

A COMPARATIVE CONTENT ANALYSIS OF NEGATIVE  
BEHAVIOR IN INTERACTIONS AMONG CHARACTERS  
ON FOX BROADCASTING SITUATION COMEDIES,  
AND THE THREE TOP-RATED SITUATION  
COMEDIES ON NETWORK  
TELEVISION

By

DALE LEON BASLER

Bachelor of Arts

Southwestern Oklahoma State University

Weatherford, Oklahoma

1975

Submitted to the Faculty of the  
Graduate College of the  
Oklahoma State University  
in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for  
the Degree of  
MASTER OF SCIENCE  
MAY, 1990

Thesis  
1990  
B315c  
cop. 2

A COMPARATIVE CONTENT ANALYSIS OF NEGATIVE  
BEHAVIOR IN INTERACTIONS AMONG CHARACTERS  
ON FOX BROADCASTING SITUATION COMEDIES,  
AND THE THREE TOP-RATED SITUATION  
COMEDIES ON NETWORK  
TELEVISION

Thesis Approved:

*Maureen Newcomb*

Thesis Adviser

*William J. Ruff*

*Elizabeth Schulz*

*Norman N. Duerben*

Dean of the Graduate College

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to express my deepest gratitude to my thesis adviser, Dr. Maureen J. Nemecek, for her encouragement, help, and guidance throughout this study.

Many thanks also go to Elisabeth H. Schillinger, and Dr. William J. Rugg, for serving on my graduate committee. Their helpful suggestions and positive support aided me greatly throughout this project.

Thanks also to Dr. Charles Fleming for helping me understand the basic concepts of mass communication research.

Special appreciation goes to my wife, Mary L. Basler, who provided the encouragement, understanding, and loving support I needed to make it through my graduate program. I couldn't have made it without her.

Finally, this work is dedicated to the loving memory of Lamona K. Bruner, my sister, who always believed in me. Thanks, Sis.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Purpose of Study.....	1
Statement of Problem.....	2
Negative Behavior in Comedy.....	3
Importance of the Study.....	5
Scope and Limitations of the Study.....	6
II. LITERATURE REVIEW.....	8
Television as an Influence on Social Behavior.....	9
Previous Studies.....	12
III. METHODOLOGY.....	17
Introduction.....	17
Scope of the Study.....	17
Media Selected.....	18
Time Frame.....	20
Statistical Tests.....	21
Tables.....	21
Limitations.....	21
Coding by Judges.....	21
Coding Reliability.....	22
Categories for Analysis.....	22
Defining the Categories.....	22
Hypotheses of the Study.....	26
IV. FINDINGS.....	29
Data Collection.....	29
Interpretation and Evaluation.....	48
V. CONCLUSIONS.....	54
Summary.....	54
Recommendations.....	56
Conclusion.....	57
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	59

	Page
APPENDIX A - CODING SHEET.....	65
APPENDIX B - RAW DATA FREQUENCIES FOR INITIATORS OF NEGATIVE BEHAVIOR FROM TOP THREE.....	66
APPENDIX C - RAW DATA FREQUENCIES FOR INITIATORS OF NEGATIVE BEHAVIOR FROM FOX.....	67
APPENDIX D - RAW DATA FREQUENCIES FOR RECEIVERS OF NEGATIVE BEHAVIOR FROM TOP THREE.....	68
APPENDIX E - RAW DATA FREQUENCIES FOR RECEIVERS OF NEGATIVE BEHAVIOR FROM FOX.....	69

## LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
I. Observed Frequency of Negative Behavior in Sit-coms Sampled Fox vs. Top Three.....	30
II. Observed Frequency of Negative Behavior on Individual Sit-com Programs Sampled.....	32
III. Type of Negative Behavior by Initiator.....	33
IV. Type of Response by Receiver to Negative Behavior.....	35
V. Gender of Instigator of Negative Behavior.....	37
VI. Gender of Receiver of Negative Behavior.....	40
VII. Age Classification of Instigator or Negative Behavior.....	42
VIII. Age Classification of Receiver of Negative Behavior.....	45
IX. Age and Gender Classification of Instigator of Negative Behavior.....	47
X. Age and Gender Classification of Receiver of Negative Behavior.....	49

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

In 1987, Fox Broadcasting Company initiated Evening Programming on the new Fox Network. Advance publicity for the Fox offerings promised fresh and innovative alternatives to programs on the established networks.<sup>1</sup>

While opinion is mixed on whether Fox programs have lived up to initial claims for freshness and innovation, several of the programs have caused some furor because of their controversial content.

Some of the more controversial programs on Fox have been situation comedies, or sit-coms. These sit-coms often feature characters who exhibit negative behavior toward other characters in the program, a trait which some media critics feel may be harmful to some viewers.

This thesis will address the kinds and frequency of negative behavior portrayed on Fox sit-coms, and compare these with top-rated sit-coms on other networks.

#### Purpose of the Study

This thesis was prompted by a desire to examine the programing practices of a fledgling network as it struggles to survive in the unfriendly world of network television,



dominated by ABC, NBC, AND CBS, the giant broadcasting monoliths. In its effort to find a firm foothold, Fox Broadcasting has resorted to measures which some viewers find objectionable.

The purpose of this study, then, was to discover whether Fox has broken new ground, or perhaps more correctly, broken the boundaries of propriety and good taste in order to attract an audience. In comparing the negative behaviors in interactions among characters in situation comedies, some insights into the changing nature of television and its possible effects on the viewing public may be learned.

#### Statement of the Problem

When Fox Broadcasting Company began airing its Sunday night programming in 1987, Garth Ancier, senior vice-president of programming for Fox, stated that Fox was out to get the young audience, those under 34 years of age.<sup>2</sup> In order to do this, Fox has introduced programs and content designed to catch the attention of the younger viewer.<sup>3</sup> The use of sexually suggestive material, double entendre, and negative portrayals of characters, etc., has sparked some controversy, and has even led to letter writing campaigns to corporate sponsors, and proposed boycotts of the sponsor's products.<sup>4</sup>

Fox, however, seems to have weathered most of the storms

of protest, and seems to have been successful in attracting the younger target audience.<sup>5</sup>

Based upon this success with a younger audience, and the idea that young people's social patterns may be influenced by television viewing, this thesis will examine instances of negative behavior among characters on Fox sit-coms, and compare those behaviors to those of the top three rated sit-coms on network television during the past year.

### Negative Behavior in Comedy

Negative behavior in comedy has a long and illustrious history. Indeed, early forms of humor involved much physical aggression and violence. We still call physical humor "slapstick," which got its name from actors beating each other with staffs for comic effect. It has also been suggested that all humor is based upon the misfortune of another individual. For example, the banana skin routine depends on someone slipping and falling, which might result in severe injury to that person.

Verbal comedy, as well as physical comedy, may be said to be dependent upon negative behavior for its humor. Most jokes are about the bad things or unfortunate circumstances that happen to ourselves, or someone else. Vaudeville comics depended upon insults and put-downs, as well as pratfalls, and other potentially dangerous physical acts to get laughs. Early movie comics such as Charlie Chaplin, and Buster Keaton, and later, W.C. Fields, and the Marx

Brothers were dependent upon physical or verbal acts of aggression which might be considered negative. Even radio comedy contained negative verbal aggression, with stars such as Charlie McCarthy trading barbs with W.C. Fields, and Mr. Dithers calling Dagwood a "lunkhead." The history of American humor, it seems, is filled with examples of negative behavior. Generations of Americans have grown up being exposed to this negative behavior, seemingly without harmful effect. However, there seems to be growing concern about some television comedy and its effects on viewers, particularly younger viewers.

A possible reason for this concern might be the large amount of exposure to such behaviors. In times past, one might have seen one or two movies a week, or have gone to a vaudeville show once or twice a month. Today, however, with the average American television set playing for nearly seven hours per day, the opportunity for heavy, repeated exposure to negative behavior is much greater. In addition, each program often contains a greater number of negative behaviors than its predecessors.

Another reason might be that the comedy in today's sitcoms seems to be much harsher than in times past. Traditional values were always in evidence. While Ricky might yell at Lucy for some dumb stunt, or Ralph might threaten to send Alice "to the moon," there was little doubt that the characters really cared for each other. There was an unspoken "line" over which the characters

would not cross. The characters in many of today's sit-coms, however, often use vicious put-downs and scathing sarcasm to provide humor. Traditional values seem to be trampled underfoot in programs such as Married . . . With Children, where the characters are caricatures of family members and their dialogue is filled with sarcasm and double entendre.<sup>6</sup> This "high voltage" humor led one Michigan viewer, Terry Rakolta, to mount a letter writing campaign to the show's sponsor's urging them to boycott the show, which she described as "consistently offensive." Rakolta also claims that the show exploits women, stereotypes poor people, and is antifamily;<sup>7</sup> charges which the show's producer claims are just part of the program's goal to amuse . . . and offend.<sup>8</sup>

Today's sit-coms are much different than humorous programs of the past. The implications of the changing attitudes and character portrayals lead some viewers to see these shows as having harmful effects on the audience. Therefore, study into the frequency and types of negative behaviors on television is not only warranted, but necessary.

#### Importance of the Study

The effects of television on its viewers has long been a concern for many people. This seemingly everpresent companion may be molding and shaping the attitudes and perceptions of its viewers in almost imperceptible ways.

