2.08
Second liked	relaxed:tense	M = 2.25
First disliked	real:fake	M = 3.67
	weak:strong	M = 3.08
Second disliked	real:fake	M = 3.21

characters and between eighth grade subjects and both disliked characters. And relaxed:tense was a basis of similarity for fifth grade subjects and second disliked characters and eighth grade subjects and first disliked characters; it was a basis of dissimilarity for fifth grade subjects and first disliked characters and eighth grade subjects and second disliked characters.

Sign tests were conducted to determine on which adjectives self was rated higher than both first and second liked characters and on which adjectives liked characters were ranked higher than disliked characters. Only sign tests which were significant by a two-tailed criterion are reported. These data are summarized in Table 4.

Subjects who Rate Themselves Similarly

Multidimensional scaling (MDS) analyses were conducted on the semantic differential ratings. Separate analyses were conducted for the first named liked character, the second named liked character, the first named disliked character, the second named disliked character, and "you." Each of these targets was rated in terms of 12 bipolar adjective pairs. The basic data in MDS is a measure of proximity; in the present case, profile dissimilarity indices were used to generate a dissimilarity matrix (see Appendix H) between subject ratings on semantic differential items. These matrices served as input for MDS analyses. An

Table 4

Items on which self was rated higher than liked characters

Grade 5	
First liked character:	real (v. fake)* sweet (v. sour)*
Second liked character:	real (v. fake)* sweet (v. sour)* fast (v. slow)** honest (v. dishonest)**
Grade 8	
First liked character:	fast (v. slow)*

Items on which liked characters were rated higher than disliked characters.

Grade 5	
First liked v. first disliked:	tough (v. gentle)**
Second liked v. second disliked:	tough (v. gentle)** strong (v. weak)** hard (v. soft)**
First liked v. second liked:	fast (v. slow)*
Grade 8	
First liked v. first disliked:	hot (v. cold)* real (v. fake)* sweet (v. sour)* strong (v. weak)** relaxed (v. tense)** hard (v.soft)** familiar (v. strange)**
Second liked v. second disliked:	hot (v. cold)* real (v. fake)* tough (v. gentle)**

* sign test, $p \leq .01$, two-tailed
** sign test, $p \leq .05$, two-tailed

ALSCAL model of computation was employed, whereby a group solution was derived (i.e., the data were externally averaged) to yield scale values which are spatial coordinates. These coordinates were used to plot a representation of the group's semantic space for the perceived stimulus structure. Specifically, this analysis yields a quantitative dimensional description of the relations between multiple subject ratings of a particular target stimulus (e.g., a liked character).

The output of these analyses allow for locating individuals within a semantic space. In order to answer the specific research questions posed, a unique stance is adopted for interpreting the output of these analyses. It begins with a focus on ratings of oneself ("you"). These ratings serve as a basis of comparison with ratings of the liked and disliked characters.

Since liking:disliking of characters was the independent variable rather than a particular set of stimuli, derivation of a two-dimensional group solution was sought in order to facilitate interpretation and comparison across targets (i.e., "you" and the four characters). It should be noted that the two dimensions do not necessarily have the same meaning (or reflect judgments on the same subsets of items) across the five targets. The meaning of the dimensions is based on similarities in the boys' ratings rather than stable dimensions of the targets themselves.

As a first step in interpreting the data, subjects with similar patterns of rating items referring to each target were identified. Visual inspection of the plots (derived stimulus configurations) suggested a number of small groups. In order to create larger groupings, the subjects' coordinates were examined. A decision rule was set to define a value greater than or equal to .50 (no rounding up) for a dimensional coordinate as indicating that dimension was important for a subject. This low value was selected in order to make the groupings more inclusive. Up to four groups were identified for each target. The first (and usually largest, owing to the procedure) group emphasized the positive importance of dimension one, regardless of the dimension two coordinate. The second group emphasized the positive importance of dimension two, regardless of the dimension one coordinate. This was followed by groupings based on negative importance accorded to each of the dimensions, respectively. While these rules for grouping subjects were arbitrarily set; although other priority sequences for grouping could have been followed, as well as the use of a value other than .50 for inclusion, once set these decision rules constitute a uniform procedure which mitigates further arbitrariness in grouping subjects.

Analyses are presented separately for each grade. The MDS model derived from subjects' ratings is described in terms of groupings of subjects, reported here for each

target. For each analysis an index of how well the data fit the derived stimulus configuration of the MDS is reported. The squared correlation, RSQ, indicates the proportion of variance of the scaled data accounted for by their corresponding distances in the MDS model. Description and graphic representation of the groups provides a context for further discussion.

Fifth grade boys' ratings of "you" (RSQ = .87) yielded three groups of subjects. Table 5 contains subject coordinates and lists groupings of subjects. A graphic plot appears in figure 1. Ratings of the first named liked character (RSQ = .74) yielded four groups of subjects (all subsequent analyses yielded four groups). Subject coordinates and groupings are presented in Table 6, and graphically displayed in figure 2. Ratings of the second named liked character (RSQ = .67), first named disliked character (RSQ = .64), and second named disliked character (RSQ = .78) yielded the subject coordinates and groupings presented in Tables 7 to 9, respectively, graphically displayed in figures 3 to 5.

Eighth grade boys' results were calculated separately from the fifth grade boys'. Subject coordinates and groupings for ratings of "you" (RSQ = .81), first liked character (RSQ = .73), second liked character (RSQ = .76), first disliked character (RSQ = .82), and second disliked character (RSQ=.71) appear in Tables 10 to 14, and are

Table 5

Subject Coordinates for the MDS Model of Fifth Grade Boys' Ratings of Themselves

subject	dimension 1	2
1	0.9943	0.8761
2	-0.6000	0.9647
3	0.0804	0.4067
4	0.8203	0.9202
5	1.3005	-1.2494
6	-0.0172	0.5916
7	-0.3183	0.3849
8	-0.5752	0.8784
9	-2.0262	0.6508
10	-1.9999	0.0511
11	1.1650	0.0419
12	0.8098	-0.0365
13	-0.1676	1.3937
14	-0.4535	-0.4268
15	1.5137	0.1185
16	1.2882	0.0143
17	-0.7818	1.3096
18	1.0165	0.2065
19	-0.2092	0.0746
20	-0.5237	-2.8504
21	0.5086	-0.0858
22	-1.0325	-1.6719
23	0.9221	-1.0729
24	-1.7144	-0.7201

subjects in group one: 1,4,5,11,12,15,16,18,21,23

subjects in group two: 2,6,8,9,13,17

subjects in group three: 10,20,22,24

subjects in group four: NA

subjects with values below the absolute value of .50 on both dimensions: 3,7,14,19

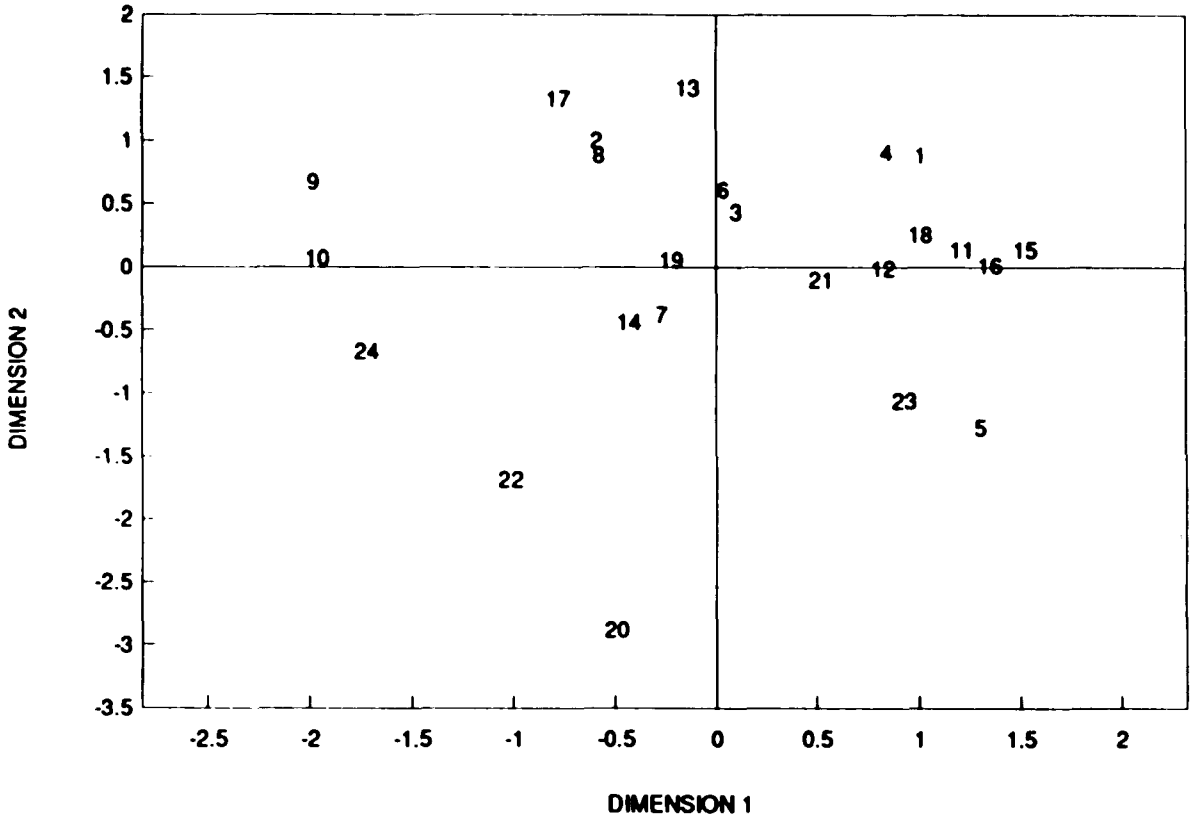

Figure 1: Plot of MDS model of fifth grade subjects' ratings of themselves.

Table 6

Subject Coordinates for the MDS Model of Fifth Grade Boys' Ratings of First Liked Characters

subject	dimension 1	2
1	1.4979	0.4215
2	0.1049	1.1091
3	1.4073	0.6649
4	-1.3786	0.9645
5	-1.2735	-0.7084
6	1.0308	0.5921
7	-1.6563	-0.0053
8	1.1242	0.8104
9	1.3577	-0.7580
10	-0.5551	-2.1629
11	1.5888	-1.2381
12	0.1713	-0.5404
13	1.3460	-1.0012
14	-1.1689	1.1934
15	-0.2033	0.1113
16	-1.6996	-0.0603216
17	1.3500	0.6659
18	-1.1730	1.0313
19	-0.0178	1.0412
20	-0.5622	-0.6017
21	0.5370	0.2759
22	-0.6577	0.1839
23	-1.0999	-0.8201
24	-0.0699	-1.1687

subjects in group one: 1,3,6,8,9,11,13,17,21

subjects in group two: 2,4,14,18,19

subjects in group three: 5,7,10,16,20,22,23

subjects in group four: 12,24

subjects with values below the absolute value of .50 on both dimensions: 15

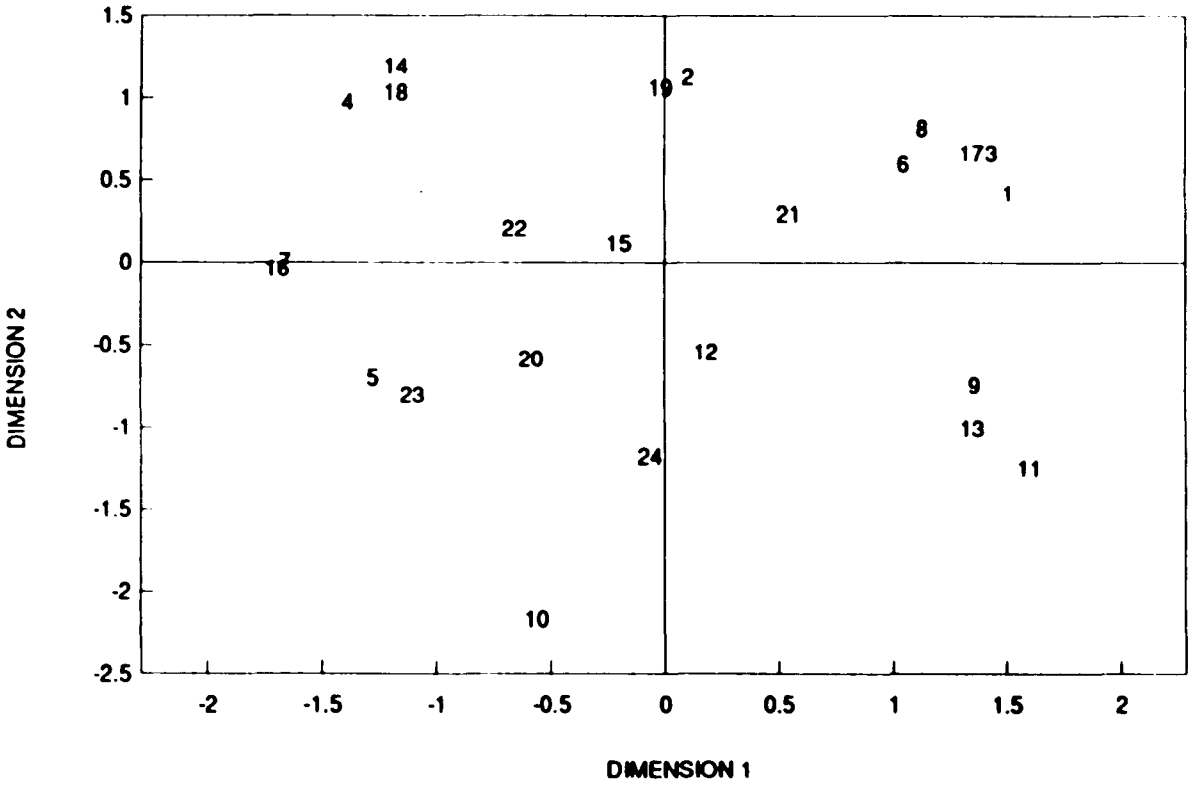

Figure 2: Plot of MDS model of fifth grade subjects' ratings of first liked character.

