1-1-1999

Pro-social and anti-social effects of television viewing on adolescents: Speculations based on family situation comedy content

Eunette Gentry

University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/rtds

Repository Citation

Gentry, Eunetta, "Pro-social and anti-social effects of television viewing on adolescents: Speculations based on family situation comedy content" (1999). UNLV Retrospective Theses & Dissertations. 1058.
https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/rtds/1058

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Scholarship@UNLV. It has been accepted for inclusion in UNLV Retrospective Theses & Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Digital Scholarship@UNLV. For more information, please contact digitalscholarship@unlv.edu.
INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

Bell & Howell Information and Learning
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 USA
800-521-0600

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
NOTE TO USERS

Page(s) not included in the original manuscript are unavailable from the author or university. The manuscript was microfilmed as received.

30

This reproduction is the best copy available.

UMI
PRO-SOCIAL AND ANTI-SOCIAL EFFECTS OF TELEVISION VIEWING
ON ADOLESCENTS: SPECULATIONS BASED ON
FAMILY SITUATION COMEDY CONTENT

by

Eunette Gentry
Bachelor of Science
Jackson State University
1998

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the

Master of Arts Degree
Hank Greenspun Department of Communication Studies
Greenspun College of Urban Affairs

Graduate College
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
December 1999
The Thesis prepared by

Eunette Gentry

Entitled

Pro-social and Anti-social Effects of Television Viewing
on Adolescents: Speculations based on Family Situation Comedy

Content

is approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

[Signatures]

Examination Committee Chair

Dean of the Graduate College

[Signatures]

Examination Committee Member

Examination Committee Member

Graduate College Faculty Representative
ABSTRACT

Pro-social and Anti-social Effects of Television Viewing on Adolescents: Speculations based on Family Situation Comedy Content

by

Eunette Gentry

Dr. Lawrence J. Mullen, Examination Committee Chair
Assistant Professor of Communication
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Researchers theorize that verbal insults within television family interactions may create images of dysfunctional families that serve as a paradigm for young viewers. This study conducted a content analysis of television programming and speculated about the possible development of antisocial behavior in adolescents due to television viewing.

"The Cosby Show" and "Roseanne" were chosen in this research sample because previous research finds that family oriented situation comedies are among children's favorite television programs. Ten episodes of each series were recorded and analyzed for their anti-social verbal content. The brother-sister sibling relationship was analyzed within each episode and coded using eight different categories of verbal insults per episode for each series, because previous research found that television siblings'
character interactions are primarily conflictual. Comparisons were made within each of the eight categories of verbal insults between both series using a t-test for Equality of Means.

Based on a content analysis of each episode, results showed that there is no overall significant difference between the types of verbal insults within the television programs. Findings indicate that future research needs to further investigate the various types and total amounts of verbal insults and anti-social displays of behavior within all family programming and, conduct television audience analyses in order hinder television programming's possible negative effects on adolescents' social development.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT......................................................................................................................................iii

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.................................................................vi

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION....................................................................................................1
  Purpose of the Study.........................................................3
  Significance of the Study..............................................4
  Definition of Terms....................................................5

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE........................................................14
  Television's Anti-Social Effect on Children.........................15
  Analyses of Television Portrayals.....................................25
  Depictions of Various Interactions...................................29
  Research Questions/Hypotheses......................................32

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY.................................................................37
  Sample................................................................................37
  Instrument............................................................................38
  Reliabilities.........................................................................39

CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS OF THE STUDY.........................................................................40
  Analysis of Data...............................................................40
  t-test for Equality of Means...............................................45
  Statistical Analysis of Research Hypotheses.........................47

CHAPTER V: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS........48
  Discussion of Results.........................................................49
  Conclusions and Recommendations for Further Study........51

APPENDICES....................................................................................................................................53
  Coding Instrument 1..........................................................54
  Coding Instrument 2..........................................................60

BIBLIOGRAPHY...............................................................................................................................66

VITA...................................................................................................................................................71
I would like to express my sincere appreciation to those individuals who contributed to the success and completion of this research. Thank you Dr. Jensen for believing in me and supporting me throughout the pursuit of my degree. Thank you Dr. Hausbeck for agreeing to serve on my committee. Special thanks goes to Dr. Beth Semic and Dr. Lawrence Mullen, committee chair. Without your support and assistance, this research would not have been possible. Thank you again for your encouragement, patience and time.

I would also like to express appreciation to my mother, father, and sisters for their love and constant support of my academic and professional pursuits.
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The average American child watches between two and three hours of television a day (Huston et al., 1992). It is estimated that by the age of eighteen a child born today will have spent more time watching television than any other activity besides sleep (Liebert & Sprafkin, 1988). Virtually unknown fifty years ago, television is now present in almost every home in the United States and has spread rapidly to all corners of the world. It is evident that television made a spectacular appearance and now has a permanent place in our lives. Scholars have investigated and analyzed the negative effects that prolonged television viewing has on us, and more importantly, our children (Liebert & Sprafkin). It is important to note that in this thesis research after a thorough content analysis of the anti-social verbal insults on television programs is conducted, only speculations can be made about the anti-social effects of television viewing on adolescents. MacBeth (1996) notes that there is evidence that programming with high contents of action and aggression has negative effects on aggressive behavior and other anti-social behaviors. Research also states that watching more entertainment
and live action programming and watching less informative programming may be related to greater impulsiveness (1996). However, studies such as the aforementioned are direct analyses of television viewing and behavior. This study makes inferences about television's anti-social effect on adolescents based on the content of television programming that is marketed for family/adolescent viewing.

Research indicates that situation comedy family programming is the prime choice of adolescent viewers (Heintz, 1992). However, the content of these television shows may not always be suitable for young viewers. If an individual has not developed his or her own personal thoughts, goals or interests, that person is highly impressionable and could easily be influenced by television's negative, anti-social messages (Comstock & Paik, 1991).

Researchers theorize that verbal insults in television family interactions may create images of dysfunctional families that serve as a paradigm for young viewers. A review of previous literature supports this notion and outlines several theories stating that displays of anti-social behavior on television can have negative effects on adolescents' social development. The most common of these theories is Bandura's social learning theory developed in 1963, which states that children learn from modeling, and the most constant form of modeling of images and ideas is television (Liebert & Sprafkin, 1988). Therefore, this form of learning can arrest adolescents' positive/pro-social development.
Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the research is to identify negative sequences of events including verbal insults that take place between brother-sister dyadic relationships on family oriented television shows, "The Cosby Show" and "Roseanne", and analyze these statements and/or actions to speculate about television's negative effects on the development of children's "real life" interpersonal relationships and social skills. Researchers have outlined behavioral theories involving individuals viewing an abundance of antisocial/negative television program content and, the social effects of adolescents viewing and using verbal insults. Although most of us have used the old adage "sticks and stones may break my bones...", few who study communication would argue that the impact of words on people and relationships are not harmful. A few ill-spoken words can negatively affect individuals and their behavior. A hurtful utterance may be spoken with the best of intentions or it may be overtly aggressive. It may occur as a one time event within an interaction, or it may be embedded in a long history of verbally abusive insults. Regardless of one's intention, feelings of hurt are derived from expressions of communication. Researchers found an association between social interaction and the elicitation of negative emotions such as hurt (Cupach & Spitzberg, 1994). Although researchers have begun to find an association between anti-social behavior and displays of emotion, television program content continues to display a wide variety of negative emotions, and anti-social behavior, including
verbal insults, that can serve as negative models of behavior for adolescents.

Research on this topic in mass media communication is important because it is imperative that children develop critical viewing skills and approach television viewing from an educational point of view, rather than as a mere form of entertainment. This is an important first step in eliminating the negative and antisocial impacts that television can have on children.

Significance of the Study

Children begin watching television at infancy. Parents often report putting their babies in front of a television set to quiet them down (Huston et al., 1992). Viewing increases rapidly during the preschool years, drops slightly at school entrance, then increases to a peak in early adolescence (Huston et al.). Children who are in the beginning stages of social development are greatly influenced by the social interactions they see on television. Children as young as 14 and 24 months can translate the two dimensional events of the television into an internalized representation for behaving in the three dimensional space of the real world, and can retain this representation for 24 hours or longer (Comstock & Paik, 1991). At these ages they will imitate what they see, even after a lengthy delay.