It is, therefore, the obligation of mass media researchers to examine the messages, both intended and unintended, television conveys.

This study is significant in that it builds upon prior research findings, and explores an area of possible effect on viewers. Also, since the Fox network is relatively new, little research appears to have been done on its programming content. Results of this study may provide some insight into Fox programming practices, and possibly provide other researchers with material for additional study.

#### Scope and Limitations of the Study

The scope of this thesis is to investigate whether the observed negative behaviors among characters on Fox Broadcasting situation comedies differ from those on top-rated situation comedies on network television.

This thesis examines negative behaviors among characters on six situation comedies: Cheers, Roseanne, The Cosby Show, Open House, The Simpson's, and Married . . . With Children. The selected research period is the February, 1990 sweeps rating period. Negative behaviors were coded by frequency, type, and age and gender characteristics of the initiator and receiver.

A limitation of this thesis is that the sweeps rating period, chosen to provide episodes of comparable quality, is limited to a time span of one month.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>"Programing: Fox Broadcasting Co.: The Birth of A Network?," Broadcasting, Vol. 115, No. 14, (April 6, 1987), p. 88.

<sup>2</sup>ibid. 89.

<sup>3</sup>ibid.

<sup>4</sup>"Michigan Viewer Urges Ad Boycott of 'Married . . . With Children.'", Broadcasting, Vol. 116, No. 10 (March 6, 1989), p. 34.

<sup>5</sup>"Programing: 'Raunch' on a Roll," Broadcasting, Vol, 116, No. 48, (November 21, 1988), p. 27.

<sup>6</sup>Richard Zoglin, "Home is Where the Venom Is," Time, 134:54, (April 16, 1990), p. 27.

<sup>7</sup>"Michigan Viewer Urges Ad Boycott of 'Married . . . With Children.'", Broadcasting.

<sup>8</sup>"Programing: 'Raunch' on a Roll," Broadcasting.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Almost from its inception, some people have expressed concern about the role television plays in our lives.

Marshal McLuhan's concept of "the media is the message," that a new medium, in and of itself, shapes and transforms society, was developed as he experienced the birth and growing pains of this new electronic marvel . . . television, during the 1950's and 1960's.<sup>1</sup>

Indeed, some evidence of the truth of this idea may be seen in the way that television, as a medium, has affected people's lives. Television has changed our daily lives more than any other technological innovation of the twentieth century.<sup>2</sup>

According to studies done in the 1950's and 60's, sixty percent of families had changed their sleeping habits, and fifty-five percent of families had altered their mealtimes and eating habits to fit their lives to the demands of the new medium. It was further found that at least seventy-eight percent of families used television as an electronic babysitter.<sup>3</sup>

In the 1970's and 80's, this trend continued. The changing patterns of American life, including the increase

in the number of working mothers, and single parent families, has caused television to become more and more a part of people's lives.<sup>4</sup>

The average American television set is on six hours and fifty-five minutes per day. The average child spends more time in the first fifteen years of his life watching television than any other activity. Studies have shown that students spend four times as many hours watching television as doing homework.<sup>5</sup> The all-pervasiveness of television has turned the "glowing box" into many people's most constant companion. The possible effects that this continual exposure has on individuals has generated understandable concern.

#### Television as an Influence on Social Behavior

We have all seen evidence that social behavior has been influenced, at least to some degree, by what we have seen on television. The emergence of fads such as 'coonskin caps during the 1950's and popular catch phrases such as Fonzie's "Sit on it," during the 1970's can be directly attributed to the Davy Crockett and Happy Days television programs.

While such effects may be relatively innocent, there are those who feel that television's influence may be much more encompassing, and potentially harmful, particularly to younger viewers.



Some communication theories may be used to examine how young viewers might be influenced by watching television.

According to Mead's theory of symbolic interaction, a child acquires the meanings and definitions of those around him through the use of language and significant symbols. This is how the individual develops the concept of total self, which Mead divides into two parts: the "I," which is the impulsive "natural" part, and the "me," the part that is developed according to the definitions and expectations of others.<sup>6</sup>

This occurs, according to Mead, by role playing which takes place in three stages: the preparatory stage, the play stage, and the game stage.

The preparatory stage, inferred from various essays by Mead, occurs at the earliest stage of development, when a child simply mimics actions without any understanding of what he is doing.

It is in the play that, according to Mead, the actual playing of roles occurs. In this stage, the child begins to form a self by taking on the roles of others. These role models are generally referred to as "significant others," because they are specific individuals important in the life of the child. With television serving as a significant other for a great number of children, Mead's theory indicates that, perhaps, many children's basic concept of reality may be being shaped by moving images on a screen.

In the third stage of self-development, the game stage or "completing" stage, the child must take on a number of roles in different situations. The child is able to take on these roles by abstracting a "composite" role from viewing others. He builds a "generalized other," developed from others, often gleaned from media sources.<sup>7</sup>

Similarly, Bandura and Walter's learning theory suggests that children learn their personalities from experiences and interactions with culture, subculture, family, and peers. For many young people, though, television families may be almost replacing real family life during the years of development. Television characters become part of the household's extended family as the viewer follows their activities in episodes that parallel the weeks and "episodes" of real life.<sup>7</sup> This may not always be beneficial. Liebert, et al. note that

. . . admired characters are presumed to behave in appropriate or desirable ways, and their approval of aggression or anti-social behavior elevates the approval of aggression in the eyes of young viewers.<sup>8</sup>

Older viewers as well as younger viewers may be susceptible to the effects of repeated negative behavior on television. Repetition theory, based on the idea that repeated exposure to a message may alter one's perception or attitude toward that message, is often employed in advertising to enhance product recall and acceptance among viewers. It is conceivable, then, that watching repeated negative behaviors might result in the viewer's acceptance

of negative behavior as a normal form of social interaction.

Too, it may be argued that Krugman's related theory of low involvement, which states that messages received by the viewer are stored subliminally and released by a behavioral trigger, may lead to the viewer's own use of negative behavior when confronted with a situation similar to that seen on television.<sup>10</sup>

Heider's balance theory may also explain how viewing negative behavior may alter one's perceptions. If the viewer likes a program, but does not like the use of negative behavior on that program, according to Heider, a stressful mental imbalance will occur. The viewer will then either change his attitude toward the program or change his attitude toward the negative behavior. If this should happen a number of times, the viewer's attitude toward negative behavior as a normal form of interaction may be altered.<sup>11</sup>

It is for the reasons suggested by these theories of perception development and attitude that research into the behaviors in interactions among characters in program content is vitally needed.

#### Previous Studies

The predominant theme in the study of program content has been the examination of physical violence on the screen and its effect on the viewer. As early as 1954, U.S.

Senate hearings were held to debate whether violence should be curtailed on television. The advent of the adult western, which often included as many as twelve acts of murder in a twenty-five minute program, heightened the call for restraint in televised violence.

In 1971, based upon earlier research studies, the Surgeon General published a report that stated there was evidence that everyday viewing of violence was associated with a greater degree of everyday aggressiveness. The combination of evidence from experimental research, which permit causal influence, and from surveys reflecting everyday events, . . . together strongly support the hypothesis that the viewing of violent entertainment increases the likelihood of aggressiveness.<sup>12</sup>

The study of televised violence, while very important, often fails to take into account more subtle forms of behavior which may be socially unacceptable in real life situations. Other studies, often using content analysis, examine the more subtle, personal communications displayed in the media.

Studies by Greenberg, Larson, Baxter and Kaplan, and others, have focused on behaviors in interactions among characters on television programs to examine the effects of television on social realities.

Larson's studies concerned the interactions, both negative and positive, of siblings on situation comedies. Her results indicated that while a slight majority of the

behaviors were positive, they be no means mirrored Family Ties producer Gary David Goldberg's contention that family relationships are "the best thing we've got."

Baxter and Kaplan, as well as Greenberg, et al., have studied the occurrences of antisocial and prosocial behaviors on television. The main focus of their studies is on the act itself, and its implications. The types of acts were divided into physical and verbal acts, with subdivisions, such as verbal insult, physical aggression, etc.<sup>14</sup>

Greenberg noted that overall, a typical hour of television will contain 14 acts of physical aggression, and more than 20 instances of verbal aggression. He states that situation comedies, while quite low in physical aggression, were filled with verbal aggression. In fact, the bulk of the interactions on situation comedies were classified as verbal aggression.<sup>15</sup>

These studies dealt with character's behaviors in their interactions. The programs studied were aired during prime time hours, which are also the prime times of family television watching. Thus, it is likely a great number of the viewers were probably younger family members.

The research in this study is based upon the groundwork laid by Larson, Baxter and Kaplan, Greenberg and others.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Marshall McLuhan, "The Medium is the Message." The Process and Effects of Communication, Eds. Wilbur Schramm and Donald F. Roberts. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971), p. 100.

<sup>2</sup>Robert M. Liebert, et al. The Early Window: Effects of Television on Children and Youth. (Elmsford, New York: Pergamon Press, 1982), p. 1. ✓

<sup>3</sup>ibid. 5.

<sup>4</sup>Joanmarie Kalter, "How TV is Shaking Up the American Family." TV Guide, Vol. 36, No. 30, issue no. 1843 (July 23, 1988), p. 6.

<sup>5</sup>Jim Killackey, "Eighth-Graders Found Long on TV, Short on Homework," The Sunday Oklahoman, April 15, 1990, p. A-20.

