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What's on TV? A Demonstration of the Utility of Contextualism and Content Analysis in Mass Media Research

Craig P. Gaumer
Eastern Illinois University

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What's on TV? A Demonstration of the Utilitiy of

Contextualism and Content Analysis in Mass Media
(TITLE)

Research

BY

Craig P. Gaumer

THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
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IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

WHAT'S ON TV?

The purpose of this thesis has been to develop, test and utilize a reliable method to quantify the prevalence of pro- and anti-social behavior on children's television as assessed from a contextualist perspective. Many previous studies in the area of television have arbitrarily assigned either pro- or anti-social labels to television programs without the benefit of analyzing the content of these programs

The few studies that have attempted to analyze the pro- and anti-social content of children's television have used only physical parameters to define pro- or anti-social behavior. Through the development of a reliable method of analyzing the contextually assessed content of children's television it is hoped sociologists will have an instrument to aid them in better understanding the pro-social and anti-social messages being presented to children via the media.

Sample programs were selected over a nine-month period. While five programs were specifically chosen to be analyzed, the individual episodes were selected at random during this time period. The sample included episodes of "Sesame Street," "Mr. T." "The Super-Powers Team," "He-Man and Masters of the Universe," and "Bugs Bunny."

The results of this study reveal that specific guidelines, a method with approximately .80 reliability, can be developed to analyze the contextually assessed pro-and anti-social content of children's television.

Findings also reveal quantification of pro- and anti-social behavior, as well

as the inclusion of contextualists considerations, may alter many of the labels either scientifically or arbitrarily imposed upon television programs in previous analyses.

These findings suggest that in order to completely understand the effect of the media upon society, future research should incorporate contextualist auguments and content analysis in their research designs to better measure the pro- and anti-social effects of the mass media.

Craig Peyton Gaumer
April 14, 1986

What's on TV?

A demonstration of the utility of contextualism and content analysis to mass media research

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THESIS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the
Master of Arts degree in Sociology
at Eastern Illinois University, Charleston,
Spring 1986.

By
Craig Peyton Gaumer
Collinsville,Ill.

Director: Ronald T. Wohlstein, Professor of Sociology
Graduate School
Eastern Illinois University
1986

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the best and most important teachers in my life:

To my parents, David Robert Gaumer and Betty Lou Peyton Gaumer. I can never thank them enough for giving me life and much love. They have been my teachers, my parents and my friends. Any measure of success I achieve is due to the encouragement, discipline, love and support with which they have unselfishly gifted me.

To my Grandfather, Louis Weldon Peyton. Throughout his life he has had to overcome numerous obstacles to provide for himself and his family. From him, I've learned the importance of honest work, faith and hope. When it seemed this project would never be completed, he provided me with words of wisdom which I shall never forget:

> Sure life is lonesome and sometimes hard to take. But always remember you can have anything you want, but you have to pay for it ... Be a dreamer, dream of things you can do, and if you try hard enough your dreams will come true.

And to, Sandy Boyer. She provided me with the motivation, support and encouragement I needed to see this through. I know that she shall be a marvelous teacher: she taught me the wonder of love and the potential of life.

CHAPTER 1

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

INTRODUCTION

Television. The mere mention of the word conjures a myriad of images in the mind's eye — from the simple display of joy radiated by a small child viewing a favorite television show to the harsh horrors or reality viewed by the American populace on the evening news — the images displayed on television have a direct and potent impact upon the masses' images of the world in which they live. The inventors of the television tube could not even have begun to formulate the slightest idea of the many diverse roles that television would portray to, and for, the viewing public: entertainer, educator, babysitter, companion, surrogate parent, friend. The influence of the medium seems to expand with every passing day.

The Growth of Television. The public appetite for television appears to be growing at a near insatiable rate. Television viewers are no longer content with the programming being beamed 24 hours a day through the airwaves into their homes. In 1981, the number of pay television subscriptions in America rose 69 percent to expand the market to 17.5 million households (BusinessWeek, July 9, 1984:40). In the latest available data on television growth, cable television expert Paul Kagen predicted that subscription television households would grow an additional 26 percent from the 1983 previous high of 28 million. By the mid-1980's, Kagen predicts that more than 35 million households will subscribe to cable or satellite television services (BusinessWeek, July 9, 1984:40).

The growth of the home video recorder industry has been even more astonishing within the past few years. In 1982, only five million Ameri-

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can households contained video recorders. By 1984, that number had nearly tripled to 15 million. The figure is projected to reach nearly 35 million households by 1988 (Newsweek, August 6, 1984:52). "Home video," says media expert Richard Snyder, "is going to be the next major medium" (Newsweek, August 6, 1984:52).

The U.S. Bureau of the Census (1984:558) estimates that 98 percent of all American households have at least one television set. Further, the Census Bureau notes that in 1982, the average American household contained 1.79 television sets. Using the latest available census population data for the United States (1984:6) of 232 million resident Americans, and controlling that total for a four member household, the statistical average computes to a gross of over 100 million television sets in use in the United States today. Experts estimate that with those millions of sets and home video recorders, the average American watches 6.5 hours of television, cable TV or home videos each day (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1984:558).

It appears that everywhere we turn we are being inundated with programs meant to entertain, inform, influence and coerce the television audience. With such a seemingly simple object playing such an important role in the lives of so many people, it would seem important for sociologists to examine what effects television has had upon human beings. However, sociologist David Phillips (1982:337-338) has noted the lack of work by sociologists in the area of television research:

> Surprisingly, sociologists have devoted very little attention to this question. This is evident when one surveys the major journals and reviews the introductory texts. In these texts, a great deal of space has been devoted to the behavioral effects of traditional institutions like family, church and school. But the newer industries of television and television advertising, which are specifically designed to influence behavior, have

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received the short shrift in the sociological literature.

Although the behavioral impact of television is rarely studied in sociology, it is often examined in other social sciences, particularly psychology.   Many types of messages have been studied, for example those concerned with 1) violence, 2) sex and 3) commercially advertised products.

Considering this deficiency in the sociological literature, it would appear that a good point to begin the examination of the effects of television upon human beings is with a review of the research conducted by communication experts and psychologists.

REVIEW OF THE RESEARCH

Most of the research that deals with the social effects of television upon human beings has focused upon children. More specifically, the bulk of the research has concentrated upon the concern that violence portrayed on television may be harmful to children. Murray (1980) notes that the question of the general effects of television on children has been at the forefront of our public consciousness since the first United States Congressional Committee addressed the issue in 1955.   Thousands of research projects have been conducted to answer one question: just what is television doing to the children of America? Over three times as much work has been documented in the area of television violence than has been reported in the area of television pro-social behavior (Murray, 1980). Both areas of research, however, yield interesting results.

Violence on Television. Some of the first major studies of the effects of television on children were conducted by Bandura and colleagues (Bandura, Ross and Ross, 1961, 1963a, 1963b). In an attempt to discover

the effects of television viewing upon children, Bandura (1963a) simulated television viewing conditions by back projecting a film into a television set and onto a screen that the children would believe to be an actual television program. In the film, an adult showed aggressive, often violent behavior toward an inflated plastic doll. After viewing the program, the children were placed in a playroom setting and the incidence of their aggressive behavior were recorded. According to Murray (1980:29-39), the results of this study, and others conducted by numerous psychologists, have shown that children who view aggressive television programs are more aggressive in their play settings than those children who had not been exposed to that stimulus.

Murray (1980) notes that children have been found to imitate the behavior of cartoon characters as well as the behavior of television actors (e.g., see Ellis and Sekyra, 1972; Lovaas, 1961; Mussen and Rutherford, 1961; Ross, 1972).