Table 7

Subject Coordinates for the MDS Model of Fifth Grade Boys' Ratings of Second Liked Characters

subject	dimension 1	2
1	1.2059	0.8375
2	-1.1453	0.0413
3	-0.1832	1.4903
4	2.0352	0.2826
5	2.0156	0.3307
6	-0.3780	-1.7539
7	-1.3697	-0.0613
8	-1.4585	-0.2624
9	-0.9853	-0.9363
10	-0.9270	0.2656
11	1.2759	-0.4856
12	-0.6737	0.9539
13	-1.2114	-0.2460
14	-0.1211	-1.8337
15	-0.7844	1.0419
16	1.1953	-0.4630
17	0.4932	-1.4047
18	0.8714	1.2131
19	0.4383	-1.3843
20	0.0025	1.3042
21	-0.8546	0.3277
22	0.2406	0.5941
23	-0.9809	0.3636
24	1.2991	-0.2152

subjects in group one: 1,4,5,11,16,18,24

subjects in group two: 3,12,15,20,22

subjects in group three: 2,7,8,9,10,13,21,23

subjects in group four: 6,14,17,19

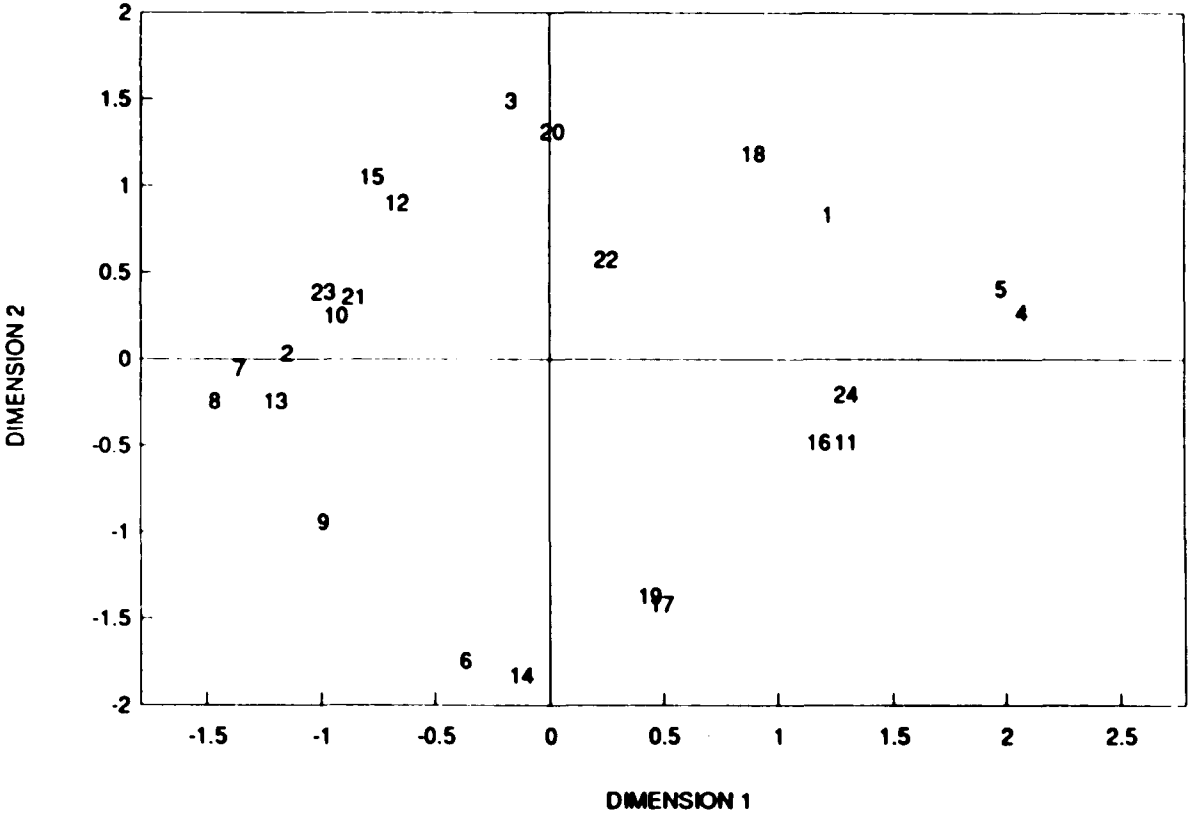

Figure 3: Plot of MDS model of fifth grade subjects' ratings of second liked character.

Table 8

Subject Coordinates for the MDS Model of Fifth Grade Boys' Ratings of First Disliked Characters

subject	dimension 1	2
1	0.5319	1.2393
2	1.6916	0.4370
3	0.1434	-1.4147
4	-1.8562	-0.0997
5	-1.7203	0.2147
6	-0.2907	1.0482
7	0.6535	1.0705
8	1.8491	-0.0010
9	1.2427	-0.8874
10	0.3659	-1.1628
11	0.5765	1.2979
12	0.2764	-1.6088
13	0.7418	0.2118
14	-0.7771	-0.8728
15	0.7269	-1.3217
16	-1.5884	-0.4480
17	-0.6644	1.1124
18	0.3954	0.1257
19	-1.1946	0.1006
20	0.0685	1.2644
21	-0.4019	1.1188
22	-1.0614	-0.9931
23	-1.3065	0.1319
24	1.5979	-0.5628

subjects in group one: 1,2,7,8,9,11,13,15,24

subjects in group two: 6,17,20,21

subjects in group three: 4,5,14,16,19,22,23

subjects in group four: 3,10,12

subjects with values below the absolute value of .50 on both dimensions: 18

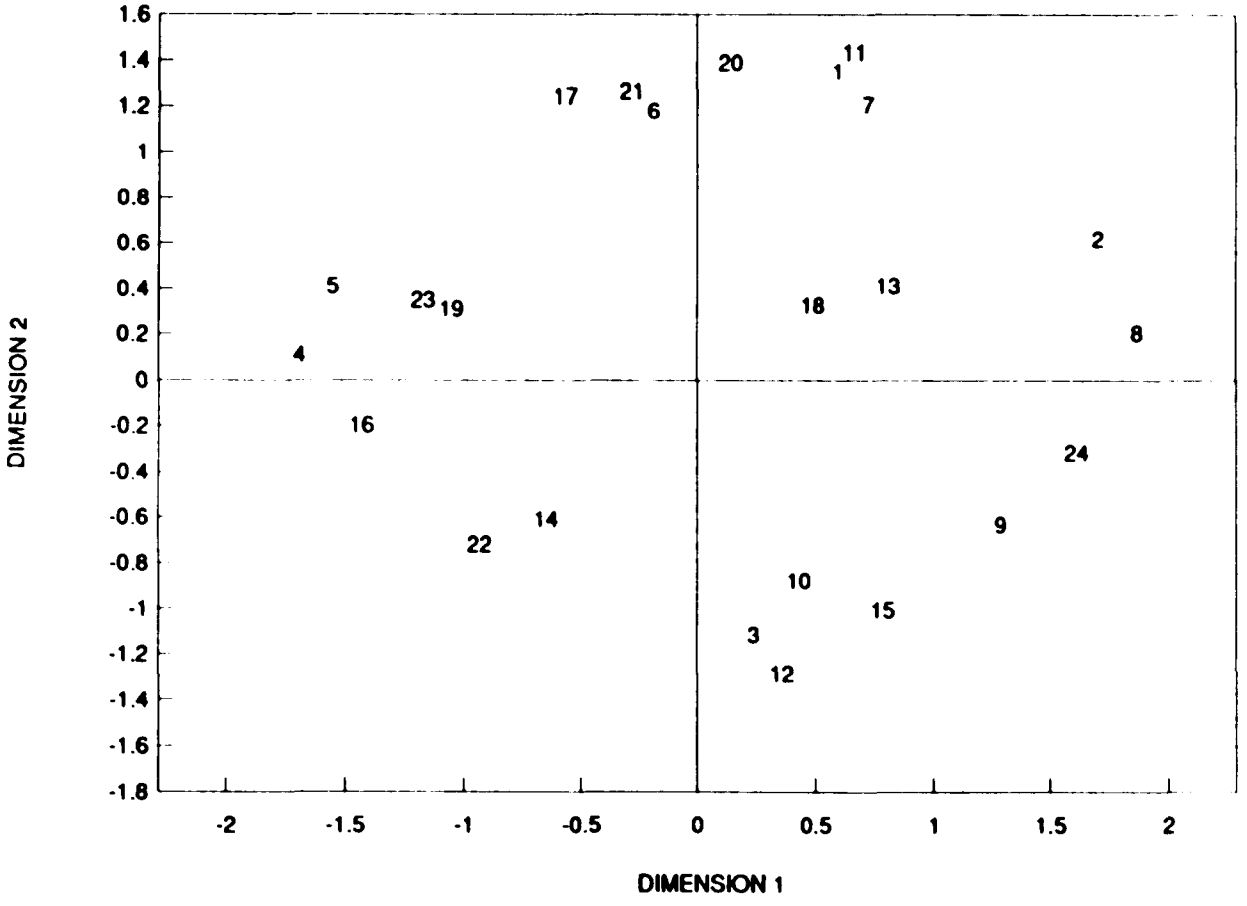

Figure 4: Plot of MDS model of fifth grade subjects' ratings of first disliked character

Table 9

Subject Coordinates for the MDS Model of Fifth Grade Boys' Ratings of Second Disliked Characters

subject	dimension 1	2
1	0.7079	1.3909
2	-1.9502	0.0138
3	-0.8185	-1.0860
4	1.1578	-0.0106
5	1.2031	1.1997
6	0.2309	-0.9843
7	0.8953	-0.4891
8	-1.6582	1.3374
9	-1.4840	-0.4660
10	-1.0039	0.6789
11	0.9700	-0.4795
12	-0.6638	-1.0783
13	0.9788	1.2250
14	0.2584	-1.0175
15	-0.5554	-1.3023
16	0.2364	-0.9126
17	1.3472	-0.0987
18	1.2791	-0.0208
19	0.5126	-1.0583
20	-1.4250	1.6073
21	0.6484	1.7030
22	-0.0146	0.0394
23	0.7542	-0.0009
24	-1.6065	-0.1905

subjects in group one: 1,4,5,7,11,13,17,18,19,21

subjects in group two: 8,10,20,23

subjects in group three: 2,3,9,12,15,24

subjects in group four: 6,14,16

subjects with values below the absolute value of .50 on both dimensions: 22

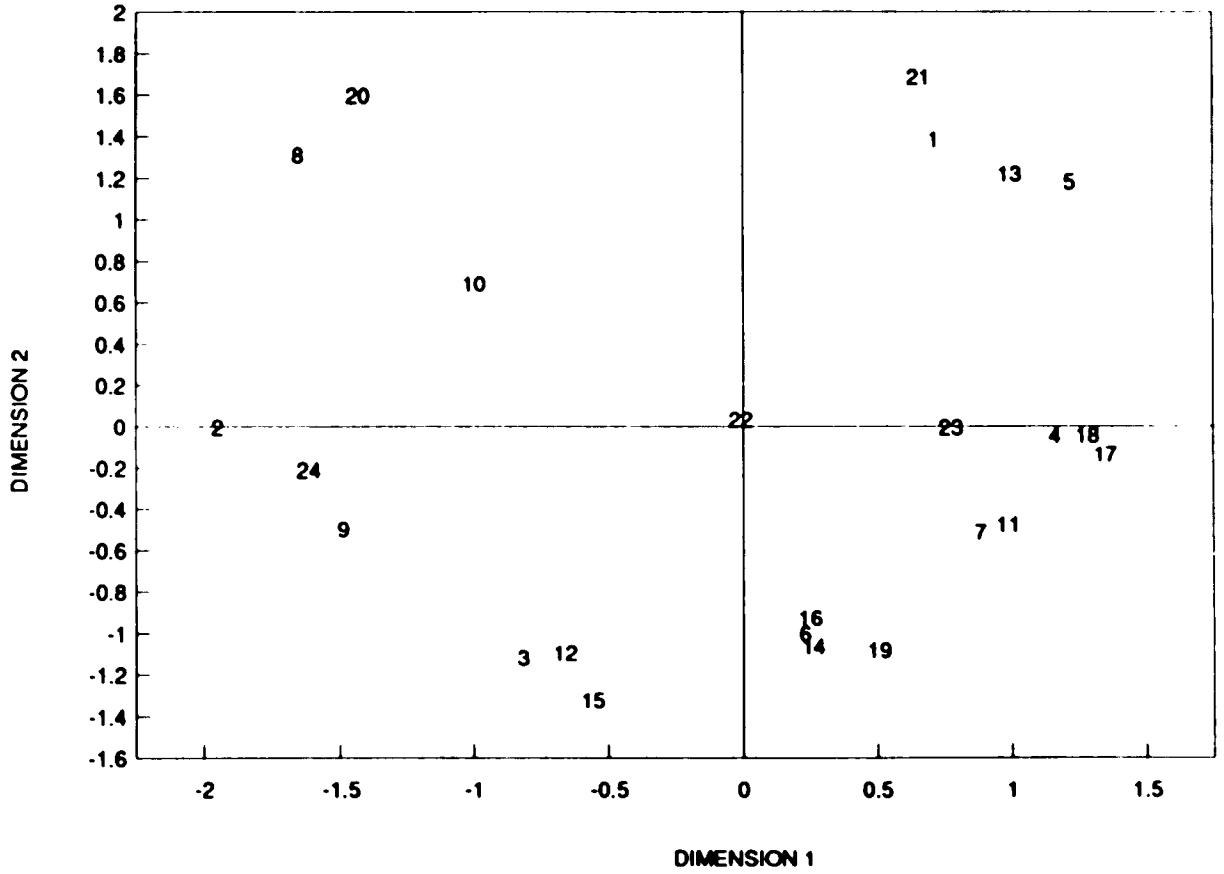

Figure 5: Plot of MDS model of fifth grade subjects' ratings of second disliked character