<sup>6</sup>Meltzer Bernard. "Mead's Social Psychology." Symbolic Interaction: A Reader in Social Psychology Ed. Jerome G. Manis. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1968), p. 10. ✓

<sup>7</sup>ibid. 11.

<sup>8</sup>Liebert. 52.

<sup>9</sup>ibid. 129.

<sup>10</sup>Warren J. Severin, with James W. Tankard, Jr. Communication Theories, Second Edition. (New York: Longman Inc., 1988), p. 192.

<sup>11</sup>ibid. 188.

<sup>12</sup>ibid. 146.

<sup>13</sup>George Comstock, et al. Television and Human Behavior. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), p. 109. ✓

<sup>14</sup>Mary S. Larson, "Interaction Between Siblings in Prime Time Television Families," Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media, Vol. 33, No. 3, (Summer, 1989), pp. 305-315.

<sup>15</sup>Leslie A. Baxter, and Stuart J. Kaplan, "Context Factors in the Analysis of Prosocial and Antisocial Behavior on Prime Time Television," Journal of Broadcasting, Vol. 27, No. 1 (Winter, 1983), pp. 25-36.

<sup>16</sup>Bradley S. Greenberg, "Life on Television: Content Analyses of U.S. TV Drama" (New Jersey: Ablex Publishing Corporation, 1980), p. 117.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

#### Introduction

This study uses content analysis to compare negative behaviors in interactions among characters on Fox network sit-coms with those on the three top-rated sit-coms on network television.

Richard Budd, et al. defined content analysis as:

. . . a tool for observing and analyzing the overt communication behavior of selected communicators.<sup>1</sup>

Content analysis has become an important tool in studies of television content and its possible impact on social reality. As Hawkins and Pingree note that

. . . content analysis is necessary so that the existence of a pattern can be established and documented. It is the carefully documented and relatively objective patterns in content that, when used to construct questions about social reality, gives this approach its advantage over other survey research in ascribing a causal direction to television. It is probable that a certain level of a set of events must be present for the pattern to influence an individual's social reality. . . . not everyone fully appreciates the importance of tying content of television to a study of how that content might affect social reality.<sup>2</sup>

#### Scope of the Study

The scope of this thesis is to investigate whether the



incidence of negative behavior in interactions among characters on Fox network sit-coms is similar to those on the three highest rated sit-coms. In order to do this, the three programs on the Fox network which may be classified as sit-coms, and three highest rated sit-coms during the past year were studied. Four weekly episodes of each program during a ratings sweep period were examined.

### Media Selected

This thesis examines six sit-com programs: The Simpsons, Married . . . with Children, and Open House on the Fox network; Cheers, and The Cosby Show, on NBC; and Roseanne on ABC. All are live action programs except The Simpsons, an animated sit-com.

The Simpsons, Married . . . with Children, The Cosby Show, and Roseanne are programs which deal primarily with family situations.

Cheers and Open House deal with individuals in other work/social environment situations: a pub for Cheers, and a real estate office for Open House. In each show, there is a core group of characters who fulfill the function of a family unit.

Brief descriptions of the three top-rated programs are as follows:

#### Cheers

An NBC comedy involving proprietors and customers

of a pub in Boston. Recurring characters include four middle adult males, three middle adult females, and one younger adult male.

#### The Cosby Show

An NBC family sit-com featuring a doctor/father, a lawyer/mother, and their children. Recurring characters include one middle adult male, one middle adult female, three younger adult males, four younger adult females, three female children, and one male child.

#### Roseanne

An ABC sit-com featuring a blue-collar family. Recurring characters include two older adult females, one middle adult male, three middle adult females, four younger adult females, and one male child.

Descriptions of Fox Broadcasting programs are as follows:

#### The Simpsons

An animated sit-com introduced in January, 1990. Described as a mutant Ozzie and Harriet<sup>3</sup>, this sit-com portrays a somewhat strange family. Recurring characters include one middle adult male, one middle adult female, one male child and two female children.

#### Open House

A work-place sit-com, centered at a real-estate

office in California. The sales people are generally greedy. Recurring characters include two middle adult males, one middle adult female, one younger adult male and two younger adult females.

#### Married . . . with Children

A family sit-com with a shoe salesman father, a stay-home mother, and two teenagers. Recurring characters include one middle adult male, two middle adult females, one young adult male, and one young adult female.

#### Time Frame

Because networks generally air their best programming during the sweeps rating periods, this study was conducted during the February 1990 rating sweeps in order to ensure comparable quality among the program episodes.

Four episodes of each program were broadcast during the month of February. Two of the programs, Married . . . with Children, and Cheers, each had a two-episode continuation during the month. For the purposes of this study, each episode of the continuation was treated as a separate episode.

A sample of twenty-four program episodes was used for coding. The episodes were videotaped, and the coding was conducted at a later date. The use of recorded segments allowed for thorough examination and review of program content.

## Statistical Tests

Each program episode was coded according to the number of times negative behavior occurred, the type of behavior committed, the gender and age of the initiator of the behavior, the gender and age of the receiver of the behavior, and the type of reaction the receiver of the behavior displayed. Raw scores for each episode, each program, and each program affiliation group were totaled.

Chi square analysis was used to see if there was any difference between groups in each category.

## Tables

The tables presented include a breakdown of types of negative behavior.

## Limitations

A limitation of this thesis is that the sweeps rating period, chosen to provide episodes of comparable quality, is limited to a time span of one month.

## Coding by Judges

Following the example of previous studies, such as those of Kaplan and Baxter, coding was conducted by a panel of two judges<sup>4</sup>. Each judge was a college graduate. The coding process was discussed and reviewed prior to actual coding.

A preliminary coding test was conducted, using recorded segments of a sit-com program not tested in the study.

### Coding Reliability

Inter-coder reliability was established using the following equation:

$$R = 2M/N1 + N2$$

where reliability, "R," is expressed in terms of percentage of agreement between coders; "M," is the number of coding decisions on which two coders agree; "N1," is the total number of coding decisions by coder #1; and "N2," is the total number of coding decisions by coder #2.

Reliability in the results of the coding process was determined to be .96.

### Categories for Analysis

This thesis uses categories for analysis that were derived from earlier studies by Leslie A Baxter and Stuart J. Kaplan; and Mary S. Larson. These studies and categories were cited and discussed in Chapter II.

### Defining the Categories

#### Negative Behavior:

Negative Behavior was operationally defined as a potentially harmful verbal or nonverbal communication or

action directed toward another person, whether or not the receiver was definitely aware of the communication-action.

Type of Behavior:

Two basic types of communication-action, or behavior, were employed in this study: physical and verbal. Each of these was divided into several communication-action subcategories:

Physical:

Physical Violence -

An attempt to produce physical injury or discomfort to another person. For example, choking, or hitting with a frying pan.

Dirty Look/Gesture -

A non-verbal indication of animosity toward another person. For example, staring angrily at another character when he grabs the last piece of fried chicken.

Verbal:

Verbal Threat -

A verbal threat of physical injury or discomfort to another person. For example, "I'm gonna knock your block off!"

Harsh Speech -

Loud or emphatic declarations or commands

spoken in a derisive or intimidating manner, such as angrily shouting, "Stop that, kid!"

**Insult -**

A remark meant to hurt the feelings or pride of another person. For example, "Is that your nose or are you eating a banana?" or "Your face looks like yesterday's pizza."

**Sarcasm -**

Derisive use of ironic remarks. For example, Roseanne says to her daughter, "Ooooh, you're so cool, let me get my autograph book."

**Comment About Others -**

Disparaging remarks about another person or persons not present. "He's so stubborn he'd argue with a post."

**Receiver Response:**

This may be operationally defined as the reaction displayed by the receiver of a negative communication-action. The receiver's response may be divided into three groups: physical, verbal, and no reaction. The physical and verbal reactions were further divided into subgroups. Receiver responses may be classified as follows:

**Physical:**

**Physical Violence -**

An attempt to produce physical injury or discomfort to another person.

Dirty Look/Gesture -

A non-verbal indication of animosity toward another person.

Verbal:

Verbal Threat -

A verbal threat of physical injury or discomfort to another person.

Insult -

A remark meant to hurt the feelings or pride of another person.

Sarcasm -

Derisive use of ironic remarks.

Emotional Outburst -

Yelling, crying, etc.

No Reaction:

No discernible reaction to the negative behavior.

Gender:

Male and Female.

Age:

Older and younger. These groups were subdivided as follows:

Older: Older Adult - fifty-five years of age or older.

Middle Adult - thirty-five to fifty-four years of age.

Younger: Young Adult/Teen - thirteen to thirty-four years of age.

Child - to age twelve.



After reviewing the data, it was discovered that the subcategories of Older Adult and Child contained many empty cells. To avoid any possible bias of findings, the subgroups were collapsed into two age groups; Older (35 years and older), and Younger (younger than 35 years).

### Hypotheses of the Study

This study was guided by five hypotheses. These hypotheses are as follows:

#### Hypothesis #1 (H1):

There will be a significant difference between the frequency of negative behaviors in interactions among characters on Fox Broadcasting sit-coms and the three top-rated sit-coms on network television. There will be a greater frequency of negative behaviors on Fox Broadcasting sit-coms.

#### Hypothesis #2 (H2):

There will be a significant difference in the type of negative behavior initiated by characters in interactions on sample sit-coms. Verbal negative behaviors will occur more frequently than physical negative behaviors.