In an Australian study, for example (Murray, Hayes and Smith, 1978), preschool children were exposed to "aggressive" cartoons such as "The Road Runner," and pro-social-oriented programming such as "Sesame Street." The children who viewed the aggressive animated cartoons were found to be more aggressive in play groups with their peers than the children who had viewed the animated segments of the pro-social television programs.

Research has indicated that both cartoon and dramatic characters portrayed on television contribute to the development of aggressive habits (Lefkowitz, Eron, Huesmann and Walder, 1972:258). The extensive research in the area of television violence supports this conclusion (Murray, 1980; U.S. Surgeon General's Scientific Advisory Committee on Television and Social Behavior, 1972). The work done in the area of pro-social

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television, while not as overwhelming in quantity, has yielded considerable quality. Murray (1980), in his extensive review of television research, concludes that most research in the area of pro-social behavior on television has been geared to discover if socially valued acts such as sharing, co-operation and helping could be learned as easily as assaultive or violent behavior. Research in this area yields interesting results.

Pro-social Behavior on Television. Much of the pro-social research has examined one of the following areas: 1) how television influences the moral judgment of children; 2) how television affects the cognitive development of children; and 3) how television alters the conceptual functioning of children (Murray, 1980:44). Most of the studies have utilized television programs that have been arbitrarily assessed to contain a large amount of socially valued messages. Other studies created their own pro-social programming (see Murray, 1980). Research using both methods has attempted to discover the impact of televised pro-social behavior upon children.

One such study, condcted by Stein and Friedrich (1972) demonstrates that pro-social behavior on television may have an effect upon children's behavior. Using a television show that they assessed as having a pro-social orientation, "Mr. Roger's Neighborhood," the scientists attempted to discover how the viewing of pro-social behavior affects children. The researchers exposed a group of children to 12 episodes of the program that were inundated with behaviors that they assesssed to be social valued. After the viewing, the children showed increases in such behaviors as nurturance and cooperation, verbalizing their feelings and regulating their own behavior. Additional studies (Friedrich and Stein, 1975; Stein, Friedrich and Tahlser, 1973) have found that exposing children to this type of programming can influence a child's helping, sharing, cooperation and

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task persistance.

The research conducted to examine the effects of television upon children has shown that children's pro-social and anti-social behavior can be influenced by television viewing. It appears that children learn from television in much the same ways they learn from other humans, through modeling.

The Effects of Television as a Modeling Factor. An analysis of the work done in the area of television and its effects on children indicate that the medium affects children through the modeling process. Children view behavior, mimic the behavior, and eventually incorporate that behavior into their own response patterns, provided they have received reinforcement for engaging in the behavior.

According to Gold (1974:190), "modeling is considered a very important aspect of socialization. Using it, a child learns what types of behavior are appropriate and approved by parents and society as a whole." Gold further notes (1974:190), "...various characteristics of models increase the likelihood that children imitate them. Three of the most important are 1) a high degree of nurturance displayed by the model toward the child, 2) power to reward others, including the child, and 3) a high frequency of interaction between the child and the model."

With the high level of frequent interaction maintained by children with television, it would appear that television would play a powerful role in the modeling and socialization of children.

Through a review of the research conducted in the area of television, several things become apparent. There is a concern that television has a powerful coercive influence upon children. Research in the area of tele-vision violence has shown that children display violent behavior after viewing television fare assessed to be violent. Also, studies have dem-

onstrated that youth are likely to engage in pro-social behavior afer viewing television programs labeled pro-social. Further, it appears that children learn from television through the modeling process. They can learn from characters with whom they have frequent interaction, either pro-social or anti-social characters, cartoon or real characters. While these conclusions help us understand the nature of the influence the medium has upon children, several additional considerations must be investigated before the true effects of television upon children can be understood.

CRITIQUE OF PAST RESEARCH

The majority of research conducted in the areas of pro-social and anti-social television have used the same general design. The experimenters begin by arbitrarily imposing a pro-social or anti-social label upon one or more television shows. These shows have usually been created specifically for the research or taped from commercial or public television. Then, by exposing children to these shows for relatively brief periods of time (ranging from 5-10 minutes up to 4-5 hours), the experimenters use television to "change" the behavior of children.

First of all, these types of research conclude that television changes children's behavior and that these changes may be permanent. There are two problems with these conclusions. In order to assess whether an anti-social or pro-social television program has changed a child's behavior, it is important to have some measure of that child's behavior in similar situations before they were exposed to the stimulus. Few studies have

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done this. It may very well be that the television programs viewed by children in these experiments have had no influence on the child's behavior. The children acting violently after viewing "anti-social" television may have been just as violent before viewing television. Conversely, the youth displaying socially valued behavior after watching "pro-social" television may have been engaging in those behaviors prior to the experiment. Before we can say television has a causal effect on children's behavior, future research must establish temporal evidence that television viewing causes changes in a child's behavior. This can be done by obtaining precise measures of a child's pro- or anti-social behavior both before and after they have been subjected to viewing pro-social or anti-social television.

Past research experiments have also concluded that the behavior exhibited by children following their viewing of pro-social or anti-social television shows are more than mere imitation. This leads to the second problem of concluding from previous research that television permanently changes a child's behavior: how do we know if viewing a pro-social or anti-social television show has a temporary or long-lasting effect upon a child? Most studies deal with short term effects of television viewing. The studies fail to subject children to the stimuli of television for an extended period of time, which could simulate the repetitious nature of children's home viewing habits.

In addition to these oversights, two major concerns have been overlooked in television research: 1) how does television affect children in their real-life social environment; and 2) how important to the effect of television upon children is the context in which behavior on the screen are interpreted? These two consideraton are of vital importance in the examination of how television affects children.

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The Environment in Which Children Watch Television. Although the environment in which children watch television is important, it has been basically overlooked by past research. As Phillips (1982:388) notes in his critiques of past television research...

> There is consensus that, in the laboratory at any rate, television or screen violence can elicit aggressive behaviors in some viewers. But there is no consensus that one can generalize from these laboratory studies of children and youths to the non-laboratory behavior of...watching television in the real world.

Phillips presents the argument that the atypical setting in which these experiments have been conducted invalidates previously held generalizations about the effects of television upon children (1982:388).

The real-life process of viewing in the home environment cannot be ignored. Laboratory experiments have assumed that because a child displays violent behavior after viewing violent behavior in the laboratory, the child will assimilate violent behavior if he watches violent television at home. This is not necessarily true. Children may learn to perform a variety of physical acts from viewing televison shows, but the social meaning and appropriateness of these actions are mediated by variables that exist outside of the laboratory setting. Factors such as peer approval, family reaction, reward and punishment for behavior, among others, help the child distinguish between actions that are appropriate to engage in and actions that are inappropriate.

Braga and Braga (1975:16) note that many factors contribute to a child's learning:

> Human beings of all races and cultures are basically more alike than they are different in terms of potentiality. But different cultural priorities tend to encourage and allow for development

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In order to determine the social nature of any physical behavior presented on television, the "context" of the physical act must be taken into consideration. Contextualism in communication research is best defined by Georgoundi and Rosnow (1985:82):

> ...contextualism emphasizes the fact that human activity does not develop in a social vacuum, but is rigorously situated within a socio-historic context of meanings and relationships. Thus, in order to understand what an act is or what it involves (its texture), one necessarily has to examine its context, which is to say the surrounding sociopolitical and historical conditions in which the act unfolds. This "context" is viewed as having a temporal and directional behavior, that is, pointing to the past (or where the activity was initiated), to the present (or to the conditions that sustain the present quality), and to the future (to the possibilities and consequences as yet unrealized).