The role that television plays in people's lives depends not only on the content transmitted, but on the goals and interests of the individual viewer (Huston et al., 1992). However, if an
individual has not developed his or her own personal thoughts, goals or interests, that person is highly impressionable and could easily be influenced by television's mixed messages (Comstock & Paik, 1991). Statistics indicate that a significantly large number of children fall into this category.

The innocence of youth leaves children vulnerable and impressionable to the messages that the mass media and television programs feed into their unshaped, steadily developing minds. There are an infinite number of ways that television influences children both positively and negatively within various social situations. All of these areas are important and worthy of proper academic investigation.

Definition of Terms

Researchers have long sought to categorize television programming based on its content; however, there are an abundance of various types of positive and negative displays that comprise a single program. Therefore, it is difficult to categorize an entire episode or series according to its content based solely on a single verbal or nonverbal interaction - an uninterrupted conversation, communicative act or sequence of acts between two family members behaving consistently (Heintz, 1992), because the overall theme of the program must also be considered. An interaction could contain multiple turns taken by both participants, as long as each participant continued to act consistently. When any actor changed his or her mode of
interaction, or when another actor entered a scene or the 
conversation, the first interaction was considered completed and a 
second interaction began. For example, if Darlene Conner, from 
"Roseanne", calls her brother D.J. a troll, and D.J. replies by 
calling her stupid before their mother stops the argument, this is 
considered a single interaction even if it involves multiple 
discrete speech acts because there was no interruption of dialogue 
by an outside character. The interaction would end when one 
participant leaves the room, another participant enters the room, 
or one of the siblings changes his/her mode of interaction (e.g., 
Darlene starts being nice to D.J.).

Situation comedy family programs - television shows that are 
usually lighthearted and humorous in nature with members of a 
family unit as the main characters (Jones, 1992), are usually 
labeled as, and assumed by viewers to be affiliative - displaying 
positive forms of social interaction between characters (Heintz, 
1992), because television families are assumed to be normal -

There are variations as to what constitutes normalcy. 
Usually, a family is considered normal if pathology is absent 
from all members. Such families are often referred to as 
nonclinical or nonlabeled families. A second view of normal 
permeates the American culture: normality as utopia. The 
ideal view is sometimes equated with health, as exemplified 
by [various] traits of healthy families. ...Healthy 
families communicate, listen, share leisure time, and have a 
strong religious core. Moreover, all family members respect,
trust, support, and value all others. In other words, a normal family resembles the [typical] situation comedy families of the 1950's. When this notion of normality is embraced, however, normality does not exist. A third view of normality refers to statistical averages. By this definition, a family is normal if it is like most other families... If most families are found to have occasional problems, the presence of a problem does not in itself imply that a family is not normal. The last version of normal [families] comports to our belief... Normal family interaction is a paradox of conflicting messages of support and hurt. Although we are all too aware of the staggering statistics on family violence, adolescent substance abuse, juvenile delinquency, and a host of other family disorders, such clinical issues are beyond our scope. Rather, we focus on negative interactions that the family experiences. (Cupach & Spitzberg, 1994, p. 259).

There are significant amounts of anti-social behavior - negative displays of verbal and/or nonverbal interactions (Liebert & Sprafkin, 1988) within family oriented television that can arrest adolescents' pro-social behavior - positive displays of verbal and/or nonverbal interactions (1988). Categories and definitions of anti-social and pro-social behavior are as follows:

Anti-social Behaviors - Category 1: Physical aggression, is defined as making physical contact by specifically hitting pushing, pulling, shoving, kicking, biting, pinching, or
pulling hair. Category 2: **Object struggle**, is defined as engaging in a fight over an object. Category 3: **Verbal Commands, Insults, Disapprovals, Threats, and Tattle-tells**, is defined as ordering; demanding with authority or in a loud tone of voice that may be accompanied by threatening facial expressions or gestures; teasing; name calling; making unfair or unfavorable judgments; making statements with intent to harm; or telling parent(s) about another sibling's wrong-doings.

**Pro-social Behaviors** - Category 1: **Giving or sharing an object**, is defined as giving or sharing an object spontaneously or upon request. Category 2: **Cooperating or Helping**, is defined as engaging in behaviors that require two individuals, and giving explanations or physical aid. Category 3: **Requesting**, is defined as asking for something. Category 4: **Praising or Approving**, is defined as verbal statements of approval or admiration of a sibling or his/her behavior. Category 5: **Comforting or Reassuring**, is defined as verbal or physical consolation when a sibling is in some way distressed. Category 6: **Physical Affection**, is defined as specific positive physical contact. Category 7: **Laughing or Smiling**, is defined as displaying facial expressions of laughter, or smiling directly as a sibling, and Category 8: **Approaching**, is defined as moving to within .5 m of a sibling with no evidence of antagonistic intent (Spitzberg & Cupach,
Verbal insults - anti-social displays of indignity, abuse, or contempt by word (Signorielli, 1991), surprisingly comprise a large amount of family programming that is assumed to be pro-social. Within this thesis research, each verbal insult is counted on a verbal insult analysis code sheet - the unit of analysis dividing each television series by episodes and categorizing them according to the various types of observed verbal insults (Heintz, 1992).

Katherine Heintz (1992) conducted research comparing the interaction behaviors of television families from the 1989-1990 season with those of an earlier analysis of interactions of families in the late 1970's. An analysis of six episodes of five family prime-time programs selected most often as favorites by 381 elementary school children reveals that conflictual interactions - verbal or nonverbal contradictory, antagonistic, or oppositional displays including verbal insults (Signorielli, 1991), occur twice as much within situation comedy family programming as in the past. This rise in anti-social interaction displays increases the types of behavioral interactions that can influence children. Heintz (1992) used three terms to categorize family interactions:

**Going Toward** - offering or seeking information.

(positive) Examples: Giving advice; asking questions; praising; worrying about others' health/well being; accepting advice; greeting someone; and/or engaging in any form of interaction
that is viewed in an overall positive manner.

**Going Against** - ignoring, opposing, or verbally insulting.
*(negative)*
Examples: Any overall negative display of behavior that includes verbally attacking in a malicious manner that is not intended to show concern or support; arguing; physically fighting; or purposely ignoring.

**Going Away** - evading or withdrawing from another.
*(neutral)*
Examples: Showing little or no concern for another; being aloof; showing unconcern without being confrontational or totally negative; withdrawing without negative intent (p. 445).

Heintz's (1992) research discovered that going against, conflictual, interactions including verbal insults within family programming occur most often within dyads containing a male child. Therefore, within this thesis research *brother-sister sibling interactions* - uninterrupted conversations, communicative acts or sequences of acts between a male and female character with the same parents (1992), were analyzed for the amount and types of verbal insults. The **categories of verbal insults** - various insult types comprising a variety of categories that are usually labeled as anti-social behavior (Spitzberg & Cupach, 1998), that were established and analyzed within each television series include:

Category A: **Verbal insults that lower self esteem of the victim.**
Example: Making another reflect about themself or their action(s) by hurting the victim’s feelings.

Category B: Verbal insults that undermine authority/character of father-figure.
Example: Criticizing/insulting the father.

Category C: Verbal insults that undermine authority/character of mother-figure.
Example: Criticizing/insulting the mother.

Category D: Verbal insults or actions that assert female dominance.
Example: Criticizing any non-father male.

Category E: Verbal insults or actions that assert male dominance.
Example: Criticizing any non-mother female.

Category F: Verbal insults that attack society or outside forces; i.e., neighbors, co-workers, customers, etc.
Example: Criticizing any person or institution not within the family.

Category G: Verbal insults that show stupidity or lack of common sense on part of family member.
Example: Questioning/insulting a family member’s
intelligence.

Category H: **Verbal insults or signs not directed towards any one individual or individual idea, yet relaying sarcastic overtones.**

Example: Making a negative/sarcastic comment not directed toward anyone specifically.

