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BEYOND WILLING SUSPENSION

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department

of Radio, Television, Film, and Theatre

San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Curtis G. Greenwood

December 2004

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ABSTRACT

BEYOND WILLING SUSPENTION

by Curtis G. Greenwood

The English scholar, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, gained the majority of his notoriety for his concept of the "willing suspension of disbelief." Surpassing the possible effects of his theory, several current media scholars note that editing speed is used by television producers create manipulative psycho- and physiological reactions in their viewers.

This thesis records and examines the editing speed of six popular Situation Comedies broadcast between the years of 1952-53 to 2002-03. Concluding that over the fifty-year period an average of 1.41 edits per minute were lost every ten years, possible reasons for this phenomenon, as well as a forecast depicting future programming, are offered.

ACKNOWLEDEGMENTS

...to my Jenni whose smile has taken me to places I had never envisioned.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

The English poet, philosopher, and critic Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834) is often ascribed with the inception of the English Romantic movement. Although Coleridge's poetic accomplishments may be small in quantity, his aptitude in forecasting literary and philosophical trends, especially relevant in his avant-garde views of existentialism and his apparent disregard of Aristotle's theatrical unities, has gained him reputation as an academic of considerable magnitude. Even among his colleagues Coleridge was deemed a "hooded eagle among blinking owls" (Shelley, 5).

Theatrically, Coleridge gained the majority of his notoriety for his concept of the "willing suspension of disbelief." The phrase, coined by Coleridge in his Biographia Literaria (1817) reinforces the obligatory participation of the 'audience – spectator' to sacrifice realism (and occasionally logic and believability) for the sake of plot, pacing of the piece, and character development. According to Coleridge, this is done willingly by the audience in exchange for an intensified sense of excitement.

However, it is the extreme pace of this heightened excitement, especially relevant in television, which has caused several prominent media theorists to balk at the editing styles and mesmerizing techniques used in modern television programming. Noted academics of media psychology Byron Reeves of Stanford University, Seth Geiger, Robert Kubey, and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi all research the phenomenon argued by James Gleick in his article *Addicted to Speed* that the "visual language" of television has

been paired down to minimal shots of one-twenty-fourth-second frames that leave "just a sensory glimmer in the viewer's brain" (Gleick, 61).

Less concerned with plot development than promptly securing (and retaining) a viewer, Jerry Mander, a prominent social critic and commentator, writes that television programs are often "filled with quick camera switches, rapid image movement, computer generated objects, computer generated morphing and other technical events." All designed to keep its audience captivated, "television images move more quickly then a viewer can react, [thus] one has to chase after them with the mind" (Mander, 43).

Despite the frenetic pacing of the medium, the consuming public, especially the Web savvy, elusive "Generation X" demographic[1], demands a faster, more abbreviated approach to the art form (Speier, 10). As these performance paces continue to accelerate, it becomes important to document and envisage reactions, both physiological and psychological on the media viewer.

Beyond the viewer's potential reactions, it is also essential to examine the sender's possible objective(s) in distributing the fast paced medium. Replicating William Schramm's basic communication model identifying Source/Sender, Message and Receiver, the role and intention of the sender arguably becomes a point of great consideration (Schramm, 27).

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[1] For the purpose of this thesis, the term "Generation X" will retain its loosely accepted definition of individuals born between the years of 1964 and 1982. Stereotypically, members of this generation are the most comfortable with modern technology and therefore have high expectations for both its aesthetic and functioning qualities.

Examining one of America's most popular modes of entertainment, the televised thirty-minute situation comedy, how have the *sender controlled*[2] elements of speed and pacing, in the completed stage of the production, changed from 1952 to 2002?

To accomplish this Kubey and Csikszentmihalyi's existing definition of edits (defined here as "a change from one camera angle to another in the same visual scene,)" (Kubey, 75) will be used to evaluate the number of edits that are used in Nielsen's top rated situation comedy of 1952 (*I Love Lucy*), 1962 (*The Beverly Hillbillies*), 1972 (*All in the Family*), 1982 *(Three's Company*), and of 1992 (*Roseanne*) to the number used in the Nielsen top rated situation comedy of 2002 (*Friends).* Further rationale for these selections and additional information on methodology will be discussed in the "Methods" section of this thesis.

Significance

According to Jerry Mander the rapid fire editing – directing technique commonly used by television (and frequently replicated by theatre producers), not only purposely draws the audience in, it also releases addicting opiates, biological chemicals that make the viewer experience positive emotions, within the human brain. These pleasurable sensations registered in the brain then reinforce the viewing behavior and, like most experiences deriving cranial satisfaction, these actions are classically repeated.

[2] In television, sender (or producer) controlled elements include the pace of film editing, use of special effects, and a number of computer manipulations to the film/video. Camera angle or position is also highly controlled by the sender. Interestingly, live theatre can mimic their televised counterparts by employing these and other controlled elements such as: blocking or direction, costume, lighting and set design. Conversely receiver (or consumer) controlled features include screen size or seat location, physiological approach, and company. Television viewers are also able to control volume and ambient lighting.

Verification of this occurrence is habitually observed by media psychologists who monitor the four basic brain wave patters, Beta, Alpha, Theta and Delta, of television watchers via an electroencephalograph (EEG).

> Beta rhythms are small, very fast wave patterns indicative of intense physiological stress or thinking. They are commonly observed during everyday occurrences where the mind is clearly focused on a single activity or deliberating between multiple events. Alpha waves are displayed via medium-amplitude oscillations, now understood to represent the foreground activity of the brain in the physically and psychologically healthy adult. Alpha waves are most characteristically visible during dream-sleep/R.E.M or when a subject is relaxing with eyes closed.
>
> Delta waves are large, slow-moving, regular waves, typically associated with the deepest levels of sleep. In children up to the age of puberty the appearance of high-amplitude theta waves, having a velocity between those of alpha and delta rhythms, usually signals the onset of emotional stimulation. The presence of theta waves in adults may be a sign of brain damage or simply an immature personality or display of childish behavior <http://www.cgjungpage.org/>.

Of these four basic brain wave patterns, the existence of alpha waves within the brain, the same waves noted during hypnotism, deep relaxation, and interestingly the R.E.M. or dream portion of sleep, are also present while watching television programs edited/directed at this brisk rate (Mander, 195)[3].

In their essay entitled "*Television Addiction is no mere Metaphor*" Robert Kubey and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi warn that exposure to these rapidly changing images follow the same addictive pattern of habit-forming drugs. "A tranquilizer that leaves the body rapidly is much more likely to cause dependence than one that leaves the body

---

[3] Originally studied by Thomas Mulholland, a psycho-physiologist at the Veterans Hospital in Bedford, Massachusetts; several medical doctors support Mander's arguments on opiates and hypnosis. Mander conducts current research in the area of television and hypnosis in association with Dr. Freda Morris, former professor of Medical Psychology at UCLA.

slowly…," precisely because the consumer is more aware that the drug's effects are wearing off. Similarly, "viewers' vague learned sense that they will feel less relaxed if they stop viewing may be a significant factor in not turning the set off. Viewing begets more viewing" (Kubey, 80).

As producers of theatre and television continue to speed up the pace of their performances, many academics hypothesize that viewers will eventually collide with a not yet existent perimeter of acceptance. Again, Kubey and Csikszentmihalyi, note that if the number of cuts in television exceed ten in two minutes, viewer recognition drops off sharply. Over time, this alienation of the spectator may also cause headaches, depression and eventual disinterest in the media (Kubey, 75).

As opiates within the brain diminish, and as heightened feelings of excitement are replaced with disorientation and programs designed to draw the viewer in begin to turn them away, scholars like Gleick and Kubey warn that audiences, particularly those belonging to the stereotypically instant gratification "Gen X" crowd, will find new forms of media to endorse. As cautioned by author Neil Postman in his book Technopoly, "A new technology does not add or subtract something. It changes everything" (Postman, 18).

Terminology

Stressing artistic autonomy and sensory allure over imitation of life has grown even more possible as technological advances allow for the mechanical movements of cameras, artificial sets, colors and lights, computer enhancements and a plethora of film

or tape related augmentations. Within the worlds of theatre and psychology there exists a lexicon that must be understood when examining their collective effects.

To clarify misconceptions for the non-specialist, or to reveal meanings outside of the film and television arena, the following list of terms and meanings frequently used in this examination, is provided below:

Alpha Waves: One of the four basic brain wave patterns, (Delta, Theta, Alpha, Beta,) alpha is considered to be just below the normal state of alertness (beta). Alpha is known as the gateway to meditation, providing a bridge between the conscious and subconscious mind. Reportedly, in alpha one experiences the stages that lead into deeper states of consciousness, creativity, visualization and persuasion.

B-roll: Videotape or film that is captured and shown as visual only without audio or editing enhancements. Organizations who film live performances to be used for historical and/or future marketing purposes often call such materials "B-Roll." In news and other film media "B-roll" is often accompanied with "A-Roll" or the interview/talking head portion of a production.

Editing: Editing is a complex series of assembling film. Though no single description is able to completely depict the process, the film and television industry typically understand it to be the process by which multiple segments of cut film are fused together. Additionally, copies of soundtracks, laugh tracks, lighting and other special effects are combined with the video to form a cohesive unit.

Hypnotism: A non-harmful state of sleep or somnambulism frequently brought on by artificial means, in which there is an unusual accessibility to the subconscious mind. Scientifically, the hypnotic state is noted by the presence of low-amplitude Alpha Waves or, less commonly high–amplitude Delta Waves within the brain.

Kinescope: Before the advent of video taping devices, television shows were often filmed from a television screen for preservative purposes. Dubbed "kinny" for short, the resulting quality of these copies was poor, containing outside video noise as well as horizontal bars across the video field.

Nielsen Media Research: Active in more than 40 countries, Nielsen offers television and radio audience measurement. It is the standard of measurement that advertisers consider when looking to endorse or sponsor a particular television program. More information on their services and methodology can be found on http://www.nielsenmedia.com/.

Opiates: A drug, hormone, or other chemical substance having sedative or narcotic effects similar to those containing opium or its derivatives: *a natural brain opiate.*

Three-camera technique: Shooting or filming a scene with the use of three cameras set at different angles or different distances. This gives the editor and director numerous shot choices in the compilation process and generally allows for less time and fewer retakes than the one camera technique.

CHAPTER II

Scientific and Historical Evidence

Scientific Evidence

Acknowledging the spectator's willing suspension of disbelief, many theatrical scholars have gone on to note the emphasis of the "emotional sensation of the audience, toward feelings aroused by color and space rather than by the poet's words or the actor's gestures" (Prampolini, 204).

James Gleick, whose contentious work "Addicted to Speed" (1997) notes that television producers happily indulge the "emotional sensations" of the viewer by instantaneously jumping into storytelling. To accommodate society's adoration for such pacing, Gleick points out that many networks have "dispensed with the traditional half-minute or so of opening titles: Mary Tyler Moore throwing her hat in the air week after week, or Cosby's family dancing around," and created *promo-tainment* (Gleick, 58).

Fashioned by NBC in 2000, promo-tainment compresses show credits into one-third of the screen (vigilantly tested for marginal comprehension) and dedicates the remaining two thirds to promote the next program. Thus numerous shows whose pre-show vignettes are "not to be missed" are essentially commencing before their allotted time slot, creating an even greater sense of urgency within the potential spectator.

Concluding that promo-tainment and other stylistic trickery may indeed trigger involuntary psycho- and physiological reactions in the viewer, Kubey and Csikszentmihalyi (2002) elaborate on the rapidity of television's pacing via their discussion on our biological orienting responses.