Table 10

Subject Coordinates for the MDS Model of Eighth Grade Boys' Ratings of Themselves

subject	dimension 1	2
1	1.3007	-0.7037
2	-1.3821	2.0092
3	0.2155	1.2458
4	1.6515	-0.1823
5	-0.7486	-0.5633
6	-1.6568	0.4019
7	0.1075	-1.0640
8	-1.3836	-0.2874
9	-0.4893	-0.8110
10	2.0939	0.1321
11	-1.2329	-0.2731
12	0.4954	-1.1707
13	0.3904	0.9064
14	-1.3210	-0.0607
15	-0.9597	-0.6916
16	-0.7588	1.8253
17	-0.5413	0.0448
18	1.7174	1.0896
19	0.0904	-0.8617
20	0.0994	-0.3459
21	1.7656	0.4295
22	0.7580	0.5099
23	-0.5952	-0.7819
24	-0.4300	-0.7971

subjects in group one: 1,4,10,18,19,21,22

subjects in group two: 2,3,13,16

subjects in group three: 5,6,8,11,14,15,17,23

subjects in group four: 7,9,12,24

subjects with values below the absolute value of .50 on both dimensions: 20

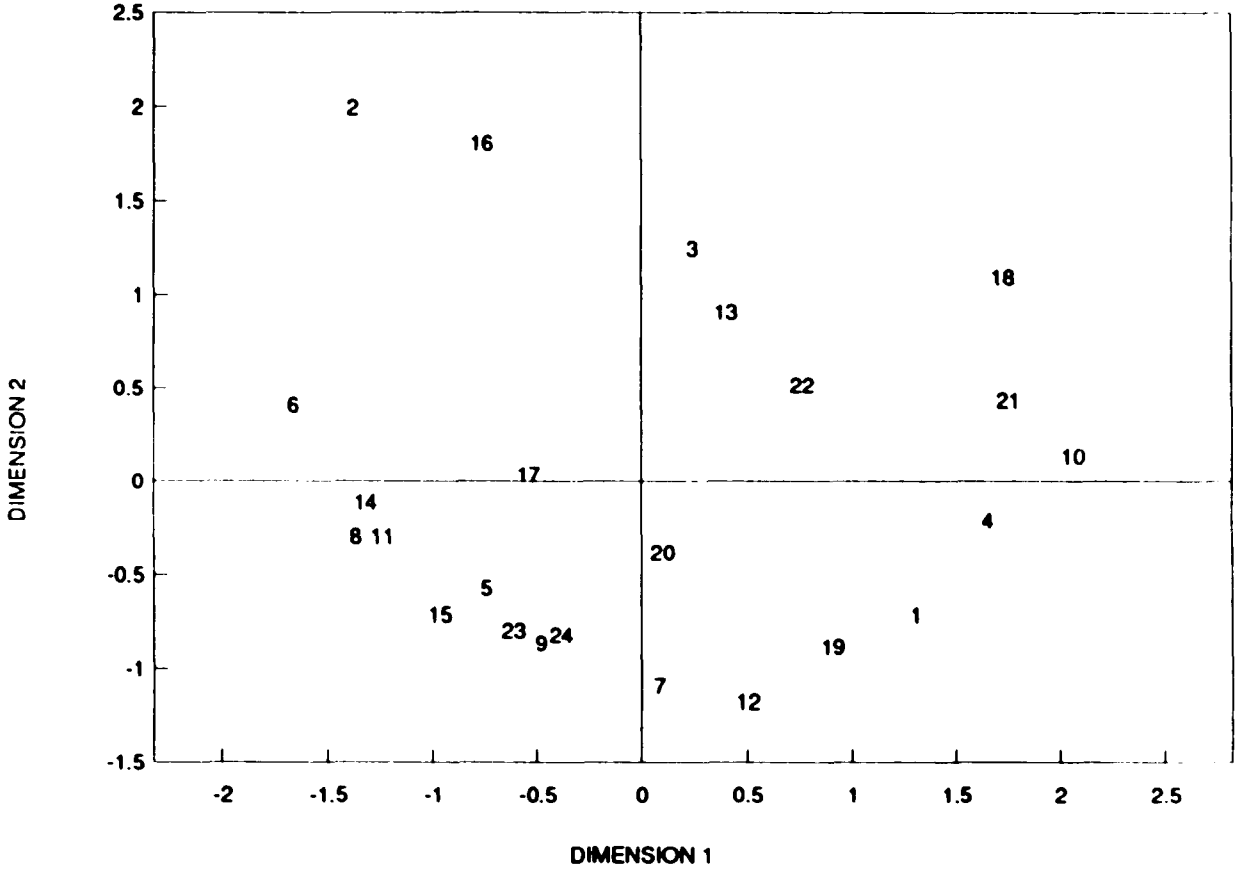

Figure 6: Plot of MDS model of eighth grade subjects' ratings of themselves

Table 11

Subject Coordinates for the MDS Model of Eighth Grade Boys' Ratings of First Liked Characters

subject	dimension 1	2
1	1.3398	0.7170
2	-2.8065	-0.1079
3	-0.6163	-0.9463
4	-2.3907	0.3220
5	1.3947	-0.0877
6	-0.2825	-1.0021
7	-0.1036	-1.1599
8	0.3435	1.7267
9	-0.9379	-0.4679
10	0.4306	0.9582
11	0.3208	1.6475
12	0.3081	1.3561
13	-0.4150	-1.0714
14	-1.3079	0.9586
15	0.8061	-0.9174
16	1.4407	0.3282
17	-0.6200	-1.2328
18	0.4804	-1.1355
19	0.6853	-0.7040
20	0.5876	0.6411
21	-0.7812	0.9440
22	0.6008	-0.3207
23	0.9408	-0.5422
24	0.5823	0.0964

subjects in group one: 1,5,15,16,19,20,22,23,24

subjects in group two: 8,10,11,12,14,21

subjects in group three: 2,3,4,9,17

subjects in group four: 6,7,13,18

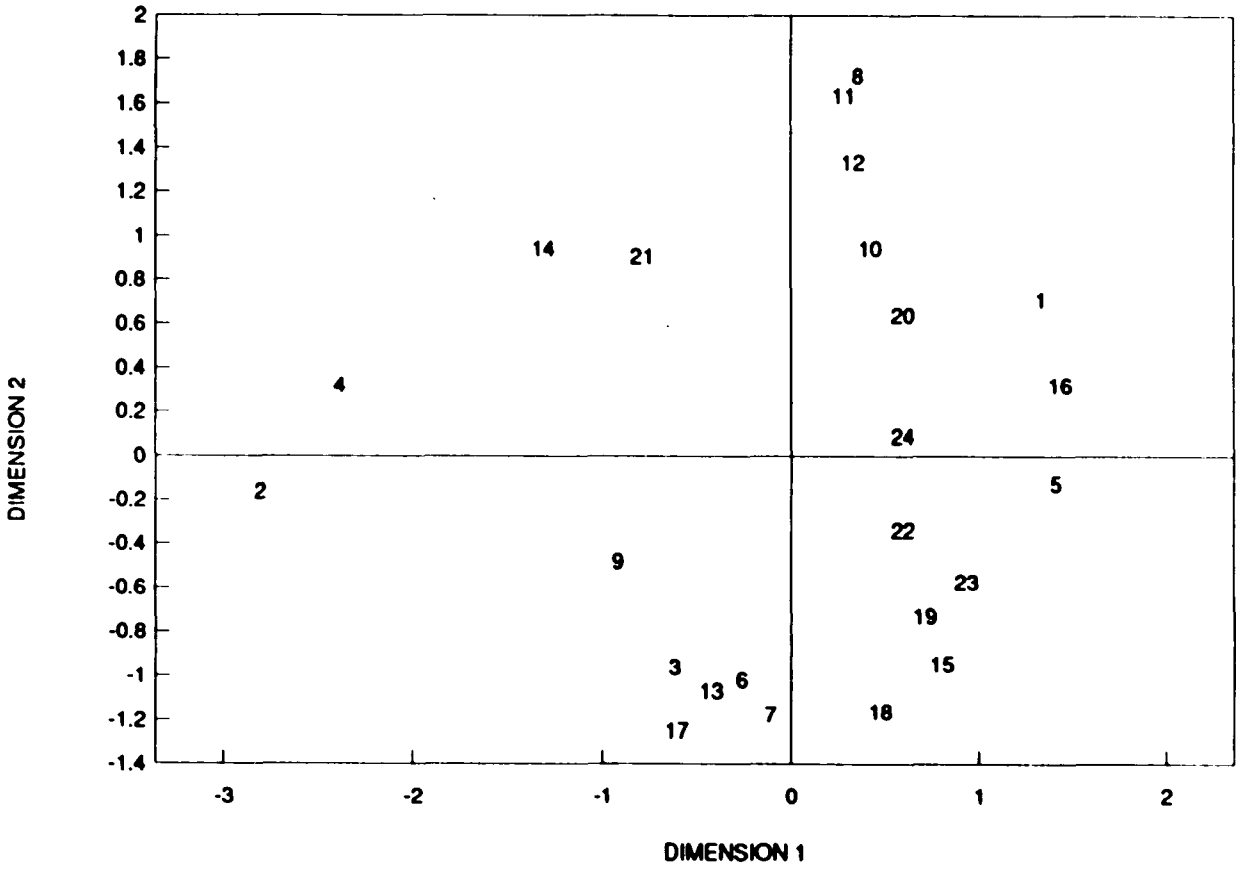

Figure 7: Plot of MDS model of eighth grade subjects' ratings of first liked character

Table 12

Subject Coordinates for the MDS Model of Eighth Grade Boys' Ratings of Second Liked Characters

subject	dimension 1	2
1	0.5124	1.0327
2	-1.2297	0.1538
3	2.1914	-1.2101
4	1.9863	-0.3464
5	1.4245	0.1367
6	-1.3042	-0.5192
7	-0.0008	0.8321
8	-0.8412	0.8040
9	-1.3235	0.1487
10	1.2877	0.3209
11	-0.9726	0.3612
12	-0.0469	1.1002
13	-1.4420	-0.8125
14	-0.9812	-1.1535
15	1.4828	0.5657
16	-1.2319	-0.0035
17	0.8668	-1.5561
18	0.4718	-1.3148
19	-0.2245	1.0855
20	1.1940	0.5658
21	-0.1300	0.8874
22	-0.9855	-0.5326
23	-0.2563	-1.4948
24	-0.3871	1.0489