Hypothesis #3 (H3):

There will be no difference in the type of response exhibited by characters who are the receiver of negative behavior.

Hypothesis #4 (H4):

There will be no difference in the gender of characters who initiate, or are the receiver of negative behaviors among characters on either Fox Broadcasting sit-coms or the three top-rated sit-coms on network television.

Hypothesis #5 (H5):

There will be no difference in the age of characters who initiate, or are the receiver of negative behaviors among characters on either Fox Broadcasting sit-coms or the three top-rated sit-coms on network television.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Richard W. Budd, et al., Content Analysis of Communications. (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1967), p. 2.

<sup>2</sup>Robert P. Hawkins and Suzanne Pingree. "Using Television to Construct Social Reality," Journal of Broadcasting, Vol. 25, No. 4 (Fall, 1981), p. 348.

<sup>3</sup>Robert Lloyd, "Cartoon From Hell" American Film, Vol. 15, No. 10, (October, 1989), p. 112.

<sup>4</sup>Leslie A. Baxter, and Stuart J. Kaplan, "Context Factors in the Analysis of Prosocial and Antisocial Behavior on Prime Time Television," Journal of Broadcasting, Vol. 27, No. 1 (Winter, 1983). p. 29.

## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS

#### Data Collection

The central question framing this study is whether negative behaviors in interactions among characters on Fox network sit-coms differ from those on the three top-rated sit-coms on network television. The hypotheses guiding the study focus on whether there are any differences in frequency and types of behavior, the age or gender of the initiator and receiver of the behaviors.

Two coders were used to classify the negative behavior.

The first hypothesis (H1), that there is a significant difference in the frequency of observed negative behaviors between Fox Broadcasting sit-coms and the three top-rated sit-coms, was supported due to the greater frequency of negative behaviors on Fox programs.

Results indicate that in the twenty-four program segments in the study, each approximately twenty-five minutes in length, a total of 857 instances of negative behavior in character interactions were identified. This indicates an average frequency of 35.71 negative behaviors per twenty-five minute segment, or 1.43 negative behaviors per minute.

Table I illustrates the comparison of negative behaviors between Fox network programs, and the top-three rated programs.

TABLE I  
OBSERVED FREQUENCY OF NEGATIVE  
BEHAVIOR IN SIT-COMS SAMPLED  
FOX VS. TOP THREE

N = 857

Categories	Fox	Top Three	Totals
Observed Frequency	538	319	857
Percent	(62.8%)	(37.2%)	(100%)

$x^2 = 55.96, p < .001, df = 1$

As Table I indicates, Fox Broadcasting programs contain a significantly greater number of observed negative behaviors than do the three-top rated programs. Fox programs contain 538, or more than 60 percent of the total negative behaviors identified in the study. This indicates an average frequency of 44.83 negative behaviors per twenty-five minute segment, or 1.79 negative behaviors minute.

A chi square analysis confirms the significance of what the raw data seems to indicate. The calculated chi square value is 55.96, ( $p < .001$ ,  $df = 1$ ).

Significant difference was observed in the incidence of negative behavior among the three top-rated programs, but not among Fox programs.

A chi square analysis for the programs on the Fox network produces a calculated chi square of 5.101, ( $p < .10$ ,  $df = 2$ ). In contrast, a chi square analysis of the top-three rated sit-coms indicates a significant difference in incidence of negative behaviors, with a calculated chi square value of 56.85, ( $p < .001$ ,  $df = 2$ ). Table II illustrates the frequencies of negative behaviors for individual programs. (See Table II, page 32)

The second hypothesis (H2), was that there would be a difference between the two major types of negative behavior indicated in this study - physical and verbal. This hypothesis was supported, due to a significantly greater frequency of verbal negative behavior. Table III illustrates the types of behavior initiated by characters on sample sit-coms. (See Table III, page 33)

For total frequencies of negative behaviors, a significant difference was found in the types of negative behaviors, ( $\chi^2 = 479.44$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $df = 1$ ), with verbal negative behavior occurring nearly seven times more often than physical negative behavior.

TABLE II  
OBSERVED FREQUENCY OF NEGATIVE  
BEHAVIOR ON INDIVIDUAL  
SIT-COM PROGRAMS  
SAMPLED

N = 857

Programs	Number of Incidents
TOP THREE	
<u>Cheers</u> Percent	98 (31%)
<u>Roseanne</u> Percent	165 (52%)
<u>Cosby</u> Percent	56 (17%)
SUBTOTAL Percent	319 (100%)
FOX	
<u>Open House</u> Percent	184 (34%)
<u>The Simpsons</u> Percent	156 (29%)
<u>Married . . . with Children</u> Percent	198 (37%)
SUBTOTAL Percent	538 (100%)
TOTALS	857
AMONG FOX PROGRAMS: $\chi^2 = 5.100, p < .10, df = 2$	
AMONG TOP THREE: $\chi^2 = 56.85, P < .001, df = 2$	

TABLE III  
 TYPE OF NEGATIVE BEHAVIOR  
 BY INITIATOR

N = 857

Types of Actions	Top Three	Fox	Totals
<u>PHYSICAL</u>			
Physical Violence	2	32	34
Physical Threat	0	9	9
Dirty Look/Gesture	22	43	65
SUBTOTAL	24	84	108
<u>VERBAL</u>			
Verbal Threat	29	40	69
Harsh Speech	35	68	103
Insult	93	150	243
Sarcasm	95	120	215
Comment About Others	43	76	119
SUBTOTALS	295	454	749
TOTALS	319	538	857
Between Physical and Verbal (TOTAL): $x^2 = 479.44, p < .001, df = 1$			
Between Physical and Verbal (FOX): $x^2 = 254.46, p < .001, df = 1$			
Between Physical and Verbal (TOP THREE): $x^2 = 230.22, p < .001, df = 1$			
Physical - Between FOX and TOP THREE: $x^2 = 12.92, p < .005, df = 2$			

On the Fox network, verbal negative behavior was observed more than five times as frequently as physical negative behavior, which was significant at the  $p < .001$  level, ( $x^2 = 254.46, df = 1$ ).



On the top-three rated sit-coms, too, verbal behavior is much more common, ( $x^2 = 230.22$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $df = 1$ ), occurring more than twelve times as often as physical negative behavior.

Overall, significant differences were found among the different types of negative behavior, ( $x^2 = 452.38$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $df = 7$ ), with significantly higher frequency of verbal negative behaviors.

A significant difference was observed in the frequency of physical negative behavior between Fox sit-coms and the top-three rated problems ( $x^2 = 12.92$ ,  $p < .005$ ,  $df = 2$ ). Much of this difference may be attributed to the frequency of physical violence. Physical violence was observed on Fox programs sixteen times as often as the top-three rated programs.

The assumption of the third hypothesis (H3) was that no significant difference would be observed in the types of response displayed by receivers of negative behavior within or between Fox sit-coms and the top-three network comedies. (See Table IV, page 35)

Results illustrated in Table IV indicate that Hypothesis #3 is only partially supported by the data. No significant difference was observed between the distribution of physical, verbal, and no reaction responses on Fox and network programs, ( $x^2 = 4.63$ ,  $p < .25$ ,  $df = 3$ ). Both Fox and network sit-coms maintained the same pattern of distribution. However, overall, there was a significant

difference between the types of response displayed by characters who were receivers of negative behavior. Seventy-four percent of responses were in the "no reaction" category, ( $\chi^2 = 547.26, p < .001, df = 2$ ).

TABLE IV  
TYPE OF REACTION BY RECEIVER  
TO NEGATIVE BEHAVIOR

N = 747

Types of Responses	Top Three	Fox	Totals
<u>PHYSICAL</u>			
Physical Violence	1	12	13
Physical Threat	0	0	0
Dirty Look/Gesture	39	60	99
SUBTOTAL	40	72	112
<u>VERBAL</u>			
Verbal Threat	1	6	7
Insult	5	12	17
Sarcasm	4	13	17
Emotional Outburst	20	24	44
SUBTOTAL	30	55	85
<u>NO REACTION</u>	208	342	550
TOTALS	278	469	747

Among Types of Responses:

$$\chi^2 = 547.26, p < .001, df = 2$$

Distribution Between Fox and Top Three:

$$\chi^2 = 4.63, p < .25, df = 3$$

On the Fox sit-coms, also, the majority of the responses were "no reaction," with seventy-three percent falling in this category, ( $\chi^2 = 247.885$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $df = 2$ ).

The results from the top-three sit-coms were similar, resulting in a calculated chi square value of 215.85, ( $p < .001$ ,  $df = 2$ ). The "no reaction" category comprised seventy-five percent of the responses.

The fourth hypothesis (H4), that there would be no differences between the number of negative behaviors initiated or received by men and the number of negative behaviors initiated or received by women, was not supported.

Table V illustrates the number of negative behaviors initiated by men and those initiated by women. (See Table V, page 37)

As the results of Table V indicate, there was a significant difference between the frequency of male and female initiators of negative behavior among all sample sit-coms. A chi square analysis for all programs sampled resulted in a calculated chi square value of 87.38, ( $p < .001$ ,  $df = 5$ ), which indicated that the frequency of negative behaviors initiated by women was significantly greater. However, over half of the variation among the programs, (55%), can be explained by one program, Roseanne, on which 80% of the negative behaviors, (132), were initiated by women.