First described by Ivan Pavlov in his1927 (English edition) of Conditioned Reflexes, the biological orienting response is the human's inherent visual or auditory reaction to any novel or sudden stimulus. In television, the rapid altering of one image to another, unexpected noises and flashing colors all activate these evolutionary inherited responses and pull attention to the screen.[4]

In further studies, a team lead by Byron Reeves of Stanford University and Esther Thorson of the University of Missouri in 1986, Reeves and Thorson measured television's "simple formal features" (cuts, edits, zooms, pans, and sudden noises) by monitoring viewer's brain waves on an electroencephalograph (EEG). The researchers concluded that "stylistic wizardry" does indeed trigger biological orienting responses that originate "their attentional value through the [our] evolutionary significance of detecting movement" (Reeves with Rothschild, 182).

Kubey and Csikszentmihalyi also claim that the frequency of edits "defined here as a change from one camera angle to another in the same visual scene, improved memory recognition, presumably because it focused attention on the screen" (Kubey, 75).

Seth Geiger, (1993) whose multiple publications refute the "memory recognition" theory, indicates that a disparity in the viewer's detection time between related and unrelated cuts demonstrates stupefaction (i.e. the inability to think clearly due to boredom or amazement). "Reaction times were slower immediately following unrelated cuts than

[4] "Typical orienting reactions include dilation of the blood vessels to the brain, slowing of the heart, and constriction of blood vessels to major muscle groups. Alpha waves are blocked for a few seconds before returning to their baseline level, which is determined by the general level of mental arousal. The brain focuses its attention on gathering more information while the rest of the body quiets" (Kubey, 75)

when following related cuts, indicating that processing unrelated cuts required more capacity than processing related cuts" (Geiger, 4).

Memory recognition aside, it is the physiological make-up of the eye itself that allows the human mind to observe both televisions' simple formal features and to see movement in a series of still pictures or film. Known as the "persistence of vision" and the "phi effect,"[5] it is a result of the combination of these two phenomena that allow us to recognize motion.

Able to discern images moving at or above 1/20 of a second, tape and/or film sequences are accordingly filmed at the speed of 24 to 30 per second however; given this pace as well as the brain/eye's persistence of vision, action scenes, music videos, commercial ads and other emotionally charged moments are frequently then edited back down to a brisk rate of one edit per second. This speed then activates our biological orienting responses continuously, purposely appealing to emotion by enticing the audience into an expected state of catharsis.

While commonly applied to the theatrical world, Kurt Lancaster, a contemporary researcher of theatrical audiences claims that stage-familiar catharsis can be directly transferred from a theatre audience to television viewers. Lancaster believes that shrouding the viewer in emotion makes the spectator become participative; even at the

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[5] Persistence of vision refers to the ability by which the eye briefly retains the after-image of the last frame until the next one is available. Able to digest images moving above 1/20 of a second, the human eye can not distinguish smaller measures of time. The phi effect is the psychological or subconscious process of connecting a series of still images to form illusory movement via a consecutive series of events. In actuality, no movement has occurred.

televised level the audience becomes a performer[6]. Thus, hurried performances provide more then mere entertainment; according to Lancaster's theory they also provide the spectator with "a sense of group social interaction or catharsis" (Lancaster, 75).

Dr. Jennings Bryant, a professor of communications at the University of Alabama disagrees. He feels that a show's fast-paced format will not necessarily crate abreaction or an unconscious release of tension, the desired by-product of a cathartic experience, but instead decrease the viewer's attention span.

In his examination, Mr. Bryant exposed preschoolers at a day-care center to four weeks of *Sesame Street*, MTV: Music Television, and selectively randomized network shows in concentrated doses. Although the study was inconclusive, measuring form (cuts, edits, zooms, pans, and sudden noises) and excluding content, Mr. Bryant found that the children who watched MTV, and thus the faster paced edits, "grew more distractible, less vigilant in their tasks, and more aggressive in their play than children who watched the slower-paced shows" (Bryant, 104).

Neurologist at the Children's Hospital in Boston, Dr. Jane Holmes Bernstein, also contends that a show's fast paced format may be the cause of decreased attention span in the class room. Her research with learning disabled children suggests that students who do not watch television are able to listen and pay attention to instructors for time-periods significantly longer then their peers who are exposed to the medium (Holmes Bernstein, 352).

---

[6] It is especially interesting to note how current productions such as *American Idol, Survivor, Big Brother* and other "reality shows" further exploit this concept via their use of audience call ins, text messaging, internet tracking and other technology.

University of Massachusetts at Amherst psychology professor Daniel Anderson argues Bryant and Bernstein's presumptions by pointing out that spectators, especially children, frequently watch television intermittently, oftentimes engaging in a secondary activity and therefore dilute the potentially frenetic experience. Byron Reeves supports Anderson's conclusions and reminds viewers of television's more receiver controlled characteristics (Reeves, 359).

While discussing the consumer's controlled elements Reeves does however note that today's superior technology may tend to amplify perceptions, magnifying both the positive and negative sensations of the viewing experience. Enhanced imaging, added fidelity and larger screens can make watching television both more participatory and increasingly lifelike; "If we are experiencing pictures, they could be defined as natural experience." (Portner, 14).

The trepidation surrounding these increasingly lifelike "image experiences" spurs its own concerns. "Losing consciousness: automatic influences on consumer judgment, behavior and motivation" written by John A. Bargh for the Journal of Consumer Research in September of 2002 discusses television's power as an automatic or "nonconscious" influence on a consumer's preferences and actions.

"...Much of social judgment and behavior occur without conscious awareness or intent and the substantial moderating influence of social– and self–regulated goal pursuits on basic and cognitive and reasoning processes" (Bargh, 280).

Exposed more then forty years ago in his book, *The Hidden Persuaders* (1957), Vance Packard first brought to the American public's knowledge the concept of

subliminal advertising. "The book, published in an era of prisoner of war brainwashing attempts and cold war paranoia, was a sensation and gave the scientific study of consumer motivations an unsavory public image" (Bargh, 283).

Nevertheless, as the television spectator's palate for hurried images grows seemingly ambivalent of the existing momentum, the theories surrounding subliminal advertising and influence, fashionably re-coined as "consumer motivation," are being revisited.

A study performed in 2002 by Joel Cooper and Grant Cooper and published in the Journal of Applied Social Psychology documented results of controlled groups exposed to visually subliminal thirst messages. Although the imagery moved beyond the eye's persistence of vision "results show that, compared to their pre-exposure ratings and compared to a control group, participants became thirstier following exposure" (Cooper, 2213). A second experiment by Cooper and Copper replicated their initial findings and gave additional evidence that the effect was not a result of simple linguistic programming.

Implications of the effects of consumer motivation, especially when speed is used to keep or manipulate a television audience, have spurred new perceptions in the realm of media psychology and the theoretical role of the editor. Dr. Bernard J. Luskin, Ph.D., examines the psychology of producing media:

> Whether editing a linear story or interactive scenario, combinations of edits show and tell the story with a perspective. One needs a vision to communicate or an idea to share. There are always multiple editing cuts employed in the context of recognition and perception. Perceptions may be created with varying degrees of sensitivity. Without "accurate empathy," which requires "seeing through the eyes of the beholder," the

> best equipment will not help. The psychology of editing represents one of the many emerging, sophisticated specialties in our changing media world. Editing in a way that stimulates emotion, creates understanding and rivets attention requires the highest level of editing skill (Luskin, 2).

Despite their varying opinions on audience's editing, biological orienting responses, dwindling attention spans or subconscious influence on consumer's preferences and actions, Geiger, Lancaster, Huffmann, joined by Luskin, Gleick, Bryant, Kubey, Csikszentmihalyi, as well as a plethora of consumer groups, additional academics and advertisers all mutually observe that the swift stylistic measures taken by the producers of theatre and television are habitually latent responses to screen size, the infamy of Music Television (MTV), the remote control and, to a lesser degree, the Internet.

Maria Elizabeth Grabe, Matthew Lombard, et al., have examined the role of these consumer-sided technological products[7]/events[8] and their effect on media content. Noting that a growing body of evidence suggests that technology has a significant impact on viewer responses, "these observations are driving a trend among media production companies toward greater use of images and editing techniques aimed at eliciting favorable responses in viewers" (Grabe, S4).

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[7]Consumer-sided technology directly refers to the technology available *by choice* to the buying public. Options surrounding a television or computer's screen size, color versus black and white display, optional remote controls, and additional audio equipment are not necessary for the audience to enjoy a program. Improved equipment used for the filming, editing, and broadcasting of a televised event are, as other sender controlled characteristics, controlled by the producer of each individual program.

[8] Technological events, such as the Internet or existence of Music Television (MTV) are controlled by the consumer in their choice to participate or avoid however, Grabe et al. point out that the choice of the masses eventually tends to 'flavor' associated products.

Beyond the obvious luxuries these multiple technological advances offer the spectator, the ease of the remote control, the enhanced picture, and clearer sound, all are designed to vie for an increasingly opiate-addicted audience base whose control over their personal entertainment choices continue to skyrocket.

Historical Evidence

Nearly one hundred years ago, the art, science, and psychology of motion pictures began to evolve from still photographs, advancing through the era of silent films into the first "talkies." Broadcast television's earliest philosophies continued to build upon those early conceptions. To clarify the selection of programs chosen for examination in this thesis, a comprehensive history of this evolution, as well as each series historical impact, is further explored in this segment.

During the era of silent films it was the celebrated director D.W. Griffith's masterpiece "*Birth of a Nation*" (1915) who first gave the audience multiple vantage points. Prior to Griffith's inspiration, cinematic cameras remained locked into one position on a static platform. Now, able to dictate his audience's sight lines, Griffith began to increase the sender controlled elements of his theatrical medium.

Forever shifting the nature of filmmaking, Griffith continued with his then avant-garde technique of angles and cuts to inspire some of the earliest thoughts about the psychology of editing, storytelling and the presentation of movies.

In June of 1923 Charles F. Jenkins continued with the now evolving technology surrounding film, cameras and "rotating disks" to construct his first experimental wireless television transmissions. However successful in his endeavors, credit for the television's

invention is typically given to the two scientists who acquired the patient: Vladimir Zworykin for the Kinescope necessary to receive the transmitted images, and Philo Farnsworth for the orthicon tube needed for the transmission. (Taflinger, 1)

Regular broadcasting, overseen by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), began in multiple markets in 1939. Lasting for five months prior to the onslaught of World War Two, it was not until post-1945 that the American public had a more unhampered access to the significantly anticipated technology.

In October of 1951 *I Love Lucy* aired for the first time on television. Eternally shaping the face of televised situation comedies, *Lucy*'s innovations were many. It was the first television program to be filmed and rebroadcast "rather then live and kinescoped from a television screen. It was the first dramatic program ever to be done before a live studio audience and to be filmed in sequence, using a three-camera technique" (Taflinger, 4). This three-camera technique and use of film allowed the at-home viewer to see an edited version of *I Love Lucy*.

Five decades later, following the same format, at-home viewers of the ninth season of *Friends* (2002/03) are also seeing a rebroadcast, edited version of an event filmed in front of a live studio audience. Neilsen Media Research ranked both programs as the top-rated televised situation comedies for their respective seasons, however, the commonalities between *Friends* and *I Love Lucy* lie beyond mere popularity.

Both shows lie at a roughly 25-year pre and post MTV precipice[9]. Additionally, *Friends*, which dominated television's airwaves in 2002/03 was airing ten years after the launch of the World Wide Web, a new technology, as we currently recognize it <http://www.w3.org/WWW/>. Likewise, *I Love Lucy*'s 1952-53 season was showing nearly ten years after the general public's accessibility to television, a new technology at the time.