subjects in group one: 1,3,4,5,10,15,17,20

subjects in group two: 7,8,12,19,21,24

subjects in group three: 2,6,9,11,13,14,16,22

subjects in group four: 18,23

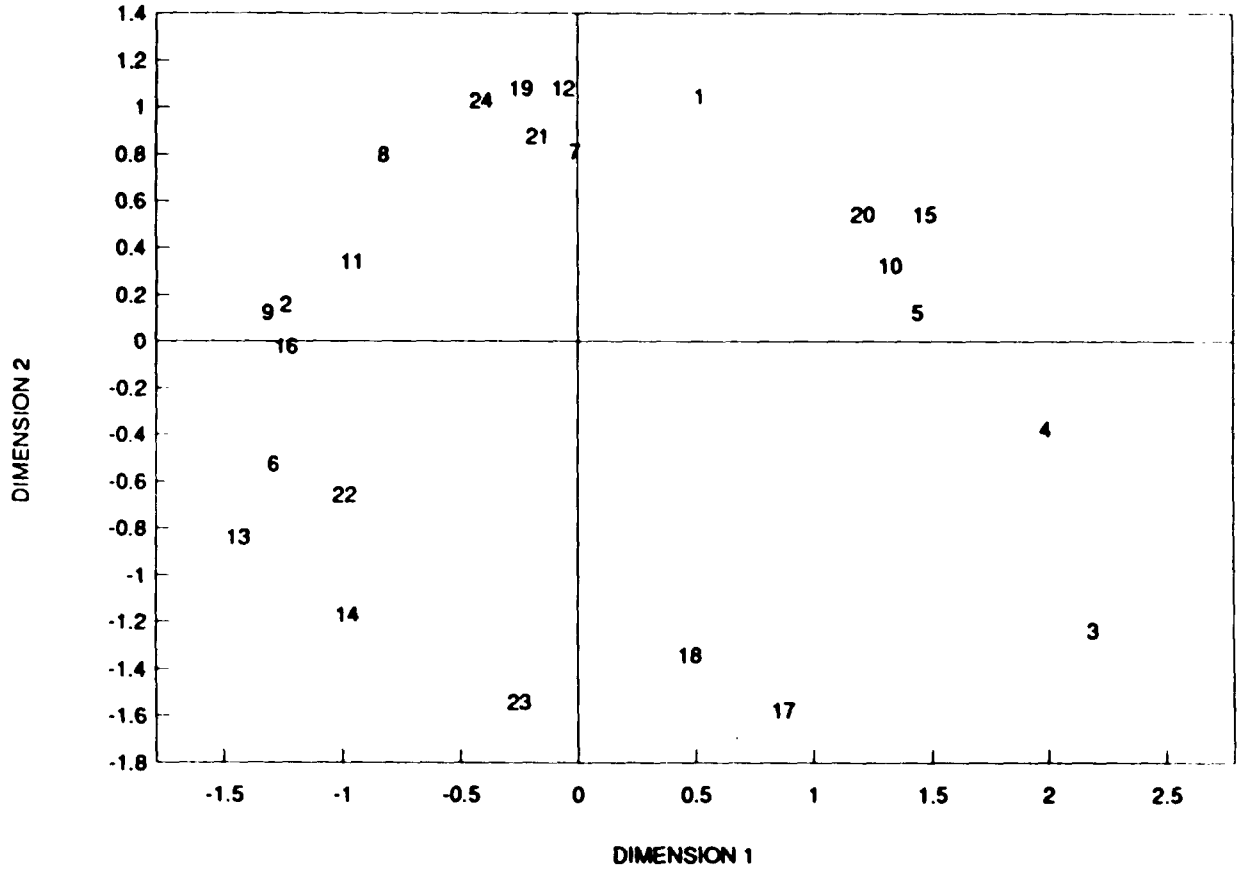

Figure 8: Plot of MDS model of eighth grade subjects' ratings of second liked character

Table 13

Subject Coordinates for the MDS Model of Eighth Grade Boys' Ratings of First Disliked Characters

subject	dimension 1	2
1	0.9262	1.7950
2	-0.5468	-0.0185
3	-0.9072	0.7008
4	-1.5783	-0.2099
5	0.6252	-0.5105
6	1.5542	-0.3461
7	-0.6972	0.1448
8	-0.0578	2.4025
9	0.9611	1.1460
10	-0.7938	-0.6086
11	-0.3263	-0.8705
12	-0.4662	-0.6607
13	0.2725	-1.6946
14	-0.8575	-0.4409
15	0.4338	-0.9005
16	-0.4874	-0.3455
17	0.2255	-0.3586
18	-0.6190	1.0846
19	-1.1380	1.2450
20	0.1712	-0.8152
21	2.7209	0.1126
22	2.3219	-0.7610
23	-0.6318	-0.0923
24	-0.9566	0.0021

subjects in group one: 1,5,6,9,21,22

subjects in group two: 3,8,18,19

subjects in group three: 2,4,7,10,14,23,24

subjects in group four: 11,12,13,15,20

subjects with values below the absolute value of .50 on both dimensions: 16,17

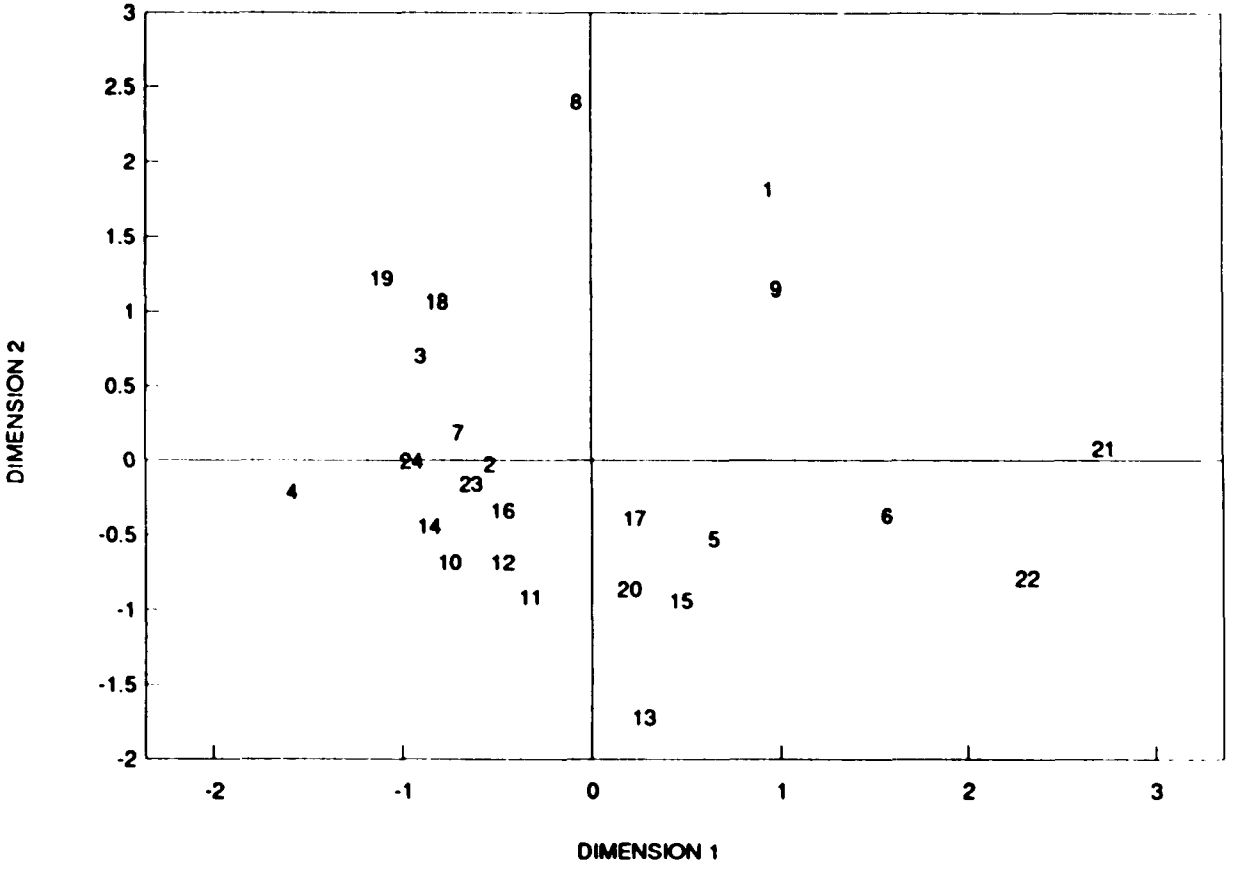

Figure 9: Plot of MDS model of eighth grade subjects' ratings of first disliked character

Table 14

Subject Coordinates for the MDS Model of Eighth Grade Boys' Ratings of Second Disliked Characters

	dimension	
subject	1	2
1	1.1544	1.4745
2	-1.3167	0.2251
3	-1.0595	0.5251
4	1.1206	-1.2703
5	-0.8873	-0.4848
6	-0.5584	-1.0026
7	0.9686	-1.2978
8	-1.1671	-0.0145
9	-1.0061	-1.1880
10	-1.1640	-0.1084
11	1.4383	1.0663
12	1.3557	-0.3582
13	-1.3522	-0.1327
14	0.0300	-0.9112
15	0.5069	0.8072
16	-1.1025	0.6041
17	1.5772	-0.7161
18	0.1381	1.2607
19	0.8710	-0.8401
20	0.8647	1.6145
21	0.8127	1.0755
22	1.3181	-1.0698
23	-1.2453	0.7908
24	-1.2968	-0.0490

subjects in group one: 1,4,7,11,12,15,17,19,20,21,22

subjects in group two: 3,16,18,23

subjects in group three: 2,5,6,8,9,10,13,24

subjects in group four: 14

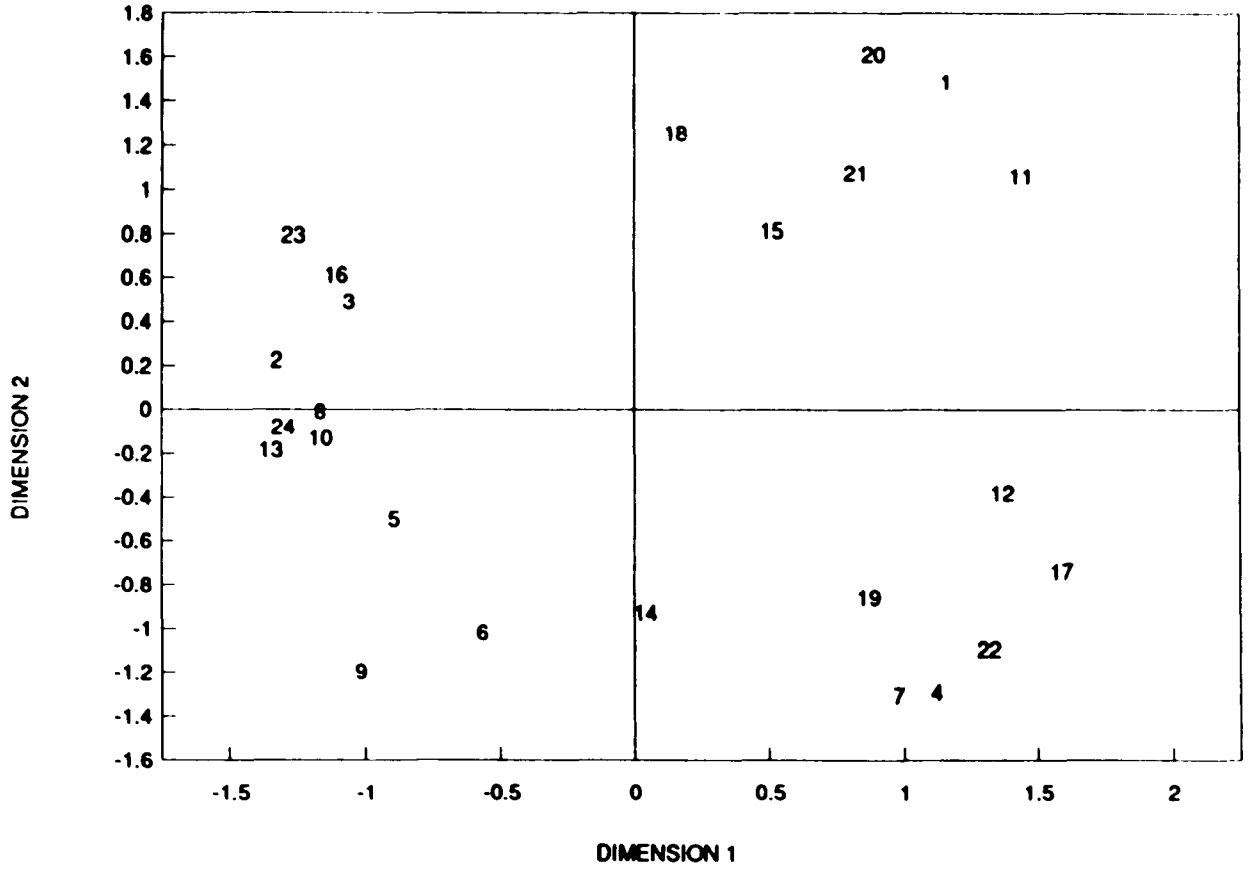

Figure 10: Plot of MDS model of eighth grade subjects' ratings of second disliked character

graphically plotted in figures 6 to 10.

Tracking Subjects

Examination of the groupings of subjects who rated items similarly can reveal if subjects who rated items similarly for "you" also rated characters similarly. Tracking these subjects indicates that the groupings of subjects are not stable across the characters. This is the case even with the provision that the focus here is on the grouping of subjects; that is, the dimensional coordinates they share may vary for each character, but the subjects remain grouped together.

Ten fifth grade subjects were grouped together based on a positive coordinate for dimension one; of these two (1, 11) remained grouped together for all the characters (and, in this case only, emphasized the same dimensional coordinate for all). Two more (14, 18) were grouped together on both liked and the second disliked character. Six subjects were grouped together because of a positive coordinate for dimension two; of these, a cluster of three (8, 9, 13) and a pair of subjects (6,17) were also grouped together for both liked and the first disliked character. Of the four grouped together based on a negative coordinate for dimension one, two (20, 22) were grouped together for both liked characters. Four subjects had coordinates less than the absolute value of .5 on both dimensions for ratings

of "you", two of these (14, 19) were grouped together for both liked and the first disliked character.

No eighth grade subjects were grouped together on all characters or for any three characters. Of the eight subjects grouped together based on a negative coordinate for dimension 1, two separate pairs (5, 15 and 11, 14) were grouped together for both liked characters; two different subjects were grouped together for both disliked characters (but neither liked character).