There may be multiple verbal insults made by both siblings within an interaction. Therefore, every verbal insult in each interaction is coded to accurately analyze the total content of verbal insults within each category for each series. For example, if Theo, from "The Cosby Show", verbally insults his sister Vanessa and purposely hurts her feelings by criticizing her relationship with her boyfriend, and Vanessa replies by telling Theo to mind his own business and "but out" of her life because she is a mature female and can do whatever she wants, this interaction is coded as containing two separate insults that are coded in different categories of verbal insults. Theo's statement is coded in Category A: Verbal insults that lower self esteem of the victim, because he hurt Vanessa's feelings and attempted to purposely lower her self esteem about her relationship. Vanessa's statement is coded in Category D: Verbal insults or actions that assert female dominance, because she is proclaiming that she is a mature female who is capable of making her own decisions. Even though the overall sentiment and interaction within Theo and Vanessa's conversation may have been affiliative, there were still
verbal insults and displays of anti-social behavior present that could possibly negatively influence the behavior of adolescent viewers.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Extensive research has been done on television's effects on children's attitudes, development, and behavior to explore the social, political, and economic factors that surround those issues. The theoretical framework for this investigation states that extensive viewing of television's negative content begets negative/anti-social behavior within untrained viewers. However, findings indicate that if children understand how television programs are made, what is real versus pretended, and how special effects make the impossible appear real, they will be less vulnerable to television viewing's negative consequences (Liebert & Sprafkin, 1988). These negative consequences include developing antisocial, passive and/or violent behavior.

There are complementary theoretical frameworks existing within this field, for example, Maire Messenger Davies (1997) discovered during research that a child's reality perception must be seen as a useful critical skill, and an important defense against the harmful, anti-social effects of television:

If the social and psychological processes involved in television [viewing] can be isolated, one can then search for
ways in which those processes can be altered. ...Children's perceptions of television's reality has seemed an especially good candidate [for a data analysis variable] and has stimulated much considerable research [in that field] (Davies, p. 21).

Television's Antisocial Effect on Children

The possibility that certain television content stimulates unwanted or disapproved attitudes and antisocial behavior has received more attention than any other issue regarding children's television viewing. Schramm, Lyle, and Parker (1961) conducted a full-length study of television and American children. Their three year study involved a total sample of 6,000 students from ten different cities and two different countries. Schramm and associates (1961) researched the physical, emotional, cognitive and behavioral effects of television viewing on adolescents and state that:

Television has certain advantages and certain disadvantages as a conveyer of reality experiences. One of its advantages is that it can convey information earlier than most media [to adolescents]. It is not necessary to learn to read before learning from television. Even after one learns to read, television still has the quality of speeding up the conveying of [inappropriate] adult information. Indeed, with television in the living room, it is all but impossible to keep to the old, measured schedules of releasing "the facts
[of life]" slowly - telling the children only bit by bit, year by year, about "life." ...Television does indeed speed up the [adolescent] process of learning at an early age (p. 66).

Schramm and associates (1961) addressed several questions with regard to adolescent television viewing and its four main effects. First, the physical effects were addressed: Question 1 - Is television hard on children's eyesight? The authors state that given proper viewing conditions, there apparently is no special reason to fear what television will do to a child's eyesight. Eyestrain is more likely to occur when the conditions of viewing are not good. Question 2 - Does television send children to school sleepy and tired? The authors state that sometimes it does. They said that almost all the teachers they surveyed could cite some instance of children's inattention or sleepiness which they ascribed to television.

Second, Schramm and associates (1961) addressed the emotional effects: Question 1 - Are children often frightened by television? The authors state that ritual violence usually does not frighten children. For example, they are not ordinarily frightened when a cartoon figure like Donald Duck is in a fight or being chased, or when a puppet takes a clown-fall. However, there are three situations on television which seem most likely to frighten children. One is a situation when harm threatens a character with whom they identify closely or to whom they feel specially attached. The other frightening situation is one which
reminds the child of his own real-life fears, especially darkness or loneliness. Fear of the unknown and unseen is still one of the deepest human emotions, and this is the element used in horror programs. The third situation is one in which a child is introduced to stressful situations too soon (Schramm et al, 1961). If a child has not developed his or her critical viewing skills in terms of reality perceptions in television viewing, everything will seem real to them. This can lead to unnecessary stress from not being able to detach themselves from the fictitious world of television. However, this kind of fear can be controlled by parents monitoring what their children watch.

Question 2 - Is television too exciting for children? The authors note that there is a fine line between excitement and fear. There is a quality in television that tends to keep piling up excitement because it is a key element in competing for audiences and ratings. Therefore, as competition for ratings grows, the excitement level on television increases because networks may feel that attracting an audience, by any means necessary, is more important than keeping anti-social content on television at a minimal level. Thus, a little violence grows into a great deal of violence, and verbal insults that were very sporadic become the central comic theme.

Third, Schramm and associates (1961) addressed the cognitive effects of television viewing on adolescents: Question 1 - Is television raising a better informed generation? The authors found that present day adolescents were better informed than previous generations were; however, it was not determined whether
television contributed to this advanced, informed state or not. Question 2 - Does television stimulate intellectual or creative activity? The authors found that television is more effective in stimulating and contributing to pre-existing interests, than in stimulating creative activity. The authors state that in order for television to be really effective in stimulating intellectual ability, creative activity, or systematic learning, it must be geared toward one or more of the educational institutions which are concerned with such activity in our society (1961). Question 3 - Does television [diminish] children's [public] tastes? The authors assume that the level of public taste has declined in recent years under the assault of popularized mass media. Question 4 - Does television paint an inaccurate picture of adult life? The authors find that children are absorbing large amounts of inaccurate information about adult life from television because they get advance knowledge of the sexual element in relationships, villains, violent crimes, harsh punishments and explicit uses of language.

Finally, the authors address television's possible behavioral effects on adolescents. Schramm and associates (1961) found that one researcher did not agree with the notion of television having behavioral effects on adolescents. He felt, "the child's task of developing into an adult is so psychologically complex that it is unlikely that any one influence, like television, will produce a particular behavioral pattern" (1961). However, as mentioned earlier in this research, studies have shown that children watch
an abundance of television, and are influenced by this medium because most adolescents have not developed the proper critical viewing skills to counter any effects of prolonged and/or unsupervised viewing. Schramm and associates (1961) pose questions involving television's possible behavioral effects including: Question 1 - Does television make children passive? The authors found in their research that television viewing does promote passivity. They cite this example:

The staff of a hospital for schizophrenic adolescent girls finds that these girls, insatiable in their demands, and yet themselves incapable of sustaining activity, want nothing so much as to be allowed endless hours of television [viewing]. Without it they are soon [uncharacteristically] noisy, unruly and frequently destructive. Significantly, the only other control of these girls [besides television] is [the] adult who constantly directs them [and] organizes their [television viewing] for them (p. 158).

Question 2 - Does television violence teach violence? The authors note that the teaching of violence is one of the most common charges against television and proves to be an accurate one because they cite these real-life situations:

In a Boston suburb, a nine year old boy reluctantly showed his father a report card heavily decorated with red marks, then proposed one way of getting at the heart of the matter: they could give the teacher a box of poisoned chocolates for Christmas. "It's easy, Dad, they did it on television last
week. A man wanted to kill his wife, so he gave her candy with poison in it and she didn't know who did it.

In Brooklyn, New York, a six-year-old son of a policeman asked his father for real bullets because his little sister "doesn't die for real when I shoot her like they do when Hopalong Cassidy kills 'em" (p. 161).

Question 3 - Does television cause juvenile delinquency? The authors cite research and figures to prove that there is a direct relationship between adolescent displays of anti-social behavior and television viewing. Schramm and associates (1961) state that in the first ten years of television's growth, juvenile delinquency more than doubled. Question 4 - Does television cause a child to withdraw from life? The authors found that television does cause withdrawal from real-life because of its fantasy portrayals and appeal, and Question 5 - Does television make addicts out of children? The authors cite two possible cases of adolescent addiction to television:

First, television addiction may result when a child "becomes accustomed to a heightened level of excitement and organizes much of his learned behavior at that particular level of excitement," so that "his behavior will be disrupted if the level of excitement declines, and he will be restless, bored, [and] ill at ease until he does something to restore the particular level of excitement around which his behavior has been organized." It may also result when the child
retreats from unpleasant problems of reality to soothing fantasy, and finds the difference so great and his responses so pleasingly reinforced by television, in contrast to what happens to them in reality, that he retreats ever more deeply... (p. 167).

Over a decade later, after the previously mentioned pioneer study was published, the Surgeon General's Advisory Committee issued a report on Television and Behavior in 1972 (National Institute of Mental Health, 1982). The report was based in large part on the findings of research projects commissioned and funded by the federal government to assess the effects of televised violence on children and youth. The report noted that there was a lack of information about the relationship of television viewing to the psychological growth and development of children. Since then, the Committee on Social Issues Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry asserted that childhood is a lengthy period characterized by growing mental capacities and changing developmental needs. Therefore, it is essential to consider the television viewing experience in light of the child's particular age and stage of development (Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry, 1982).