1952 – 53: *I Love Lucy*

I Love Lucy debuted on CBS in October of 1951. Capitalizing on the American public's familiarity with comedy-variety show acts broadcast on both radio and seen on early television, the show, independently produced by Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz, spent four of its six prime-time seasons as Nielsen's highest-rated series on television. Although still ranked in Nielsen Media Research's chief position after 179 individual episodes, *I Love Lucy* ceased weekly production in 1957.

According to the Museum of Broadcast Communications in Chicago, Illinois, television programs in the 1950s were a tenaciously domestic medium, abundant with pleasant images of marriage, family, and a happy home life.

> The story of *I Love Lucy*'s humble origins suited the medium perfectly, because it told of how a television program rescued a rocky marriage, bringing forth an emotionally renewed and financially triumphant family (Anderson, 5).

Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz starred as Lucy and Ricky Ricardo, a young married couple living in a converted brownstone on the upper east side of Manhattan.

---

[9] Gleick, Geiger, and Kubey all credit Music Television's (MTV) inception as *the* most significant event in modern television and theatrical pacing.

Characteristic of Ball and Arnaz's own family life, *I Love Lucy* reflected the newly-wed's relationship in the funhouse mirror of a Situation Comedy format.

To this extent *I Love Lucy* resembled a number of other vaguely autobiographical Situation Comedies of the period; *The George Burns and Gracie Allen Show* (1950-58), *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet* (1952-66), and *The Danny Thomas Show* (1953-64) reportedly all echo this same type of arrangement (Anderson, 5).

Emblematic of many of the 1950's sentimentalities surrounding gender roles; Ricky Ricardo provides for the family as the orchestra director at the ever popular Tropicana nightclub. Lucy, his witty yet indignant housewife longs to liberate herself from the plight as the familial domestic and join her husband in the apparently male dominated world and of show business. Partnered by faithful side-kicks, and coincidentally former vaudeville players, Ethel (Vivian Vance) and Fred (William Frawley), conflicts inevitably arise when Lucy's sole desire to be more than a housewife run up against Ricky's equally zealous belief that such ambitions in a woman are indecorous.

> This dynamic is established in the pilot episode--when Lucy disguises herself as a clown in order to sneak into Ricky's nightclub act--and continues throughout the entire series. In episode after episode Lucy rebels against the confinements of domestic life for women, the dull routines of cooking and housework, the petty humiliation of a wife's financial dependence, the straightjacket of demure femininity. Her acts of rebellion--taking a job, performing at the club, concocting a money-making scheme, or simply plotting to fool Ricky--are meant to expose the absurd restrictions placed on women in a male-dominated society. Yet her rebellion is forever thwarted. By entering the public sphere she inevitably makes a spectacular mess of things and is almost inevitably forced to retreat, to return to the status quo of domestic life that will begin the next episode (Anderson, 2).

Politically, the effectiveness of each episode does not lie in the indifferent resolution or Lucy's down-trodden return to the status quo, but in her character's outburst of insubordinate energy that spins each episode into its initial chaos. Mrs. Ricardo's rebellious endeavors are usually thwarted by her own ineptitude, however Lucille Ball's genius as an entertainer perversely undermines the narrative's unequivocal message, creating a tension which cannot be resolved. "Viewed from this perspective, the tranquil status quo that begins and ends each episode is less an act of submission than a sly joke; the chaos in between reveals the folly of ever trying to contain Lucy" (Anderson, 3).

Technologically, the production process was ground-breaking for filmed television. To optimize existing network production facilities in what was still predominately a live medium, potential sponsor Phillip Morris Cigarettes and CBS insisted that the program be broadcast live from New York. Battling to utilize movie industry production facilities in Hollywood, California, Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz sought to guarantee the longevity of their work by capturing it on film.

Eventually consenting to Ball and Arnaz, CBS agreed to the couple's demands with the caveat that the future Ricardo family agree to pay the additional production expenses and accept a reduced fee for their work. In exchange, the Ball and Arnaz independently owned Production Company Desilu was given one-hundred percent ownership of the series.

Winning the right to film their work however did present the Arnaz and Ball team with a new complication: customarily capturing the series on film meant shooting with one camera on a closed soundstage. Aware of their rapport with a live audience, Arnaz

and Ball also wanted to capture the spontaneity of Ball's comic performances and interaction with other performers. Turning to cinematographer Karl Freund to help solve the problem, Freund adapted the live-TV aesthetic of shooting with multiple cameras to the context of film production.

Since it would not be possible to change the lighting during a live performance, Freund developed a system for lighting the set from above. "With three cameras running simultaneously in front of a studio audience, *I Love Lucy* was able to combine the vitality of live performances with the visual quality of film." The editing of the film was to take place at a later time ensuring that the televised episode captured the same sight gags and physical comedy intended by Ball and Arnaz (Anderson, 4).

1962 – 63: *The Beverly Hillbillies*

Like *I Love Lucy, The Beverly Hillbillies* (1962-71) was premiered by CBS. Running for over two hundred episodes during its nine-year span, *The Beverly Hillbillies* is listed as Nielsen's top-rated show during its premier season and remained in the top ten throughout its original syndication.

Conceptualized by Paul Henning[10], due to its duration, reach, and frequent presence in Nielsen's crowning position, *The Beverly Hillbillies* is frequently coined the most successful network series of all time however, given the bevy of other triumphant series, the onslaught of cable networks and the growing accessibility of television in the

[10] A prominent television producer of his day, Henning is often referenced for his multiple 'country-style' offerings. Outside of *The Beverly Hillbillies* his most notable works are *Petticoat Junction*, *The Real McCoys*, and *Green Acres*.

1960's, sufficient data has not been provided by the show's producers to validate this claim.

The Beverly Hillbillies premise is explained in the series highly visual opening montage:

> Jed Clampett (Buddy Ebsen) is an Ozarks mountaineer who, through epic fortuity and sheer ineptitude rather than the Protestant work ethic, falls into unfathomable wealth with the discovery of oil beneath his worthless Arcadian scrub oak. When a roving petrochemical concern gets wind, they buy him out for $25 million, whereupon town sophisticate Cousin Pearl (Bea Benaderet) convinces him fabled Beverly Hills might provide: (a) a suitable beau for his daughter Elly May (Donna Douglas) and (b) career opportunities for his wayward nephew Jethro Bodine (Max Baer, Jr.). Taking their cue from *The Grapes of Wrath* (Steinbeck via John Ford), they load up the truck and move to Beverly--replete with a rocking chair up top to house Granny (Irene Ryan), the family's reluctant matriarch (Cullum, 2).

In spite of his bewilderment surrounding his newfangled life of extravagance, Jed remains a citadel of homespun wisdom, the very personification of Kennedy-era enthusiasm in the accessibility of the American Dream.

Assisting to the show's enormous popularity, was its kitschy yet appealing theme song. Performed by Bluegrass enthusiasts Lester Flatt and Earl Scruggs the show's anthem rapidly became a number-one hit on country-western charts. To bolster its credibility among audiences even more, Flatt and Scruggs frequently appeared on the show as themselves.

Understanding that familiar personalities played key role in the spectator's "relate-ability" to the program, Henning is believed to have recycled several of his characters from other recognizable works.

> Cousin Pearl was a textbook recreation of Grand Ol' Opry mainstay Minnie Pearl.... Even the series name was taken from a bluegrass band of the 1930s. And of course, the characters of Jethro, Elly Mae, and Granny seemed to borrow more than casually from Li'l Abner, Daisy May, and Mammy Yokum, respectively (Cullum, 1).

Perhaps more ironically, if not unfortunately, Jed Clampett and his uncouth entourage's arrival seemed to mirror almost entirely another unconventional clan of unexpected backwoods callers. With the assassination of President John F. Kennedy (November 22, 1963), the national spotlight, unfalteringly, was thrust onto the now President by default, Lyndon B. Johnson.

Almost immediately, the American public began to see a myriad of parallels in the Clampett – Johnson association. Rather than notoriously glamorous elitists directing the national agenda, Americans saw a Texas farmer whose own multi-million dollar fortune could be traced back to a lucky find of "Texas Tea."

Long before President Johnson was recognized for his consummate political savvy and sharp-edged callousness, he entered the popular culture as somewhat of a national embarrassment, both memorialized and ridiculed, much like *The Beverly Hillbillies*, for turning off the lights in the White House to save electricity, or showing a disbelieving public his gall bladder scar.

Regardless of intended or inopportune political parallels, its stock characters, consumer motivating theme song and guest artists; by the sheer nature of its notoriety, *The Beverly Hillbillies* appears to have reflected the American public's taste in television programming during the 1962-63 season.

1972 – 73: *All in the Family*

Perhaps more then any other syndicated series in television history *All in the Family* helped to shape the future of standard network's content. Characterized by episodes replete with controversy, socially relevant topics and politically charged messages, *All in the Family* helped to usher in a new era in American television: one that no longer purposely avoided the possibility of contentious or sexually taboo subject matters. Themes such as rape, gender and racial stereotypes or even overtly political statements[11] were shockingly common to *All in the Family*'s viewers.

Airing from 1971 – 1983 (its final four seasons as the re-named *Archie Bunker's Place*) on CBS, *All in the Family* was the top-rated show on American television. Winner of four consecutive Emmy Awards[12] as "Outstanding Comedy Series," *All in the Family* was not only one of the most successful Situation Comedies in television history, it was also, arguably, one of the most significant.

The plot, typically revolving around the career and domestic concerns of the Bunker household in Queens, New York, focus primarily on family patriarch Archie Bunker (Carroll O'Connor), a prejudiced loading dock worker who habitually clashes with one or more of his more liberally minded family members. Disturbed by the changing nature of American society, "gains by the "Spades," "Spics," or "Hebes" of

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[11] Aired in November of 1972, in the episode titled *Mike Comes into Money*, the characters battle over Mike's decision to donate money to the real life presidential candidate George McGovern, Richard Nixon's Democratic opponent.

[12] The Emmy Awards are US television production awards. Offering two types, the Daytime Awards administered by the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, and the Primetime Awards, given by the Academy of Television Arts & Sciences. *All in the Family* won multiple awards in 1973-1976.

America (as he referred to Blacks, Hispanics, and Jews, respectively), [come] at his expense and that of other lower middle class whites" (Gunzerath, 3).

Contradicting O'Connor's insensitive character was his lovingly capricious 'dingbat' wife, Edith. Played by Jean Stapleton, Edith usually suffered through Archie's bigoted diatribes in an effort to avoid confrontation. Conversely, Mike Stivic (played by Rob Reiner) Archie's live-in son-in-law, a stereo-typically open-minded college student, married to the Bunkers' daughter Gloria (Sally Struthers) thrives upon these heated confrontations.

The altercations between Archie and Mike ("Meathead") serve as the general foundation for a great deal of *All in the Family*'s comic bantering. However, as comedy ensued, often at the cost of minorities and other non-traditionally represented groups, several questions were raised by network producers regarding the show's longevity.

Producers Norman Lear and Alan (Bud) Yorkin brought *All in the Family* into the United States after securing the rights from the series forefather, British comedy series, *Till Death Us Do Part*. Airing on the BBC in the mid-1960s, *Till Death Us Do Part* focused on the character of bigoted dock worker Alf Garnett.

Developing two pilot episodes based on the *Till Death Us Do Part* model Lear and O'Connor brought the product to ABC and were discarded however, seeking shows that would appeal to a more diverse and increasingly urban audience base, CBS President Robert D. Wood, though leery of the show's poignant material, made a 13-episode commitment to air the series beginning in January 1971 as a midseason replacement <http://www.sitcomsonline.com/allinthefamily.html>.

The network had ample reasons to be suspicious of reactions to its new program. *All in the Family* seemed to revel in breaking prime time's previously unbreakable taboos. Archie's recurrent tirades laced with degrading racial and ethnic soubriquets, Mike and Gloria's perceptibly active sex life, the resonance of Archie's belching and of flushing toilets--all broke with sitcom convention. However, they also made people sit up and take notice of the new CBS series.