TABLE V  
GENDER OF INSTIGATOR OF  
NEGATIVE BEHAVIOR

N = 857

	Male	Female	Totals
TOP THREE			
<u>Cheers</u>	56	42	98
<u>Roseanne</u>	33	132	165
<u>Cosby</u>	41	15	56
SUBTOTAL	130	189	319
FOX			
<u>Open House</u>	90	94	184
<u>The Simpsons</u>	99	57	156
<u>Married . . . with Children</u>	83	115	198
SUBTOTALS	272	266	538
TOTALS	402	455	857

Between FOX and TOP THREE:

$$x^2 = 7.74, p < .01, df = 1$$

Among all programs:

$$x^2 = 87.38, p < .001, df = 5$$

Among FOX programs:

$$x^2 = 16.5, p < .001, df = 2$$

Among TOP THREE programs:

$$x^2 = 64.77, p < .001, df = 2$$

A significant difference was observed in the gender of initiators between Fox and the top-three sit-coms as well, ( $x^2 = 7.74, p < .01, df = 1$ ). For Fox programs, though, there appears to be no significant difference between the number of negative behaviors initiated by men and women. A

chi square analysis for Fox programs, combined, resulted in a calculated chi square value of .07, ( $p < .9$ ,  $df = 1$ ). However, a chi square analysis among the individual Fox programs indicated that there was a significant difference in the gender of negative behavior initiators among the shows, with a calculated chi square of 16.5, ( $p < .001$ ,  $df = 2$ ). This difference can be explained by two programs, The Simpsons, and Married . . . with Children. The Simpsons contained a significantly greater frequency of negative behaviors initiated by men, (63%), ( $x^2 = 11.31$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $df = 1$ ), whereas Married . . . with Children contained a much greater frequency of negative behaviors initiated by women, (58%), ( $x^2 = 5.19$ ,  $p < .025$ ,  $df = 1$ ).

For the top-three programs, overall, a significant difference was observed between the number of negative behaviors initiated by men and women. A chi square analysis for combined total frequencies of male and female initiators on top-three sit-coms resulted in a calculated chi square of 10.92, ( $p < .001$ ,  $df = 1$ ). In addition, there was a significant difference in the gender of negative behavior initiators among the top-three sit-coms. A chi square analysis among the three programs resulted in a calculated chi square of 64.77, ( $p < .001$ ,  $df = 2$ ). Also, The Cosby Show and Roseanne contained significantly different frequencies of male and female initiated behaviors, though the direction differed. The Cosby Show had significantly more negative behaviors initiated by

males,  $x^2 = 12.07$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $df = 1$ ), while Roseanne had significantly more female-initiated negative behaviors, ( $x^2 = 59.4$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $df = 1$ ).

It should be noted that most of the negative behaviors initiated by women occurred on one program, Roseanne, which contained seventy percent of the total negative behaviors initiated by women on the top-three sit-coms.

An examination to determine whether there was a difference in the gender of the receivers of negative behavior also resulted in significant differences. (See Table VI, page 40)

As Table VI indicates, there was a significant difference between the total frequency of male and female receivers of negative behaviors. A chi square analysis resulted in a calculated chi square of 7.94, ( $p < .005$ ,  $df = 1$ ).

A chi square analysis also indicates that there was a significant difference between the number of men and women receivers among all sample programs. The calculated chi square was 125.72, ( $p < .001$ ,  $df = 5$ ). Of this total variation, 86% can be explained by three programs, The Cosby Show (17%), The Simpsons (32%), and Roseanne (37%).

TABLE VI  
GENDER OF RECEIVER OF  
NEGATIVE BEHAVIOR

N = 747

	Male	Female	Totals
TOP THREE			
<u>Cheers</u>	65	15	80
<u>Roseanne</u>	39	106	145
<u>Cosby</u>	39	14	53
SUBTOTAL	143	135	278
FOX			
<u>Open House</u>	73	85	158
<u>The Simpsons</u>	120	28	148
<u>Married . . . with Children</u>	76	87	163
SUBTOTAL	269	200	469
TOTALS	412	335	747

Overall:

$$x^2 = 7.94, p < .005, df = 1$$

Among All Programs:

$$x^2 = 125.72, p < .001, df = 5$$

Among FOX Programs:

$$x^2 = 49.76, p < .001, df = 2$$

Among TOP THREE Programs:

$$x^2 = 75.61, p < .001, df = 2$$

On Fox, overall, there was a significant difference between total frequencies of male and female receivers, with a calculated chi square of 10.5, ( $p < .005$ ,  $df = 1$ ). There was also a significant difference between male and

female receivers among the three Fox sit-coms, with a calculated chi square of 49.76, ( $p < .001$ ,  $df = 2$ ). Of this total variance, 68% can be explained by The Simpsons on which a eighty-one percent of the receivers of negative behaviors were men. The Simpsons was also the only Fox program to contain a significant difference between male and female receivers, with a greater frequency of male receivers, ( $x^2 = 57.19$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $df = 1$ ).

On the three top-rated sit-coms, overall, there was not a significant difference in the total frequency of negative behaviors between men and women, with a calculated chi square value of only .23, ( $p < .75$ ,  $df = 1$ ). However, there was a significant difference between male and female receivers among the top-rated sit-coms, ( $x^2 = 75.61$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $df = 2$ ). Of this total variance, 46% is attributable to Roseanne, and 38% is attributable to Cheers.

A significant difference between male and female receivers was found in each of the three top-rated sit-coms, but the direction of significance was not the same for each show. Cheers and The Cosby Show each had significantly more male receivers ( $x^2 = 31.25$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $df = 1$ , and  $x^2 = 11.79$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $df = 1$ ). Roseanne on the other hand, contained significantly more female receivers ( $x^2 = 30.96$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $df = 1$ ).



Hypothesis #5 (H5), was that there was no difference in the ages of the characters who initiated or were receivers of negative behavior.

TABLE VII  
AGE CLASSIFICATION OF INSTIGATOR  
OF NEGATIVE BEHAVIOR

N = 857

	OLDER	YOUNGER	TOTALS
<b>TOP THREE</b>			
<u>Cheers</u>	92	6	96
<u>Roseanne</u>	118	47	165
<u>Cosby</u>	38	18	56
<b>GROUP TOTALS</b>			
OLDER, YOUNGER	248	71	319
<b>FOX</b>			
<u>Open House</u>	143	41	184
<u>The Simpsons</u>	90	66	156
<u>Married . . . with Children</u>	121	77	198
<b>GROUP TOTALS</b>			
OLDER, YOUNGER	354	184	538
<b>GRAND TOTALS</b>			
OLDER, YOUNGER	602	255	857

Overall:

$$x^2 = 140.50, p < .001, df = 1$$

Among All Programs:

$$x^2 = 51.04, p < .001, df = 5$$

Among FOX Programs:

$$x^2 = 18.1, p < .001, df = 2$$

Among TOP THREE Programs:

$$x^2 = 21.6, p < .001, df = 2$$

As indicated in Table VII, there is a significant difference between total observed frequencies of older and younger characters who initiated negative behaviors, with older characters initiating significantly more negative behaviors than did younger characters, ( $\chi^2 = 140.50$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $df = 1$ ).

There were also significant differences in the ages of initiators of negative behavior among the programs. A chi square analysis resulted in a calculated chi square of 51.04, ( $p < .001$ ,  $df = 5$ ). Of this total variance, 51% can be explained by The Cosby Show and 23 % can be explained by The Simpsons.

The combined total frequencies of Fox programs indicate there is a significant difference between older and younger characters who initiate negative behavior, ( $\chi^2 = 53.72$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $df = 2$ ). Among the Fox programs, there is also a significant difference in initiator age classification, ( $\chi^2 = 18.1$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $df = 2$ ). Of the total variance, 64% can be attributed to The Simpsons. In addition, two Fox programs, Open House, and Married . . . with Children, each contained a significant difference between older and younger initiators of negative behavior. Each program contained a significantly higher frequency of older negative behavior initiators: Open House, ( $\chi^2 = 56.54$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $df = 1$ ), and Married . . . with Children, ( $\chi^2 = 9.78$ ,  $p < .005$ ,  $df = 1$ ).

Combined total frequencies of the three top-rated sit-coms indicate there is a significant difference between older and younger initiators of negative behavior on the three top-rated sit-coms, ( $x^2 = 98.21$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $df = 1$ ). Also, there is a significant difference in initiator age classification among the top three sit-coms, ( $x^2 = 21.6$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $df = 2$ ). Of this total variance, 68% can be attributed to The Cosby Show. In addition, each of the top-three sit-coms contains a significantly higher frequency of older initiators of negative behavior: Cheers,  $x^2 = 75.47$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $df = 1$ ), Roseanne, ( $x^2 = 30.55$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $df = 1$ )., and The Cosby Show, ( $x^2 = 7.14$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $df = 1$ ).

There were also significant differences in age classification of receivers of negative behavior in this study. (See Table VIII, page 45)

As Table VIII illustrates, there was a significantly higher frequency of older receivers of negative behavior in the total observed frequency, ( $x^2 = 48.84$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $df = 1$ ). There were also significant differences in age classification of receivers among all programs, ( $x^2 = 93.61$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $df = 5$ ). Of this total variance, 34% can be attributed to The Simpsons, 19% can be attributed to Married . . . with Children, and 16% can be attributed to The Cosby Show.