Ulla Johnsson-Smaragdi (1983) studied social effects of television viewing. The conclusion drawn by the author states that problems in the sphere of interpersonal or social adolescent relations have repeatedly been found to correlate with certain kinds of mass media use. Liebert and Sprafkin (1988) provide an
account of various research theories that investigates television's effect on children's attitudes, development, and behavior. They find evidence of television's negative and anti-social effect on children. Here are two instances reported by Liebert and Sprafkin (1988):

In Los Angeles, a housemaid caught a seven year old boy in the act of sprinkling ground glass into the family's lamb stew. There was no malice behind the act. It was purely experimental, having been inspired by curiosity to learn whether it would really work as well as it did on television.

The New York Journal-American reported that police arrested an eleven year old who admitted having burglarized Long Island homes for more than $1,000 in cash and valuables. His accomplice was identified as a seven year old friend. The boy said he learned the technique of burglary by seeing how it is done on television (p. 9).

As a result of the foregoing reports, entertainment television came to be seen by social scientists as exerting a potentially great influence on adolescents.

In 1990 Bryant analyzed the effects of portrayed family values on an individual's behavior, and asserted that television shapes and affects the values of the family. The following year, Signorielli (1991) examined television violence from a historical perspective. The author focused on the amount of violence on television and examined its effects. She concluded that there is
a relationship between the viewing of crime and violence on television and antisocial behaviors (Signorielli). Another study on television and its effects was conducted by Spigel (1992) who researched television within the family circle. This study found that there was a misrepresentative idea that television would bring families closer together.

Clifford, Gunter and McAleer (1995) researched the cognitive impact of television. Their findings follow three key themes: the extent to which children understand and recall program content; program impact on related areas of knowledge, attitudes and beliefs; and the role of mediating variables - age, gender, language, ability, viewing habits, and general knowledge. The authors theorize that prolonged anti-social television exposure can mutate what could be firmly instilled beliefs, even in children with otherwise unchangeable beliefs due to parental guidance (Clifford et al., 1995).

Koolstra and Van Der Voort (1996) conducted a study using a sample of 1,050 Dutch elementary schoolchildren who were in grades two and four, at the outset of research. This study investigated the longitudinal effects of television viewing on the frequency of which children read books, and the casual mechanisms that underlie television's effect on leisure-time reading. The children were surveyed three times, at one year intervals. Structural equations analysis suggested that television viewing reduced children's reading. The data suggests that two casual mechanisms underlie television's reductive effect on children's book reading: a
television-induced deterioration of attitudes toward book reading, and television-induced deterioration of children's ability to concentrate on reading.

In addition to the deterioration of academic pursuits, television viewing has also been thought to limit the growth of adolescents' thinking abilities. Public figures, the popular press, and many individuals believe that television is the root of almost every social evil form declining test scores to the loss of "family values" (MacBeth, 1996). Some educators have attacked the medium of television saying that it is superficial, and encourages short attention spans and illogical thinking in adolescents as well as some adults.

Within his research John Leland (1997) states that television can cause confusion and interfere with other learning processes in one and two year olds. He found that all programs teach children something or another, and it is up to the parents to make sure their children's television education is conservative and not overdone. He contends that there are several good programs for pre-schoolers that include educational television that provide examples of and promote pro-social behavior.

Shrum, Wyer, and O'Guinn (1998) conducted two studies investigating the extent to which heavy television viewing affects adolescents' perceptions of social reality and the genuine cognitive processes that underlie these effects. These cognitive processes include viewing and interpreting images displayed on television that can serve as a behavior model. Both studies
found evidence that heavy viewers' beliefs about social reality are more consistent with the content of television programming than those of light viewers.

John Taylor Gatto (1999) stated in his research that most children who spend much of their time viewing television are irresponsible, need constant supervision, and lack social skills. These children replace their daily activities with other children with television. He asserts that television reduces children's attention span, portrays a reality far from real life, and corrupts their minds. Gatto suggests that children should drastically reduce their amount of television viewing.

Television is an integral part of American family life. Most people seem unable to reduce their viewing time, or describe their own involvement with, and learning from this medium. However, it must not be forgotten that television can also instill positive, pro-social effects within adolescents and other viewers. Stuart Jeffries (1996) states that television is often unjustly blamed for all of society's social ills such as rampant violence and illiteracy. He reminds people that television also showcases love in all its forms, from which people can also learn.

Analyses of Television Portrayals

Television portrays social interactions and relationships, ranging from family interactions to relations with strangers in strange places. Within situation comedy family programming people express feelings, empathy, kindness, and sexuality; they also
demonstrate cruelty, intensity, and violence (Huston et al., 1992). This notion supports research that states that all contents of family programming are not suitable for adolescent viewers. Huston and associates (1992) discuss the images on television and their influence on children's social and behavioral development. The authors assert that televised social behavioral portrayals serve as a model that is learned through observation. The viewer incorporates television messages into a cognitive framework. Hence, individuals recall or learn what they can assimilate. Much of what is learned by observation can influence a person's beliefs and expectations about the world, even if it is never imitated. However research states that some of what is viewed on television by adolescents will be learned and translated into behavior.

Barcus (1983) investigated various forms of television content and programming that is viewed by adolescents. He found that imitative and modeling effects may be assumed to occur as the child observes various personality and physical traits in characters that are similar to themselves in age and gender. Lull (1988) studied how television influences the family and how families interpret and use television. He found that television programming presents constant images of social life, including that of families, and is an agent of socialization to role-differentiated behavior in families. In similar research, Comstock and Paik (1991) show that studies in social and behavioral sciences on television and children are pertinent to
the pro-social development of American children. They assert that concept-orientation is positively associated with talking to the child about the moral implications of what occurs in television programs; with the offering of geographic, historical, or scientific information in connection with what is shown on television; and with emphasizing that television is make-believe (Comstock & Paik). In another study Tichi (1991) analyzed American television culture. This researcher states that television is the biggest window in the world; it is a looking glass through which the viewer becomes a modern "Alice." This researcher also states that television is said to be the greatest show on earth, and all the world is a stage from which to learn, with television (1991).

Sprafkin, Gadow, and Abelman (1992), authors of "Television and the Exceptional Child", attempt to understand the process of children's learning from television. These authors take into account the differences between exceptional children and their nonlabeled counterparts, as well as differences among children with divergent educational exceptionalities (Sprafkin, Gadow, & Abelman, 1992). The researchers found that for some children, under some conditions, television is harmful; and, for other children under the same conditions, or for some children under other conditions, television viewing may be beneficial to adolescents pro-social development (Sprafkin et al., 1992). These conditions rely on the children's comprehension of television's anti-social behavior. Attention to television content has also
been found to be greater for verbally presented information than for similar material presented visually. This difference is more pronounced in older children than in younger ones (Jones, 1992). Jones also analyzed family sitcoms for content and impact. He found that some were "pro-kid," suggesting that parents were essentially incapable of managing the lives of modern youth and that kids would have to learn their own emotional life lessons.

Since television presents an extensive array of emotions and emotional situations, it seems reasonable to expect that this medium serves as an important source of information about emotion for children who are still in the process of learning about emotional experiences and can be negatively affected by anti-social expressions of emotions and interactions (Weiss & Wilson, 1996). Research confirms that television dangerously contributes to children's beliefs about the nature of emotions, how to express different emotions, and what emotions are appropriate to feel and display in particular situations.

Douglas and Olson (1996) examined the portrayal of family relationships in domestic comedies. Their findings state that the general relational environment was rated more conflictual and less cohesive in modern television families. The researchers found that modern television families were rated less able to manage day-to-day life and less able to socialize children effectively. Moreover, Davies (1997) probes television reality and its relationship to life. He found that it is impossible to separate the categories of life and art in evaluating adolescent viewers'
modality/reality judgments. When people make judgments about art (television) and the way in which it represents life, they must draw on the artistic features of the work in order to evaluate its truth and impact (1997).