In effect, its unconventionality caused *All in the Family*'s pilot episodes to consistently rate below average in research tests conducted by both the ABC and CBS networks. "Nevertheless, CBS went ahead and debuted the show on 12 January 1971, though with relatively little fanfare or network promotion" (Gunzerath, 2).

Expectedly, initial viewer response to *All in the Family* was tepid. While Wood ensured that the network's telephone switchboards were prepared for an onslaught of aggravated calls surrounding the series preliminary airing, the avalanche of calls never occurred, in part because of the unfortunate fifteen percent audience share garnered by the first episode. The show continued to languish in Nielsen's ratings during its first few months of syndication.

Despite *All in the Family*'s initial reaction, television critics quickly became aware of the production's ground-breaking content. As strong word-of-mouth advertisements among loyal viewers and a 1971 Emmy endorsement escalated the show into the homes of more traditional audience members, *All in the Family* swiftly became Nielsen's top-rated prime time show. The series continued to seize that coveted position for each of the following five seasons (Nielsen Report on Television, 164).

viewers a rather square, perhaps even trite, situation comedy <http://www.sitcomsonline.com/allinthefamily.html>.

All in the Family's enormous impact on American television's content is almost unfeasible to calculate. By discarding the frothy domestic plotlines and quiet undertones of social inequalities seen in shows such as *I Love Lucy* and *The Beverly Hillbillies,* in exchange for overtly topical themes with important social implications, *All in the Family* helped to usher in a new generation of comedic programs. "In this sense, its influence on prime time programming continues to be felt decades later" (Gunzerath, 3).

1981: The inauguration of Music Television *(MTV)*

While the content and editing styles of Music Television, more commonly known as MTV, are not directly discussed in this thesis, it is crucial at this junction to *briefly* discuss the network's inception as to understand its possible sway on more modern television's programming.

Literally launching onto television screens via trendy 1980's cable and satellite technology on August 1, 1981 after John Lack's (one of the creators) announcement: "Ladies and Gentlemen let's rock and roll," the network ballooned to alter both the nature of the music industry and the way audiences watch television.

In his article titled *Get Serious* written for Adweek, Jeremy Schlossberg states that MTV had the distinct ability to furnish its audiences with something no one else could offer. In short, MTV became among the first networks to specially market, profile and involve its core viewers (Schlossberg, 41).

Instituted by Warner Amex Satellite Entertainment Company (WASEC) after extensive marketing research, the preliminary key to the early success of MTV was the accessibility to low-cost or free programming in the form of music videos. Repeatedly provided by record company executives at no cost, the concept of these "promotional clips" was developed in Great Britain in an effort to make the American audience more familiar with British acts[15].

These promotional clips, which ultimately matured into the new medium of music videos, were characteristically three to five minute segments, usually shot on film but intended to be shown only on a television set. "The foundation of a video clip is the soundtrack, which is a recorded song, the sale of which is promoted by the video. In some cases, other material such as sound effects or introductory dialogue may also appear on the soundtrack" (Burns, 2).

Visually, the early music video typically consisted of live concert footage or, more frequently, lip synching, pantomimed instrument playing, and occasional non-choreographed dancing by the performing artist(s). However, as the medium rapidly evolved, these once solely promotional clips became a finishing point to themselves. The combination of movie-soundtrack partnerships, cryptic storylines, avant-garde editing techniques, graphic imagery, and novel performer relationships with the camera quickly shrouded the emerging art form in a cloud of controversy.

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[15] Historians of MTV note the band Duran Duran as their first example of this phenomenon. "Ultimately MTV proved to be immensely important to the careers of numerous artists, including Madonna, Michael Jackson, Prince, Peter Gabriel, and U2, as well as Duran Duran" (Burns, 2).

While becoming a breaking ground for experimental camera and editing techniques, the youth driven nature of the medium's, and coincidentally the network's, treatment of sex, violence, and other sensitive topics became the catalyst for both positive and negative publicity. Advertisers looking to exploit an increasing large and influential youth market were intrinsically drawn to the network's unique niche-market scheme; others, frequently aghast by an individual video's speed and/or content, shunned the network's existence (Schlossberg, 40).

Notwithstanding an often disgruntled public, even by the early eighties the network's stronghold on the artistic format had become so prolific that its mimicking grew immeasurable. Ferrel Guillory, director of the Media and Public Life program at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, gives readers one example of the MTV phenomenon in his book Exploration of Social and Economic Trends, 1924-1999.

Guillory notes that by 1984 multiple political spectators were discussing how television commercials surrounding Ronald Regan's reelection campaign were typical of the MTV format: "short on story and substantive message and long on quick bursts of sight and sound stimulation" (Guillory, 213).

Additionally nodding to ideas spurred by MTV, Michael Mann, creator of NBC's 1984 hit *Miami Vice*, credits MTV for his series success. Initially billed as "MTV Cops" prior to the official naming the series, Miller blended his traditional hour-long cop show with MTV style editing, an ultra modern musical score and avoidance of earth-tone colors.

By 1987 MTV had begat MTV Europe. Individual Asian and Latino services were launched in 1991 and 1993 respectively. Italian, Indian, Russian and other countries have also followed suit and while the content of the network has changed significantly from solely fast paced music videos to now regularly include game and reality shows, award ceremonies and their own offering of teen themed cartoons and situation comedies; MTV continues to be an artistic and economic mega-force with daily global viewerships reportedly in the multi-millions <www.mtv.com>.

1982 – 83: *Three's Company*

While appalled viewers of early episodes of *Three's Company* labeled the show an illicit attempt to use the now wildly popular Situation Comedy format to glorify perverse behavior and alternative lifestyles,[16] Gerard Jones author of *Honey, I'm Home*: *Sitcoms: Selling the American Dream,* notes that the creators behind *Three's Company* were astutely acting in response to the evolving attitudes of the late 70's and early 80's television viewer.

Suggesting that producers Don Nicholl, Michael Ross and Bernie West recognized the mediums growing trend toward "simple titillation," Jones maintains that the creators of the series simply took an additional step in that direction. The producers "took advantage of TV's new hipness" exhibiting increased amounts of titillation "in [a]

[16] In order to ease concerns of their obtrusive land-lords, the show's main male character justifies his living with members of the opposite sex by alleging he is a homosexual. While commonly viewed as a perversion or mental disorder by the general public of the time, The American Psychiatric Association had removed the diagnosis of homosexuality from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders in 1973; in 1975 the American Psychological Association followed suit and urged all mental health professionals to remove the stigma of mental illness from men or women of homosexual orientation.

completely undemanding form," and thus creating "an ingenious trivialization that the public was waiting for" (Jones, 156).

Aired on ABC from 1977-84, having entered complete national syndication in 1982, *Three's Company* chronicles the life of a young man (Jack Tripper played by John Ritter) living platonically with two young attractive female room-mates[17]. Set in the swimsuit convenient Southern California town of Santa Monica, the notorious trio shared an apartment in order to surmount the high cost of living.

Though the main characters remained true to their vows of a nonphysical relationship, the series was infamous for its use of subtle connotations, double entendres, and titillating imagery; especially for the advantage of the series' secondary male characters: coincidentally the Archie Bunker fashioned and traditionally minded Stanley Roper (Norman Fell) and the more women-hungry Ralph Furley (Don Knotts).

Notorious for these female exposés "bouncing around the apartment braless in tight sweaters, ...clad in a towel, nightie, short-shorts or bathing suit," (Mann, 4) *Three's Company* entered the television scene in the midst of television's self pronounced "jiggle era."

Beginning in 1976 with the likes of *Charlie's Angels* and *Wonder Woman*, *Three's Company* and its analogous associates were the medium's response to the sexual revolution and the swinging single lifestyle gaining popularity in the late Seventies and early Eighties. Though otherwise benign in content, *Three's Company* was among the

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[17] Stereotypically intelligent brunet Janet Wood (Joyce DeWitt) and simple-minded blonde Christmas "Chrissy" Snow (Suzanne Somers) were the series' originally cast female leads.

first American[18] Situation Comedies to openly address the sexual implications and frustrations of co-ed living.

Three's Company's puerile infatuations and dangerously televised flirtations with sex helped garner the series remarkable ratings and media exposure. Consistently rating on Nielsen's top 15 most watched programs[19] directories for its aired years, embellishing the cover of Newsweek in February of 1978, and endorsed by the reigning queen of comedy, Lucille Ball[20], the series lasted 174 episodes finally giving way "to NBC's comically violent *The A-Team*" in 1984 (Mann, 2).

1992 – 93: *Roseanne*

Broadcast on ABC beginning in 1988, *Roseanne* acquaints viewers with the plight of a typical lower class family who struggle with life's fundamental tribulations: marriage, children, finances and notorious parent's in law. Molded on the classic familial situation comedy model, the series spotlights the Connor family of five; children DJ, Darlene, Becky, with parents Roseanne and Dan. "The household's mother, Roseanne, is being accompanied in her quest to keep the family together by her sister Jackie and various friends over the years" <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0094540 /plotsummary>.

While, like *All in the Family* and even to a limited degree, *I Love Lucy*, the premise of this show remained domestic in its setting. *Roseanne* also continued to extend

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[18] Creators of *Three's Company* openly acknowledge the show's origination from the 1973-76 British televised comedy *Man About the House.*

[19] Ranking between Nielsen's third and eleventh most watched televised series during 1976-1982.

[20] Lucille Ball enjoyed *Three's Company* and Ritter's pratfalls to the extent that she agreed to host the show's 1982 retrospective special.

the boundaries of topics traditionally reserved for the Situation Comedy genre via her character's straightforward discussions surrounding issues of gender, homosexuality, and family dysfunction.

Where this series particularly differentiates itself from other shows discussed in this thesis is in the main character's ability to personally relate to these controversial themes. Diverging from the "Archie Bunker" model of an America changed by the growing acceptance of minorities, the character of Roseanne *lived* the existence of a poor, overweight minority.

The television personality is based on Roseanne Barr's own comic persona, that of a self-pronounced brash, loudmouthed, working class mother and wife who mocks and derides the grievance of her present condition and who is especially blunt regarding her views on both men and sexism. "Her humor aggressively attacks whomever and whatever would denigrate fat poor women--husbands, family and friends, the media, or government welfare policies" (Cirksena, 2).

The forthrightness of these dramatic moments, generated via Roseanne Thomas-Barr-Arnold's real life experience prior to her rise to stardom were considered by Carsey-Werner Studios, the show's producing partner, an antidote to the upper-middle class respectability of their preceding success found in *The Cosby Show*. What the producers unintentionally created was not only a nearly ten year syndicated success, but an intensely powerful public persona.

Along with manifold public faux pas on the part of the show's star, the producer's management of all socially controversial issues, while televised, had to remain consistent

with Mrs. Barr-Arnold's stated political and social views. Although Roseanne did not write the scripts, she retained complete artistic control of the show. Not only do numerous plots draw on aspects of Roseanne's life prior to her successes, several refer to contemporaneous events in her "real" life (Cirksena, 1).

2002 – 03: *Friends*

Perhaps unlike any of the afore-mentioned programs, the content of *Friends*, launched by NBC on September 22, 1994, has yet to have an abundance of academically related studies[21]. While the subject matter of the majority of the episodes remained controversially benign, intellectuals studying film and television theorize that its enormous success heralds an alarming, yet quickly emergent, audience interest in "water-cooler" productions. As noted by critic John Nettles, these are the types of: "...programs that would strong-arm us into believing that if you don't watch, you'll have no idea what your co-workers are talking about on Friday morning" (Nettles, 16).

