CULTURAL INDICATORS PROJECT

TV MESSAGE ANALYSIS

THE ANNENBERG SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATIONS

UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

Recording Instrument

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Units of Analysis:

This instrument is comprised of two sections, each designed for a separate recording unit:

Section A: The TV Program
Section B: The Leading (Major) Characters

Organization of Instructions:

Each section is prefaced by an index of its variables, the definition of its recording unit, and instructions relevant to its particular recording form.

General Viewing and Recording Procedure:

In most cases, you will find it necessary to view the program, or portions of it, more than once. Replay the show or segments of the show as often as necessary. The following procedure has proven to be the most efficent:

- On the first viewing, which should be relatively uninterrupted, it helps to take notes on scratch paper and to compile three lists:

  (1) List all speaking characters in the order in which they first speak in the program, and, while watching the program, write down any relevant notes pertaining to each character that will be useful later in the coding process. The more exhaustive and specific the notes, the more efficient the coding will be (for example, don't just write down your impressions, write down specifics, such as the family situation, occupations, etc.).

  (2) On another piece of scrap paper, keep a running list of possible themes that should be coded in the program section of the instrument. This will help help when trying to recall single instances of the appearance of a particular theme. Instances of sexual portrayal should also be written down in this manner; writing down the entire line from the program is especially helpful to differentiate between explicit reference and innuendo.

  (3) Finally, keep a running list of the violent actions in the order in which they appear and try to note where they occurred in the program in order to simplify rescreening.

Remember, both you and your partner should be taking these kind of notes so you can compare after viewing the program and have more specific information to work with.

After you have seen the entire program and completed the lists, finalize the character list and recopy onto the A (Program) form. Determine which characters constitute principal roles and which are minor parts (according to the definitions in Section B). Check them off appropriately on the character list.

Once these tasks are completed, you may proceed to code. In general, begin with the A form (Program), and follow with the B form (major characters). If necessary, the program should be rescreened for the thorough description of the violent actions. Record these on the A form.

When you have finished, check all forms for legibility, labels and write-ins. Make sure you have B forms for all major characters and that all violent actions have been listed. Do not assign identification numbers to programs, characters, or violent actions. The administrative staff will do this. Be sure, however, that all names and descriptions are clear, accurate, and legible.

Be sure to keep all characters' "names" consistent on both forms. Use the "name" you have written on the A form character list to identify the major characters on the B form.

SECTION A: RECORDING INSTRUMENT FOR THE PROGRAM RECORDING UNIT

	Variable	Item
I. General:	Tone of Program	1
	Place of Major Action	2
	Date of Major Action	3
	Setting of Major Action	4
II. Themes:	Law Enforcement	5
	Crime	6
	Schools	7
	Close Relationship Between the Sexes	8
	Home	9
	Death and/or Dying	10
III. Violence:	Seriousness of Violence in the Program	11
	Significance of Violence in the Program	12
IV. Sexual Portrayal:	Nature of Sexual Portrayal	13
	Seriousness of Sexual Portrayal	14
	Degree of Sexual Portrayal	15

Recording Unit: The Program

By "program" is meant a single fictional story presented in dramatic form. For the purpose of this recording instrument, it need not be identical with the term as used say in newspaper TV "program" listings, though it may be. A half-hour cartoon show therefore may contain three complete ten-minute plots; each of these ten-minute dramatic entities would then constitute a separate "program," and each would be separately analyzed by this instrument.

General Coding Instructions:

Be sure to take thorough notes on scrap paper while watching the program. We want specific evidence for the coding of themes. Remember that while each theme may be identified by the first item, all items in the theme should be watch for, and the theme may be coded if any of the items appear.

On the right-hand side of the A form, recopy the character list you have made and indicate which are major and which are minor characters.

On the bottom of the A form, list the violent actions as you have found them and be sure to describe the actions as fully as possible, giving the names of all characters involved, their role as participants (direct or indirect), and an account of exactly what transpired.

1. TONE of the Program

0 = cannot code, explain
1 = mostly humorous, comic, light
2 = neither light nor serious; mixed; unclear
3 = mostly serious

2. PLACE OF Major Action

0 = cannot code, explain
1 = U.S. only
2 = U.S. and other, explain
3 = only other, explain

3. DATE of Major Action

1 = before 1900
2 = turn of century to World War II
3 = World War II to 1975
4 = 1975 to present ("general" present, contemporary with production)
5 = future
6 = other periods, or action shifts over several time periods, explain

4. SETTING of Major Action - HABITAT

0 = none indicated
1 = urban (central city to suburb of large metropolitan area)
2 = small town
3 = rural or rustic (village, farm, ranch, etc.)
4 = uninhabited (desert, etc.)
5 = mobile (ship, plane, train, etc.)
6 = mixed, combination of above

Always include a written description of the exact habitat. For example, if the major action takes place on a plane, code "5" (Mobile) and write "plane" in the blank. If the setting is mixed, code "6" and write in a description of the habitats that are combined, such as "trans-atlantic ship and New York City." Please be as specific as possible in your description. This item pertains to the location of the major action of the program. Code "6" should be used only if the setting of the major action involved more than one of the previous codes. For programs in which several settings are shown but in which the major dramatic action is confined to one locale, ignore the incidental settings and code the single setting of major action.