To better understand contextualism, consider the following hypothetical illustration. Suppose a child is watching an episode of "Batman" on television. The protagonists of the series are obviously Batman and his youthful ward, Robin, the Boy Wonder. There is no doubt in the child's mind that these men are heroes, people to emulate. While viewing the show, the child sees the following sequence of physical behavior:

> Robin is walking past the First National Bank of Gotham City when he notices the vile, arch-fiend known as the Joker taking the purse of a sweet, old widow. Robin responds by issuing the villain a verbal command to stop his actions and return the purse.
> Further, Robin warns that "if you don't return the purse right now, I'm going to have to make you return it."
> The Joker, being the vile creature the audience knows him to be, keeps the purse, knocks down the widow, and attacks Robin.
> The Joker quickly gains an advantage over the youthful crime-fighter.
> Batman, who just happens to be patrolling the neighborhood, arrives on the scene of the altercation. He quickly surveys the

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situation and attacks the Joker to protect Robin, avenge the widow, secure the return of the purse and bring the villain to justice.

Past research methods would have used this episode as an anti-social stimulus because of the prevalence of physical violence running throughout this particular sequence of events. Considered in context, however, the actions of Batman and Robin would be seen in an entirely different light. Several pro-social actions occured in this scene: 1) Batman and Robin engaged in helpful behavior. Robin attempted to help the widow. Batman come to the aid of both the widow and Robin. 2) Robin tried to avoid using violence by issuing a verbal warning to the villain. 3) Batman and Robin punished the Joker for stealing the purse by capturing him and taking him to the proper authorities. This scene illustrates the fact that by taking the physical actions of television characters and placing them into cultural context, we can ascribe the appropriate social meaning to their behavior.

Television research needs to take this into consideration in future studies. As Georgoundi and Rosnow explain (1985:83):

> ...what is being argued here is that communicative acts a) unfold within concrete historical and sociocultural contexts; b) refer to the interaction of the people who are situated within particular places in a complex configuration of relationships (e.g. groups); c) involve the exchange of information or messages the construction and interpretation of which occur in a shared context of symbolic meaning (e.g. culture); d) create or "introduce" new contexts or dimensions of discourse that help shape or alter the texture of social reality ... in other words, what is being communicated and how they not only reflect the wider sociocultural context within which the exchange takes place, but alter this context by introducing new social settings and situations that demand appropriate behaviors.

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messages are present throughout the course of any television program. We cannot know what television is doing to children until we know the nature of the programs children watch. By taking into consideration the cultural context of the actions on the screen in these analyses of children television programs, sociologists can examine the true social nature of television.

In order to assess the true influence of television upon children, future research needs to take into consideration the omissions in past research citied in this critique. Specifically, future research should pay closer attention to three very important areas: 1) contextualism; 2) content analysis of public and commercial television; and 3) television programming viewed by children in their everyday lives.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The purpose of the research project is to initiate investigation into some of the areas identified in my critique of past television research. Specifically, this project is an attempt to develop, test and utilize a method to quantify the contextually assessed pro-social and anti-social behavior presented on children's television.

In order to analyze the content of these shows, a procedure must be developed for describing and counting the amounts of contextually viewed pro- and anti-social behavior on children's television. Once such a procedure is developed, this research will test the intersubjectivity, or reliability, of that method, and then utilize it to analyze the pro- and anti-social nature of a sample of children's television programs arbitrarily assessed to be pro- or anti-social.

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Summary.   Before any work can be done to develop, test or utilize this method, however, it is important to address some theoretical concerns.

First of all, are people capable of understanding the contextual meaning of human behavior?   Secondly, are children capable of understanding the contextual meaning of human behavior?   By addressing these concerns through an application of attribution theory, the second chapter will explain that children can understand the contextual meaning of human behavior presented on television.   The discussion in the second chapter will also lead us to understand how to begin to develop a method to measure the contextually assessed pro-social and anti-social behavior presented on children's television.

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL CONCERNS

In the first chapter, the importance of contextualism to television research was noted. Further, it was argued that research needs to examine the content of television from a contextual point-of-view before we can establish the influence of television upon children. Before a method can be devised to analyze the content of children's television from this perspective, however, it is necessary to establish if children can understand the context, or social meaning, of behavior they view on television. Part of this chapter will address whether or not children can attribute meaning to the various contexts in which human behavior occurs. This will be done through an application of Heider's attribution theory to contextualism. Then, by reviewing previous research conducted in the area of attribution theory and the pro- and anti-social content of television, I will discuss why it is important for research to differentiate between pro-social and anti-social behavior in regard to violence. Once the attribution framework is presented, and it is understood that children can comprehend the contexts of televised behavior, we can begin to develop a research method to measure the content of television from a contextual point-of-view.

ATTRIBUTION THEORY

Crittenden (1983) provides an excellent overview of attribution theory in her review of the "Sociological Aspects of Attribution." Therefore the majority of my interpretation of attribution theory, except where noted, is

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taken from her review.

According to the most recent comprehensive review of the literature dealing with television and children (Murray, 1980), there is a relationship between televised behavior and the subsequent behavior of the audience.

Through an examination of these reviews, however, it becomes apparent that the research has paid attention only to behavior per se and has ignored the context within which these behaviors occur. Attribution theory, as well as contextualism, argues that the cultural meaning behind the act is as important, if not more so, than the act itself, in formulating how we interpret our environment and how we interact with others in our environment.

Georgoundi and Rosnow (1985:83) explain the importance of contextualism:

> ...a message or a piece of information is not an isolable unit to be studied as an independent variable that produces particular effects upon the receiver. Rather, it is inseparably intertwined with how the exchange occurs, with whom, and for what purpose.

While attribution theory examines the meaning behind overt behavior or messages, it also explains how this can be done, where contextualist theory does not. For this reason, it is important to understand attribution theory to comprehend how one can learn the contextual meaning of human behavior.

As defined by Crittenden (1983:425) attribution theory is 'the study of causal interpretations that persons give to events in their environment.' The basic tenet of the theory, as posited by Fritz Heider (1958), asserts that people make sense of their own behavior, as well as the behavior of others, through the use of psychological mechanisms. These psychological mechanisms shape people's responses to others' behavior as well. Us-

The work done in the area of television and children has ignored or failed to take into consideration the idea that people are able to make dispositional interpretations about the social world in which behavior occurs. Through looking at the meanings attributed to various behaviors viewed on television, we can better understand the influences those behaviors may have on children. The only research to date that attempts to take into consideration anything resembling this perspective was conducted by Kaplan and Baxter (1982) and deals with the portrayed attribution of human behavior on prime-time television.

CRITIQUE OF PREVIOUS ATTRIBUTION RESEARCH

The title of this section is a misnomer: in the review of the literature in the area of television and children, and in the area of television content research, only one study was found to utilize the attributional perspective. In their study of attribution of anti-social and pro-social behavior on television, Kaplan and Baxter (1982:478) propose analyzing the content of television from a true attributional perspective:

> ...the meaning of pro-social and anti-social behavior on popular television entertainment programs will depend upon the attributional information that is also presented to the viewer. Furthermore, recurrent patterns of association between types of behavior and portrayed causes may, over time, influence the viewer's implicit theories of social causality. The main goal of this is to systematically analyze portrayed causes for pro-social and anti-social behavior on popular television entertainment programs (Kaplan and Baxter, 1982:478).