The series circles around the fantastic friendship of three eye-catching men and three equally beautiful women, all in their mid to late twenties, who recurrently congregate at one another's somehow spacious Manhattan apartments and/or share a common sofa at a Greenwich Village coffeehouse aptly named "Central Perk."

While the six main characters are both perpetually and freely moving in and out of each other's love lives, apartments, dreams and families; the creators of the series have been careful to ensure a unique, and importantly relatable, persona for each star.

[21] With original episodes still having been broadcast in the Spring of 2004, additional time is needed for academics to properly research and address this phenomenon.

According to Lauren Johnson, historian and lifelong fan of the series, casting director Ellie Kanner worked with the show's creators to ensure the characters not only became believable, but that they each expressed qualities potential audience members might own. Viewers of the series are to ask meant to ask themselves "Which *'Friend'* am I?" or "Which would I like most to know?"(Johnson, 11).

NBC's webpage, http://www.nbc.com/Friends/about/index.html, dedicated to the award winning series highlights these individual character quirks:

> Monica (Cox Arquette) is a chef with an obsession for neatness and order in her life. She is also married to Chandler (Perry), a dry wit who is never at a loss for words. Across the hall are Chandler's longtime roommate Joey (LeBlanc), a womanizing actor currently on the soap opera "Days of Our Lives," and Rachel (Aniston), Monica's best friend from high school.
>
> Across the alley from Monica and Chandler is Monica's hapless brother Ross (Schwimmer), a paleontology professor who has been divorced three times, including once from Rachel. Although Rachel is no longer romantically involved with Ross, they share the responsibility of raising their newborn daughter, Emma. Rounding out the circle of friends is Monica's ex-roommate, Phoebe Buffay (Kudrow), an offbeat eternally optimistic folk singer and massage therapist <http://www.nbc.com/Friends>.

Marta Kauffman and David Crane, the creators initially responsible for the show originally labeled *Friends Like Us*, offered the series to Warner Brothers Television along with two other unrelated models in 1993. Picked up by NBC for their fall 1994 "Must See TV" schedule, the series has gone on to garner seven Emmy nominations <http://www.nbc.com/Friends>, an innumerable amount of fans and perpetually impressive Nielsen ratings. During the ten seasons the show has been broadcast it has remained as one of Nielsen's top ten most watched programs (A.C. Nielsen Company).

CHAPTER III

Methodology

To gain an enhanced understanding of the difference in pacing over the 50 year interval from 1952 to 2002; three separate coders viewed deliberately selected episodes of Nielsen's top rated situation comedies (*I Love Lucy, The Beverly Hillbillies, All in the Family, Three's Company*[22], *Roseanne* and *Friends*) for the seasons in question.

Using Kubey and Csikszentmihalyi's existing definition of "edits" ("defined here as a change from one camera angle to another in the same visual scene," (Kubey, 75) coders examined one episode from each series two times in order to gain the characteristic number of edits viewed by the audience/spectator per minute.

All episodes were viewed simultaneously by the three person examining team on a twenty-one inch color television over a series of six nights. Examining one episode per evening and using individual hand tally counters to collect the number of edits, coders employed the following methodology to ensure replication:

- The coders strictly adhered to Kubey and Csikszentmihalyi's existing definition of editing.
- Each coder's hand tally counter was clicked one time for every edit observed. In the event that the hand tally was clicked by accident, that individual coder abstained from clicking his/her counter for the next edit witnessed.

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[22] Although ranked under *M*A*S*H* in its Nielsen rating for the 1982-83 season, *Three's Company* more closely fits into this paper's definition of Situation Comedy. While frequently billed as a comedy, the M*A*S*H series frequent use of dramatic elements, character's development in position and personal lives, and their eventual departure to their respective homes more closely fit the definition of a Drama.

- Coders mutually agreed **not** to count the first camera angle (the shot moving from the opening credits or commercials into the plot) as the first edit however, any angle ending a segment, including edits into commercials or closing credits **was** included in the total number of edits.
- If the story line continued as ending credits played coders continued to tally edits.
- To ensure inter-coder agreement, five minutes of each examined episode were viewed and discussed prior to coding. Fades and establishing shots were mutually agreed by all three coders as properly fitting into Kubey and Csikszentmihalyi's definition.
- In the event of disagreement between coders, the examining team agreed in advance to let the majority's decision (two of three) rule. Likewise, if all three coders disagreed, final decision was to be given to the author. Neither of these policies needed to be set into action.
- At the end of the fist viewing the collected number of edits was given orally to "Coder A" who collected the data. The hand tallies were re-set to zero and the system was then repeated during the second viewing. Appendix A details the individual coder's findings.
- As all events were available on Video Cassette (VHS) or Digital Video Disk (DVD), the running time for each episode was recorded by Coder A from the instrument used for playing the episode during the second viewing.

Additionally, again to ensure comparability, only the content portion of each episode was included in this examination. Except as noted above, opening and/or closing credits, any existing promotainment, and commercials[23] were excluded. To ensure the coders were not absorbed in character or plot development, episodes were also scrutinized without the distraction of sound. This was achieved by simply muting volume while coding each individual episode.

Basic mathematics were used to achieve both the average number of edits observed per episode (dividing the sum of the coder's findings by six) and per minute (dividing the found average of edits by the show's running time). Numbers have been carried out two decimal points to ensure accuracy. Appendix 'A' gives greater detail on these figures.

While detailed justification for the selection of each series is provided in Chapter II of this thesis, the individual episode examined for each production was intentionally chosen to reflect the common feel, or standard aesthetic look, of each individual series. As such the following criterion was established to ensure not only sentiment, but comparability between episodes:

- Availability of the taped event to the public.
- To circumvent untypical edits or stylistic tricks, avoidance of any episodes with a flashback, dream sequence or other material previously seen by the consuming audience.

[23] This includes "stay tuned" messages commonly seen during advertisement segments for show's broadcast in the 1970's and 80's.

- Again to ensure comparability, evasion of all holiday (Halloween, New Years Eve, etc.) and vacation or overtly message oriented/ plot essential (Death, Marriage, of a main character etc.) themes.
- Disallowance of any episode(s) advertised as a cliff-hanger or multiple part series.
- Appropriate fit into this paper's definition of Situation Comedy as discussed below. This excluded any individual episode lasting longer then the standard thirty minute allocation.
- Exclusion of any special promotions, including series launch and finales, or previously viewed (re-run) episodes.
- Each selected program must have *originally* aired on a standard[24] network in American English, the official language of the United States.

For the purposes of this study Situation Comedy has been defined specifically as a televised genre of performance lasting up to 30 minutes, and consisting of recurring characters whose growth or personal development remains comparatively static over time. While episodes may be linked by existing or developing relationships; age, career, financial or other aspects of normal life do not mature at a natural rate.[25]

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[24] For the purpose of this thesis, standard networks will refer to programming available on a major network (ABC, NBC, CBS) that was available to the public without cable, satellite or other form of paid subscription.

[25] For example, *I Love Lucy*'s baby Ricky never became a toddler despite the shows multiple year run.

Discussion revolved solely on the speed of editing witnessed during each coded episode, possible reasons for this phenomenon and *reported* social, psycho- and physiological effects of recurrently watching programs edited at an increased velocity.

While references have been drawn from multiple resources, this thesis does not address in any depth the quality, content, or artistic merit of the shows, the worth and/or role of Situation Comedies in television or American society, nor shows that differ from the prerequisites set in the established methodology.

It is also essential to reference a person's individual decision to watch and/or avoid television. While this paper deliberates the possible negative ramifications of televised editing speed on children and/or adults, any persuasion in favor of the argument of complete or semi-abstinence of the medium is non-intentional.

CHAPTER IV

Individual Numeric Findings

I Love Lucy – Numeric Findings

When systematically reviewed by this examining team, *I Love Lucy*'s edits changed at a rate averaging 5.18 per minute with the average cut between edits equaling 11.59 seconds. Exploring her infamous *Job Switching*[26] episode, some individual shots between edits lasted beyond one minute and thirty seconds. A variation of 5 edits was distributed among the coders with a high of 112 edits observed and a low of 107 in the 21 minute 21 second long episode.

Appendix A has been attached to this thesis to provide more specific information regarding the coder's individual numeric findings. Two smaller charts summarizing the average number of edits seen per minute (Chart A) and the average seconds between edits (Chart B) can be seen below:

Chart A: Average Number of Edits per Minute

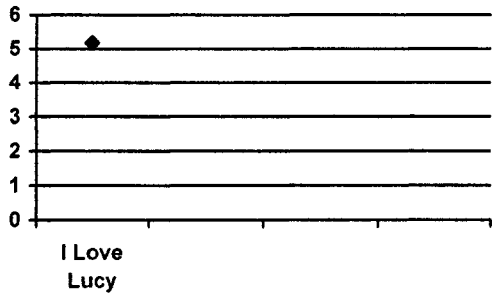
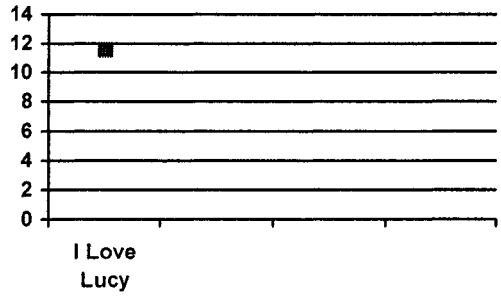


Chart B: Average Seconds Seen Between Edits



[26] Originally aired on the 15 September 1952, Lucy challenges Ricky to stay home and attend to her duties while she joins the work force. After securing a job at a candy factory Lucy and Ethel stuff themselves with chocolate at the factory's conveyer belt.

The Beverly Hillbillies – Numeric Findings

Following a now well established comic format of interlopers endeavoring to quietly slip-in to their reinvented circumstances and, accomplishing no prominent advances technologically, when edits were methodically observed for this program, at best the series is reflective of a slightly more technology expectant public.

After viewing the *Jed Saves Drysdale's Marriage*[27] episode, originally broadcast on the 23rd of January, 1963, the investigative team observed edits changed at a rate averaging 6.39 edits per minute. While the average cut between edits equaled 9.39 seconds, one individual shot between the cut segments lasted beyond two minutes, greater then any individual shot witnessed in the *I Love Lucy* episode coded. A dissimilarity of 5 edits was spread among the coders, the lowest equaling 146 edits observed with a high of 151 in the 23-minute 30-second long episode.

Charts C and D shown below, display the data in a more visual format, comparing it directly to the episode examined for *I Love Lucy*:

Chart C: Average Number of Edits per Minute

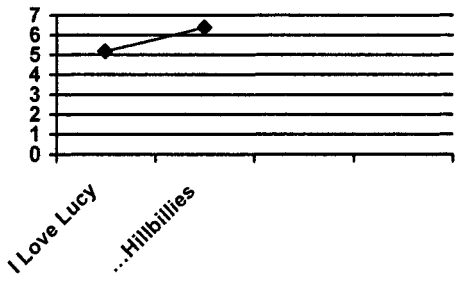
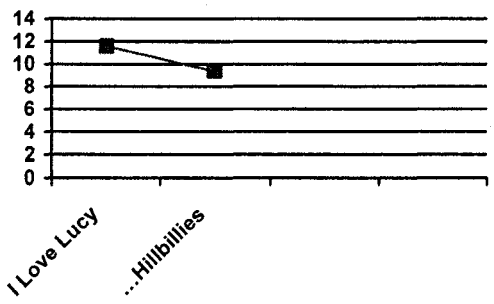


Chart D: Average Seconds Seen Between Edits



[27] Mistaking cousin Pearl as an available maid, straight-man Drysdale threatens his marriage when he looks to the Clampetts for a housekeeper while his wife is away. The episode originally aired on the 23rd of January, 1963.