The percentages of subjects grouped together on ratings of "you" who were <u>not</u> grouped with any members of these groups for character ratings was low for the most part. Among fifth grade subjects, the percentages for subjects initially in groups 1, 2, and 3, respectively, are 17%, 12%, 56%. Two of the remaining four subjects, who had coordinates less than the absolute value of .5 for both dimensions, were not subsequently grouped together. Among eighth grade subjects, the percentages for subjects initially in groups 1, 2, 3, and 4, respectively, are 21%, 44%, 25%, and 44%. Although these percentages (for both grades) indicate a notable amount of rating commonality with other subjects who similarly rated themselves, it reflects a number of times when a few (often pairs) subjects who looked similar on self-ratings also looked similar on one character or another. In other words, these were not patterns of rating across characters, but rather sporadic co-occurrence

on ratings of a single character. Overall, however, boys who rated themselves similarly did not similarly rate even their favorite characters.

This data contributes another piece to understanding the relationship between individuals and cultural symbols. The finding that subjects who rated items similarly for "you" did not also rate characters similarly may be interpreted to mean that evaluations of characters are not simply a projection of self-evaluations. Conversely, the way these boys understood themselves is not simply a reflection of television characters they like. They like different characters, evaluate both most and least liked characters differently, yet evaluate themselves similarly on the semantic differential items. Fewer eighth grade subjects than fifth grade subjects who were grouped together because of similar ratings of "you" remained grouped together for character ratings. This is counter to the expectation that older subjects would exhibit more within-subject consistency in their judgments. Perhaps it indicates greater differentiation of self from others, even others who are liked very much, as well as greater distinctions being made between liked characters or differentiation (more complexity) within preferences. The present data do not clearly address any of these suppositional explanations. Nonetheless, it is clear that neither appropriation nor projection account for either the

fifth or eighth grade data. More likely, there is some sort of person-by-character interaction, which incorporates aspects of both processes.

Correlations of MDS Dimensions

Although visual inspection is a valid indicator of the agreement of two multidimensional spaces, correlation of dimension weights can serve to determine the extent to which the spaces overlap. This analysis differs from the tracking of subjects reported above by focusing on relations between dimensional coordinates rather than individual subjects. In the present case, correlation serves to distinguish different patterns of dimension weights for self and liked and disliked characters.

Correlation coefficients for dimension one are reported in the left column in Table 15. Note that in both grades the correlations of self and second liked character are higher than with the first liked character, and that self and second disliked character are more closely related than self and first disliked character. In each grade the lowest correlation was between self and first disliked character. Interestingly, the highest correlation for fifth grade subjects was between self and the second disliked character (r = .55, $p \leq .01$). The negative correlation between self and the first disliked character was also significant (r = -.40, $p \leq .05$). The highest correlation for eighth grade subjects

Table 15

Correlations of dimensions of MDS spaces

grade	self and character	dimension one	dimension two
5	first liked	-.15	.31
	second liked	.36	-.31
	first disliked	-.40*	.02
	second disliked	.55**	-.14
8	first liked	.05	-.16
	second liked	.43*	-.44*
	first disliked	.004	.13
	second disliked	.31	.21

* $p \leq .05$

** $p \leq .01$

was between self and the second liked character (r = .43, $p \leq .05$).

Correlation coefficients for dimension two are reported in the right column in Table 15. There is not a clear pattern for these correlations. Grade five subjects' correlations are highest between self and first liked character, next highest for self and first disliked character, followed by self and second disliked character; the relatively high negative correlation between self and second liked character is noteworthy. Grade eight subjects' correlations also reveal a relatively high negative relationship (r = -.44, $p \leq .05$) between self and second liked character, a low negative correlation with first liked character, and low positive correlations with disliked characters.

These correlations of MDS dimensions confirm some of the tentative conclusions drawn from data previously presented, but also raise new questions. For both grades, subjects had little positive relation to first disliked characters; grade five subjects had a significant negative correlation on the first dimension, and this is in accord with expectations. Yet second disliked characters were related to a notable extent. The correlation between self and first liked character were surprisingly low on the first dimension. Relationships to second liked characters were relatively high on dimension one, yet the correlations for

dimension two were negatively related at similarly high levels. These findings suggest that first named liked and disliked characters tend to be selected on the basis of properties of the character independent of the subject, while second named liked and disliked characters are selected on the basis of characters' relationships to subjects. The fifth grade subjects' positive relationships between attributes of self and disliked characters is corroborated by descriptive analyses of interview protocols, which indicate that self-relevant themes are reflected in talk about disliked, as well as liked, characters.

Analysis of Individuals' Protocols

Analyses of interview protocols attempted to find patterns in the descriptions of characters. Several descriptive procedures and their results are discussed in turn.

Subjects' interview protocols were transcribed verbatim. Analyses focused on predication to the character or oneself. Predicates are considered in the traditional grammatical sense, as a word or phrase that says something about the subject of the sentence (Lyons, 1968, pp. 147-150). Actions, as well as attributes or qualities, can be predicated.

For each subject, predicate distributions were derived for each of the four characters and "you." Rather than too

quickly subordinating idiosyncracies of individual usage to the externally imposed categories of content analysis, data reduction consisted simply of grouping similar predicative words and phrases together (e.g., smart, thinks a lot, graduated college). Much of the search for patterns within an individual's descriptions focused on parallels in description of "you" and each of the liked characters and disliked characters. These parallels were then coded to characterize the various qualities of the relationship.

data reduction procedures. As a first step, the interview transcript (including metaphor productions) for each subject was pared down to highlight phrases which refer to the target (a character or oneself). All interviewer questions were removed, as were extraneous subject comments such as, "That's a tough one (question)," and "Let's see...well this sounds kind of weird, but..." Next, phrases which referred exclusively to particular scenarios from the television show were removed, but with care taken to preserve the character's actions and predications to the character. For example, "Doogie Howser is a doctor who practices in X hospital in Y (city)," would be pared down to "is a doctor." And lastly, but importantly, since the talk was not always clear and straightforward exposition, often including chaining of various attributes or events, compound statements were broken into simple propositional components. These initial procedures for processing the data yielded

lists of attributes and actions attributable to the character and oneself.

Paring down the data in this way facilitated comparisons between what had originally been long strings of talk. But the lists of attributes themselves afford only counts of frequency of exact matches between lists. Therefore, a tactic was introduced to condense the lists by grouping the statements. Three types of evidence from the transcripts were employed to aid in grouping statements. First, one question in the interview required a comparative relational statement about oneself and the character, and a number of subjects also made such statements spontaneously at other points in the interview. Secondly, elaborative statements in the transcript were also identified and used to guide groupings of attributes. These were statements which were not merely chaining of attributes or repetitions, but rather elaborated upon or introduced nuance to a description. Thirdly, recurrence of mention of an attribute served to indicate its importance. Groupings of statements about each character and oneself were made independently. First priority was given to grouping statements related to explicit self-other comparisons made by the subject, second priority was given to themes which the subject had elaborated in the transcript, and remaining statements were grouped on the basis of surface similarity.

The next step in data reduction involved identifying

parallels between grouped character attributes and grouped attributes ascribed to self. Each of the four character descriptions were successively compared to the subject's self description; in other words, four comparisons were made. This tactic is similar to that of the MDS analyses, which tracked the subjects based on similarity of self evaluations, insofar as it places the greatest emphasis on the self descriptions. Emphasis was given to aspects of the character descriptions which had an analogue in the self description. It should be noted that the parallels were not exact matches; on a number of occasions the subject attributed tendencies to himself which are similar to those of the character, yet differ greatly in intensity and object. Furthermore, a single self theme can be reflected in more than one character quality.

These data reduction procedures were designed to produce minimal abstraction from the subjects' descriptions in order to provide a rich vocabulary (semantic space) for self, while allowing for comparison of more than just particular statements. By avoiding both abstract categories and categories created as common intersects of characters, the analysis allows for discovery of ways in which characters embody dimensions relevant to self. These procedures yielded descriptive comparisons of qualities of self reflected in characters, and vice versa, for each subject. These constitute a set of richly textured

parallels or interpretations, akin to brief case studies. Aggregate data was derived by coding qualities of each of these aspects of viewer:character relationships.

A premise of the data reduction procedures and subsequent coding is that viewers' relationships with television characters were not expected to be simple. Each subject's relationship with a character was expected to be based on several particularistic points of connection or "themes" derived from the groupings and parallels described above. In other words, a subject cannot accurately be characterized as having a "type" of relationship with characters in general or with even a particular character.

qualities of self:character parallels. The parallels discovered between qualities subjects ascribe to themselves and characters are especially interesting when examined for any particular subject. There is evidence that conventional meanings have indeed been appropriated, but there is also evidence that there are differences in what subjects find salient, and that this salience is related to personally relevant themes. It is apparent that interindividual differences are not only a matter of selectivity, but also a matter of elaborative constructions, so that characters serve as both a focal point for and a concrete representation of personal concerns.

Parallels between each subject and characters he likes and dislikes suggest the basis for interpretation of

individual cases, but any expansion remains a literary sort-of enterprise. Expansions for several subjects follow and serve as examples of the type of interpretations which can be made; these interpretations provide insight into the dynamic process between individuals and television characters. Several examples follow.

Both of subject 5.23's liked characters are funny and both exhibit tendencies which are similar to, but exceed, the subject's. Beyond that, a number of points of connection can be discerned. Bart Simpson is the first named liked character. The subject states that he avoids trouble; Bart is described as someone who is bad but lies to avoid trouble. While the subject is wrongly blamed in his family, Bart boldly asserts himself and does as he pleases. And while the subject states that he's active and dynamic, he characterizes Bart as both dynamic and scared; Bart displays a vulnerability he doesn't acknowledge in himself.

This subject's other liked character is Michelangelo of the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, who is funny and, in common with the subject, likes pizza. More importantly, the subject describes both himself and the character as having similar active, excited, temperaments. He's athletic and would like to fight criminals, and Michelangelo is tough and does it. And Michelangelo does something that he cannot--get back at his brother.

MacGyver and PeeWee Herman were named as disliked

characters. Both have similarities to the subject, inventing and activity tempo, respectively. Both surpass the subject in some respect, getting out of trouble and playing with great toys, respectively. Yet the subject surpasses both of them in some ways. The subject portrays himself as having a more active temperament than MacGyver and as smarter and less physically awkward than PeeWee. In addition, MacGyver is perceived as fake.

Subject 5.24 liked Michelangelo and Shredder, both from The Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles cartoon show. Both characters surpass the subject in power (he's athletic, but they are ninja master and karate expert, respectively) and Michelangelo also excels in doing good. While the subject stays out of trouble, Michelangelo does the opposite and relishes fighting. And both Michelangelo and the subject talk playfully. Shredder exhibits a duality (good-bad) the subject does not see in himself; he states that perhaps sometimes he could use help from the turtles, while Shredder helps the turtles at times and, at other times, is an adversary. Along similar lines, it can be inferred that the subject considers himself morally superior to Shredder. And finally, Shredder is ordered around and has more frustration than the subject, whose action is also restricted.

Subject 5.24 dislikes Crang and Foot Soldiers, from the same cartoon show as the liked characters. He cites negative qualities of both disliked characters and it

appears that the subject considers himself morally superior to both. Furthermore, the subject claims he is liked by people, while Crang is a strange recluse. Foot Soldiers do the opposite of what the subject does--he avoids trouble, and these characters fight. Note that the same behavior, fighting, prohibited for the subject, is mentioned in relation to both a liked and disliked character. A transformations of meaning can be inferred whereby it may be a negative quality in a disliked character and a titillating forbidden possibility when a liked character does it.

Subject 8.20 referred to characters he likes by the names of the actors, rather than their character names. He shares an ethnic identity, Italian, with one liked character, Tony Danza, and a place of origin, the West, with the other, Josh Brolin (Hickock in The Young Riders). A number of other parallels can also be discerned. Tony frequently gives advice, and the subject claims he's someone who knows what to do; and while Tony is often trying to make things right, the subject claims he gets things done, does his homework, and is a gentleman. Relationships may be inferred between Tony's characteristic of being wild but adaptable and Hickock's tendency to be wild and start fights with the subject's statement that his parents tell him when he's over the line. His complaint about Tony is that sometimes he is silly. But he also faults Hickock's straightforward way of dealing with things as also serious

and gloomy; he claims that he tries to be happy all the time. Other parallels between his description of himself and that of Hickock are extremely revealing. He likes the loner character and states that he prefers doing things on his own. Despite his statement that he knows what to do, his description of Hickock is telling--he is not all together, but knows what he is doing. Likewise, he admits that he is sweet and easily bruised, and describes Hickock as tough but hurting inside.

Subject 8.20 dislikes Roseanne and Archie Bunker. He said that Roseanne is annoying, fat, and not funny. Her family life is apparently very unlike his own, and not perceived as realistic; she is characterized as not strict and as having too much fun with her family. He has parents who set limits. Yet he claims he likes to do things on his own, and says he likes Roseanne's daughter, who is something of an outsider who frequently argues with her family. Furthermore, Roseanne's code of ethics is suspect according to the subject; she is sneaky, lies, and doesn't live up to her deals. In contrast, the subject described himself as a gentleman, while also claiming that he is not a nerd. Archie Bunker also exhibits several counterpoints to his own behavior. Archie is racist and rude, in contrast to his claims to be a gentleman. Archie has schemes for making money, while the subject says he works hard, both at a job in the park and at school. The only truly positive

characteristic attributed to Archie is that he's funny. Yet similarities can be found between some equivocal aspects of the subject and character. He likes to do things on his own, not unlike Archie, who is negatively described as stubbornly doing things his way. And he describes Archie as someone who doesn't show emotion, but who can be reached and convinced of another point of view. We can infer that he recognizes Archie's vulnerability, not so different from Hickock's tough exterior and pained interior, nor from his revelation that he is sweet and easily bruised.