Unfortunately, Kaplan and Baxter diverge from their proposal. Using an eight-point behavioral chart (TABLE 2.1), Kaplan and Baxter sought to

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that have different motivations behind them. They talk about attributional meanings, yet they commit the same error as their predecessors: they fail to examine the contextual meaning attributed to these acts before labeling them pro- or anti-social.

Attribution of anti-social and pro-social behavior. Kaplan and Baxter error in using the terms "cause" and "motivation" interchangably. From an attributional perspective, there is a difference between the two. Locus-of-control measures the direct, overt cause of an act. It answers the question "what made that action occur?" The answer: because the individual wanted to commit the act (internal locus-of-control) or he was forced to commit the act (external locus-of-control). Motivation, however, is the goal of, or meaning behind, a person's behavior. And this is what research needs to investigate on television.

The difference between cause and motivation can best be illustrated through the following hypothetical scene from an episode of the situation comedy "Happy Days:"

Richie Cunningham has just walked into "Arnold's" and notices, off in the corner, that some hoods from a motorcycle gang are teasing and shoving Potsie, Richie's nerdish friend. Richie asks them to stop. They refuse. "Listen, Bucko," Richie warns the leader of the gang, "if you don't stop that right now, you're going to regret it." The leader of the gang laughs and begins to violently shake Potsie. Richie shoves the hood off of his friend, but soon the whole gang descends upon the two.

At that moment, "The Fonz" happens out of his office, appraises the scene, and quickly jumps into the fight to protect his friends.

Using the information from Kaplan and Baxter's research, we can identify several possible causes for these characters' actions. The cause of both

children, the same force, employed by other persons in a different context, might be defined as violent (1972:46).

This is not an easy distinction to make, and the Surgeon General's Advisory Committee's report continues on and attempts to make some distinctions between the pro-social and anti-social uses of force (1972:46):

> Whether or not the use of physical force will be defined as violence depends upon one's perspective and upon the context, as well as the nature of the act. The recipients of forceful action generally define such action as violent more readily than do initiators of the action. Thus:
> ...the same act may be considered violent under some circumstances and not under others...
> ...the same violent acts may be rejected if one initiates it but may be approved as self-protection against another's attack...
> ...violence may be accepted if it is deemed necessary to protect a person, a property or an important belief...
> ...the ethics of violence may be blunt; line-of-duty violent acts of soldiers and police may be acceptable.
> ...violence to right a wrong may be acceptable by an acknowledged official but not by ordinary citizens...

The omission of these considerations from Kaplan's and Baxter's pro-social and anti-social labeling of television behavior is a major weakness in their work. Further, it places their research outside of the attributional perspective that they intended to utilize. The attributional and contextual distinctions between the pro-social and anti-social uses of force should be utilized in assessing the nature of any behavior. These distinctions will be taken into consideration in this project. For the purpose of this research, the chart on the following page (TABLE 2.2) will be used to help identify pro and anti-social behavior on television.

Before this chart can be used, however, we must make sure that children can make the distinction called for in this chart. While Crittenden and

Table 2.2   Pro-social/Anti-social behavior (revised from Kaplan and Baxter)

PRO-SOCIAL BEHAVIOR

Physical assistance — an attempt to provide physical aid to another character without the use of force (i.e. helping a lady carry her groceries; opening a door for someone with their arms full; cleaning your room without being told).

Forceful assistance — an attempt to aid another character who is being assaulted and/or threatened through the use of force or threat (i.e. tackling a purse-snatcher who is running away from the scene of the crime; using force to break up a fight). Forceful assistance may also include the use of force to prevent harm, damage or assault to another person, to one's property, the property of others, or an important belief (i.e. a soldier protecting his wife, his country and the "American Dream").

Punishment — the use of force, or threat of force, or threat of an unpleasant experience, taken to make another person who has committed a socially unacceptable act repent or atone for their actions. Punishment must, however, meet cultural standards of acceptance. Any over-necessary use of force or threats in punishment can be seen as anti-social (see below). (i.e. spanking a child; using force notto stop a criminal during the commission of a crime, which would be forceful assistance, but to bring him/her to justice after the commission of the crime).

Reward — an attempt to provide another character with legitimately obtained or owned property or income (i.e. raising your child's allowance for being good.

Verbal assistance — an attempt tp provide another character with help either by giving them information or advice (i.e. making sure your friend is wearing his seatbelt; telling your lab partner the correct answer to the problem, etc.).

Compliment — a remark that is meant to enhance another character's feeling of self worth. (i.e. "Boy, Mrs. Cleaver," says Eddie Haskell, "you sure look beautiful today.").

Critique — a remark that may hurt another's feelings, but is intended for a beneficial reason. (i.e. "You know that was a bad thing to do don't you," said Mrs. Cunningham? "I don't ever want you to do that again. I hope you learned a lesson.").

Sacrifice — an action that causes harm, discomfort, loss of property or some other undesireable consequence to oneself, but is done to aid others. (i.e. pushing someone out of the way of a speeding vehicle and getting hit instead; giving someone else the last piece of candy when it is rightfully yours, etc.).

ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOR

Physical aggression - an attempt to produce physical injury or discomfort in another character with the specific intent to harm them and gain self-gratification. (i.e. hitting someone because you don't like the way they look; pushing someone out of your way in a crowded line).

Theft - an attempt to deprive another person of property or income that is rightfully their's. (i.e. stealing the answers to a test; robbing a bank).

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Physical non-assistance - not proving help to someone who need it wehe it is appropriate for you to do so. (i.e. not opening the door for someone who has their hands full of packages; seeing a truck about to hit someone and not pushing them out of harm's way, etc.).

Verbal non-assistance - failure to provide another with helpful information or advice that may be beneficial to them. (i.e. not yelling "fire" when you see flames in a crowded movie theatre; not answering an important question from your parents).

Misconception - lying to someone to harm them or keep them from helping themself. (i.e. telling someone who cannot swim well that the water isn't really too deep when you know it is; telling a classmate who was absent there was no homework assignment when there was).

Symbolic aggression - physiclly or verbal threatening someone with physical harm or loss or property without actually engaging in the physical act. (i.e. shaking your fist at someone in anger; telling someone "I'm going to erase your face").

Insult - directing a remark at someone that serves no other purpose but to harm their feelings. (i.e. callin someone a bad name, etc.).

Heider have argued that man, as 'intuitive psychologists,' can make attributional distinctions about the meaning of others' behavior, it remains to be shown that children can make the distinctions utilized in (TABLE 2.2) Since the purpose of this research is to develop a scale that measures what children see on television, it is important to assess whether they can make these contextual attributions.

CHILDREN AND ATTRIBUTION RESEARCH

As noted earlier in this chapter, through a review of the work of Heider (1958) and Crittenden (1983), man constucts his opinion of other people's behavior through the use of intuitive psychological mechanisms. Man attributes meaning to the overt behavior of others through the use of these mechanisms. The question remains: can children attribute contextual

meaning to the behavior of other people in the manner hypothesized by attribution theory?

Fincham (1983) provides a very good summary and interpretive analysis of this question in his work on attribution theory. Through a review of Fincham's work, we can arrive at a better understanding of whether or not children can make attributional judgments.

According to Fincham (1983:149), children learn to make moral judgments as soon as they begin associating with others in their peer group: "as the child enters the peer group and experiences relationships of mutual respect and equality, autonomous moral thinking emerges. Subjective responsibility, or judgments based on intentionality, begin to characterize the child's thoughts." Fincham notes that work in the area of Piagetian theory have supported the notion that children make these judgments.