TABLE VIII  
AGE CLASSIFICATION OF RECEIVER  
OF NEGATIVE BEHAVIOR

N = 747

	OLDER	YOUNGER	TOTALS
TOP THREE			
<u>Cheers</u>	69	11	80
<u>Roseanne</u>	93	52	145
<u>Cosby</u>	27	26	53
GROUP TOTALS			
OLDER, YOUNGER	189	89	278
FOX			
<u>Open House</u>	102	56	158
<u>The Simpsons</u>	80	68	148
<u>Married . . . with Children</u>	98	65	163
GROUP TOTALS			
OLDER, YOUNGER	280	189	469
GRAND TOTALS			
OLDER, YOUNGER	469	178	747

Overall:

$$x^2 = 48.84, p < .001, df = 1$$

Among All Programs:

$$x^2 = 93.61, p < .001, df = 5$$

Among FOX Programs:

$$x^2 = 3.51, p < .10, df = 2$$

Among TOP THREE Programs:

$$x^2 = 20.31, p < .001, df = 2$$

On Fox sit-coms, as well, there was a significant difference in age classification of receivers. Total observed frequencies on combined Fox programs indicated a significantly higher frequency of older receivers, ( $x^2 =$

17.66,  $p < .001$ ,  $df = 1$ ). However, among the Fox programs no significant differences were found, ( $x^2 = 3.51$ ,  $p < .10$ ,  $df = 2$ ). Two of the programs, though, were found to contain a significantly greater frequency of older receivers of negative behavior: Open House, ( $x^2 = 13.84$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $df = 1$ ); and Married . . . with Children, (6.68,  $p < .01$ ,  $df = 1$ ).

A chi square analysis of the total observed frequencies on the three top-rated sit-coms also indicates a significant frequency of older receivers of negative behavior, ( $x^2 = 35.97$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $df = 1$ ). Also, a significant difference in age classification of negative behavior receivers was observed among the three programs, ( $x^2 = 20.31$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $df = 2$ ). Of this total variance, 60% can be attributable to Cheers, and 35% can be attributable to The Cosby Show. In addition, two of the programs, Cheers and Roseanne, each contain significantly greater frequencies of older receivers: Cheers, ( $x^2 = 42.05$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $df = 1$ ); and Roseanne, ( $x^2 = 11.60$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $df = 1$ ).

While the greatest frequency of negative behaviors were initiated by older characters, there was a significant difference between Fox and top-three programs in the observed frequency of negative behavior initiated by older men and older women.

TABLE IX  
AGE AND GENDER CLASSIFICATION OF  
INSTIGATOR OF NEGATIVE  
BEHAVIOR

N = 857

	<u>MALE</u>		TOTALS	<u>FEMALE</u>		TOTALS	GRAND TOTAL
	OLDER	YOUNGER		OLDER	YOUNGER		
<u>TOP THREE</u>							
<u>Cheers</u>	54	2	56	38	4	42	98
<u>Roseanne</u>	25	8	33	93	39	132	165
<u>Cosby</u>	26	15	41	12	3	15	56
<u>GROUP TOTALS</u>							
OLDER, YOUNGER	105	25	130	143	46	189	319
<u>FOX</u>							
<u>Open House</u>	83	7	90	60	34	94	184
<u>The Simpsons</u>	53	46	99	37	20	57	156
<u>Married . . . with Children</u>	63	20	83	58	57	115	198
<u>GROUP TOTALS</u>							
OLDER, YOUNGER	199	73	272	155	111	266	538
<u>GRAND TOTALS</u>							
OLDER, YOUNGER	304	98	402	298	157	455	857

Older Males vs. Older Females (FOX):  $\chi^2 = 5.47$ ,  $p < 0.25$ ,  $df = 1$

Older Males vs. Older Females (TOP THREE):  $\chi^2 = 5.8$ ,  $p < .025$ ,  $df = 1$

Fox programs contained significantly more observed negative behaviors by older men, ( $\chi^2 = 5.47$ ,  $.025$ .  $df = 1$ ), while the top-three sit-coms contained significantly more observed negative behaviors by older women, ( $\chi^2 = 5.8$ ,  $p < .025$ .  $df = 1$ ). There was no significant difference between Fox and the top-three programs in the distribution of older men and older women who were receivers of negative behavior. (See Table X, page 47)

On both Fox and network programs, older men were the receivers of significantly greater frequency of observed negative behavior: Fox, ( $\chi^2 = 12.6$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $df = 1$ ); top-three, ( $\chi^2 = 4.45$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $df = 1$ ).

#### INTERPRETATION AND EVALUATION

Analysis of the finding of this study yielded some interesting results. As predicted in hypothesis #1, Fox Broadcasting sit-coms contained a greater frequency of observed negative behaviors. Of all negative behaviors observed in the study, 62.8% (538) occurred on Fox programs. Individual Fox programs also generally had a much greater frequency of negative behaviors than did the three top-rated sit-coms. The only exception was Roseanne, which contained slightly more negative behaviors than The Simpsons, the Fox program with the lowest frequency of negative behaviors.

TABLE X  
AGE AND GENDER CLASSIFICATION OF  
RECEIVER OF NEGATIVE  
BEHAVIOR

N = 747

	<u>MALE</u>			<u>FEMALE</u>			GRAND TOTAL
	OLDER	YOUNGER	TOTALS	OLDER	YOUNGER	TOTALS	
TOP THREE							
<u>Cheers</u>	60	5	65	9	6	15	80
<u>Roseanne</u>	29	10	39	64	42	106	145
<u>Cosby</u>	20	19	39	7	7	14	53
GROUP TOTALS							
OLDER, YOUNGER	109	34	143	80	55	135	278
FOX							
<u>Open House</u>	56	17	73	46	39	85	158
<u>The Simpsons</u>	68	52	120	12	16	28	148
<u>Married . . . with Children</u>	58	18	76	40	47	87	163
GROUP TOTALS							
OLDER, YOUNGER	182	87	269	98	102	200	469
GRAND TOTALS							
OLDER, YOUNGER	291	121	412	178	157	335	747
Older Males vs. Older Females (FOX): $\chi^2 = 12.6, p < .001, df = 1$							
Older Males vs. Older Females (TOP THREE): $\chi^2 = 4.45, p < .05, df = 1$							



The frequency of negative behaviors on Roseanne was much greater than the other top-rated programs. In fact, Roseanne contained more observed negative behaviors than Cheers and The Cosby Show combined, (52% of top-three total).

In this study, there was also a significant difference in the type of behaviors initiated by characters, with verbal negative behaviors being predominate. There was a significant difference overall, on Fox programs, and on the three top-rated programs.

A probable reason for this significant difference is that sit-coms usually deal with lighter issues, and avoid physical aggression, which might make the audience uncomfortable. Any violence which might appear on a sit-com is usually what George Gerbner refers to as "humorous violence," which the audience is expected to realize is not going to truly harm anyone. Humorous violence is often administered, "tongue in cheek," since the only purpose is the get a laugh from the audience.

Similarly, most of the negative behaviors were delivered to evoke laughter, so it is not surprising that the overwhelming response to negative behaviors by receivers was no reaction at all. Significantly greater frequencies of "no reaction" responses were found for total observed frequencies, overall, for Fox programs, and for the three top-rated programs.

Of the total negative behaviors observed in this study, 53% were initiated by women. It is also important to note that 60% of the recurring characters on the combined programs were female. Of the six programs studied, four had a significant difference in the gender of initiators of negative behavior. Two contained significantly more negative behaviors initiated by women, (Roseanne, and Married . . . with Children), two contained significantly more negative behaviors initiated by men, (The Simpsons, and The Cosby Show).

Most of the total variation due to gender can be attributed to Roseanne. On Roseanne, negative behaviors initiated by women occurred four times more often than those initiated by men, the widest margin of difference in this study. This may be explained, perhaps, by the fact that of the eleven recurring characters on Roseanne, nine are women.

Of the total observed frequencies in this study, men were the receivers of negative behavior 55% of the time. On Fox programs, men were the receivers of 57% of the negative behavior, and on the three top-rated programs, men were the receivers of 51% of the negative behavior. There was a significant difference between male and female receivers in four of the six programs. Cheers, The Cosby Show, and The Simpsons had significantly more male receivers of negative behavior, while Roseanne had significantly more female receivers of negative behavior.

In this study, older characters initiated a significantly greater number of negative behaviors than did younger characters. Older characters initiated 70% of all negative behaviors. On Fox programs, older characters initiated 66% of negative behaviors, and on the three top-rated programs, 78% of the negative behaviors were initiated by older characters. There was a significant difference in the ages of characters who initiated negative behavior in five of the six sit-coms, with only The Simpsons having no significant difference.

One possible explanation for this might be that, while 51% of all recurring characters in this study were categorized as younger characters, more older characters were usually considered the "stars" of the show, (Roseanne Barr, Bill Cosby, et al). Therefore, it seems appropriate that most of the action, and negative behavior, would be initiated by older characters. On The Simpsons, however, the children, especially Bart and Lisa, are pivotal characters, often being the catalyst for the program's story line.

Older characters were also the receivers of negative behavior more often than younger characters in this study. Older characters were the receivers 63% of total negative behavior. On Fox programs, 60% of receivers were older, and on the three top-rated sit-coms, 68% of receivers were older characters. Of all sample programs, only The

Simpsons, and The Cosby Show, did not contain a significant difference between older and younger receivers.