These interpretive expansions of parallels between character and self descriptions are intended to illustrate the quality of the phenomenon in question. Further analyses reveal the extent of the phenomenon and its more formal characteristics.

number of themes. A large number of descriptive themes were generated for both liked and disliked characters (the totals are 379 and 315, respectively); note that more themes were generated for liked than disliked characters. The mean number of themes generated for each liked character was 3.95, and the mean number of themes generated for each disliked character was 3.28.

Fifth grade subjects generated a total of 185 themes for liked characters (M = 3.93, s.d. = .87) and 152 for disliked characters (M = 3.17, s.d. = .60). Eighth grade subjects generated 194 themes for liked characters (M =

4.08, s.d. = .87) and 163 for disliked characters (M = 3.40, s.d. = .69).

A high percentage of subjects' talk about characters reflects themes which emerge from their talk about themselves. Parallels were found for 88% of liked characters' qualities (332 of the 379 themes) and for 81% of disliked characters' qualities (256 of the 315 themes). This degree of relationship with disliked characters would not be expected if a process of appropriation were exclusively at play.

A relatively small percentage of the interview protocols focused on character qualities with no analogue in the subjects' self description. For fifth grade subjects such descriptions constituted 16% (n = 31) of talk about liked characters and 24% (n = 34) for disliked characters. The percentages were lower for eighth grade subjects, 8% (n = 16) for liked characters and 15% (n = 25) for disliked characters. Tabulations of parallels between subjects which follow do not reflect these statements.

<u>characterization of person qualities.</u> The parallels between perceived character qualities and acknowledged subject qualities were coded into three categories, reflective of the degree of abstraction from surface features. This coding serves as one way of qualitatively characterizing the relationship.

The most concrete parallels between subjects and

characters were physical similarities. In addition to similarities such as physical size, these include demographic similarities (e.g., age, ethnic origin such as "Italian").

Behavioral similarity was conceived as a broad category which included overt actions, manifestations of social roles, and similarities in behavioral situations (e.g., S5.1, Balki is tricked into mischief, while the subject is wrongly blamed). In some instances it was clear that the character does what the subject needs, does what the subject cannot, exceeds the subject's behavior, or acts in a way that is similar to a nemesis of the child (e.g., a character bosses minions, while the subject is frequently scolded).

Psychological aspects of persons and dispositional attributions focus on a persons' interests, likes, global abilities, beliefs, values, and feelings and their overt expression (e.g., "I get mad"). This category excludes concrete action and situational characteristics of a person, but includes general statements of emotional expression.

Physical, behavioral, and psychological/dispositional parallels may also be in "inverse" relationship. The character and subject may differ greatly in surface features, but have something in common insofar as they exemplify opposite qualities (e.g., unpopular:well liked).

It was noted above that several times a subject spoke quite a bit about a character's qualities for which there

was no relation to the subject. These were most often "fantastic" qualities (e.g., Donatelo is adept at using a staff to fight), qualities particular to the character's situation or role and with no analogue, however oblique, in the subject's discussion of himself (e.g., Cosby is an attentive doctor), or particularities of format (e.g., Gary Shandling breaks frame and directly addresses the audience). Such references were infrequent. In addition, on 3 occasions fifth grade subjects and on 5 occasions eighth grade subjects expressed their attraction to a female character.

The reliability of this coding scheme was assessed by comparing the two independent codings of 25% of the data (i.e., 6 subjects in each grade). The percentage of agreement between the two coders was 88%.

Parallels which focused on physical similarities between a character and self accounted for only 2% of the themes cited. In grade five subject protocols, only 1% (n = 2) of parallels involving liked characters and 2% (n = 2) involving disliked characters mentioned physical similarities. In grade eight subject protocols, 4% (n = 8) of parallels involving liked characters and 1% (n = 1) of parallels involving disliked characters were of this type (see Table 16).

Behavioral themes were cited much more frequently, accounting for 53% of parallels between a character and

Table 16

Types of self-character parallels

Grade	Physical			Behavioral			Psychological		
	liked	disliked	total	liked	disliked	total	liked	disliked	total
5	2	2	4	101	77	178	51	39	90
8	8	1	9	76	53	129	88	84	172*
totals	10	3	13	178	130	308	139	123	262

* Eighth grade subjects used psychological themes significantly more often than fifth grade subjects, $t(23) = .95$, $p < .05$.

self. These behavioral similarities were the most common for fifth grade subjects; approximately two-thirds of fifth grade parallels with liked characters (66%, n = 101) and disliked characters (65%, n = 77) focused on behavioral characteristics. Among eighth grade subjects, behavioral parallels accounted for 43% (n = 76) of parallels with liked characters and 38% (n = 53) of parallels with disliked characters (see Table 16).

Parallels which focus on psychological aspects of persons and dispositional attributions were also frequent, accounting for 45% of the themes, and were the most frequent type for eighth grade subjects. About a third of fifth grade parallels with liked characters (33%, n = 51) and disliked characters (33%, n = 39) were of this type. More than half of eighth grade subjects' parallels with subjects involved psychological qualities. Fifty-one percent (n = 88) of their parallels with liked characters and 61% (n = 84) of their parallels with disliked characters were of this type (see Table 16).

Subjects in the two grades did not significantly differ in the number of behavioral themes used ($t(23) = .95$, $p \geq .05$). Eighth grade subjects used psychological themes significantly more often than did fifth grade subjects ($t(23) = 1.80$, $p \leq .05$, one-tailed). There was no significant difference overall (grades 5 and 8 combined) in the number of behavioral and psychological themes used

($t(47) = .67$, $p \geq .05$).

spanning themes. Themes which emerge from talk about self which are also reflected in the subject's talk about more than one character are of special interest. These are referred to as spanning relationships. These data were tabulated in two ways, one which focuses on the number of spanning relationships produced by subjects in each grade, and the other which focuses on the number of subjects who produce one or more theme that spans 4, 3, or 2 characters.

To focus on the number of themes which span characters, group totals were tabulated. It should be noted that these numbers are not comparable to the total number of themes generated for liked and disliked characters reported above because a single theme may be related to more than one characteristic of a particular character. Two-thirds (67%) of these themes were reflected in descriptions of more than one character, and 39% spanned three or four characters (see Table 17). Inspection of table 17 indicates that performance was very similar in the two grades. About two-thirds of the themes were applicable to more than one character (65% for fifth grade and 69% for eighth grade). Approximately 40% of themes spanned three or four characters (38% for fifth grade and 40% for eighth grade).

The second tabulation of these data focuses on how many subjects in each grade produced one or more theme that span three or four characters. Ninety-six percent (46 of 48) of

Table 17

Number and percentage of themes which span characters

	Number of characters spanned								Total
	4		3		2		1		
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
Grade									
5	19	16	27	22	32	27	42	35	120
8	22	17	30	23	38	29	41	31	131
total	41	16	57	23	70	28	83	33	251

subjects produced at least one theme which was reflected in descriptions of three or four characters, as well as talk about oneself. Among grade five subjects, 15 had at least one theme that spanned four characters, and 8 (who did not span four characters) had at least one theme that spanned three characters. Eighth grade subject performance was identical, with 15 subjects with themes spanning four characters and 8 spanning three characters. In summary, almost all the subjects produced at least one self-related theme that was reflected both in liked and disliked characters.

The finding that a substantial number of self relevant themes are reflected in talk about more than one character, along with the finding that almost all subjects produced self-relevant themes that were reflected in descriptions of at least three characters, indicates that subjects' identities are not simply an appropriation and interiorization of the qualities of certain characters. Since themes were not reflected in all characters, however, neither does projection account for the relationship. An interactive process which is neither dependent upon the input (i.e., the characters) nor independent of it is suggested by these data.

A focus on spanning relations in a few subjects' interview protocols conveys the extension of the relationships between subject and characters and between the

characters themselves. In addition, the quality of the relationships is revealed by the particular characters which embody self-relevant themes, the combination of themes embodied in any particular character, and how directly the themes are reflected in the characters.

One fifth grade subject's (5.1) protocol reveals four themes which span self and the four characters. The subject claims he is funny, popular, frequently blamed for misdeeds--often wrongly so, and that "I can make people in a bad mood." He named Balki and Alf as liked characters and Johnny Depp and Cosby as disliked characters. In global terms, Balki and Alf might be described as inept but lovable outsiders, Johnny Depp as a concerned detective, and Cosby as an affable father. The subject's descriptions casts Balki, Alf, and Cosby, as well as himself, as funny. The subjects' statements about his own inclusion in peer groups are interesting in relation to statements about each of the characters: Balki is unusual in terms of his accent, face and clothes; Alf lives in hiding; Johnny Depp "doesn't look like a nice person"; and Cosby acts like "Mr. Special." None of the characters are well liked in the way the subject claims to be. In fact, the self-theme stands in an inverse (albeit oblique) relationship to qualities he notes in characters. Interestingly, he also made the statement, which may be interpreted as defensive, that peers "never make fun of me." Another set of relationships revolves

around the theme of being wrongly blamed. Just as the subject claims to be wrongly blamed, Balki is tricked into mischief. Alf, in contrast, commits misdeeds and diverts responsibility. The subject himself disparages Johnny Depp, then states the contradictory recognition that maybe he is fun or a good cop, serving as a parallel instance of someone who is not assumed innocent until proven guilty. And Cosby seeks to attract attention, while, for the subject, that seems to mean being singled out for blame. Finally, the subject's acknowledgment that he "gets people in a bad mood" stands in different relationships to characterizations of Balki as caring and helpful (the opposite), Alf as someone who is gloomy and never makes anyone happy (the same), Johnny Depp as a dangerous person who doesn't make people happy (the same), and Cosby as a doctor who heals patients and even makes the subject feel better on occasion (the opposite). One liked and one disliked character seem to be the subject's opposite on this quality and one of each seems similar to the subject.

An eighth grade subject's (8.24) protocol displays slightly less spanning (two themes span all four characters and one theme spans three characters). The adolescent describes himself as a "cool guy," sweet and smart but capable of being rough and getting away with things, and as calm and stoic. He likes Johnny Depp and Richard Grieco (both the names of the actors), a detective and a private

investigator, respectively. He dislikes Roseanne and Pee Wee Herman, both comedians. Both Johnny Depp and Richard Grieco are described as having stylish clothes and hairstyles, paralleling the subject's description of himself as a cool guy and a party dude; also, the interviewer noted that he had a rather dramatic pompadour hairstyle and was fashionably dressed. In contrast, Roseanne is described as big and dull and Pee Wee is described as looking different than anyone. Another self-relevant theme is also reflected differently in liked and disliked characters. The subject acknowledges a duality in himself--sweet and smart, but he's also rough and can get away with things. Both liked characters are described as strong, tough, and self-reliant. Pee Wee reflects the negative side of the duality; he is soft and tries to evade trouble, even resorting to crying. Similarly, liked and disliked characters embody different poles of the subject's announced qualities of maturity, calmness, and purposeful inexpressiveness. Johnny Depp is happy, talkative, and "stays cool" and Richard Grieco can cools down his hot temper and "doesn't get bent out of shape." Although both are more expressive than the subject revealed himself to be, they are expressive in different ways, and ways which parallel aspects of the subject. The subject, like Johnny Depp, gets along with people, but unlike him, doesn't talk much; like Richard Grieco he doesn't express his anger, but he claims he gets back at

people who anger him. The disliked characters display a different side of this theme. Roseanne tells corny jokes, screams, has "an attitude," and Pee Wee doesn't act normal, he plays, and is "like a fag." Paralleling these character qualities, the subject acknowledges he was formerly immature, and no longer "jumps around" or talks much.

Another eighth grade subject's (8.8) protocol reveals a greater number of themes, but less relationship between characters. Particular characters seem to serve as representations of particular themes. The subject claimed "there's something I don't want to do, I don't do it," that he's smart but latter acknowledges that he is not doing well in school, that he keeps calm, gets along with people, and tries "to get somewhere in life." Of these five themes, three span three characters and two span two characters; also, the subject notes a quality in two characters which has no parallel in his talk about himself, and one quality which characterizes only one of the characters. The subject liked Alf and MacGyver, a comical alien and a low-keyed FBI-type agent, respectively. He disliked Roseanne and Gary Shandling, each a comedian with a distinctive style. His claim that he doesn't do what he doesn't want to do is reflected in Alf, who is mischievous but usually forgiven for it, MacGyver, who always gets into problem but gets out of them, and Roseanne, who is characterized as stubborn. The first two behave recklessly but can rebound; Roseanne's

behavior was considered negative. The subject's statements about his school performance are paralleled three times in his character descriptions. MacGyver, the liked character is described as smart, and the subject claims that he is smart although later acknowledging academic difficulties. Alf, the other liked character, is helped by the family he lives with, similar to the subject's statement that when he has problems, he figures them out or goes to a teacher or grownup. The negative side, doing poorly in school, is reflected in disliked character, Gary Shandling, who is described as slow and dull. The subject's claim that he gets along with people is also paralleled in characters in three different ways: MacGyver helps others, Alf tries to adjust but can't (a quality which also reflects another theme, desiring to succeed), and Roseanne, again embodying negative aspects, treats her family poorly. The subject claims to be calm; MacGyver is described as someone who doesn't get excited or worry, while Roseanne is described as sarcastic and sour. The subject's statement that he tries "to get somewhere in life" and wants to succeed is reflected twice in characters, and in neither instance in a positive way. Alf tries to adjust, but can't, and Gary Shandling makes a joke of serious things. Finally, some character qualities have no parallel in self-description. Both Alf and MacGyver are described as having "a good heart," and "fat" is a recurrent descriptor of Roseanne.