Studies by Fincham and other (see Fincham, 1983) have demonstrated that children can distinguish between a variety of meanings attributed to the same behavioral act, depending upon the actor's intentionality and the consequences of the action. This approximates Heider's criteria for making attributional judgments. Studies have shown that this ability is learned at an early age (see Keasey in Fincham, 1983:153):

> ...there is little increase in the use of Heider's criteria in 6-year-olds, 8-year-olds and 10-year-olds, precisely because they are already used by the youngest age group.

If children can make attributional judgments as early as age 6, then it would seem important to examine the content of one of the major sources from which they draw social information: television. By examining the content of television from a contextual point-of-view, we can see what meanings children are learning to attribute to what behaviors. Since

children can theoretically make attributional distinctions between the contents of televised social behaviors, it would seem valid to use a contextual method to assess and quantify the pro- and anti-social nature of behavior presented on children's television.

SUMMARY

From the theoretical perspectives and arguments presented in this chapter, it is apparent that contextual meanings attributed to televised behavior are of great importance when assessing the effects of television upon children. Attribution theory, as well as contextualism, make note that children can comprehend the motivations and contexts attributed to others. As noted in the theoretical critique of Kaplan and Baxter, previous research have failed to address these concerns to any degree. In the next chapter, taking into consideration the arguments presented in the first two chapters, I will formulate a research design to measure the pro- and anti-social content of children's television.

CHAPTER III

METHODS AND RESEARCH DESIGN

In the previous chapter, I have established the logical and theoretical significance of reconceptualizing judgments of what messages are presented by television to the viewing audience, and in particular, to the children in the viewing audience. Since children do model their behavior to some degree from television, it is important to have an idea of the anti-social and pro-social content of those television programs, either on public or commercial TV, that are extensively viewed by children. Simply put, judgments regarding the anti-social and pro-social nature of television programs requires more scientific delineation than those that have been utilized by television research in the past. This thesis is an attempt to develop a scientific method to conduct such a delineation.

Theoretically, a strong case has been made that behavioral acts must be viewed in context before anti-social and pro-social labels can be imposed on those behaviors. Drawing from attributional theory, it is clear that children, as intuitive psychologists, have the ability to place behavioral acts in context. It is clear, then, that a method of quantifying the pro-social and anti-social behavior presented on television must consider the context in which human behavior occurs. This chapter is an attempt to develop a research method to quantify contextually assessed behavior viewed on children's television. In this chapter, I will develop a research strategy for empirically utilizing such a research method.

NATURE OF THE RESEARCH DESIGN

As previously noted, past studies have failed to utilize quantitative methods to analyze the nature of, or amount of, pro-social and anti-social behavior on television. In order to develop a scheme to do that, careful attention must be paid to the use of scientific observation. As Kaplan (1969:126) notes:

> Scientific observation is deliberate search, carried out with care and forethought, as contrasted with the casual and largely passive perceptions of everyday life. It is this deliberateness and control of the process of observation that is distinctive of science.

Kaplan (1969) provides an excellent discussion of scientific inquiry in the social sciences. He notes throughout his text that two of the most important issues to be addressed in any scientific research are validity and reliability of the experiment or project. In the formulation of this research design, this project must pass the test of reliability, but need not concern itself with the issue of validity. By discussing the nature of these two tests, it will become apparent why I have decided to include reliability and not deal with validity as the test of my project.

Validity and Reliability. Hartman (1979:122-123) provides an excellent discussion of these topics. His definition of validity, as well as his discussion of reliability, enhanced my understanding of these topics.

In defining validity, Hartman (1979:122-123) presents a clear discussion of how the test is applied to research:

> Validity is an easy concept to describe, but difficult to guarantee or measure. In general, an instrument or measure is

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said to be valid if it measures what it purports to measure. For example, an IQ score is a measure of general learning ability. If the IQ score is indeed such a measure, persons with high IQ scores should perform certain learning tasks better than persons with low IQ scores.

To test validity, this project would have to test if the chart I have devised to categorize if it does indeed measure pro-social and anti-social behavior. To do so, I would have to find some method of discovering the "true" cultural definitions of these behavior. That test is not possible, or essential, at this stage of the process on inquiry. The purpose of this project is to demonstrate that such behavior can be quantified from a contextual point-of-view to assess the social nature of children's television programming. The validity of that quantification is not necessary at this time.

Reliability is concerned with whether or not a scale measures essentially the same thing each time it is administered. We will have an accurate method if, each time it is utilized in research, it yields approximately the same result from the same information with all things being equal. From these definitions of the two concepts, it should be apparent why reliabilty will be addressed in this project and why validity need not be satisfied at this time.

Pro-social and anti-social definitions of human behavior are merely arbitrarily opinions of personal beliefs. While these opinions may be shared by a collective, there is no way to determine the "true" or "valid" definitions of either pro- or anti-social behavior. However, once a specific set of parameters have been established for identifying pro-social and anti-social behavior, these behavior can be measured. In order to ensure that these parameters are clear, concise and can be identified by anyone wishing to do so, the parameters must pass the test of reliability.

Using the parameters set forth in chapter two, this project will analyze the

contextual content of a single program typically watched by children. If the method is reliable, it will be used to analyze the pro-social and anti-social nature of children's television programs. If it is not reliable, the method will be revised.

The issue of reliability will be addressed again in this chapter. However, before we can discuss this topic further, it is necessary to describe how the pro-social/anti-social parameters set forth in the second chapter will be used to quantify the contextually assessed behavior present on children's television programming.

NATURE OF CONTENT ANALYSIS

In order to quantify the types and number of messages presented by behavior demonstrated throughout the course of any given television show, it is necessary to utilize a detailed research method called content analysis.

Content analysis has been utilized by communication researchers to interpret the underlying themes of many forms of communication: dreams (Hall, 1969:147-158), music (Brook, 1969:287-296), poetry (Raben, 1969:175-186), and many others. Analyses of television content have examined topics such as sex (Franblau, Sprafkin and Rubinstein, 1977), sexual intimacy and drug use in TV series (Fernandez-Collado, Greenburg, Korzenny and Atkin, 1978) physical contact and sexual behavior on prime-time TV (Silverman, Sprafkin and Rubinstein, 1979), and the portrayal of driving on television (Greenberg and Atkin, 1983). The research have dealt with specific themes that can be presented in a myriad of ways: through speaking, 'thinking,' or physical action as portrayed on television.

It is of primary importance in formulating a content analysis research design to have a detailed set of instructions and examples for those who are to do the actual analysis. This helps establish reliability among coders. As Hosti (1969:3) notes, "Content analysis is a phase of information processing in which communication content is transformed, through objective and systematic application of categorization rules, into data that can be summarized and compared."

It is important to note, however, that even if an analysis of television content passes the test of reliabilty, there is no way to escape experimenter bias:

> Even the simplest and most mechanical forms of content analysis require the investigator to use his judgment in making decisions about his data. What categories are to be used? How is category A to be distinguished from category B? What criteria are to be used to decide that a content unit (word, theme, story and the like) should be placed in one category rather than another? (Holsti, 1969:3).

The bias of this project is the use of my categories of pro-social and anti-social behavior.

After a review of past research in content analysis of television, I have developed a method to quantify the pro-social and anti-social content of children's television from a contextual point-of-view. The decisions as to what behavior are pro- or anti-social, as noted earlier, rest upon my judgments as set forth in (TABLE 2.2)

In future research, the validity of these decisions should be addressed. For now, the two questions to be answered by this project are based

on the test of reliabilty and the reconceptualization of previous research:

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1) can a reliable method be devised to quantify contextually assessed pro-social and anti-social behavior on children's television; and 2) will a reliable scientific method support or reject the arbitrary labels assigned by previous studies to children's television shows? In the next section, through a delineation of my specific research design, I will explain more clearly how I intend to deal with these questions.