All in the Family – Numeric Findings

Despite *All in the Family*'s myriad of topical advancements, technologically the series remained fairly static in its innovations. While the use of color rather than black and white film stands out as the largest technological improvement, the series was not pivotal in bringing about this change[28]. After studying the episode titled "*The Bunkers and the Swingers*[29]" that originally aired on the twenty-eighth of October in 1972 the coders noted an almost predictable increase in the amount of edits.

Witnessing an average of 158 total edits during the 22-minute and 58-second long episode, or 7.00 edits per minute, the average seconds between edits was calculated at 8.57 seconds. Observations were made with little disproportion between the coder's findings; the high number of edits counted was observed at 161 (Coder C) with a low only nine units below at 152 (Coder B).

Interestingly, while the number of edits per minute rises at an unsurprising pace, the average seconds seen between individual edits decreases. Possible explanations for this observable fact will be discussed at greater length in the "Conclusions" section of this thesis.

As seen on the following page, charts E and F give a more visual depiction of these details.

---

[28] Disney was among the first to capitalize on the popularity of color television after their premier of *Walt Disney's Wonderful World of Color* in September, 1961; however, standard networks made regularly broadcast programs available in color to those with sufficient technology as early as 1953 (e.g. Dragnet in December of 1953, and a broadcast of president Dwight Eisenhower in June, 1955)

[29] After searching the local newspaper's personal ads for new friends, Edith invites a couple over for dinner. After Archie's usual round of insultive questioning, he bluntly decides to ask the couple what they like to do for fun.

Chart E: Average Number of Edits per Minute

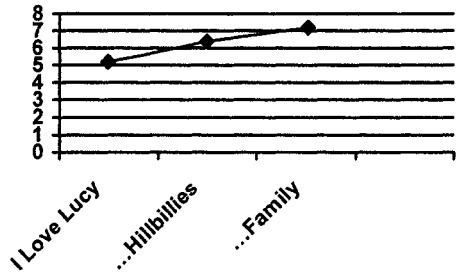
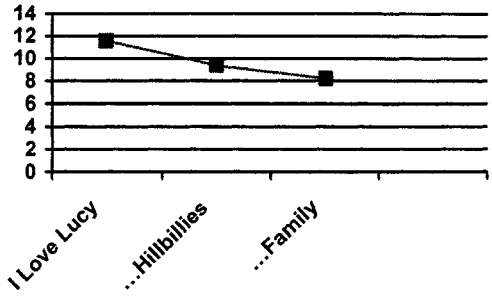


Chart F: Average Seconds Seen Between Edits



<u>*Three's Company* – Numeric Findings</u>

Though now often considered topically tame television, *Three's Company* heralded new peripheries regarding acceptable televised subject matters. Technically becoming more sophisticated in its use of edits (fades were used to blend one scene into another) when appraised by the coders, the series displays interesting changes as compared to its ten year older equivalent.

After coding the "Breaking Up is Hard to Do" episode[30], examiners noted that the number of edits ranged from a low of 169 to a high of 196 over the twenty three minute seventeen second episode. Averaging 8.02 edits per minute, no single scene stood out to the coders as having lasted over 45 seconds often, changing so quickly that edits seemed to blur into one longer scene.

As demonstrated by Chart G, when taking the average number of edits consumed by the viewer (185.83) during the twenty-three minute, seventeen second episode and dividing it by sixty seconds; audience spectators are typically glimpsing a change in camera angle every 7.48 seconds.

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[30] Having aired originally on January 3rd, 1983 the plot revolves around landlord Furley who discovers that the nice young man that Janet and Jack have fixed Terri up with is a convicted murderer.

While the number of edits observed in the coded episode flaunt only a slight decrease from predecessor *All in the Family,* especially when compared to the previously seen acceleration in the speed of editing from *I Love Lucy* to *The Beverly Hillbillies, Three's Company* commutates diminutive changes. However, when *Three's Company* is compared directly to *I Love Lucy*, (Chart H) changes in speed become more apparent.

Chart G: Average Seconds Seen Between Edits

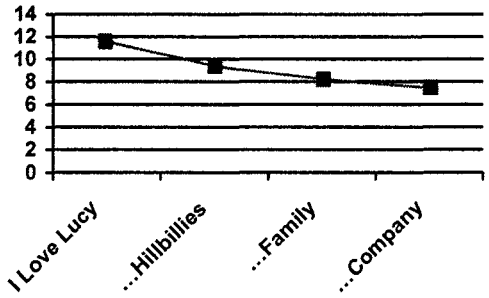
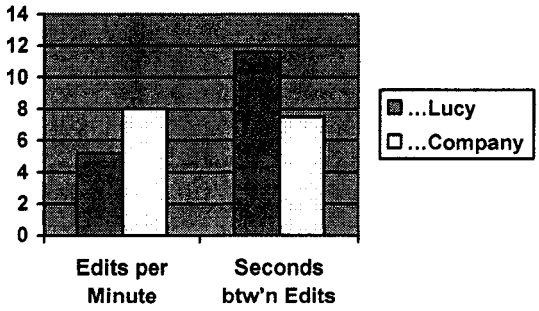


Chart H: I Love Lucy and Three's Company side by side comparison:



While the edits observed for this program display typical changes, by presenting the spectator with an opportunity for both titillation and an editing pace now hasty enough to compete with MTV, *Three's Company* seemingly thrust open the door for a sexier, if not increasingly frivolous television program

<u>*Roseanne* – Numeric Findings</u>

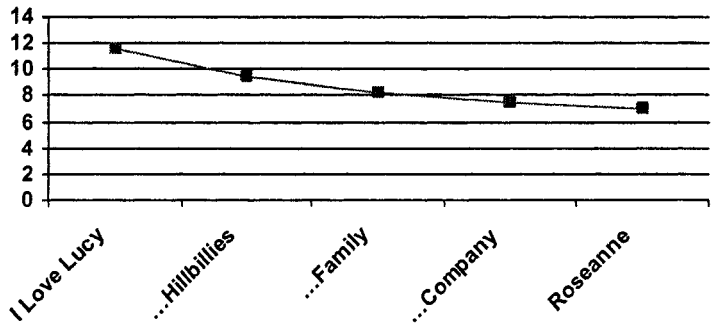
In spite of the highly publicized producer-star related distress surrounding this series, *Roseanne* enjoyed multiple years as Nielsen's top rated Situation Comedy[31].

[31] According to Nielsen Media Research *Roseanne* rated 2nd in 1988-89, 2nd in 89-90, 3rd in 90-91, 2nd in 91-92, 2nd in 92-93 (under *60 Minutes)*, 4th in 93-94, and 10th in 94-95 before falling out of the top 10 shows broadcast.

While scrutinizing the *Mommy Nearest*[32] episode originally broadcast on October 6, 1992 coders found that, despite the series reputation for recurrently weighty material, the show's editing continued to escalate at an unsurprisingly conventional rate.

Demonstrated in Chart I below, based on the examining team's findings, spectators of this production can expect to experience a changed viewpoint via an editing technique every 6.93 seconds, .55 seconds faster then edits witnessed in the episode coded for *Three's Company*.

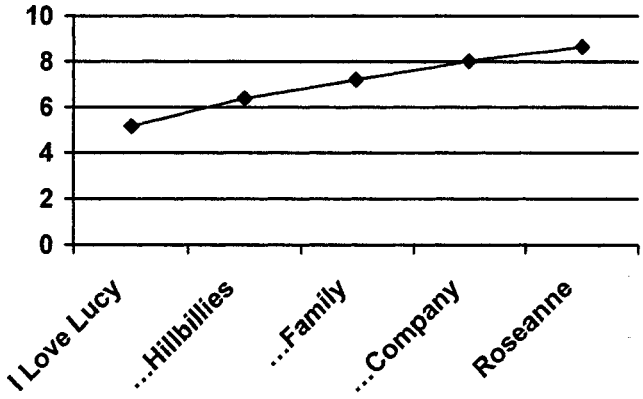
Chart I: Average Seconds Seen Between Edits



Part of this increasingly accelerated experience is accomplished via the series use of establishing shots; viewers are taken through the streets of fictional "Lanford" given vantage points around a church, a street corner and/or various points in front of the Connor family home. Familiarizing the audience with the neighborhood and the intentionally depressed depiction of the local economy brings the typical edit per minute to 8.65, just slightly over *Three's Company* rating of 8.02.

[32] Roseanne and Jackie are stunned when their mother announces she is moving to Lanford. Meanwhile Jackie agonizes over dating a "perfect" but much younger man.

Chart J: Average Number of Edits per Minute



Friends – Numeric Findings

Perhaps a response to a target market that has grown up with 'MTV', or simply the by-product of that same generation who are now able to create their own entertainment; *Friends* was edited at a rate unlike anything else witnessed by the examiners.

Investigating a visually mesmerizing "The One with the Blind Dates" episode[33], coders noted edits occurring at the mind numbing velocity of 13.29 edits per minute, beyond double of what was witnessed in the *I Love Lucy* episode studied; see Chart K on the following page. Due to this frantic pacing, distribution among the coder's data is spread by 24 digits: swaying from 295 to 319 edits witnessed (See Appendix A).

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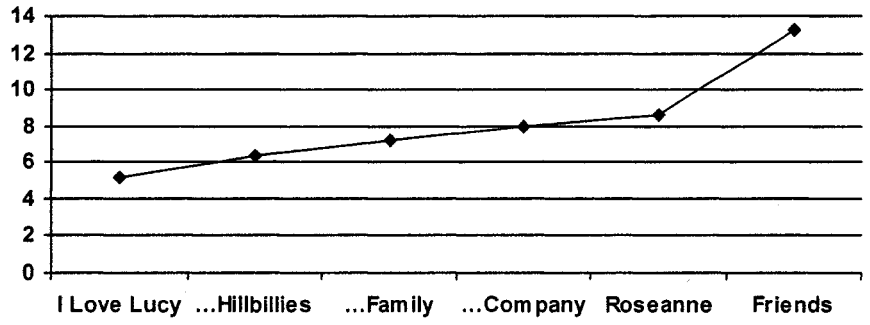
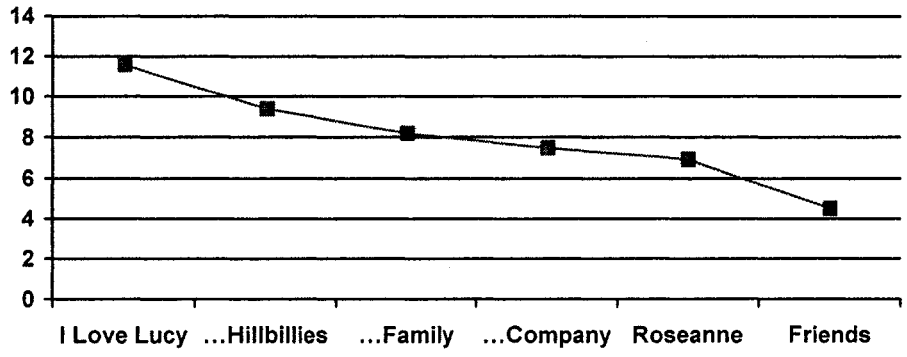
[33] Originally broadcast on February 6, 2003, characters Phoebe and Joey set up Rachel on Ross on terrible blind dates, in hopes that, by comparison they will realize how good they are together.

Chart K: Average Number of Edits per Minute



Regardless of the high distribution, the examined episode yielded information connotating that regular viewers of *Friends* can expect a televised edit every 4.51 seconds (Chart 'L' on the following page), again an unpredicted increase from its ten years former predecessor. While back to back editing, meaning the edits flashed from one player to the next repeatedly, was especially relevant, all of the previous techniques used in the aforementioned productions (fades from one scene into another, establishing shots, and guest artists[34] etc.) were revisited by the series' creators and/or editors.