As can be seen by looking at these subjects, a self-relevant theme can have a parallel in some or all characters, and can be reflected either directly (in the same form as it appears in talk about self) or indirectly.

dynamic statements. Another pass at subject protocols focused on statements which suggest that the character expands the way in which the subject sees himself or the world. These are explicit statements that indicate that the character provides a "possible self" or possible modes of action for the subject. Yet an important distinction must be made. A simple statement in response to the question, "Is there anything that he does that you'd like to do?" is not necessarily an indication that there is a dynamic relationship between "self" and the character. For example, one fifth grade subject (S5.20) replied that he would like to, "master the numchucks," another (S5.11) stated he'd like to, "Be a cop. He's like an undercover cop, and I want to be a cop." An eighth grade subject (S 8.1) responded in a similar vein that he would like to, "Be a good ball player. Play in the major leagues.". Such statements designate a desirable role, but do not reflect any psychological link between the subject and a character. Other answers to the explicit question cited above, as well as statements appearing spontaneously at other places in the interview, indicate a more dynamic quality of relation, involving a juxtaposition of oneself and the character or

some other elaboration of the desire to be like the character. For example, subject 5.11 excitedly recounted a vignette from the television show MacGyver:

"...he takes like a remote controlled car and takes it apart, puts these wires together, and he tells his friend, 'Hey, my friend, get me the screwdriver.' And he takes all the tools apart once, and he likes to fix things, so anything that's broken, he says, 'Let me try and fix it.' And once, my radio, actually my sister's radio, it was broken. And I told her, 'Get me the screwdriver and hammer.' I had all these tools right in front of me. I felt like I was a professional, like I can really do this. ...I said, 'Mom, mom, look, I fixed this.' She said, 'Really? Well I'm proud of you. Maybe you're going to be a mechanic.' I said, 'Maybe, just like MacGyver.'"

Two independent coders read 151 statements selected from 10 subjects' transcripts (i.e., 5 subjects from each grade) and marked those which they judged to be statements indicating a dynamic relationship between the subjects and the character, as described above. Intercoder agreement was 79%.

The frequencies of dynamic statements appear in table 18. Only 57% (27 of 48) of subjects made any dynamic statements at all. These subjects averaged 1.2 dynamic statements each, across the four characters they discussed; the average per subject for liked characters was .90, and for disliked characters it was .33. There was a difference in the use of dynamic statements in relation to liked and disliked characters; subjects made significantly more dynamic statements in relation to liked characters, $t(47) = 1.93$, $p < .05$, one-tailed.

Fifth grade subjects produced a total of 23 dynamic

Table 18

Frequency of dynamic statements

Grade	Liked characters	Disliked characters	Total
5	19	4	23
8	24	12	36
total	43	16	59

Note. The statements cited above were made by 13 subjects in grade 5 and 14 subjects in grade 8. The remainder of the subjects did not make dynamic statements.

statements, with a mean number per subject of .96 and a standard deviation of 1.68. The total number of dynamic statements produced by eighth grade subjects was 36, with a mean number per subject of 1.50 and a standard deviation of 2.0. The difference between grades in use of dynamic statements was not statistically significant, $t(23) = .83$, $p \geq .05$.

Within both grades the standard deviations for the number of dynamic statements were large in relation to the mean. In order to more accurately reflect the degree of variation between individuals in each grade, a second tabulation of this data focused on how many subjects in each grade produced one or more dynamic statement. Almost the same number (13 and 14 of the 24 subjects in grades 5 and 8, respectively) of subjects in each grade made at least one such statement. This means that a substantial percentage of students in both grades (grade 5, n = 11, 46%; grade 8, n = 10, 42%) did not make any dynamic statements. More subjects made a dynamic statement in relation to a liked character (n = 21) than to a disliked character (n = 11). Differences were small in each grade between the number of subjects who produced dynamic statements in relation to liked and disliked characters (see Table 19). Only three grade five subjects made more than one dynamic statement; one subject made 2, one made 3, and another made 8. In grade 8, six subjects made more than one dynamic statement; one subject

Table 19

Number of Subjects who made Dynamic Statements

Grade	Liked characters	Disliked characters	Total
5	10	4	13*
8	11	7	14**
total	21	11	27

* One subject produced dynamic statements in relation to both a liked and a disliked character.

** Four subjects produced dynamic statements in relation to both a liked and a disliked character.

made 3, two made 4, one made 5, and two subjects made 6 statements of a dynamic relationship between themselves and characters. Four eighth grade subjects and one fifth grade subject produced dynamic statements in relation to both a liked and a disliked character

These results indicate that either subjects were often not explicitly self-aware of dynamic qualities of their relationships with characters or they were reluctant to communicate these qualities of their relationships with characters. Explicit awareness is not a necessary part of any of the posited relationships between self and the social world. If anything, subjects might be expected to be less aware of projection than of appropriating information from external models. Yet the use of more dynamic statements in relation to liked than disliked characters, as well as the fact that more subjects made dynamic statements about liked characters, suggests a process of appropriation.

The quality of dynamic statements as a direct expression of a deep level of relationship between a character and oneself make them important when they do appear. These statements complement the spanning data in depicting the way in which self-relevant themes are reflected in particular characters. But no direct relationship is apparent between how many themes are reflected in (span) the character and the number of dynamic statements about a character. For example, examination of

the three subjects whose protocols were previously discussed in terms of spanning relations reveals that only one, subject 5.1, made any dynamic statements at all. This subject, in discussing himself, reflected that: "I'm kind of like Alf, the way I am on the block. Every time something on the block goes wrong, and I go to the kids who look at me like 'why did you do that?' Like it seems every time something happens on the block, they all look at me..." This statement, of course, is an explicit amplification of a theme identified as spanning several characters: that he is wrongly blamed for misdeeds.

Nor are subjects who made dynamic statements distinguished in terms of their spanning relationships. The relations between the two cuts at the data will be illustrated with several examples. Subject 5.5 depicts himself as funny, not always good, smart in some things/not good at math, and often blamed. His first-named liked character, Bart Simpson, reflects all of these themes, as well as another characteristic not reflected in any other character--they both get mad. He made two dynamic statements relating himself and Bart. The first is a rather general statement: "And like he's like a normal kid, because he would say things that we would say, you know, and he would do things like we would do. So it's like kind of fun the way he does it and we do it--the same thing." The second statement focuses on specific, potentially possible,

action: "...when he gets in trouble, he figures a way to squirm himself out of it. Sometimes I could do that, but not all the time and he always figures a way to do it and never gets like in deep trouble." The other character he said he liked was Kelly Bundy. She reflects two self-relevant themes. He claims to be smart in some things, but not math, and he said that she is not dumb. Also, while he is often blamed, she is a con artist who does what she wants. Much of the rest of his talk about her revolves around how desirable she is, and how pretty. He did, however, make a dynamic statement related to these characteristics and a possibility for action: "She can get like any boy, and I want to be able to get any girl." This subject made no further dynamic statements.

Subject 8.3 depicted himself as physically small, funny, someone who can't get away with much, wants to stand out, and is wild and does crazy things. He likes Booker and Bart Simpson and dislikes PeeWee Herman and made two dynamic statements in relation to each of them. The subject's description of Booker reflects each of the five themes emerging from his description of himself, sometimes reflected in an indirect way. The subject made two dynamic statements relating himself and Booker. The first explicates the relation between the subject's size and Booker's toughness, and between the subject's inability to get away with much and Booker's lack of such constraints:

"Well one, he's tough. He won't take things, like I said before, and I like that. But I'm small and I can't do things like that, but he can and he's got strength and I like that. So he doesn't have to take anything from anybody." The second dynamic statement is a bit of reflection on behavior he claims to have modified: "I used to be very wild, like Booker. I'd do things that weren't right. And people used to think about that and they'd think, 'Oh, there goes M., he's going to do something crazy.' And at first...and...I don't do stuff like that anymore."

Subject 8.3 describes both himself and Bart Simpson as small, funny, and wild, but Bart is truly rebellious and the subject can't get away with what Bart does. In addition, the character uniquely reflects an aspect of the subject--Bart has a dark side and the subject characterizes himself as sly and mischievous. One of his statements repeats some parallel characteristics, compares the two liked characters, and spells-out a dynamic between Bart's behavior, constraints on his own behavior, and the recognition of expanded possibilities for action: "Well I think because he's funny and he's wild also. Not as wild as Booker, but he's wild and he talks back to his dad and he can get away with it a lot but...and I can't do that, but occasionally I might." Later in the interview the subject was asked, "Is there anything Bart Simpson does that you'd like to do?" He

replied, "Just the way he acts. I don't get away with much." Despite the simplicity of the answer, it conveys a resonance between the subject and the character.

PeeWee is discussed by subject 8.3 as a disliked character. The subject's commonalities with PeeWee initially appear to be very surface-level--they are both funny, act silly, and talk a lot--a subject characteristic reflected only in this character. But his initial description of PeeWee betrays a young adolescent's defensive recognition of his own dual nature, half boy and half man: "Alright, PeeWee Herman, well he's almost an adult and he acts like a kid and I guess that's what makes him funny to some people. But the way he does things, they really annoy me. And his voice--it annoys me--and the way he laughs, and a lot of people think he's annoying, but to little kids, I could understand they would think he's funny, but when you get older you see that he's just a grown person that's acting like a kid and I just don't like that at all." A further, direct, comparison appears in the subject's description of himself: "Actually, also, I would say I'm not as silly as PeeWee Herman or something like that."

A last example of the quality of self-character relationship revealed by dynamic statements is provided by subject 8.22. Three themes emerge from his discussion of himself--he does strange stuff, is an honest and ordinary person, and is a weird person who paradoxically both does a

lot and is lazy. Bart Simpson was the first liked character he named. Bart reflected all three of the self-relevant themes, and the subject's five dynamic statements were made in the course of discussing him. The subject said that Bart is real, and when further probed said, "Well, because some of the stuff that, you know, he does is some of the stuff that maybe I would have done when I was that age, and stuff. And you know, he has a sister and stuff like that, and his family, you know, kind of reminds you of your family, my family." Shortly after this in the interview, the subject was asked to compare Bart to other people on television, and further attests to Bart's reality and displays a strong resonance to him:

"In a way he's, like that show's a little more realistic than the other stuff, because, aa, for instance, like when you watch T.V. shows that are like drama shows, it shows life in a different perspective than it does on that show, 'cause, you know, like aaa, a lot of people really believe that life is like more like drama and stuff. Because it's really not, you know. But, you know, I really don't believe that. You don't go through life like really sad and stuff. It would be pretty much of a bummer if you did. So it's like the character himself is more like real people. It's stuff that people would do. I think that the fact that he's a cartoon, like people don't realize that."

In this statement we see Bart Simpson as a token in the subject's emerging philosophy of life. The subject uses Bart as an example, but also plays out his insights in relation to Bart's activity, which he feels embodies a perspective on life, the correct perspective.

He also sees Bart as a psychological counterpart: "...He just does, does things. Like sometimes I do things

like that. You don't even think about it, you just start doing it." This psychological resonance also reveals a duality in thought and action: "oh yeah, he's pretty confused. He does some things like me, he doesn't think about before he does it. Sometimes acts nice and he seems pretty confused." Furthermore, Bart is not only like him, but also does things he has not done: "Well he does some things that are really crazy that I'd like to do. Like saw off the head of the town figure, or so... Things like that or things that I've always wanted to do or maybe I've done or something."

So we see that some subjects even explicitly express the depth of their relationship to television characters. As stated previously, this only serves to confirm the resonance revealed by the scanning analysis.

Discussion

This investigation has posed questions regarding the role of technologically transmitted culture in the growth of personal identity. Television characters have been acknowledged as affectively charged mediators of cultural significances which have altered the boundaries of the world, especially for developing individuals. It has been asserted that these symbols serve as materials for encoding personal experience, and may also be transformed by individuals expressing meanings through them. Thus, it is

argued that television characters are neither stimuli in the classic sense nor projective test.

Previous studies have defined identification with television characters in terms of perceived similarity with a character. Tabulations of closeness of self and character ratings indicated that subjects in both grades rated themselves more similarly to first named liked characters than to second named liked characters, and both disliked characters were perceived as dissimilar to self. Yet similarity of self and liked character ratings were not close enough to infer anything more than preference. It is likely that prior studies, which required explicit judgments of self:character relationships, employed a methodology which pulled for greater similarity in ratings. It is reasonable to assume, however, that if there were emotionally powerfully identifications, they would have emerged from the independent ratings of self and characters which were employed in the present investigation. Other tabulations of results for semantic differential data are not surprising in light of previous research. For subjects in both grades, character qualities which tended to be valued in liked characters were strength, toughness, and hardness. Fifth grade subjects also favored fastness. Eighth grade subjects, while valuing hotness, also favored characters who were more real, more relaxed, less strange, and sweeter.