5 thru 10. The themes and aspects of life comprising items 5 thru 10 are to be coded according to the emphasis of their presentation (if any) in the program:

0 = no attention is paid to the theme
1 = theme is present but minor; incidental to plot
2 = theme is significant to the plot
3 = theme is the outstanding issue or focus of the program

5. LAW ENFORCEMENT and the administration of justice; police, other agents and agencies of law, courts, trials, prisons

6. CRIME; corruption, illegality, gross (criminal) injustice

7. SCHOOLS; education, students, teachers, study

8. Intimate or CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE SEXES, romantic relationships, whether cooperative or hostile; love, sex, prostitution, sadism, etc.

9. HOME; family, marriage, domestic problems, children, youth, old age, pregnancy

10. DEATH AND/OR DYING

11 and 12. Violence is defined as the overt expression of physical force (with or without a weapon) against self or other, or compelling action against one's will on pain of being hurt or killed, or actually hurting or killing. Must be plausible and credible; no idle threats, verbal abuse, or gestures with no credible violent consequences. May be intentional or accidental; violent accidents, catastrophes, acts of nature are included.

11. SERIOUSNESS (or potential seriousness) OF VIOLENCE in the Program

0 = there is no violence in the program
1 = strictly humorous
2 = partly humorous; ambivalent
3 = mostly real, serious violence, even if in cartoon or comedy

12. SIGNIFICANCE OF VIOLENCE to the plot and main characters

0 = violence does not appear
1 = there is some violence but it is incidental to the plot
2 = violence is significant to the plot, it matters considerably for story and major characters
3 = violence is the major outstanding feature or climax, highlight or resolution of the plot

13 thru 15. These variables focus upon the portrayal of sex or the appearance of sexual behaviors or interaction in the program. Sexual portrayal, interaction, or behavior may include the following: DISCUSSION OR DEPICTION of kissing, embracing, touching, flirting, seductiveness, heterosexual intercourse, homosexual behavior, rape, prostitution, sadism, etc.; that is, actions or behavior that could be classified as sexual, or potentially sexual, in nature.

13. NATURE OF SEXUAL PORTRAYAL, sex-related topics, or sexual interaction in the Program

0 = cannot code, <u>explain</u>
1 = no sexual portrayal
2 = only verbal innuendo
3 = only verbal explicit discussion
4 = only verbal, both innuendo and explicit discussion
5 = only physical portrayal
6 = both verbal (innuendo or explicit) and physical portrayal

14. SERIOUSNESS OF SEXUAL PORTRAYAL in the Program

0 = cannot code, <u>explain</u>
1 = no sexual portrayal
2 = mostly light or comic sexual portrayal
3 = mixed, both light and serious portrayal
4 = mostly serious sexual portrayal
5 = other, <u>explain</u>

15. DEGREE OF SEXUAL PORTRAYAL in the Program

0 = cannot code, <u>explain</u>
1 = no sexual portrayal
2 = there is some sexual portrayal but it is incidental to the plot
3 = sexual portrayal is significant to the plot, it matters considerably for story and major characters
4 = sexual portrayal is the major outstanding feature, highlight, or resolution of the plot

SECTION B: RECORDING INSTRUMENT FOR THE LEADING (MAJOR) CHARACTER RECORDING UNIT:

	Variable	Item
I. Demographics:	Sex	1
	Chronological Age	2
	Social Age	3
	Race	4
II. Occupation:	Field of Activity	5
III. Home and Family:	Marital Status	6
	Homemaker	7
	Children - Natural	8
	Children - Minor	9
IV. General Role:	Role of the Character	10
	Character Type	11
V. Violence:	Violence Committed by Character	12
	Violence Suffered by Character	13

Recording Unit: The Major Character

Characters to be analyzed in this section are all those on your character list who play leading roles representing the principal types essential to the story. Once the decision has been made as to which characters are major, every other character on the list should be designated as minor. Code only the major characters.

General Coding Instructions

Write in the character's full name and/or anything else that may be necessary to precisely identify him/her if you do not have a proper name. For example, hair color may be required to distinguish between two parking lot attendants who are not named in the program, have speaking or essential roles, and are otherwise similar. In such a case, "Attendant #1" and "Attendant #2" are unsatisfactory (even if the program's credits list the two characters as such). "Dark-haired attendant" and "light-haired attendant" would be the appropriate designations.

Describe the character's occupation as precisely as possible. Be specific. Avoid overly broad labels, such as, driver, clerk. When there are complicated situations, explain the difficulties. Rather than sticking a label on a character, describe the job the character performs. It is better to say "writes novels," rather than "writer," "owns and operates a bar" is preferable to "self-employed" or "manager."