RESEARCH DESIGN

As noted in the previous section, it is of primary importance to have a clear set of definitions and descriptions of the content to be analyzed. In chapter two, the chart used by Kaplan and Baxter (1982) was revised and modified in conjunction with the considerations of contextualism. As I have noted previously, these descriptions and accounts will be used by both the coders and myself to quantify the pro-social and anti-social content of children's television programs.

From the arguments presented in the previous chapter, it has been noted that the majority of research in the area of children's television has focused on anti-social behavior. Further, the research has not examined these programs with a contextual, quantifiable method to see if programs that they impose anti-social labels upon are in actuality anti-social in nature. The sample of shows used by the coders and researcher in this study will examine shows that have been "labeled" anti-social or pro-social by previous studies, public opinion or researcher bias.

In order to test the reliability of the entire set of descriptions used in TABLE 2.2, I will use a show in the reliability test that satisfies several criteria. First of all, the television program used in the reliability test should be

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one with which children are familiar. Studies (see chapter I and II) have shown that children are more likely to model behavior they are familiar with.

They model their behavior from those with whom they have frequent contact, as well as those whose behavior they see as appropriate. In that regard, all of the programs that will be used in this project will be drawn from television programs with which most children should be familiar.

For the reliability test, I will use the Saturday morning cartoon show "The Super-Powers Team." This show features cartoon characters that are familiar to, and popular with, children and their parents. Superman, Batman and Wonder Woman, as well as their friends and foes, have been popular media characters since the late 1930's and early 1940's. Also, considering the nature of the show, namely the struggle between good and evil, there should be a clear division between anti-social and pro-social behavior. This division should provide the coders with many of the wide variety of behaviors described in TABLE 2.2

I have arbitrarily selected two coders to quantify the content of an episode of "The Super-Powers Team," along with myself, to satisfy the test of reliability. The total number of coders selected was limited to three due to the financial, temporal and methodological limitations of the researcher.

For the purpose of this research, the level of agreement of the coders must approximate 80 percent to pass the standard of reliability. If the agreement level does not reach this figure, the descriptions and methodology utilized in the initial reliability test will be examined and modified until a reliability of .80 is achieved.

Each coder will be individually trained in the use of the scale. The first step will be to introduce each behavior and discuss the concep-

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tualization of the behavior as espoused in TABLE 2.2. Next, the different circumstances or special conditions under which any item may occur will be explained to the coders. Each coder will be told to rely on the chart, and not their own opinion, in assessing the pro- or anti-social nature of an act. As noted in the second chapter, each individual is an intuitive psychologist capable of making attributional judgments about their own behavior and the behavior of other people. Individual differences may, however, cause people to attribute different meanings to the same behavior. To prevent individual bias from influencing the quantification of pro- and anti-social behavior on these programs, the coders should use the same descriptions of behavior. The coders, using the descriptions in TABLE 2.2 should theoretically be able to make the same judgments.

In order to ensure coder familiarity with the characters on the program, each coder will be asked if he/she have viewed the program. They will be asked if they are familiar with the characters on the program. Those not familiar with the program will view an episode of the program to establish familiarity with the characters and to facilitate their under-standing of the context of the characters' behavior.

Once each coder is familiar with the descriptions and the television program, they will be asked to quantify the pro- and anti-social behavior on an episode of "The Super-Powers Team" that is being played on video recorder. Each time that they see a character engage in a behavior on the chart, the coder will stop the VCR and record the time of the act, the specific type of act, and identify of those involved in the action. Consider-ing the difficulty involved in actually pinpointing the specific beginning or ending of a behavior, a five second time interval will be allowed for margin of error, provided that the behavior and character descriptions agree.

When the level of intersubjectivity, or reliability, between the two coders

and myself exceeds .80, the second phase of the project will begin. The methodology will be used to assess the quantitative pro-social and anti-social nature of programs viewed by children on television programs that previous studies have labeled either pro- or anti-social

The basis of these judgments of pro- or anti-social behavior is arbitrary. The sample of shows that I selected is also arbitrarily. To the best of my knowledge, previous research have imposed anti-social labels upon two of the programs used in this project due to the use of violence throughout each program. They are: "The Bugs Bunny/ Road Runner Hour" and "Mr. T." Another show, "He-Man and The Masters of The Universe," draws mixed anti-social and pro-social labels from critics due to the mixture of physical aggression and moral lessons interspersed throughout each half hour episode. Finally, an episode of "Sesame Street," which numerous studies have defined, and used, as a pro-social stimulus, is included in the sample. Using the chart set forth in the second chapter, the researcher will analyze and quantify the pro- and anti-social content of each of these shows for a single story, or episode, and attempt to test the validity of these arbitrarily imposed labels.

SUMMARY

In the next chapter, I will report the level of agreement between coders. I will also report what they witnessed, agreed upon, and disagreed upon during their quantification of the pro- and anti-social behavior on "The Super-Powers Team" used in the reliability test. Then, using the same descriptions and methodology, I will quantify the pro- and anti-social acts on one episode, or show, from each of those programs included in this

sample of children's television programs. The quantified accounts of the behavior presented on each of these shows will be discussed in the next chapter. By comparing the content of these shows to the labels impos-ed upon them, I will discuss the degree to which this methodology enhances our ability to identify and understand the pro- and anti-social content of children's television.

CHAPTER IV

RESEARCH FINDINGS

As noted in the previous chapters, this thesis is an attempt to develop a reliable method to quantify the pro-social and anti-social behavior demonstrated on children's television from a contextual point-of-view. On the basis of a high level of agreement between the primary researcher and the two coders, it appears that it is possible to develop a reliable research method to quantify contextually interpreted behavioral acts.

For the test of reliability, I utilized the contextual behavior chart outlined in the second chapter. Each coder was independently trained by the researcher in the use of the chart and quantification method. After reading the definitions and examples of pro- and anti-social behavior set forth in the chart, each coder was asked if they needed further clarification of the definitions or use of the quantification method. If desired, or needed, additional clarification was provided. When both the coder and the researcher felt that the coder had an adequate understanding of the definitions and methods, they proceeded to jointly view an episode of "The Super-Powers Team" to provide visual demonstrations and illustrations of the forms these behavior might take during the course of a typical children's cartoon. Throughout this process, both coder and researcher were instructed to stop the video-recorded episode each time they believe they witness a behavior descibed in TABLE 2.2. Through this process, clearer agreement was established between the coders and the researcher.

When the coder and researcher demonstrated a mutual understanding of the categories, the training session was ended. After this, the reliability test was conducted.

Each coder, including the primary researcher, independenlty viewed an episode of "The Super Powers Team" to enhance their familiarity with the characters in the show. After they had an understanding of the social nature of the characters in the program, vis-a-vis their pro-social and anti-social disposition, each coder analyzed the content of the episode using the anti-social/pro-social descriptions. Each coder was asked to stop the recorder the moment they viewed a pro-social or anti-social behavior defined in the chart. They were then instructed to record the type of act, those engaged in the exchange, and the "time" of the act on the video recorder time meter. In this way, the agreement between each coder's data could be checked. After the data were collected from both coders and from the researcher, the agreement level between the three was calculated. The tabulations reveal a high level of agreement.