Chart L: Average Seconds Seen Between Edits



[34] John Lovitz appears as Aniston's blind date.

CHAPTER V

Collective Numeric Findings

Possible Reasons for the Increase in Frequency

When observing the changes in the speed of television editing over the past fifty plus years, no single number enumerates the acceleration however, given the course of this study some base line conclusions can be observed; especially when examining each series edits comparatively . Indeed, as implied by Reeves, Gleick, Geiger, Kubey and Csikszentmihalyi, the medium of television has matured in both its technical and stylistic wizardry.

Assuming that the Situation Comedy format is typical for the preponderance of televised events, it can be unmistakably acknowledged that to the customary spectator, television has speed up[35]. In fact, given the data uncovered in this thesis, viewers could expect the average number of seconds observed between television's edits to *decrease* at a rate of 1.41 seconds per decade. The graph on the following page outlines this finding in greater detail.

[35] While a number of academic studies echo similar findings in the televised news industry, this thesis focuses exclusively on popular situation comedies.

Year – Show	Average seconds seen between edits	Change in seconds seen per decade
1952-53: *I Love Lucy*	11.59	
1962-63: *The Beverly Hillbillies*	9.39	-2.19
1972-73: *All in the Family*	8.57	-0.82
1982-83: *Three's Company*	7.48	-1.09
1992-93: *Roseanne*	6.93	-0.55
2002-03: *Friends*	4.51	-2.42
***Average* Change seen per Decade**		**-1.41**

While in some cases, especially 1982-83's *Three's Company* as compared to 1992-93's *Roseanne*, changes seen between individual decades may be minute their collective impact is considerable. Alarmingly, if the trend were able to continue at this same average pace into the 2053-54 television season (an equal fifty year span to the one examined in this thesis) similarly edited events would flash by at a rate beyond the human brain's ability to comprehend via the phi effect or the eye's persistence of vision. Appendix 'B' details this technically possible, yet *impossible* to humanly digest trend.

It is important to confirm at this point however, that the greatest increase in both the number of edits consumed by the viewer and the speed witnessed via the average seconds between edits occurred between the years of 1992-93 and 2002-03; from *Roseanne* to *Friends*.

Raised with MTV and Speed-friendly Technology

While specific answers for this increased pace of edits require additional independent study, it can be easily assumed that the spike is attributed to a new generation of television consumers; a generation raised on music videos and fluorescently colored video games, a cohort high at ease with instantly connecting internet lines and remote controls that access a bevy of speedily paced shows.

"The changing pace of media from films to television commercials, from broadcast news to music videos, both reflects and conditions a changing pace in our psyches" (Gleick, 55). If in fact audiences have become conditioned to a particular pace of movement, in this case television editing, Pavlov's discussion on biological orienting responses would argue that for these spectators to take notice of a new program the televised movement would simply have to "*go faster*."

Social psychologist Robert Levine notes that this generation of television viewers, labeled "grazers," is comfortable changing stations up to twenty two times a minute. "They approach the airwaves as a vast smorgasbord, all of which must be sampled, no matter how meager the helpings" (Levine, 84)

Echoed by Susanna Speier, author of "Stranded on Planet X" published in TDR, Speier reminds us that television and theatre are exclusively about attention. Born after Apollo Eleven landed on the moon, the authoress informs readers of her work that as a member of Generation "X" she grew up at the science museum in place of the circus. Generation X is a "childhood imagination…fed by the Big Bang Theory on planetarium

ceilings," (Speier, 11) Assumingly, *Lucy*'s conveyer belt could never move fast enough to satisfy the moment to moment cravings of this techno-savvy youth.

Still, for those not familiar with the format, the increased editing pace experienced during *Friends* borders on the subliminal. With the now straightforward ability to manipulate effects frame by frame, to create scenes that are able to fade into the next or jump into something different entirely, television professionals know that their viewers cannot always keep up.

Interviewed by James Gleick for his article "Addicted to Speed," Tom Ohanian, the chief editor at Avid Technology, a forerunner in digital editing systems for film and television cautions that "The technology encourages experiment," especially it seems when it comes to speed (Gleick, 58).

Technology Encourages Experiment

Conceivably, Ohanian's comment is accurate; with a variation of only .23 from their respective previous decades, as demonstrated in the following grid, the only spike similar to the event distinguished between *Roseanne* and *Friends* is apparent between the coded episodes of *I Love Lucy* and *The Beverly Hillbillies*.

Year – Show	Average seconds between edits	Change seen per Decade
1952-53: *I Love Lucy*	**11.59**	
1962-63: *The B'rly Hillbillies*	**9.39**	**-2.19**
1972-73: *All in the Family*	8.57	-0.82
1982-83: *Three's Company*	7.48	-1.09
1992-93: *Roseanne*	**6.93**	-0.55
2002-03: *Friends*	**4.51**	**-2.42**
Average Change seen per Decade		-1.41

As a relatively new medium *I Love Lucy*'s innovations were inevitable; by removing themselves from the poor quality of the kinescope and recording the episodes televised, reruns were made available for the first time, their use of the three camera technique set the standard for even today's situation comedies and the Ricardo's extreme appeal to the live audience fed both the actors energy and the rapidly emerging business side of the television market.

Post the "butter for guns" mentality of World War Two, in 1949 Americans who lived within range of a small yet emerging number of television stations in the country could watch a limited selection of televised programs. However, by *I Love Lucy*'s rise to stardom the number of television sets in use rose dramatically from six thousand in 1946 to an estimated twelve plus million in 1951.

According to Gerard Jones book, Honey I'm Home: Sitcoms: Selling the American Dream, no new invention had entered the American home faster than black and white television sets; by 1955 half of all U.S. homes had both purchased and frequently used the cutting-edge technology (Jones, 5).

Perhaps this windfall of both popularity and controversy can further explain the pacing change evident between *I Love Lucy* and *The Beverly Hillbillies*. By 1962[36] the eminence of the medium would have brought about not only a public better informed of the rapidly growing trend but, more importantly, a more educated, expectant workforce, excited to have their hand in the creative future of television.

Possible Effects of the Remote Control & Cable Television

Just as the general knowledge of the medium, public expectation and improvements in editing and filming equipment affected the pace of editing seen between the decade of *I Love Lucy* and *The Beverly Hillbillies*, the technology behind the remote control and cable television networks feasibly explains changes observed in the way producers both created and paced shows popular in the 1980's.

Edward Tenner, author of Why Things Bite Back: Technology and the Revenge of Unintended Consequences writes that the effortlessness of changing channels via the remote control has encouraged "a more rapid and disorienting set of images to hold the viewer… This, in turn, is leading to less satisfaction with programs as a whole, which of course promotes more rapid channel surfing" (Tenner, 92).

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[36] *The Beverly Hillbillies* began its national syndication in the fall of this year.

Adding to the temptation of grazing via television's remote control and, ultimately to the energy that fuels one of the utmost challenges to keeping spectators tuned in, came with the establishment of the cable network. While rooftop antennas promised viewers access to channels available in the nearest city several rural pockets were forced to go without television's offerings, cable television was first theorized to address this issue.

Upon cable television's actualization however, it quickly became apparent that the "television deprived" rural areas were not the only viewers eager to access additional channels and programming. Gerard Jones informs readers of his work that in New York City, cable operators contracted to broadcast the home games of the local basketball and hockey teams.

Disquieting to the standard networks servicing the area, by 1971 the local cable company had more than 80,000 subscribing sports fans in New York City alone. Neighborhood television consumers had quickly learned that cable television equaled more choice in programming (Jones, 114).

By the mid 1970's networks specifically designed to be distributed via the cable system began to materialize on a national level: Time Incorporated's Home Box Office (HBO) in 1975; media mogul Ted Turner's "superstation," quickly renamed WTBS, in 1976. C-SPAN, ESPN, and Nickelodeon, all followed suit, launching 1979. Cable News Network (CNN) along with the infamous Music Television (MTV) stations hurriedly took advantage of the increased popularity commencing in 1980 and 81.

Possible Effects of MTV's Style & the Internet

Further necessitating the need for a rapid editing style as an effort to keep the viewer mesmerized in the 1980's came the forefront of the Internet. While shows like *Three's Company* languished under the stringent rules of the FCC and the dreaded yet necessary appeal to advertisers, the unrestricted internet threatened to tread on the already diminishing power of the major networks.

Omitting *I Love Lucy* and *Friends* based on their previous discussions, averaging 7.48 seconds between individual edits, *Three's Company* hypothetically displays the most direct reflection of an immediate thereat by the then innovative style of MTV, cable networks and the newly immerging internet.

The chart below demonstrates *Three's Company*'s high rate of change when omitting the previously discussed programs.

Year – Show	Average seconds between edits	Change seen per Decade
1952-53: *I Love Lucy*	11.59	
1962-63: *The B'rly Hillbillies*	9.39	-2.19
1972-73: *All in the Family*	8.57	-0.82
1982-83: *Three's Company*	**7.48**	**-1.09**
1992-93: *Roseanne*	6.93	-0.55
2002-03: *Friends*	4.51	-2.42
Average Change seen per Decade		-1.41

With corporations like A.C. Nielsen Media Services, exclusively organized to track and record even the first whisperings of audience listlessness or ennui, a once three-channel monopolized television system feels the continual threat of additional television networks, public and cable broadcasting and internet use, to keep their audiences properly "transfixed."

While the viewing public may balk at the images as the literally race past, that perhaps is their singular intention: to create a visceral response that will keep the audience transfixed, unaware of the remote control comfortably placed on their laps.

CONCLUSIONS

Other Areas of Possible Study

Live Theatre

As one examines the phenomenon of the speed of editing apparent in popular situation comedies, several other closely related occurrences must be more fully deliberated. If, as multiple scholars attest, television is a reflection of our society in both tastes and content, then surely speed must also be considered. As we either revile the evolution or exalt the fast-paced and discontinuous cutting style, it is important to consider the flavor the popularity of the "speed-style" passes on to other mediums.

Arguing that full length films are a mere extension of the images already or soon-to-be seen on television sets, then in no other medium is television more often rivaling then that of live theatre. In JAM Theatricals quarterly magazine aptly titled "Spotlight," directors highlight Broadway's current trend of "translating" a piece from one medium into another, most commonly from film or television into live performance.

"Just as commercial forces tempted early filmmakers with the safety of proven stage successes, the multi-million dollar realities of modern Broadway have caused many producers to seek refuge in projects with safer subject matter or commercial history" (JAM, 12). Recurrently that successful commercial history is found by examining popular movie and television pieces.

In their commentary JAM Theatricals is quick to cite the following examples: *The Full Monty* (Screen 1997, Stage 2000), *Hairspray* (Screen 1988, Stage 2002), and *Disney's The Lion King* (Screen 1994, Stage 1997) however, recent reversals have also

been witnessed; *Chicago* originally written as a non-musical play in 1927 went on to become one of 2002 Oscar winning successes. Likewise, Matthew Broderick's turn at Professor Herald Hill in the 2003 televised event *The Music Man* went on to garner millions of dollars from advertisers and consumers alike(IMDb.com).

However, choosing an offering from a faster paced medium alone does not guarantee success, it seems almost imperative that the potential audience member understand that the live production is not a slower paced re-hashing of a similar story. To communicate this immediately to the spectator, the Western States Arts Federation /WESTAF (2000) offered a report to theatre producers encouraging them to involve audience members in the "pseudo reality" of their presentation *instantaneously* from the moment of ticket purchase.