Depictions of Various Interactions

Research indicates that family sitcoms consistently rate among children's favorite TV programs (Heintz, 1992). Weiss and Wilson (1996) examined the nature of emotional interactions in family-formatted sitcoms that are popular among children. Results of their research revealed that family oriented sitcoms prominently feature child characters within the major storyline and focus on common emotions and emotional situations that real-life adolescents identify with and whose behavior they could possibly emulate. However, there is a significant amount of negative, anti-social displays of behavior, including verbal insults, in the character interactions that adolescents identify with. Interactions between characters on modern sitcoms focus on emotions such as fear, anger, and other negative emotions. Interactions with siblings constitute at least half of a child's family interactions (Spitzberg & Cupach, 1998). Spitzberg and Cupach's research also notes that sibling relationships are typified as being more tolerant to conflict yet containing more anger and aggression than relationships with peers. In conflicts during dinnertime, siblings did not restrain their hostility when opposing each other, and were more likely to be direct versus
NOTE TO USERS

Page(s) not included in the original manuscript are unavailable from the author or university. The manuscript was microfilmed as received.

30

This reproduction is the best copy available.

UMI
conflictual. Brother-sister dyads were characterized mostly as "going against" (1992). The majority of conflictual verbal interactions occur within brother-sister pairs. Research noted that same sex sibling interactions were considerably more affiliative than brother-sister interactions (1992). The age of the interacting siblings also contributes to the quality of family interactions displayed. Not only do teenaged siblings, especially opposite sex siblings, fight more often on television than their other counterparts, they are also more likely to challenge parental authority, and thus engage in other conflictual interactions like verbal insults (1992). These challenges of parent authority-verbal insults from opposite sex siblings are fairly frequent, and are coded as Verbal Insult Categories B and C within this thesis research.

The standard model of behavior for depictions of the interactions of television characters also includes family social interactions. The "social reality" typically shown on broadcast television is not representative; it is a prism concentrating certain images and eliminating others, rather than being a mirror of the social world (MacBeth, 1996). The social status of the entire television family unit has been addressed within television family interaction studies. Previous content analyses of television families have addressed the issue of representations of family structure, family economic status, and family race to find a possible link between the amount of negative, anti-social displays within the television-family unit. Analyses of
prime-time programming indicate that most television-family program studies are not equally representative of all types of real-life families according to race and/or economic status.

Further research finds that representations of television-family demographics show some consistent patterns (Heintz, 1992). Although television can counteract stereotypes, the predominant content of situation comedies may serve to reinforce the main views that women are helpless and incompetent; men are aggressive; most people are white, affluent Americans; and the principal racial/ethnic group members are African-Americans (MacBeth, 1996). An analysis of television family demographics also indicated that two-parent, white, middle-class families are overrepresented, while single-parent, non-white, and working-class families are underrepresented (Heintz, 1992).

Research Questions/Hypotheses

This thesis research sample is representative of two different races and socioeconomic statuses: "Roseanne" depicts a White, working-class family with at least one working parent; and "The Cosby Show" depicts a Black, upper middle-class family with two working parents. The only obvious similarities between the two series are that both parents are present within the family structure, and each television family has one male child, and at least two daughters. This allows an equal number opportunities for opposite sex siblings to interact and have their verbal insults coded.
Various research questions have emerged from the previous review of literature which states that adolescents viewing an abundance of anti-social displays/interactions like verbal insults, including those within situation comedy family programming that is labeled as being suitable for young viewers, could negatively affect their pro-social behavioral development. Upon a thorough examination of the content of these family programs, research questions and several research hypotheses have been developed including:

Research question 1: Does a difference in economic status between the two series affect the amount of verbal insults or anti-social/negative behavior displayed?

Research question 2: Does a difference in race between the two series affect the amount of verbal insults or anti-social/negative behavior displayed?

Hypothesis 1: There is a significant difference in the number of verbal insults per series within Category A: Verbal insults that lower self esteem of the victim.

Example: Making another reflect about themself or
their action(s) by hurting the victim's feelings.

Hypothesis 2: There is a significant difference in the number of verbal insults per series within Category B:
Verbal insults that undermine authority/character of father-figure.
Example: Criticizing/insulting the father.

Hypothesis 3: There is a significant difference in the number of verbal insults per series within Category C:
Verbal insults that undermine authority/character of mother-figure.
Example: Criticizing/insulting the mother.

Hypothesis 4: There is a significant difference in the number of verbal insults per series within Category D:
Verbal insults or actions that assert female dominance.
Example: Criticizing any non-father male.

Hypothesis 5: There is a significant difference in the number of verbal insults per series within Category E:
Verbal insults or actions that assert male dominance.
Example: Criticizing any non-mother female.
Hypothesis 6: There is a significant difference in the number of verbal insults per series within Category F:
Verbal insults that attack society or outside forces; i.e., neighbors, co-workers, customers, etc.
Example: Criticizing any person or institution not within the family.

Hypothesis 7: There is a significant difference in the number of verbal insults per series within Category G:
Verbal insults that show stupidity or lack of common sense on part of family member.
Example: Questioning/insulting a family member's intelligence.

Hypothesis 8: There is a significant difference in the number of verbal insults per series within Category H:
Verbal insults or signs not directed towards any one individual or individual idea, yet relaying sarcastic overtones.
Example: making a negative/sarcastic comment not directed toward anyone specifically.

The preceding research questions and hypotheses were developed because there are variations within the format of the two television series within this research sample. There is an overall difference between the two series, even though they are
both categorized within the family situation comedy format. "Roseanne's" format involves a family residing in an environment that is "expectantly" conducive to anti-social behavior because of its low socioeconomic status. On the other hand, "The Cosby Show's" format, which involves an upper middle-class family, creates an environment in which various displays of anti-social behavior and/or verbal insults "should not" be expected. Therefore, hypotheses involving differentiating displayed amounts and types of verbal insults were developed.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Sample

Twenty episodes of two television series, ten episodes of "Roseanne", and ten episodes of "The Cosby Show" were recorded randomly to ensure an equal sampling of each series. Both of the programs are in syndication; therefore, episodes from a variety of different seasons for each series were recorded and analyzed for opposite sex sibling displays of verbal insults.

Two series were selected for this thesis research to ensure an effective comparison/contrast within each series according to its program format. "The Cosby Show", a formerly long running television series on NBC that began airing in 1984, was chosen for this content analysis based Katherine Heintz's (1992) research which named that program as one of American adolescents' favorite television series. "Roseanne", which also aired during the mid-eighties through the mid-nineties, was not noted in any of the previous content analyses; however, it was chosen independently by the researcher because it complimented "The Cosby Show" within each of the analyzed categories of verbal insults and the framework of the character interactions that were coded.
These series were also chosen because they were both long running television series, therefore a significant number of episodes were available for sampling, recording, and research. However, there are limitations in the availability of the anticipated tapings of these series. Recording such a large amount of episodes per series relies on the availability of rerun-free airings.

Both series represent completely different types of family units. On "Roseanne" the family is White, and working-class. Adversely, on "The Cosby Show" the family is Black, and upper middle-class. Both series were also chosen because they are family oriented situation comedies with one male child, and at least two daughters. This allows equal numbers of opportunities for brother-sister dyadic interactions to be coded for their verbal insults.

Instrument

A verbal insult analysis code sheet was developed by the researcher for each series. Then, each series was analyzed for content of its verbal insults by episodes. The instrument is designed to count and analyze brother-sister (sibling) verbal insults. A count of the verbal insults was made by dividing the displayed verbal insults into eight different categories that research defines as being "going against", negative, categories of verbal insults that demonstrate anti-social behavior that adolescents may identify with and be affected by (Heintz, 1992).
A content analysis of each episode for each series was conducted using the eight different categories of verbal insults listed on the Verbal Insult Analysis Code Sheet.

Reliabilities

All episodes for both television series were coded independently by the researcher. Two additional coders include the researcher's thesis committee chair and a student from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. One episode from both series was viewed by all coders and discussed until agreement was reached on definitions of interactions and insults, and how each statement within a brother-sister interaction should be coded using the eight different categories of verbal insults. Then, each additional coder independently analyzed an episode that the original researcher already coded. Outside coders account for 10% of the total episodes coded by the original researcher. Intercoder reliability was calculated at 100% after the independent coders' analyses were compared to the independent researcher's results.
CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Findings of this thesis research found no overall significant difference in the amount or type of verbal insults within the categories tested in the content analysis of "Roseanne" and "The Cosby Show." These findings are significant because research found numerous types of anti-social verbal insults in both series.