In this specific episode of "The Super-Powers Team," "Escape From Space City," the three coders identified a sum of 82 acts that "fit" into the pro-social/anti-social contextual chart. The primary researcher judged 81 such acts, while coder one found 80 and coder two identified 69. With only one exception, all of the acts tabulated by coder one and two were included in the 81 behaviors reported by the primary researcher. Coder one and the researcher disagreed on the commission of one act, an instance of physical assistance that was tallied by the researcher but not by the coder. The primary researcher and coder one achieved an agreement level of 98.8 percent. The researcher and coder two agreed on 68 of a possible 82 identifications, with coder two including one compliment not tallied by the researcher and omitting various instances of physical assistance, verbal assistance, critiques, and symbolic aggression (see TABLE 4.1). The degree of agreement between coder two and the researcher

Table 4.1   Data From Analysis: "The Super-Powers Team"

Behavior	Researcher	Coder One	Coder Two
Pro-social			
Forceful Assistance	25	25	25
Physical Assistance	14	13	10
Verbal Assistance	14	14	7
Compliment	0	0	1
Critique	1	1	0
Altruism	0	0	0
Sacrifice	0	0	0
Punishment	0	0	0
Reward	0	0	0
Sub Totals	**54**	**53**	**43**
Anti-social			
Physical Aggression	19	19	19
Theft	0	0	0
Physical Non-assistance	0	0	0
Verbal Non-assistance	0	0	0
Misconception	3	3	3
Symbolic Aggression	5	5	4
Insult	0	0	0
Sub Totals	**27**	**27**	**26**
Totals	**81**	**80**	**69**

0 -denotes behavior in these categories were not observed.

was 82.9 percent. Coder one and coder two agreed on 68 of a possible 81 acts for a similar agreement level of 83.9 percent (see TABLE 4.1).

Considering the high degree of agreement between the three coders, this method is considered a reliable instrument for quantifying the pro- and ant-social behavior on children's television. By precisely specifiying those acts deemed pro- and anti-social, the coders were able to utilize similar guidelines to tell them what acts to include or exclude from the analysis. It should be noted, however, that while the descriptions used to identify behaviors were contextually based, they only represented a portion of all pro-social and anti-social behavior. In chapter five, a suggested reformulation of the methodology will be suggested that will facilitate the incorporation of additional pro- and anti-social behavior.

The use of this methodology, however, revealed some very interesting pieces of information about the content of those children's television programs analyzed in this project.

ANALYZING THE DATA FROM THE ANALYSIS
OF CHILDREN'S TELEVISION PROGRAMS

In the previous chapters, it was noted that previous research imposed pro- and anti-social labels upon a number of children's television programs without quantifiably analyzing the content of those programs. It was argued that a quantification of pro- and anti-social content might place a different label on a number of these shows. Using this methodology to analyze the content of five programs created for children revealed that the pro- and anti-social contents of children's television are not as clearly distinguishable as arbitrary assessment would indicate. There are numerous instances of anti-social behavior on programs labelled pro-social.

Conversely, those programs deemed to be anti-social often demonstrated a variety of pro-social behavior. The following data refutes some of the labels arbitrarily assigned to describe the pro- and anti-social content of specific children's television programs (for examples of this labeling, see Murray, 1980).

In the episode of "The Super-Powers Team" used for analysis, "Escape From Space City," the number of pro-social behaviors exceeded the anti-social by a 2-to-1 ratio. The data shows that 66.6 percent of the 81 acts tabulated fell into the pro-social category. While 60 percent of those acts recorded were of a violent nature (symbolic aggression, physical aggression and forceful assistance), 51 percent fell into the pro-social category (see Table 4.2).

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Table 4.3 Distribution of Pro- and Anti-social Acts For "Mr. T"

Pro-Social Categories	Violent Acts	Non-violent Acts	Totals
Forceful Assistance	16	—	
Physical Assistance	—	37	
Verbal Assistance	—	35	
Compliment	—	9	
Critique	—	7	
Altruism	—	0	
Sacrifice	—	0	
Punishment	—	0	
Reward	—	0	
Sub Totals	16	88	Pro-social - 104
Anti-Social Categories	**Violent Acts**	**Non-violent Acts**	**Totals**
Physical Aggression	22	—	
Theft	—	5	
Physical Non-assistance	—	0	
Verbal Non-assistance	—	0	
Misconception	—	1	
Symbolic Aggression	9	—	
Insult	—	3	
Sub Totals	31	9	Anti-social - 40
Totals	**47**	**97**	**N = 144**

— denotes that either a violent or non-violent label is not applicable to a specific pro- or anti-social category. For example: A compliment cannot be considered a violent act, nor is there such a thing as "non-violent physical aggression."
0 -denotes behavior in these categories were not observed.

from these figures, when analyzing the acts on these shows from a contextual point-of-view, both shows display a high amount of pro-social behavior.

Another show that had previously been labelled anti-social, "Bugs Bunny," lived up to its label. Of the 24 acts tabulated in a five minute "Bugs Bunny" cartoon, "Falling Hare," 83% were anti-social. In addition, 90% of these anti-social acts were of a violent nature and 79% of all behavior in the cartoon utilized violence.

This confirms the assertion of previous studies that slapstick cartoons such as "Bugs Bunny" are among the most violent shows on television (Murray,

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Table 4.4 Distribution of Pro- and Anti-social Acts For "Bugs Bunny"

Pro-Social Categories	Violent Acts	Non-violent Acts	Totals
Forceful Assistance	1	—	
Physical Assistance	—	2	
Verbal Assistance	—	1	
Compliment	—	0	
Critique	—	0	
Altruism	—	0	
Sacrifice	—	0	
Punishment	—	0	
Reward	—	0	
Sub Totals	**1**	**3**	**Pro-social - 4**
Anti-Social Categories	**Violent Acts**	**Non-violent Acts**	**Totals**
Physical Aggression	18	—	
Theft	—	0	
Physical Non-assistance	—	2	
Verbal Non-assistance	—	0	
Misconception	—	0	
Symbolic Aggression	0	—	
Insult	—	0	
Sub Totals	**18**	**2**	**Anti-social - 20**
Totals	**19**	**5**	**N = 24**

— denotes that either a violent or non-violent label is not applicable to a specific pro- or anti-social category. For example: A compliment cannot be considered a violent act, nor is there such a thing as "non-violent physical aggression."

0 - denotes behavior in these categories were not observed.

1980). Before this assertion can be generalized to include all such cartoons, however, further analysis of this type of program should be performed to test the validity of this statement.

The episode of "He-Man and The Masters of The Universe" that was analyzed, "Happy Birthday Roboto," also fit its previous label. This label stated that their was an even mixture of pro- and anti-social behavior (see chapter three). In this episode, 60% of all acts tabulated were of a pro-social nature, while 40% were anti-social (see TABLE 4.5). Also, 52% of all acts were nonviolent, while 48% were of a violent nature. At the end of each episode, "He-Man," like "Mr. T," stresses moral lessons for

Table 4.5   Distribution of Pro- and Anti-social Acts For "He-Man"

Pro-Social Categories	Violent Acts	Non-violent Acts	Totals
Forceful Assistance	13	—	
Physical Assistance	—	21	
Verbal Assistance	—	14	
Compliment	—	3	
Critique	—	2	
Altruism	—	0	
Sacrifice	—	0	
Punishment	—	0	
Reward	—	0	
Sub Totals	13	40	Pro-social - 53
Anti-Social Categories	**Violent Acts**	**Non-violent Acts**	**Totals**
Physical Aggression	16	—	
Theft	—	1	
Physical Non-assistance	—	0	
Verbal Non-assistance	—	0	
Misconception	—	0	
Symbolic Aggression	14	—	
Insult	—	5	
Sub Totals	30	6	Anti-social - 36
Totals	**43**	**46**	**N = 89**

— denotes that either a violent or non-violent label is not applicable to a specific pro- or anti-social category. For example: A compliment cannot be considered a violent act, nor is there such a thing as "non-violent physical aggression."
0 -denotes behavior in these categories were not observed.

youngsters to learn.   Clearly, the intent of both of these shows, despite the use of violence throughout each, is to teach children pro-social behavior.