According to WESTAF, pre-show vignettes, lobby acts, scented and/or holographic tickets or envelops and the like, all appeal to base sensations and subconsciously prepare the spectator's mind for the psychological rush of a potentially frenzied performance. (WESTAF, 19)

Ken Kesey, who seems to echo WESTAF's sentiments, goes beyond the safety of a previously produced performance. A self-titled "postmodern" stage director and producer, Kesey takes full advantage of film and television's modern technology to create a complex stage environment and vigorously paced production. "Employing music, lights, flashing images and crackling fire in his recent production *Twister: A Ritual Reality in Four Quarters Plus Overtime if Necessary* (2000), Kesey purposely

seeks to overthrow his viewer's senses to give the play maximum emotional impact" (Huffmann, 454).

Perhaps the financial epitome of this successful fusion between live performance and television-like sequencing belongs to *Cirque du Soleil.* Literally translated to mean "Circus of the Sun," "*Cirque*" began both performing and handling business operations in an 800 seat tent in Montreal nearly two decades ago. In 2000, the now globally celebrated "*Cirque*" went on to produce eight shows on four separate continents. While still based in Montreal, the company, now employing thousands of workers and showing daily to an even greater number of audience members, carries out business from their forty plus million dollar facility (WESTAF, 19).

However, not all theatre wants to emulate television's seemingly vogue rushed pace, nor should it. Dr. David Suzuki, medical director for Science Matters will be among the first to agree that we live in an overtly visual world and that despite society's visual favoritism, most of us "have become so accustomed to the dominance of visual stimuli that we…" no longer acknowledge it (Suzuki, 1530).

Suzuki warns that the use of all of our senses is central to our psychological health and that any singular sensory deprivation, a common occurrence in our "plugged-in" lives, is harmful to our physiological well being.

In appealing to this high demand for visualization, and hopefully an eventual move toward a more complete petition to all of our senses; new technology is being (and must continue to be) developed not only to re-create television's familiar editing pace, but to surpass it as a means of audience interest and retention.

Virtual Reality

A forerunner in film, television and live entertainment, the Disney conglomerate has already begun its experiments with this developing procedure. Located in their Orlando, Florida theme park, Disney has combined visual cues with replicated movements to create CyberSpace Mountain in the DisneyQuest virtual theme park.

"CyberSpace Mountain begins with visitors designing the roller coaster of their dreams on a touch-sensitive monitor." While the creation of the roller coaster is an amusing part of the experience, the real adventure begins when "you are loaded into a two-man pod that uses 360-degree motion to simulate the ride you have created" (Kent, 81).

While the concept of this new technology seems overtly pleasure oriented, its effects are far more reaching. The brainchild of U.S. Army Colonel Casey Wardybski, virtual reality is now also used as a recruiting tool for potentially interested soldiers. Simulating tactics, training and even mild combat senses, a virtual-reality based computer program/game labeled America's Army is specifically designed to appeal to today's youth who have grown accustom to rapidly changing visual stimuli via their X-boxes or Game-boys, familiarity with MTV and the television remote control (Kent, 80).

According to the Entertainment Software Association, the U.S. Army is right on target, claiming that fifty percent of Americans over the age of six years old frequently occupy themselves with video and/or computer games. This same agency notes that more then 37.5 million video game consoles have been sold in the United States during

the last four years and that enthusiastic Americans have purchased more then 239 million interactive games in 2003 alone.

HDTV: High Definition Television

However, if there is to be a weak link in the gaming, virtual reality and even the television industries, it is the actual technology of the standard television that these programs are run on. In order to address the potential problem, the television industry, in cooperation with the FCC and other governmental regulating industries, are rapidly advancing the technology surrounding high definition television, more commonly referred to as "HDTV."

In 1997 the federal government issued each U.S. television broadcaster an additional channel on which to introduce high definition television. Preliminary transmissions of these high-resolution forms of television, in which images reportedly appear much sharper and clearer, began in 1998. While the majority of older (pre 1996) television sets cannot receive HDTV signals, individual sets will presumably have to be either replaced or modified by 2006, when the traditional, low-definition television broadcasts are presumably scheduled to end and broadcasters are slighted to return their original, non-HDTV channel to bureaucratic sources. (Kent, 81)

Interestingly, the HDTV format approved in the United States calls for television signals to be transmitted digitally. Not only will this allow for further convergence between television sets, audiences and producers; the benefit may also be extended to computers and the Internet.

For the typical television watcher/ internet user who consume, by one estimate, an average of two-and-a-half to four hours a day using the medium(s), if used intelligently, the added impact of both virtual reality and digitally transmitted programs may have positive physiological and psychosocial health benefits. By allowing the viewer access to their favorite programs outside of a traditionally isolated or sedentary environment, new technology comes with the promise of engaging in secondary activities and meeting like-minded individuals.

If, as Ken Kesey theorizes, that one of the goals of modern theatre is to re-create television's familiar editing pace, and the goal of television editing to capture and maintain audience interest, perhaps like Disney and the U.S. Army have done, the next step for producers of television will be to incorporate the increasingly life-like realms of virtual reality into their HGTV systems.

As technology currently stands, the intense pace of the heightened excitement observed in television editing, especially applicable in the syndicated situation comedies discussed, all desire to replicate, at least to some degree, a real life experience.

While the possibilities of virtual reality and/or simulated life occurrences may offer participants a nearly instantly gratifying experience, society still seems to be acknowledging Coleridge's theory:

> In sleep we pass at once by a sudden collapse into this suspension of the will and the comparative power: whereas in an interesting play, read or represented, we are brought up to this point, as far as it is requisite or desirable, gradually, by the art of the poet and the actors; and with the consent and positive aidence [sic] of our own will. We choose to be deceived (Coleridge, 3:114).

...Modern society just seems in more of a rush to get there.

APPENDIX A

Coder's Numeric Findings on Individual Programs

Beyond Willing Suspension: Appendix A

Coders Findings on Individual Shows

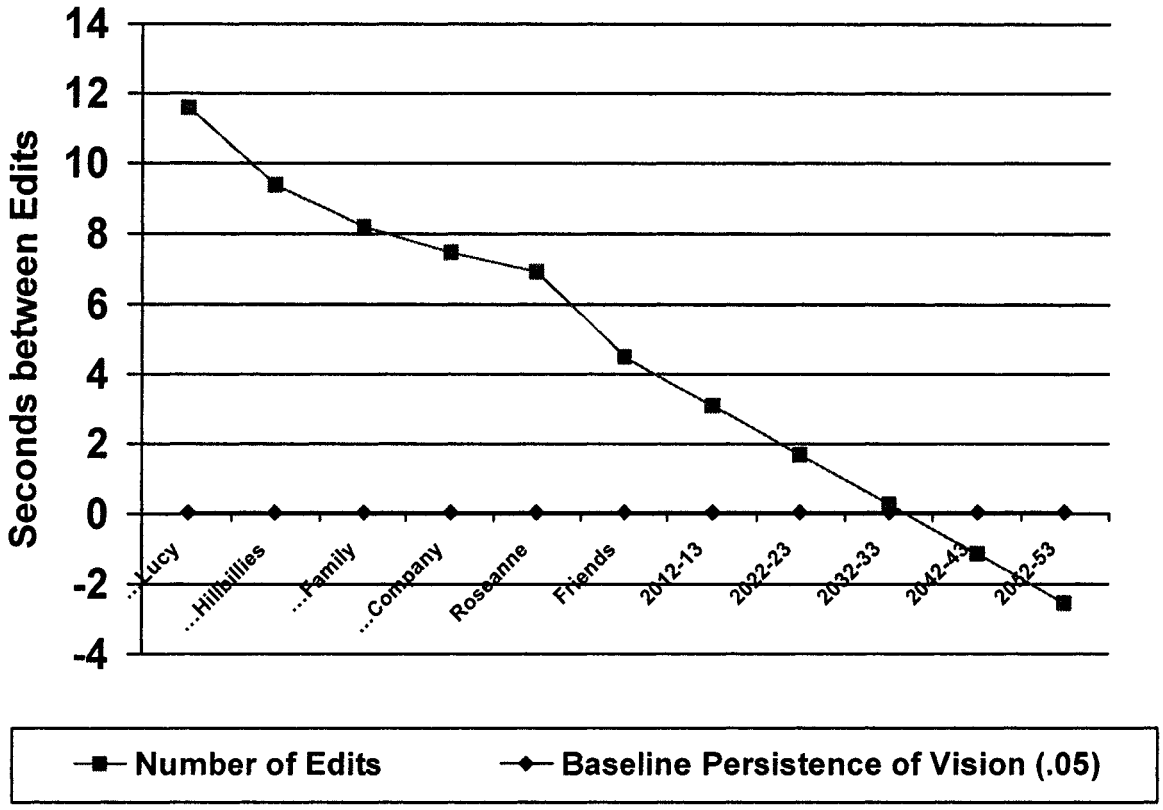
Recorded number of edits observed & counted by individual coder(s)

Program	Episode Name	Original Air Date	Coder A	Coder B	Coder C	Coder D	Coder E	Coder F	Avg. Edits during observ.	Avg. Edits per Hour	Avg. Edits per Minute	Avg. Seconds per Edit
I Love Lucy	Job Switching	15-Sep-52	107	111	108	109	112	112	109.83	21.21	5.18	11.59
Beverly Hillbillies	Jed Saves Drysdale's Marriage	23-Jan-63	149	150	146	149	148	151	148.83	23.3	6.39	9.39
All in the Family	The Bunkers and the Swingers	28-Oct-72	157	160	152	158	160	161	158.00	22.58	7.00	8.57
Three's Company	Breaking up is hard to do	3-Jan-83	183	189	169	190	188	196	185.83	23.17	8.02	7.48
Roseanne	Mommy Nearest	6-Oct-92	175	177	175	174	174	178	175.50	20.28	8.65	6.93
Friends	The One with the Blind Dates	6-Feb-03	295	305	310	319	301	305	305.83	23.01	13.29	4.51

APPENDIX B

Possible Fifty-Year Forecast

Based on an average decrease of 1.41edits per decade,
the following chart forecasts the *technologically* possible decline in the
average number of seconds seen between edits over a 100 year period; from *I Love Lucy*
in 1952-53 to a similar event in 2052-53.



Via the "persistence of vision" the human eye is capable of witnessing images moving at
or above 1/20 or .05 of a second. At .28, the year 2032-33 remains just above that
threshold, edits and other stylistic activities completed beyond that mark
will remain a "visual blur."

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Comparable to the efforts made surrounding *The Beverly Hillbillies*, CBS used multiple tactics to keep *All in the Family* a vibrant program, one of their more noteworthy was the frequent infusion of strongly acted, contentious supporting characters. Keeping to the show's established controversial format, The Jefferson's an African American family moved next door to the Bunker's Queen's apartment. Edith's liberally-minded visiting cousin, Maude Findlay, also followed suit[13]. Guest stars also added an occasional spark, conceivably the most unforgettable of which featured the legendary entertainer Sammy Davis, Jr. as himself, a successful black man and the very personification of Archie Bunker's distain.[14]

All in the Family's impact extended beyond the world of television. In several academic and social circles, the series became the focus of debates on the use of comedy as an appropriate means to contest prejudice and/or social inequality. However, by the late 1970s, after a number of changes in the original cast, CBS began to question if the series had begun to loose its earlier comic luster.

By 1979 O'Connor's character had quit his job to buy and run a neighborhood tavern, and the series was reinvented as *Archie Bunker's Place*. Although still highly rated by Nielsen Media Research (listed as number 9 for the season), producers felt that the show no longer stood out as distinctive, and had become what seemed to numerous

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[13] CBS's introduction of characters to the series became so successful that both *The Jefferson's* and *Maude* became their own syndicated productions.

[14] Originally broadcast on February 19, 1972, Sammy Davis Jr. plays himself, a passenger in Archie's taxi cab who has inadvertently left his briefcase behind. Arrangements are made to retrieve the briefcase at the Bunker house.