Analysis of Data

Within the ten episodes of "Roseanne" that were analyzed there was a total of 46 different types of verbal insults. There were a total of 13 insults in Category A, and they represent 28.3% of the total number of verbal insults. There were a total of 3 insults in Category B, and they represent 6.5% of the total number of verbal insults. There were a total of 4 insults in Category C, and they represent 8.7% of the total number of verbal insults. There were a total of 5 insults in Category D, and they represent 10.9% of the total number of verbal insults. There were a total of 4 insults in Category E, and they represent 8.7% of the total number of verbal insults. There was a total of 1 insult in Category F, and it represents 2.2% of the total number of verbal
insults. There were a total of 9 insults in Category G, and they represent 19.6% of the total number of verbal insults. There were a total of 7 insults in Category H, and they represent 15.2% of the total number of verbal insults.

Within the ten episodes of "The Cosby Show" that were analyzed there was a total of 29 different types of verbal insults. There were a total of 5 insults in Category A, and they represent 17.2% of the total number of verbal insults. There were a total of 2 insults in Category B, and they represent 6.9% of the total number of verbal insults. There were a total of 2 insults in Category C, and they represent 6.9% of the total number of verbal insults. There were a total of 2 insults in Category D, and they represent 6.9% of the total number of verbal insults. There was a total of 1 insult in Category E, and it represents 3.4% of the total number of verbal insults. There were a total of 2 insults in Category F, and they represent 6.9% of the total number of verbal insults. There were a total of 9 insults in Category G, and they represent 31% of the total number of verbal insults. There were a total of 6 insults in Category H, and they represent 20.7% of the total number of verbal insults.

There was only one category that showed similarities in the comparison of both television series. Category G - Verbal insults that show stupidity or lack of common sense on the part of a family member occurred an equal number of times in both "Roseanne" and "The Cosby Show." It should also be noted that the frequency of the occurrence of verbal insults in Category G within the
sample of episodes for each series was significantly high (n=9). Therefore, there were nine different verbal insults within each series that displayed negative, anti-social behavior by making comments about another family member's (sibling's) stupidity. The largest number of verbal insults within this study were in Category A: Verbal insults that lower the self esteem of the victim, within the research sample of episodes of "Roseanne" (n=13). There were more than twice as many self esteem insults within this category on "Roseanne" than on "The Cosby Show." An example of one of these types of anti-social displays of verbal insults includes Darlene Conner, from "Roseanne," telling her brother D.J. Conner that he is "stupid trash."

At least two speculations can be made about the findings of this research. First, one can speculate about the research questions that were posed for this study, concerning a difference in the number and types of verbal insults based on a television family's socioeconomic status and/or race. Based on an initial review of the statistics, one could speculate that the there are higher numbers of self esteem insults on "Roseanne" because the theme of the television series revolved around a working-class family struggling to make ends meet. Throughout the entire series there were constant comparisons made by various members of the "Conner family" to wealthier classes of people. This may have been the justification for allowing the family members and siblings to insult one another, because everyone in the family had low self esteem about their socioeconomic status. The race of the
television families that were analyzed within this sample did not seem to make a significant difference in the amount or types of verbal insults displayed. Second, one can speculate that an adolescent viewing these so called "affiliative family programs" could be affected by the presence and frequency of their anti-social/negative displays of behavior. This thesis research found that based on the percentages and totals represented within each category, there is a significant number of anti-social behavioral displays within each episode of both series due to the numerous types of verbal insults that can be represented.
Table 1

Categories of Verbal Insult Types by Program: Comparison Between "Roseanne" and "The Cosby Show"

**TELEVISION SERIES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INSULT TYPES</th>
<th>&quot;Roseanne&quot;</th>
<th>&quot;The Cosby Show</th>
<th>TOTALS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Category A:</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Self esteem)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category B:</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Father-figure)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category C:</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Mother-figure)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category D:</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Female dominance)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category E:</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Male dominance)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category F:</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Outside forces)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category G:</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Stupidity)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category H:</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Non directed/Sarcastic)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTALS</strong></td>
<td><strong>46</strong></td>
<td><strong>29</strong></td>
<td><strong>75</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
t-test for Equality of Means

The t-test determined if there were significant differences within the verbal insult categories between the two series. Hypotheses 1 - 8 predicted significant differences in the numbers of verbal insults that are displayed between the different television series in each of the eight categories. The t-test for equality of means found no significant difference in either verbal insult category between the two television series, seven out of eight times within the eight categories of verbal insults.

Hypothesis 1 predicted a significant difference in the number of verbal insults that are displayed between the different television series in Category A: Verbal insults that lower self esteem of the victim. There was not a significant difference in Category A (t=-1.067, df=18, p>.05). Hypothesis 2 predicted a significant difference in the number of verbal insults that are displayed between the different television series in Category B: Verbal insults that undermine authority/character of father-figure. There was not a significant difference in Category B (t=-.305, df=18, p>.05). Hypothesis 3 predicted a significant difference in the number of verbal insults that are displayed between the different television series in Category C: Verbal insults that undermine authority/character of mother-figure. There was not a significant difference in Category C (t=-.600, df=18, p>.05). Hypothesis 4 predicted a significant difference in the number of verbal insults that are displayed between the different television series in Category D: Verbal insults or
actions that assert female dominance. There was not a significant difference in Category D (t=-.758, df=18, p>.05). Hypothesis 5 predicted a significant difference in the number of verbal insults that are displayed between the different television series in Category E: Verbal insults or actions that assert male dominance. There was not a significant difference in Category E (t=-.728, df=18, p>.05). Hypothesis 6 predicted a significant difference in the number of verbal insults that are displayed between the different television series in Category F: Verbal insults that attack society or outside forces; i.e., neighbors, co-workers, customers, etc. There is a significant difference in Category F (t=.447, df=18, p<.05). Hypothesis 7 predicted a significant difference in the number of verbal insults that are displayed between the different television series in Category G: Verbal insults that show stupidity or lack of common sense on part of family member. There was not a significant difference in Category G (t=.000, df=18, p>.05). Hypothesis 8 predicted a significant difference in the number of verbal insults that are displayed between the different television series in Category H: Verbal insults or signs not directed toward any one individual or individual idea, yet relaying sarcastic overtones. There was not a significant difference in Category H (t=-.178, df=18, p>.05).
Statistical Analysis of Research Hypotheses

The only significant difference in the number of verbal insults per series was in Category F: Verbal insults that attack society or outside forces; i.e., neighbors, co-workers, customers, etc. ($t=0.447, df=18, p<0.05$). Thus, only Research Hypothesis 7, concerning Category F, may be accepted. All other research hypotheses must be rejected. Therefore, the Null Hypothesis is not rejected/accepted for Hypothesis 1, Hypothesis 2, Hypothesis 3, Hypothesis 4, Hypothesis 5, Hypothesis 7, and Hypothesis 8. Since findings show that there is a significant difference in the $t$-test for Equality of Means comparison within Category F, the Null Hypothesis for Hypothesis 7 is rejected.
CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

This study conducts a content analysis of "Roseanne" and "The Cosby Show" and speculates about the possible development of antisocial behavior in adolescents due to prolonged exposure to television viewing that is marketed toward families and adolescents, yet has significant amounts of verbal insults and other displays of negative behavior.

"Roseanne" and "The Cosby Show" were chosen in this research sample because previous research found that family oriented situation comedies are among children's favorite television programs. Ten episodes of each series were recorded and analyzed for their anti-social verbal content. The brother-sister sibling relationship was analyzed within each episode and coded using eight different categories of verbal insults per episode for each series, because previous research found that television siblings' character interactions are primarily conflictual. Comparisons were made within each of the eight categories of verbal insults between both series using a t-test for Equality of Means.

48
Discussion of Results

Results of this thesis research found that there is no overall significant difference between the various types of verbals insults that were coded for each episode. Only one verbal insult category, Category F: Verbal insults that attack society or outside forces; i.e., neighbors, co-workers, customers, etc., exhibited a significant difference between the two series, "Roseanne" and "The Cosby Show." The content analysis showed that there was one verbal insult category observed in the research sample of "Roseanne" that had the highest frequency of occurrence within this entire study. Category A: Verbal insults that lower the self esteem of the victim, had the largest number of insults coded (n=13). "Roseanne" had more than twice as many verbal insults in the self esteem category as "The Cosby Show" (n=5).