The final program analyzed was an episode of the Children's Television Network program "Sesame Street."   As noted in the first chapter, numerous studies have concluded that "Sesame Street" displays a large amount of socially valued behavior.   Of those acts performed by characters on the show analyzed, the majority, or 70.3%, were of a pro-social nature.   It may suprise many to know that 29.6% of the acts tabulated were of an anti-social nature (see TABLE 4.6). Also, 21% of those acts tabulated were violent in nature.   While these figures do not dispute that

Table 4.6   Distribution of Pro- and Anti-social Acts For "Sesame Street"

Pro-Social Categories	Violent Acts	Non-violent Acts	Totals
Forceful Assistance	0	—	
Physical Assistance	—	24	
Verbal Assistance	—	33	
Compliment	—	6	
Critique	—	0	
Altruism	—	1	
Sacrifice	—	0	
Punishment	—	0	
Reward	—	0	
Sub Totals	0	64	Pro-social - 64
Anti-Social Categories	**Violent Acts**	**Non-violent Acts**	**Totals**
Physical Aggression	19	—	
Theft	—	0	
Physical Non-assistance	—	3	
Verbal Non-assistance	—	0	
Misconception	—	0	
Symbolic Aggression	1	—	
Insult	—	4	
Sub Totals	20	7	Anti-social - 27
Totals	**20**	**71**	**N = 91**

— denotes that either a violent or non-violent label is not applicable to a specific pro- or anti-social category. For example: A compliment cannot be considered a violent act, nor is there such a thing as "non-violent physical aggression."
0 - denotes behavior in these categories were not observed.

"Sesame Street" is a pro-social program, they do demonstrate that children can learn anti-social and violent behavior from even the "nicest" programs on television.

SUMMARY

From the preceding data, it appears that given a specific set of guidelines, it is possible for researchers to analyze and quantify the contextually assessed pro- and anti-social behavior on children's television. Also, while the data affirmed the labels previously imposed on "Sesame Street," "Bugs Bunny," and "He-Man," they challenged the labels assigned to

"The Super-Powers Team" and "Mr. T." The analysis also demonstrates that children can view view anti-social behavior on even the most pro-social of television shows, and vice-versa. From the data presented in this chapter, it would appear that a quantifiable method of content analysis of contextually assessed behavior is of great use in assessing the type of messages being presented to children through television.

In the next chapter, modifications in the formulation and utilization of this methodology will be suggested. In addition, it will be explained how research of this type can facilitate future research on the effects of the mass media upon children.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this study has been to contribute to the sociological knowledge and understanding of "how television viewing affects children." Particular attention was given to examining and reconceptualizing the manner in which previous studies addressed this question. Specifically, the intent of this thesis was to design, test and utilize a method to quantify the contextually assessed pro- and anti-social behavior displayed on children's television. The utility of this method to television research has been expressed throughout the course of this study: we cannot measure the effect of television upon children until we understand the texture of the television shows viewed by children.

SUMMARY

A brief overview of the relevent literature was presented in Chapter I. It was noted that previous studies have shown that television can influence, or change, children's behavior. The material in Chapter I suggests, however, that past research has not examined the effect television has upon children in their real-life, non-laboratory home environment. It was noted that this thesis was intended to be the first step in examining this phenomenon. It was argued that to understand the effect of television upon children, social scientists must understand the nature and character of the stimulus of programs that children view in their home. Through developing, testing and utilizing a method to analyze the pro-social and anti-social content of children's television, social research can better

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understand what messages are being presented to children through the television medium.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Several methodological concerns need to be addressed in future use of this type of content analysis. The issue of validity must be examined. While this thesis used a specific set of descriptions to classify pro- and anti-social behavior, it should not be assumed that these are the "true" and valid descriptions of all such behaviors. In order to examine the social effects of the messages being beamed into our living rooms, we need to have some understanding of what society as a whole considers to be pro- and anti-social behavior. Is there a consensus on these definitions? Do the definitions of pro- and anti-social behavior vary from family-to-family, from community-to-community? A survey analysis addressing these questions would help answer the question of how to arrive at valid definitions of pro- and anti-social behavior.

Also, in order to measure the pro- and anti-social content of television programs accurately, it may be neccessary to devise some method to scale or rank various types of pro- and anti-social behavior. What are the most anti-social of behaviors and the least anti-social? What are the most pro-social and least pro-social types of behavior? An ordinal ranking or both pro- and anti-social behavior would seem to enhance the quantification process.

Finally, research need to examine which is more important, the message presented or the manner in which the message is presented. While the difference between the two is subtle, it is nevertheless distinct. For ex-

ample, during the coding of "Sesame Street" the researcher tabulated numerous anti-social actions on the part of characters attempting to teach the audience how to count, or recite the alphabet. While the message presented was pro-social (i.e. "we want to teach you to learn the alphabet"), the manner in which this was conveyed (through unnecessary violence) often stepped into the anti-social classification. With this problem examined, in addition to those mentioned earlier,this method of content analysis could be used for many useful purposes.

In the future, this method should be used on a wide variety of shows that children view in their home environment. By analyzing these shows, and having some idea as to the pro- and anti-social content of each program, we will have a better understanding of the types of behavior children are learning from television. Once we know what children are watching, we can better examine the effects of these different messages upon children's behavior.

Once we know what children are watching, we need to examine how these programs affect the child in his home environment. What is the relationship between the content of the show and the child's short-term and long-term behavior? How important are the roles of peers, siblings and family in reinforcing or prohibiting children from modeling the behavior they view on television? Does television evoke temporary or permanent changes in the behavior of children? What effect does television viewing have on the adult? These issues, and many more, need to be addressed in future research. Only by devising some method of viewing and analyzing children's television viewing and behavior patterns in the real world can we have an valid idea as to what television is "doing" to society.

In addition, this type of analysis should be used to examine the content of other types of media that are believed to have a powerful influence on

children, namely movies, music and comic books. Psychologists and psychiatrists argue that children are being harmed by viewing such violent movies as "Rambo" and "The Terminator." Is this the case? What messages are being presented to children throughout the movies? And how do these messages affect children's behavior? Research in the past (Wertham, 1954) has analyzed the content of comic books and concluded that children learn a variety of anti-social behavior from the medium. Is this the case or not? Research should deal with all of these types of media.

Finally, future research should examine the mix of pro- and anti-social behavior in all of these mediums. Particular attention should be paid to the context in which these messages occur. Do children learn bad behavior when they view it on television, or do they learn what bad behavior is and how and why to avoid it? Does the media provide children with a method of identifiying and contrasting pro- and anti-social behavior? By examining the context in which pro- and anti-social themes are dealt with in literature, on the screen, and in music, social scientists will be able to better understand what children are learning from the media.

CONCLUSION

In summary then, this study has demonstrated that a reliable method to quantify the contextually assessed pro- and anti-social content of children's television is possible and is a useful tool for television research. Further, this thesis has demonstrated the theoretical utility of reconceptualizing the manner in which research has typically analyzed the content of various

television programs.   With more research along these lines, in all area of the media, it is hoped that someday social scientists will be able to discover what effects the mass media has on children, and on society as a whole.

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