Three essentially different relationships between socio-cultural symbols and mental events were introduced in the early portions of this paper. One stance contends that mind has an ordered form independent of the social world; cognitive organization is applied to social phenomena, providing tokens for expression of the organization of mind. A variation of this stance might propose that individuals construct a coherence based on individual experience or personality and impose this ordering upon the world, akin to the psychodynamic concept of projection. If either of these exclusively person-centered bases of organization were truly operating, the results of the study reported here would be very different. Greater similarity might be expected between a subjects' ratings of self and characters. Neither tabulations of self-character similarity on item ratings nor correlations of MDS dimension weights indicated the degree of similarity which would suggest the operation of an overriding cognitive coherence or projective process. Furthermore, it would be expected that subjects who evaluate themselves similarly would also rate liked characters similarly. The data from semantic differential ratings do not confirm these expectations. MDS analyses indicated that subjects who similarly evaluated themselves did not similarly rate liked and disliked characters. This is most directly interpreted to mean that their evaluations of characters are not simply projections of self-evaluations.

Descriptive analyses of interview protocols confirm this--characters reflect self-relevant themes to various degrees and in various ways. There is not a strong imposition of self onto characters, as might result from a projective process.

A second stance regarding socio-cultural symbols and mental events is that the world is ordered and provides a configuration for the organization of mind. This stance would predict a great deal of congruity between evaluations of television characters and evaluations of oneself, but for different reasons than a projective stance. The same data cited above to disconfirm the projective stance also supports the argument that subjects did not simply appropriate qualities from characters and incorporate them into concepts of self; greater self-character similarity, greater similarity of character ratings by subjects who rated themselves similarly, and descriptions of self which reflect greater appropriation of characteristics of liked characters would have been expected.

Of course both of the positions noted above have been modified by proponents to more fully account for context, in the first case, and for cognition and personality, in the second case. But these are gerrymandered positions which run counter to their basic world views. In contrast, the patterns of results presented here argues for the appropriateness of an explanation which recognizes that

neither the subject nor the object can be accurately characterized independently of the relationships into which they enter.

MDS analyses indicated that fifth grade subjects who similarly evaluated themselves were more likely than their eighth grade counterparts to also be grouped together for evaluation of a liked or disliked character. Yet eighth grade subjects' ratings of disliked characters were less different from their self ratings than were fifth grade subjects' ratings. Considered together, these two analyses suggest that the older subjects made more discriminations in what they liked, and also recognized qualities similar to their own in disliked characters. The latter may be indirect evidence of greater integration of discrepant elements of personal identity.

Correlations of MDS dimension weights for self and characters indicated that there was not a great deal of agreement between the multidimensional spaces. Relationships to first liked characters were low. Subject ratings were more closely related to second named liked characters. And there were relatively high correlations with second disliked characters. A plausible inference is that subjects focus on the qualities of first named liked and disliked characters, while relating to second named liked and disliked characters in a more personal manner.

Descriptive analyses of interview protocols provided

different types of evidence confirming the position that socio-cultural symbols are both appropriated and transformed.

Comparisons of self descriptions to character descriptions revealed a high percentage of parallels with both liked and disliked characters. These parallels were derived from subject generated categories and serve as a counterpoint to the results obtained using the experimenter generated categories of the semantic differential, which indicated less of a relationship between evaluations of self and evaluations of characters. The descriptive analyses of self-character parallels in individual protocols acknowledge an emic, within-subject, coherence and relationship which the experimenter imposed, etic, dimensions of the semantic differential obscure.

Qualities ascribed to both liked and disliked characters embodied themes which emerged in talk about oneself. Descriptive comparisons of self descriptions to character descriptions revealed a high percentage of parallels with both liked and disliked characters; aspects of both liked and disliked characters embodied what the subjects acknowledged as aspects of themselves. Furthermore, themes frequently spanned self and some--but not all--characters. Self themes were reflected across both liked and disliked characters, but were not reflected in all characters, or even (necessarily) both liked characters.

Each character, selected by the individual, is a symbolic vehicle embodying certain aspects of self.

Contrary to predictions, it is not the case that subjects in grade 5 simply appropriated these cultural symbols and subjects in grade 8 transformed them as well. The psychological processes may be inferred to be similar at both ages--the characters simultaneously provide forms which are appropriated and transformed in the process of the construction of identity. Yet the processes may be applied to qualitatively different content. For example, consonant with previous studies of social cognition, eighth grade subjects used psychological themes in their descriptions of self and characters significantly more than fifth grade subjects.

It has been asserted that individuals appropriate symbols prevalent in a culture but transform their meaning and affective significance. If personal transformation of the significance of a character is essentially connotatively structured, this should be reflected in the constructed representations as well as the process of representing the world. If the relationships subjects have with characters were merely cognitive representations and not also affective significances, we might expect more consistency in qualities acknowledged in both self and characters. Discrepant aspects of liked characters might be minimized; also, a rational process might be expected to filter out negative or

equivocal aspects of self which have parallels in descriptions of disliked characters. The fact that the data does not reflect strong operation of such rationalistic, ego-protecting biases suggests that the process of acquiring and integrating the information is not exclusively a cognitive process. Furthermore, significantly more dynamic statements were used in relation to liked characters than disliked characters, suggesting that affectively positive characters make a greater contribution to expanding a subject's world.

Development is a process which occurs between an organism and its environment (cf. Bertalanffy, 1950, Werner, 1957, Brent, 1984). While it is true that the data reported here focus on psychological products at a discrete point in time, they are reflective of psychological processes which occur between an individual and a cultural symbol. Perhaps this is accentuated because the data reflect two types of process. The first is the developmental changes in cognitive, emotional, and social processes which constitute the transition to adolescence. The other is the temporary stable state which is constructed as the interpretation of a text. The products, the subjects' talk, are an instantiation of both. It has been argued that symbols both give form to the psychological experience of individuals and are changed in usage by individuals. Cultural symbols such as television characters serve as representations through

which individuals understand their experience and are also transformed by individuals expressing meanings through them. Empirical evidence has illustrated this process, as well as the variety of characters cited and individuality which is reflected in how the boys relate to characters. Individuals must engage in an ongoing dialogue with a cacophony of cultural voices. In the context of this din, individual identity is constructed.

APPENDIX A

PRETESTS

An informal group session with four classrooms in grade six and seven (two in each grade) was conducted to elicit favorite and disliked characters. (These children were not be subjects in the study.) Additional characters were selected from popular periodicals. A list of characters was compiled from these sources. This list of characters was presented for evaluation (unidimensional evaluation) on a seven-point Likert scale.

Subjects were selected from among boys who rated characters at both of the evaluative poles (i.e., liked and disliked) of the scale; in other words, potential subjects who utilized only one pole or only points near the midpoint were excluded.

Instructions:

I want to find out which television characters you like and dislike.

(REFER TO SCALES DRAWN ON THE BLACKBOARD:)

A different character's name will be written on each line. Next to it are pairs of words. Here is how to mark your answers:

If you like a character very much, put a check-mark next to "like" (on the far left)

like ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ dislike

If you "sort of" like a character, put a check-mark here:

like ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ dislike

If you don't really like a character, but don't really dislike him or her either, put your check-mark on the middle line.

like ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ dislike

If there are characters you like better than everyone on the list, write their names at the bottom.

Also, if there are characters you dislike more than anyone on the list, write their names. Make sure to make check marks so I know if you like or dislike the character.

name:_____ class___

date of birth:____ circle one: M F

	like						dislike
BALKI / BRONSON PINCHOT	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
KEVIN / FRED SAVAGE	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
HANSON / JOHNNY DEPP	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
GARY SHANDLING	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
MAC GYVER	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
ARNOLD / GARY COLEMAN	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
DR. HUXTABLE / COSBY	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
SAMANTHA / ALYSSA MILANO	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
ALEX / MICHAEL J. FOX	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
PEE WEE HERMAN	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
ROSEANNE	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
MIKE / KIRK CAMERON	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
ALF	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
AL BUNDY	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
JACK / JOHN RITTER	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
DOOGIE HOWSER	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
DWAYNE WAYNE	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
TONY / TONY DANZA	___	___	___	___	___	___	___

APPENDIX B

ORDER OF PRESENTATION

ORDER OF PRESENTATION OF TASKS

The open-ended descriptions will always be presented first. The order of presentation of the other tasks will be varied according to a Latin Square Design, as follows:

interview	metaphor production	semantic differential
semantic differential	interview	metaphor production
metaphor production	semantic differential	interview

The arrows indicate six different orderings of the tasks. Four subjects at each age will receive each order of presentation.

APPENDIX C

OPEN-ENDED DESCRIPTION OF CHARACTERS

Who are two television characters you really like?

Who are two television characters you really don't like?

Tell me about _____.

(Let's say I've never seen the show. Can you tell me more?)

What do you like about _____?

Is there anything you dislike about _____?

APPENDIX D

SEMANTIC DIFFERENTIAL SCALES

Instructions:

I want to find out what television characters mean TO YOU. A different character's name will be written on the top of each page. Beneath it are pairs of words. Here is how to mark your answers:

If you feel that the character is very skinny, put a check-mark next to "skinny."

fat ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ skinny

If the character seems "sort of" fat, but not really fat, put a check-mark here:

fat ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ skinny

If you feel the character is equally fat and skinny, put your check-mark on the middle line.

fat ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ skinny

REMEMBER:

Be sure you check every pair of words. DO NOT OMIT ANY.

Make only one check-mark for each pair of words.

DO NOT LOOK BACK AND FORTH through the items.

THINK OF EACH PAIR OF WORDS SEPARARTELY.

I want your first impressions, the immediate "feelings" about the characters. But please do not be careless, because we want your true impressions.

character: _____ subject: _____

weak	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	strong
relaxed	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	tense
fast	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	slow
sad	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	happy
real	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	fake
hard	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	soft
honest	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	dishonest
cold	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	hot
dangerous	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	safe
familiar	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	strange
sweet	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	sour
tough	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	gentle

Outline of items on the semantic differential task

(EVALUATIVE)

M sweet--sour

honest--dishonest

* happy--sad

* safe--dangerous

real--fake

relaxed--tense (also activity)

* familiar--strange

*M open-closed

(POTENCY)

* strong--weak

tough--gentle (also evaluative)

M hard-soft

(ACTIVITY)

*M hot--cold

M fast--slow

KEY:

M metaphoric item

* reflected item

APPENDIX E

METAPHOR PRODUCTION TASK

If _____ were a/an (animal, color, food), what would he/she be?

(If I came from Mars and I didn't know anything about _____s, what would you tell me about _____s ?

(After the first time:)
Tell me about _____s.

Now, tell me how _____ is like a/an _____.

(If not much elaboration, ask for "another kind of _____.")

APPENDIX F

DIRECTIVE INTERVIEW PROBES

(similar characters:)

Is _____ similar to anyone else on t.v.?

How are they similar?

How is _____ different from other people on television?

(individual style:)

How is _____ special in the way he/she does things?
(probe for elaboration)

(self referential:)

Is there anything _____ does that you'd like to do?

Tell me about some everyday thing that bothers you, sonething that's a problem.
(In your life, is there anything that's hard to do?)

Can you tell me more about it?

How do you deal with it? What do you do?
(What does it feel like when you're doing it?)

If _____ was in the same situation, how would he/she deal with it?

(Go through questions about a personal incident with the first character only. Refer to the same incident with subsequent characters.)

APPENDIX G
QUESTIONS ABOUT ONESELF

If YOU were a/an (animal, color, food), what would you be?

(If I came from Mars and I didn't know anything about _____s, what would you tell me about _____s ?

Now, tell me how you're like a/an _____.

(If not much elaboration, ask for "another kind of _____.")

Tell me about yourself:

What do people in school know about you?

What would you <u>like</u> everyone to know about you?

Is there anything you dislike about yourself?

What do you like about yourself?

How are you different from other people?

What are some of the special ways you do things? Do you have your own "style"?

CHECKLIST

---

end with:

(perceived influence; self referential:)

Has the way you think about things or the way you act changed because of anyone you've seen on T.V.?

APPENDIX H

CONSTRUCTION OF MATRIX FOR INPUT TO MDS ANALYSIS

A raw data matrix will be constructed for each character and "self" by listing each subject's rating of the character (or self) on each item. (See example below.)

RAW DATA MATRIX (example)

	Items											
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
subjects												
1	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
4	5	5	5	5	5	5	1	1	1	1	1	1
5	1	1	1	1	1	1	5	5	5	5	5	5
6	2	3	4	2	3	4	2	3	4	2	3	4
7	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
...24												

The profile dissimilarity measure for a pair of objects i.e., subjects or characters) is computed by adding squared differences between corresponding differences between corresponding elements in the raw data matrix. This yields a single numerical value which is a measure of dissimilarity for each pair of subjects.)

A full dissimilarity matrix consists of a profile dissimilarity measure for each pair of objects. A MDS analysis can be performed with this matrix as input. (See below.)

DISSIMILARITY MATRIX (for subjects; example)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	...24
1	0	13.9	6.9	9.8	9.8	7.5	0	
2	13.9	0	6.9	9.8	9.8	7.5	13.9	
3	6.9	6.9	0	6.9	6.9	2.8	6.9	
4	9.8	9.8	6.9	0	13.9	7.5	9.8	
5	9.8	9.8	6.9	13.9	0	7.5	9.8	
6	7.5	7.5	2.8	7.5	7.5	0	7.5	
7	0	13.9	6.9	9.8	9.8	7.5	0	
...24								

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