Speculations can be made about why this occurred. Perhaps it was because there was not a large enough sample, or variety in the types of episodes gathered for each series within this random research sample. On the other hand, perhaps there are higher numbers of self esteem insults on "Roseanne" because the theme of the television series revolved around a working-class family struggling to make ends meet. Throughout the entire series there were constant comparisons made by various members of the "Conner family" to wealthier classes of people. This may have been the justification for allowing the family members and siblings to insult one another, because everyone in the family had low self esteem about their socioeconomic status.
The race of the television families that were analyzed within this sample did not seem to make a significant difference in the number or types of verbal insults displayed. There was an equal number of verbal insults made within the sample of both, "Roseanne" and "The Cosby Show," (n=9), in Category G: Verbal insults that show stupidity or lack of common sense on the part of a family member.

One can also speculate that an adolescent viewing these so-called "affiliative family programs" could be negatively affected by the frequency of their anti-social displays of behavior. It was determined that there is a surprisingly large number of verbal insults on family programming within brother-sister dyadic interactions. This may be evident for a number of different reasons. Perhaps broadcasting televised brother-sister dyadic interactions that are primarily conflictual is justified by programmers because research states that real-life opposite sex sibling interactions are on average, more conflictual than same sex sibling interactions (Heintz, 1992). Thus, programmers may feel as if they can present these forms of anti-social behavior on television because these "fictitious" interactions are merely imitating life. The danger in this notion lies in the fact that real-life adolescents could start displaying these negative, anti-social models of fictitious interactions within their everyday behavior. When this happens, "real-life" (adolescents) begins unwittingly imitating these "fictitious" anti-social displays.
One can also speculate about other possible reasons for televised portrayals of conflictual brother-sister dyadic interactions. Perhaps there is a specific model of success for family oriented television situation comedies that is not deviated from. Even past situation comedies like the Honeymooners contained verbal insults that speculatively impacted viewers negatively. It seems that no matter what race or socioeconomic status a situation comedy family is characterized as being, there will be at least a minimal amount of negative and/or anti-social program content presented. Perhaps this is because television programmers and/or executives are only concerned with profit and not adolescents' social well-being.

Conclusions and Recommendations for Future Study

Television is so commonplace that it seems to be virtually invisible, and impossible to detect as a major factor contributing to the dysfunction of adolescents and modern society collectively. This requires researchers to employ painstaking methods, such as the content analysis conducted within this thesis research, to explore television's content and its possible anti-social effects on modern society's and adolescents' values, attitudes, and behaviors.

Any number of verbal insults or anti-social displays of behavior on television programming, however minute, marketed toward families and/or adolescents could possibly have lasting negative effects on our youth. We can not draw concrete
conclusions about mass media's effect on adolescents solely from content analyses of one type of observed interaction. This limits the chances of discovering and diminishing the anti-social effects of television viewing on adolescents.

Future research should further explore a variety of other methods of analyzing the social learning influence of all types of programming and program interactions on adolescents. More complex units of interaction analysis need to be developed and researched. Researchers like Katherine Heintz (1992) initiated studies such as this; however, the categories of interaction used within her research, "going-toward," "going-against," and "going away," are not as elegant as research would hope. New units of interaction analysis that are mutually exclusive and research-effective must be developed to continue television interaction research studies. Moreover, findings of this research indicate that future research should also investigate the total amount of verbal insults and anti-social displays of behavior within all family programming and, conduct television audience analyses in order to hinder television programming's negative effects on adolescents' social development.
APPENDICES

CODING INSTRUMENT 1

AND

CODING INSTRUMENT 2
CODING INSTRUMENT 1

"The Cosby Show's"
Categories of Verbal Insults

RESEARCH DESIGN - A content analysis of ten episodes of "The Cosby Show" was conducted with a count of the number of verbal insults that took place in each of the thirty minute segments between brother/sister (sibling) relationships. The following categories of insults were established:

Category A: Verbal insults that lower self esteem of the victim.

Category B: Verbal insults that undermine authority/character of father-figure.

Category C: Verbal insults that undermine authority/character of mother-figure.

Category D: Verbal insults or actions that assert female dominance.

Category E: Verbal insults or actions that assert male dominance.

Category F: Verbal insults that attack society or outside forces; i.e., neighbors, co-workers, customers, etc.

Category G: Verbal insults that show stupidity or lack of common sense on part of family member.

Category H: Verbal insults or signs not directed toward any one individual or individual idea, yet relaying sarcastic overtones.
DATA INTERPRETATION

A. Verbal insults that lower self esteem of the victim:

   Episode 1 - Denise goes to Hillman
   Episode 2 - Theo visits friend in hospital
   Episode 3 - Rudy has friends over
   Episode 4 - Cliff and Claire go to community center
   Episode 5 - Denise baby-sits Winnie and Nelson
   Episode 6 - Rudy and Peter play with Cliff's juicer
   Episode 7 - Cliff's birthday with Lena Horne
   Episode 8 - End of summer vacation
   Episode 9 - Cliff Remodeled kitchen with Dabnis
   Episode 10 - Rudy likes Clarence

TOTAL:

Of ___ verbal insults, this category represents ___ %
of all insults.

B. Verbal insults that undermine authority/character of
father-figure:

   Episode 1 - Denise goes to Hillman
   Episode 2 - Theo visits friend in hospital
   Episode 3 - Rudy has friends over
   Episode 4 - Cliff and Claire go to community center
   Episode 5 - Denise baby-sits Winnie and Nelson
   Episode 6 - Rudy and Peter play with Cliff's juicer
   Episode 7 - Cliff's birthday with Lena Horne

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
Episode 8 - End of summer vacation
Episode 9 - Cliff Remodeled kitchen with Dabnis
Episode 10 - Rudy likes Clarence
TOTAL:

Of _____ verbal insults, this category represents ____ % of all insults.

C. Verbal insults that undermine authority/character of mother-figure:

Episode 1 - Denise goes to Hillman
Episode 2 - Theo visits friend in hospital
Episode 3 - Rudy has friends over
Episode 4 - Cliff and Claire go to community center
Episode 5 - Denise baby-sits Winnie and Nelson
Episode 6 - Rudy and Peter play with Cliff's juicer
Episode 7 - Cliff's birthday with Lena Horne
Episode 8 - End of summer vacation
Episode 9 - Cliff Remodeled kitchen with Dabnis
Episode 10 - Rudy likes Clarence
TOTAL:

Of _____ verbal insults, this category represents ____ % of all insults.

D. Verbal insults or actions that assert female dominance:

Episode 1 - Denise goes to Hillman
Episode 2 - Theo visits friend in hospital
Episode 3 - Rudy has friends over
Episode 4 - Cliff and Claire go to community center
Episode 5 - Denise baby-sits Winnie and Nelson
Episode 6 - Rudy and Peter play with Cliff's juicer
Episode 7 - Cliff's birthday with Lena Horne
Episode 8 - End of summer vacation
Episode 9 - Cliff Remodeled kitchen with Dabnis
Episode 10 - Rudy likes Clarence
TOTAL:

Of ____ verbal insults, this category represents ____ %
of all insults.

E. Verbal insults or actions that assert male dominance.

Episode 1 - Denise goes to Hillman
Episode 2 - Theo visits friend in hospital
Episode 3 - Rudy has friends over
Episode 4 - Cliff and Claire go to community center
Episode 5 - Denise baby-sits Winnie and Nelson
Episode 6 - Rudy and Peter play with Cliff's juicer
Episode 7 - Cliff's birthday with Lena Horne
Episode 8 - End of summer vacation
Episode 9 - Cliff Remodeled kitchen with Dabnis
Episode 10 - Rudy likes Clarence
TOTAL:

Of ____ verbal insults, this category represents ____ %
of all insults.
F. Verbal insults that attack society or outside forces; i.e.,
neighbors, co-workers, customers, etc.:

Episode 1 - Denise goes to Hillman
Episode 2 - Theo visits friend in hospital
Episode 3 - Rudy has friends over
Episode 4 - Cliff and Claire go to community center
Episode 5 - Denise baby-sits Winnie and Nelson
Episode 6 - Rudy and Peter play with Cliff's juicer
Episode 7 - Cliff's birthday with Lena Horne
Episode 8 - End of summer vacation
Episode 9 - Cliff Remodeled kitchen with Dabnis
Episode 10 - Rudy likes Clarence

TOTAL:

Of ______ verbal insults, this category represents ______ %
of all insults.