In the total study, older men initiated slightly more negative behaviors than did older women, though Fox programs had significantly more negative behaviors initiated by older men (56%), while the top-three sit-coms had significantly more negative behaviors initiated by older women (58%). The next frequent category of initiators on Fox and the top-three programs was young women, followed by young men.

Older men were receivers of negative behavior significantly more often than older women on both Fox and the top-three programs, and younger women were receivers of negative behavior more often than young men.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSIONS

#### Summary

This thesis was prompted by a desire to examine differences in the way Fox Broadcasting Company has approached programming. In order to attract and hold a younger audience, Fox has often utilized non-traditional methods in its programs.

The focus of this study, then, has been to determine whether the "new" style and attitude of "hip" coolness employed in some Fox programming has caused a marked difference in the type, frequency, and character of negative behaviors.

Overall, the sit-coms on Fox were found to have a significantly higher number of negative behaviors than did the top-three rated sit-coms on network television. In addition, the overall tone of negative behaviors on Fox programs seemed, in this writer's opinion, somewhat more cynical than the top-three programs. For example, Roseanne, the only top-three program to contain as many negative behaviors as Fox sit-coms, might be considered by some viewers to be a negative program. However, while the wit displayed is often sharp-tongued, the underlying tone

is often one of warmth and caring. As noted Television critic John Leonard wrote of the show, ". . . all of it is nasty-cuddly, like trained bears."<sup>1</sup> The characters may growl at each other, but underneath there's a heart of gold.

The characters on Married . . . with Children on the other hand, seem to revel in their disdain for each other. The teen-aged kids on the show seem to view their parents mainly as walking "money machines," while the parents haven't a clue to what is going on in their children's lives, and don't seem to really care.<sup>2</sup>

Other findings in this study include marked differences overall, on Fox, and on the top-three programs in portrayals of characters by age, gender, and type of negative behavior initiated or received. Older characters were more likely to be the initiators of negative behaviors, but they were also more likely to be the receivers as well. Older men, in particular, seemed to be the butt of much of the humor.

As in similar previous research results, the predominant form of negative behavior was verbal. Insult and sarcasm were the preferred types of verbal behavior on all programs.

The "new" approach to situation comedy, where the repartee is razor-sharp, and traditional values and institutions are punctured like so many hot-air balloons, seems to be working for Fox. Married . . . with Children

is usually rated in the 30's in the Nielsen ratings, and the recently introduced, The Simpsons, is already hitting the top twenty. Roseanne, the network program which is most similar to the type of comedy exhibited on Fox, has been the number one program on network television for over a year. Audiences, it appears, do seem to enjoy this different approach to humor.

### Recommendations

Further research into the negative behaviors in interactions among characters on television sit-coms should be conducted. A study of motivations and underlying meaning of verbal exchanges should be undertaken, for this might be sending unintended messages to viewers, especially younger viewers.

Also a study covering several season's programming, conducted in conjunction with a study of adolescents' use of televisions to form social skills might give a better insight into the long-term use and effects of program content.

Another interesting study might include comparing Fox situation comedy programming to popular comedy programs of the past which seemed to contain a great amount of negative behavior, such as All in the Family, The Honeymooners, etc.

## Conclusion

Often what makes people laugh is more a mirror of their society than any other indicator. Whether television comedies reflect life as it is, or may somehow shape viewer's lives to fit a different reality may never be truly known. It is very important, though, that researchers continue to study, so that the last laugh doesn't turn out to be on the audience.



## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>John Leonard, "Television: Live on Five" New York, Vol. 20, No. 15, (April 20, 1987), p. 83.

<sup>2</sup>Richard Zoglin, "Home is Where the Venom Is," Time, 134:54, (April 16, 1990), p. 86.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Agee, Warren K., Phillip H. Ault and Edwin Emery.  
Maincurrents in Mass Communications. New York:  
Harper and Row, 1989.
- Babbie, Earl. The Practice of Social Research, Fourth  
Edition. Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Co.,  
1986.
- Baxter, Leslie A. and Stuart J. Kaplan. "Context Factors  
in the Analysis of Presocial and Antisocial Behavior  
on Prime Time Television." Journal of Broadcasting,  
Vol. 27, No. 1 (Winter, 1983), pp. 25-36.
- Brown, Ray. Children and Television. Beverly Hills,  
California: SAGE Publications, Inc., 1976.
- Bruning, James L. and B. L. Kintz. Computational Handbook  
of Statistics, Third Edition. Glenview, Illinois:  
Scott, Foreman and Company, 1987.
- Budd, Richard W., Robert K. Thorp and Lewis Donohew.  
Content Analysis of Communications. New York: The  
Macmillan Company, 1967.
- Buerkel-Rothfuss, Nancy L., Bradley S. Greenberg, Charles  
K. Atkin, and Kimberly Neuendorf. "Marriage and  
Family: Learning about the Family from Television."  
Journal of Communication, Vol. 32, No. 3 (Summer,  
1982), pp. 191-201.
- Cicourel, Aaron V. Cognitive Sociology: Language and  
Meaning in Social Interaction. New York: The Free  
Press, 1974.
- Cole, Barry. Television Today: A Close-up View. New  
York: Oxford University Press, 1981.
- Comstock, George. Television in America. Beverly Hills,  
California: SAGE Publications, Inc., 1976.
- Comstock, George. Public Communication and Behavior.  
Volume I, Orlando, Florida: Academic Press, Inc.,  
1986.

- Comstock, George, Steven Chaffe, Natan Katzman, Maxwell McCombs, and Donald Roberts. Television and Human Behavior. New York: Columbia University Press, 1978.
- "The Cutting Edge." Signals, (January, 1990), pp. 12-13.
- Eron, Leonard D. and L. Rowell Huesmann. "Television as a Source of Maltreatment of Children." School of Psychology Review, Vol 16. No. 2, pp. 195-202.
- Gerbner, George. Violence and Terror in the Mass Media. Paris, France: United Nations Educational, Scientific Cultural Organization, 1988.
- Gitlin, Todd. The Whole World is Watching. Berkeley California: University of California Press, 1980.
- Greenberg, Bradley S. Life on Television: Content Analyses of U.S. TV Drama. New Jersey: Ablex Publishing Corporation, 1980.
- Greenberg, Bradley S, Katrina W. Simons, Linda Hogan, and Charles Atkin. "Three Seasons of Television Characters: A Demographic Analysis." Journal of Broadcasting, Vol. 24, No. 1 (Winter, 1980), pp. 49-60.
- Hawkins, Robert P. and Suzanne Pingree. "Using Television to Construct Social Reality." Journal of Broadcasting, Vol. 25, No. 4 (Fall, 1981), pp. 347-364.
- Hefzuleah, Ibrahim M. Critical Viewing of Television: A Book for Parents and Teachers. Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, Inc., 1987.
- Holsti, Ole R. Content Analysis for the Social Sciences and Humanities. Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1967.
- Hsia, H. J. Mass Communications Research Methods: A Step-By-Step Approach. Hillsdale, New Jersey; Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., 1988.
- Johnson-Smaragdi, Ulna. TV Use and Social Interaction in Adolescence: A Longitudinal Study. Stockholm, Sweden: Almquist and Wiksell International, 1983.
- Kalter, Joanmarie. "How TV is Shaking Up the American Family." TV Guide, Vol. 36, No. 30, issue No. 1843 (July 23, 1988), pp. 5-11.

- Kaplan, Stuart J. and Leslie A. Baxter. "Antisocial and Prosocial Behavior on Prime-Time TV." Journalism Quarterly, Vol. 59, No. 3 (Autumn, 1982), pp. 360-367.
- Larson, Mary S. "Interaction Between Siblings in Prime-Time Television Families." Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media, Vol. 33, No. 3 (Summer, 1989), pp. 305-315.
- Leonard, John. "Television: Live on Five." New York, Vol. 20 (April 20, 1987), p. 83.
- Liebert, Robert M., Joyce N. Sprafkin and Emily S. Davidson. The Early Window: Effects of Television on Children and Youth. Elmsford, New York: Pergamon Press, 1982.
- Lloyd, Robert. "Cartoon From Hell." American Film, Vol. 15 (October, 1989), p. 112.
- Marc, David. Demographic Vistas: Television in American Culture. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984.
- Marc, David. Comic Visions: Television Comedy and American Culture. London: Unwin Hyman, Ltd., 1989.
- McLuhan, Marshal. "The Medium is the Message." The Process and Effects of Communication Eds. Wilbur Schramm and Donald F. Roberts. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971, pp. 100-115.
- Meehan, Diana. Ladies of the Evening. Metuchen, New Jersey: Scarecrow Press, 1983.
- Meltzer, Bernard. "Mead's Social Psychology." Symbolic Interaction: A Reader in Social Psychology Ed. Jerome G. Manis. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1968, pp. 5-24.
- Meyrowitz, Joshua. No Sense of Place: The Impact of Electronic Media on Social Behavior. New York: Oxford University Press, 1985.
- "Michigan viewer urges ad boycott of 'Married . . . with Children'." Broadcasting, Vol. 116, No. 10 (March 6, 1989), p. 34.
- Newcomb, Horace. Television: The Critical View, Fourth Ed., New York: Oxford University Press, 1987.
- "Now playing at the FCC: 'Fox vs. Fin-Syn'." Broadcasting, Vol. 118, No. 6 (February 5, 1990), pp. 27-28.