(The occupation descriptions are important, not only for coding the character's occupation, but also for matching characters in the reliability analysis. For example, pair 1 lists a character designated as "driver", pair 2 has a character called "messenger." These might be the same character. We would be able to match them easily if pair 1 had given an occupation description like "delivers messages for the mob.")

In the COMMENTS section of the B form, any information important to the understanding of the portrayal of the character should be noted. Especially important to note is any information that may be missed because there is no variable to cover it. THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT so don't skip over this section lightly.

1. SEX

0 = cannot code, explain
1 = male
2 = female
3 = other, no sex

2. CHRONOLOGICAL AGE

Record the chronological age of the character as known or estimated (from 01 thru 99). If the age of the character is indeterminate or mixed, code "00" and explain.

3. SOCIAL AGE

0 = cannot code, various ages, ageless, other, explain
1 = pre-adolescent and adolescent period
2 = young adult (few or no family responsibilities; can be from late teens to middle thirties)
3 = settled adult (family, established in career)
4 = elderly, old

4. RACE

0 = cannot code, explain
1 = white
2 = other, explain

5. FIELD OF ACTIVITY most closely related to occupation

0 = no discernible occupational activity, uncertain, other, mixed, explain
1 = entertainment, art, sports, mass media
2 = agriculture, farming, nature, animals
3 = business, industry, finance, transport, private agency
4 = government, courts, law; official authority
5 = health, medicine, social welfare and services
6 = education (student, teacher, etc.)
7 = science
8 = religion
9 = illegal activity

6. MARITAL STATUS

0 = cannot code, explain
1 = apparently not married, no impending marriage, no reference to having been married
2 = impending marriage
3 = presently married
4 = separated
5 = formerly but no longer married (widowed, divorced)
6 = mixed, explain
7 = presently cohabiting, "living with" someone; must be of the opposite sex
8 = presently involved in a homosexual or lesbian relationship

7. HOMEMAKER -- A homemaker is one whom the program shows as providing housekeeping and similar functions, without pay, for other members of the household. Thus, for example, neither maids nor people living alone should be coded as homemakers. Note that the definition requires that the character be portrayed (either seen or discussed) as performing some housekeeping activity for other members of the household. Thus, a "housewife" should not be coded as a homemaker unless she is portrayed as performing some housekeeping duty.

0 = cannot code, character is not shown as a homemaker
1 = character is shown as a homemaker

8. CHILDREN - NATURAL

0 = cannot code, no information, has never had children
1 = character does have, or has had, a child of his/her own

9. CHILDREN - MINOR -- Does the character have minor children, natural or otherwise, living with him or her, or for whom he or she is responsible? Code appropriately, and write in the number of children beside your code.

0 = cannot code, character has no dependent children
1 = character has permanent, ongoing responsibility for minors (natural or adoptive parents, legal guardians, etc.)
2 = character has otherwise limited responsibility for minors (babysitter, governess, day-care, etc.), explain

10. ROLE

0 = cannot code, explain
1 = mostly light, comic
2 = neither light nor comic, mixed, unclear
3 = mostly serious

11. CHARACTER TYPE

0 = cannot code, explain
1 = "good" - protagonist, positive, or hero type
2 = mixed, neither, uncertain
3 = "bad" - antagonist, villain type

12. VIOLENCE COMMITTED BY CHARACTER -- Does the character commit any violence? If so, code highest degree.

0 = no violence committed
1 = non-fatal violence commited; does not appear to kill anyone
2 = fatal violence committed; kills or appears to kill; or fatal consequences indicated.

13. VIOLENCE SUFFERED BY CHARACTER: VICTIMIZATION -- Is the character subjected to any violence? If so, code the highest degree.

0 = character not subjected to violence
1 = non-fatal violence suffered; recovers or recovery indicated
2 = fatal violence suffered; dies violent death, or fatal result is indicated

Violence is defined as the overt expression of physical force (with or without a weapon) against self or other, compelling action against one's will on pain of being hurt or killed, or actually hurting or killing. Must be plausible and credible; no idle threats, verbal abuse, or gestures with no credible violent consequences. May be intentional or accidental; violent accidents, catastrophes, acts of nature are included.

Dramatic Action is defined as a symbolic (thematic) realm of motion confined to a single scene (time-space location) in which some agent(s) employ some means (agency) for some purpose (to achieve goal, overcome bårrier) with some consequences.

Violent Action is a scene of some violence confined to the same agents. Even if the scene is interrupted by a flashback, etc., as long as it continues in "real time," it is the same act. However, if new agent(s) enter the scene, it becomes another act.

Note: to be considered violence, the incident must inolve human or human-like characters, humanized animals, or non-humanized animals who are dramatic characters. Do not include anything involving non-humanized animals unless they function as a dramatic character, e.g., Lassie. Always include anything involving human, human-like, or humanized animal characters. Thus, the slaughtering of the cattle herd in the movie Hud is not violence; the killing of Bambi's mother in the Disney film, however, is a violent incident.