G. Verbal insults that show stupidity or lack of common
sense on part of family member.

Episode 1 - Denise goes to Hillman
Episode 2 - Theo visits friend in hospital
Episode 3 - Rudy has friends over
Episode 4 - Cliff and Claire go to community center
Episode 5 - Denise baby-sits Winnie and Nelson
Episode 6 - Rudy and Peter play with Cliff's juicer
Episode 7 - Cliff's birthday with Lena Horne
Episode 8 - End of summer vacation

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
Episode 9 - Cliff Remodeled kitchen with Dabnis

Episode 10 - Rudy likes Clarence

TOTAL:

Of ____ verbal insults, this category represents ____ % of all insults.

H. Verbal insults or signs not directed towards any one individual or individual idea, yet relaying sarcastic overtones.

Episode 1 - Denise goes to Hillman

Episode 2 - Theo visits friend in hospital

Episode 3 - Rudy has friends over

Episode 4 - Cliff and Claire go to community center

Episode 5 - Denise baby-sits Winnie and Nelson

Episode 6 - Rudy and Peter play with Cliff's juicer

Episode 7 - Cliff's birthday with Lena Horne

Episode 8 - End of summer vacation

Episode 9 - Cliff Remodeled kitchen with Dabnis

Episode 10 - Rudy likes Clarence

TOTAL:

Of ____ verbal insults, this category represents ____ % of all insults.
"Roseanne's"
Categories of Verbal Insults

RESEARCH DESIGN - A content analysis of ten episodes of "Roseanne" was conducted with a count of the number of verbal insults that took place in each of the thirty minute segments between brother/sister (sibling) relationships. The following categories of insults were established:

Category A: Verbal insults that lower self esteem of the victim.

Category B: Verbal insults that undermine authority/character of father-figure.

Category C: Verbal insults that undermine authority/character of mother-figure.

Category D: Verbal insults or actions that assert female dominance.

Category E: Verbal insults or actions that assert male dominance.

Category F: Verbal insults that attack society or outside forces; i.e., neighbors, co-workers, customers, etc.

Category G: Verbal insults that show stupidity or lack of common sense on part of family member.

Category H: Verbal insults or signs not directed toward any one individual or individual idea, yet relaying sarcastic overtones.
DATA INTERPRETATION

A. Verbal insults that lower self esteem of the victim:
   Episode 1 - Fred left Jackie
   Episode 2 - Becky and Mark move in trailer
   Episode 3 - DJ's bossy girlfriend
   Episode 4 - Darlene and David get back together
   Episode 5 - Roseanne is nesting/Neilson Family
   Episode 6 - David graduates
   Episode 7 - Roseanne has baby shower to get a crib
   Episode 8 - Jackie and Roseanne fight over oreo mom
   Episode 9 - Dan and Roseanne sneak in Barmitzvah
   Episode 10 - Dan upset about not being a singer
   TOTAL :
   Of _____ verbal insults, this category represents _____% of all insults.

B. Verbal insults that undermine authority/character of father-figure:
   Episode 1 - Fred left Jackie
   Episode 2 - Becky and Mark move in trailer
   Episode 3 - DJ's bossy girlfriend
   Episode 4 - Darlene and David get back together
   Episode 5 - Roseanne is nesting/Neilson Family
   Episode 6 - David graduates
   Episode 7 - Roseanne has baby shower to get a crib
Episode 8 - Jackie and Roseanne fight over oreo mom

Episode 9 - Dan and Roseanne sneak in Barmitzvah

Episode 10 - Dan upset about not being a singer

TOTAL:

Of ____ verbal insults, this category represents ____ % of all insults.

C. Verbal insults that undermine authority/character of mother-figure:

Episode 1 - Fred left Jackie

Episode 2 - Becky and Mark move in trailer

Episode 3 - DJ's bossy girlfriend

Episode 4 - Darlene and David get back together

Episode 5 - Roseanne is nesting/Neilson Family

Episode 6 - David graduates

Episode 7 - Roseanne has baby shower to get a crib

Episode 8 - Jackie and Roseanne fight over oreo mom

Episode 9 - Dan and Roseanne sneak in Barmitzvah

Episode 10 - Dan upset about not being a singer

TOTAL:

Of ____ verbal insults, this category represents ____ % of all insults.

D. Verbal insults or actions that assert female dominance:

Episode 1 - Fred left Jackie

Episode 2 - Becky and Mark move in trailer
E. Verbal insults or actions that assert male dominance.

Episode 1 - Fred left Jackie  
Episode 2 - Becky and Mark move in trailer  
Episode 3 - DJ's bossy girlfriend  
Episode 4 - Darlene and David get back together  
Episode 5 - Roseanne is nesting/Neilson Family  
Episode 6 - David graduates  
Episode 7 - Roseanne has baby shower to get a crib  
Episode 8 - Jackie and Roseanne fight over oreo mom  
Episode 9 - Dan and Roseanne sneak in Barmitzvah  
Episode 10 - Dan upset about not being a singer  
TOTAL:  
Of ____ verbal insults, this category represents ____ % of all insults.
F. Verbal insults that attack society or outside forces; i.e., neighbors, co-workers, customers, etc.:

Episode 1 - Fred left Jackie
Episode 2 - Becky and Mark move in trailer
Episode 3 - DJ's bossy girlfriend
Episode 4 - Darlene and David get back together
Episode 5 - Roseanne is nesting/Neilson Family
Episode 6 - David graduates
Episode 7 - Roseanne has baby shower to get a crib
Episode 8 - Jackie and Roseanne fight over oreo mom
Episode 9 - Dan and Roseanne sneak in Barmitzvah
Episode 10 - Dan upset about not being a singer

TOTAL:

Of ___ verbal insults, this category represents ___% of all insults.

G. Verbal insults that show stupidity or lack of common sense on part of family member.

Episode 1 - Fred left Jackie
Episode 2 - Becky and Mark move in trailer
Episode 3 - DJ's bossy girlfriend
Episode 4 - Darlene and David get back together
Episode 5 - Roseanne is nesting/Neilson Family
Episode 6 - David graduates
Episode 7 - Roseanne has baby shower to get a crib
Episode 8 - Jackie and Roseanne fight over oreo mom
Episode 9 - Dan and Roseanne sneak in Barmitzvah
Episode 10 - Dan upset about not being a singer
TOTAL:

Of _____ verbal insults, this category represents ____ %
of all insults.

H. Verbal insults or signs not directed towards any one
individual or individual idea, yet relaying sarcastic
overtones.

Episode 1 - Fred left Jackie
Episode 2 - Becky and Mark move in trailer
Episode 3 - DJ's bossy girlfriend
Episode 4 - Darlene and David get back together
Episode 5 - Roseanne is nesting/Neilson Family
Episode 6 - David graduates
Episode 7 - Roseanne has baby shower to get a crib
Episode 8 - Jackie and Roseanne fight over oreo mom
Episode 9 - Dan and Roseanne sneak in Barmitzvah
Episode 10 - Dan upset about not being a singer
TOTAL:

Of _____ verbal insults, this category represents ____ %
of all insults.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.


Jeffries, S. (1996). Television is accused of creating a society of violent, illiterate slobs. Yes, it can show us how to kill - but it can also teach us how to love. *New Statesman*, 127(4383), 48-51.


Leland, J. (1997). The magnetic tube: The hand that rocks the cradle may rule the world, but the hand that holds the remote may be more important. It's never too early to start watching what your kids watch. *Newsweek, 129*, 89-90.


Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.


VITA

Graduate College
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Eunette Gentry

Local Address:
9004 Fox Hollow Court, #202
Las Vegas, Nevada 89117

Home Address:
5950 Huntview Drive
Jackson, Mississippi 39206

Degrees:
Bachelor of Science, Mass Communications, 1998
Jackson State University

Special Honors and Awards:
Awarded $3,000 First Prize in a National Journalism/Mass Media Essay Competition
Graduated with High Honors

Thesis Title: Pro-social and Anti-social Effects of Television Viewing on Adolescents: Speculations based on Family Situation Comedy Content

Thesis Examination Committee:
Chairperson, Dr. Lawrence Mullen, Ph.D
Committee Member, Dr. Richard Jensen, Ph.D
Committee Member, Dr. Beth Semic, Ph.D
Graduate Faculty Representative, Dr. Kate Hausbeck, Ph.D