- Oskamp, Stuart. Television as a Social Issue: Applied Social Psychology Annual. Vol. 8, Newbury Park, California: SAGE Publications, Inc., 1988.
- Palmer, Edward L. and Aimee Dorr. Children and the Faces of Television. New York: Academic Press, Inc., 1980.
- Pearl, David. "Violence and Aggression." Society, Vol. 21, (September/October, 1984), pp. 17-21.
- "Programing: Animated fare heads back to prime time." Broadcasting, Vol. 116, No. 10 (March 6, 1989), p. 38.
- "Programing: Fox Broadcasting Co.: The Birth of a Network?" Broadcasting, Vol. 114, No. 14 (April, 6, 1987), pp. 88-90.
- "Programing: Night by night network." Broadcasting, Vol. 118, No. 6 (February 5, 1990), pp. 56-60.
- "Programing: 'Raunch on a Roll'." Broadcasting, Vol. 115, No. 21 (November 21, 1988), pp. 27 and 30.
- Rice, Mabel and Ellen Wartella. "Television as a Medium of Communication: Implications for How to Regard the Child Viewer." Journal of Broadcasting, Vol. 25, No. 4 (Fall, 1981), pp. 365-372.
- Severin, Werner J. with James W. Tankard, Jr. Communication Theories, Second Edition. New York: Longman Inc., 1988.
- Skill, Thomas, James D. Robinson and Samuel P. Wallace. "Portrayal of Families on Prime-Time TV: Structure, Type and Frequency." Journalism Quarterly, Vol. 64, No. 2 and 3 (Summer/Autumn, 1987), pp. 360-367.
- "Three-networking viewing falls below 70%." Broadcasting, Vol. 116, No. 16 (April 17, 1989), pp. 29-30.
- Thomas, Sari and Brian P. Callahan. "Marriage and Family: Allocating Happiness: TV Families and Social Class." Journal of Communication, Vol. 32, No. 3 (Summer, 1982), pp. 184-190.
- Wurtzel, Alan and Guy Lometti. "Industry Speaks: Determining the Acceptability of Violent Program Content at ABC." Journal of Broadcasting, Vol. 28, No. 1 (Winterr, 1984), pp. 89-97.
- Wurtzel, Alan and Guy Lometti. "Research Television Violence." Society, Vol. 21 (September/October, 1984), pp. 22-24.

Zoglin, Richard. "Home is Where the Venom Is," Time,  
134:54, (April 16, 1990), p. 85.

## APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A  
CODING SHEET



## CODING SHEET

		MALE				FEMALE			
		OA	MA	YA	C	OA	MAA	YA	C
	INITIATOR								
<u>PHYSICAL</u>	Violence								
	Threat								
	Dirty Look Gesture								
<u>VERBAL</u>	Comment About Others								
	Harsh Speech								
	Sarcasm								
	Insult								
	Threat								

		MALE				FEMALE			
		OA	MA	YA	C	OA	MAA	YA	C
	RECIPIENT								
<u>PHYSICAL</u>	Violence								
	Threat (none observed)								
	Dirty Look Gesture								
<u>VERBAL</u>	Emotional Outburst								
	Insult								
	Sarcasm								
	Insult								
	Threat								
	<u>NO REACTION NOTED</u>								

APPENDIX B

RAW DATA FREQUENCIES FOR INITIATORS  
OF NEGATIVE BEHAVIOR FROM  
TOP THREE

	OAA	MAA	MALE		TOTALS	OAA	MAA	FEMALE		TOTALS	GRAND TOTAL
			YA	C				YA	C		
<u>PHYSICAL</u>											
Violence	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	2	2
Physical Threat	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dirty Look/Gesture	1	5	0	0	6	0	12	4	0	16	22
SUBTOTAL	1	5	0	0	6	0	14	4	0	18	24
<u>VERBAL</u>											
Verbal Threat	1	18	1	2	22	0	9	0	0	9	31
Harsh Speech	0	10	2	0	12	0	14	0	0	23	35
Insult	0	21	10	2	33	3	36	19	2	60	93
Sarcasm	0	36	3	2	41	0	47	7	0	54	95
Comment About Others	0	15	3	0	18	1	17	5	0	23	41
SUBTOTAL	1	100	19	6	126	4	123	40	2	169	295
TOTALS	2	105	19	6	132	4	137	44	2	187	319

OAA - OLD AGE ADULT 55+  
 MAA - MIDDLE AGE ADULT 35-54  
 YA - YOUNG ADULT 13-34  
 C - CHILD 0-12

APPENDIX C

RAW DATA FREQUENCIES FOR INITIATORS  
OF NEGATIVE BEHAVIOR FROM FOX

	OAA	MAA	MALE YA	C	TOTALS	OAA	MAA	FEMALE YA	C	TOTALS	GRAND TOTAL
<u>PHYSICAL</u>											
Violence	0	9	1	6	16	0	10	6	0	16	32
Physical Threat	0	2	1	1	4	0	4	1	0	5	9
Dirty Look/Gesture	0	15	1	3	10	0	20	4	0	24	34
SUBTOTAL	0	26	3	10	39	0	34	11	0	45	84
<u>VERBAL</u>											
Verbal Threat	1	19	5	3	28	0	6	2	4	12	40
Harsh Speech	2	29	1	5	37	0	23	7	1	31	68
Insult	3	38	11	13	65	1	44	38	2	85	150
Sarcasm	0	51	7	10	68	0	33	15	4	52	120
Comment About Others	1	29	2	3	35	0	20	16	5	41	76
SUBTOTAL	7	166	26	34	233	1	126	78	16	221	454
TOTALS	7	192	29	44	272	1	160	89	16	266	538
GRAND TOTALS TOP THREE AND FOX	9	297	48	50	404	5	297	133	18	453	857

OAA - OLD AGE ADULT 55+  
 MAA - MIDDLE AGE ADULT 35-54  
 YA - YOUNG ADULT 13-34  
 C - CHILD 0-12

APPENDIX D

RAW DATA FREQUENCIES FOR RECEIVERS  
OF NEGATIVE BEHAVIOR FROM  
TOP THREE

	OAA	MAA	MALE YA	C	TOTALS	OAA	MAA	FEMALE YA	C	TOTALS	GRAND TOTAL
<u>PHYSICAL</u>											
Violence	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1
Physical Threat	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dirty Look/Gesture	0	20	0	2	22	0	12	4	1	18	39
SUBTOTAL	0	20	0	2	22	0	13	4	1	19	40
<u>VERBAL</u>											
Verbal Threat	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Insult	0	3	0	0	3	0	1	1	0	2	5
Sarcasm	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	2	0	3	4
Emotional Outburst	0	5	0	0	5	0	6	9	0	15	20
SUBTOTAL	0	10	0	0	10	0	8	12	0	20	30
No Reaction	3	76	31	1	111	8	51	34	4	98	208
TOTALS	3	106	31	3	143	8	72	50	5	136	278

OAA - OLD AGE ADULT 55+  
 MAA - MIDDLE AGE ADULT 35-54  
 YA - YOUNG ADULT 13-34  
 C - CHILD 0-12

APPENDIX E

RAW DATA FREQUENCIES FOR RECEIVERS  
OF NEGATIVE BEHAVIOR FROM FOX

	OAA	MAA	MALE YA	C	TOTALS	OAA	MAA	FEMALE YA	C	TOTALS	GRAND TOTAL
<u>PHYSICAL</u>											
Violence	0	8	3	0	11	0	1	0	0	1	12
Physical Threat	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dirty Look/Gesture	1	21	5	4	31	0	19	9	1	29	60
SUBTOTAL	1	29	8	4	42	0	20	9	1	30	72
<u>VERBAL</u>											
Verbal Threat	0	6	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	6
Insult	0	5	2	0	7	0	3	2	0	5	12
Sarcasm	0	2	0	2	4	0	8	1	0	9	13
Emotional Outburst	0	16	1	3	20	0	2	1	1	4	24
SUBTOTAL	0	29	4	5	37	0	13	4	1	18	55
No Reaction	0	123	29	38	190	0	65	76	11	152	342
TOTALS	1	181	40	47	269	0	98	89	13	200	469
GRAND TOTALS											
TOP THREE AND FOX	4	287	71	50	412	8	170	139	18	335	747

OAA - OLD AGE ADULT 55+  
 MAA - MIDDLE AGE ADULT 35-54  
 YA - YOUNG ADULT 13-34  
 C - CHILD 0-12

2

VITA

Dale Leon Basler

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Science

Thesis: A COMPARATIVE CONTENT ANALYSIS OF NEGATIVE BEHAVIORS IN INTERACTIONS AMONG CHARACTERS ON FOX BROADCASTING SITUATION COMEDIES, AND THE THREE TOP RATED SITUATION COMEDIES ON NETWORK TELEVISION

Major Field: Mass Communications

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Elk City, Oklahoma, May 25, 1953, the son of Willie L. and Evelyn Basler. Married to M.L. Hensley on July 10, 1976.

Education: Graduated from Leedey High School, Leedey, Oklahoma, in May 1971; received Bachelor of Arts in Speech-Theater and English from Southwestern Oklahoma State University in May, 1975; completed requirements for the Master of Science Degree at Oklahoma State University in May, 1990.

Professional Experience: Teaching Assistant, School of Journalism and Broadcasting, Oklahoma State University, August, 1989, to May 1990.