October 24, 1995

Hi George -

I'm enclosing a copy of the article I wrote based on my thesis. I know you're swamped, as usual, but if you get a few moments I'd appreciate your thoughts & if you think it would be good to submit it where.

Our national media consultant is hooked on the COM convention - he's sending ideas on a regular basis - I'll keep forwarding them.

Life is on the fast track here - but good. Look forward to talking with you soon.

Linda

Upload

What is it? Scholarly piece or pop article. Not sure —

This is a summary report of a study that analyzes the program "Under One Roof", a serial drama that gives viewers the Langstons, an extended African American family living in Seattle. The central question of this study revolves around the issues and dynamics involved in American prime time television's ability to create and sustain images of African Americans that retain dignity and show the texture of life for blacks in America -- the cultural richness; the daily grind of discrimination; and the structural barriers that make professional, economic and personal success continue to be a grave challenge.

Not study — essay, article —

Read Ace Hansen
Harper
Jay C
Jo Freeby

UOR — did he intend? or anyone?

Interest — problem? focus —
1 main point

Com TV dr series often

Racism weaves itself into the daily lives of African Americans, but prime time television paints another picture ~~for the viewers' consumption~~. ~~As~~ Although housing discrimination continues to exclude African Americans from the neighborhoods of their choice, but "The Fresh Prince of Bel Air" depicts a black judge and his family living in a mansion, troubled only by the vagaries of comic conflict ~~and contortions~~.

~~As~~ African American actress Debbie Allen cavorts with rapper L.L. Cool Jay in the situation comedy "In the House" in a world devoid of racial barriers, Ms. Allen is refused service at a Beverly Hills jewelry store. (Feagin & Sikes ~~37.~~) While the 1990 level of poverty for African American families was just under 37% (Hacker 100), in the world of prime time television from 1984-1989, only 1% of African American characters were clearly lower income. (Jhally and Lewis 58.) For African Americans, the similarities between the land of TV and terra firma is as close as Disneyland and Watts.

Sut Jhally and Justin Lewis have documented prime time television's perpetuation of the myth of the American dream and the audience impact of this myth through an analysis of "The Cosby Show". The authors demonstrate how the financially and personally successful Huxtable family contributes to a conservative ideology of "enlightened racism" that asserts that the "failure" of most black people to achieve what the Huxtables have achieved is an indication of laziness or stupidity. The absence of the depiction of race or

class barriers to success allows audiences to draw conclusions that the Civil Rights Movement accomplished what it set out to, that there are no structural obstacles to African American achievement and that any failure to achieve is strictly individual.

In order for a prime time television program, such as "Under One Roof", to offer an alternative to this conservative ideology its characters must more closely match the demographics for African Americans in the United States. There must be range and diversity among black characters and depth and complexity within black characters. If "Under One Roof" is to reflect a shift to an ideology in which the dynamics of racism are exposed and explored, programmatic themes need to portray racial obstacles to success. This study asks whether "Under One Roof" offers an entertainment television narrative that invites the American public to question and understand the complex dynamics and impact of institutionalized racism on the quest for the American Dream. Did this six episode program establish a precedent for an ideology that extends beyond enlightened racism?

Race and Racism

"Under One Roof", a CBS drama about an extended African American family, was a mid-season replacement airing on Tuesday nights from 8:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. (Eastern Standard Time) during the spring of 1995. It opened and closed after only six episodes. This case study examines the depiction of African American characters, interactions, scenes and racial themes in "Under

One Roof" and analyzes the fate of the program.

The content analysis portion of the study utilized a survey form, largely based on the instrument used by the Cultural Indicators Project (Gerbner, Cultural Indicators Instrument) with additional questions regarding racial depiction of characters, interactions, scenes and racial themes. Each of the six episodes were thoroughly coded according to this questionnaire. Further analysis involved interviews with key "Under One Roof" production staff and CBS officials.

The study explores several key issues:

*What is the current status of African Americans and racial discrimination in the U.S. and how does it compare to TV reality?

* What have been the post -Cosby stereotypes of African Americans and what audience attitudes have these stereotypes cultivated?

*What kind of characters and themes would offer an alternative to the post Cosby stereotypes?

*Does "Under One Roof" offer these alternative characters and themes?

"Under One Roof" is examined in the context of the post 1984 history of African American stereotypes in prime time television in contrast to the reality of life for African Americans. Finally, the study asks two major questions: Does "Under One Roof" offer an alternative to these stereotypes and why is it no longer on the air?

An essential criteria to analyze the authenticity of black characters and themes in "Under One Roof" is the correlation of the lives of the program characters with the lives of African Americans. An examination of racial demographics in the U.S. and the operation of racism are fundamental to this analysis.

That racism constitutes prejudice plus power is a widely accepted definition. (Hacker, Sherover Marcuse). According to this definition any individual may hold racist or prejudiced views, however, only those with institutional power can enforce these views. Hacker says: "Ideas about equality and inferiority and superiority are not simply figments in people's minds. Such sentiments have an impact on how institutions operate, and opinions tend to be self-fulfilling." (29). The history of overt and legal racial barriers such as school desegregation and Jim Crow laws as well as covert barriers such as insurance and mortgage redlining and unequal access to health care and employment have been among the many structural obstacles to black and white equality in the U.S.

In 1990 the median income for white families was $36,915 in contrast to the median income for black families which was $21,423. In the same year 14.2% of all white families had income of under $15,000 while 37% of black families were under this poverty level income. Since 1974 the unemployment rate for blacks has remained in the double digits while it has remained under 8% for whites. (Hacker 94-103). The same patterns emerge in the contrast between black and white status in housing, education and other indicators of economic success and cultural achievement .

Racial inequities are not limited exclusively to the lower economic classes. There is much evidence to indicate that middle class African Americans regularly face racial discrimination and encounter structural barriers which make it difficult to lead lives of dignity and success. In their 1994 book, Living with Racism: The Black Middle-Class Experience, Feagin and Sikes interviewed over 200 middle-class African Americans to accumulate qualitative data about the impact of racism on their lives. The authors document story

after story of middle-class blacks being treated with hostility in hotels, restaurants and stores with overwhelming consistency. Their interviews with African American business people demonstrated repeatedly that at minimum African Americans are frequently insulted or ignored by white customers, clients, and contractors and often lose business because of racial discrimination. They found that this phenomenon puts the African American businessperson in a constant dilemma of questioning whether and when to confront the insults and slights and risk losing business or to exercise restraint and suffer the resulting ~~stress and~~ distress. (214).

Post Cosby Images of African Americans

The advent and popularity of "The Cosby Show" in 1984 marked the beginning of a shift in how African Americans were depicted on prime time television and how racial themes were addressed. According to Sut Jhally and Lewis, the message of these Cosby and post- Cosby images is one of "enlightened racism" in which the central family on the program, the Huxtables, achievements "ultimately lend credibility to the idea that 'anyone can make it,' the comforting assumption of the American dream, which is a myth that sustains a conservative political ideology blind to the inequalities hindering persons born on mean streets and privileging persons born on easy street." (7-8). The authors assert that "the 'Cosby Show' matters because it informs people in the United States about the position of African Americans in the society." (31).

There are a series of misrepresentations and misconceptions about race and class conveyed by the "Cosby Show" that can be summarized as four distinct myths:

Myth #1: Racism is a thing of the past. The American Dream is

real for everyone. Anyone with the will can make it.

Myth #2: Social mobility for African Americans can be achieved with ease.

Myth #3: Once African Americans reach the middle and upper middle income levels, racial barriers melt away.

Myth #4: The United States is a classless society.

. The images of blacks promoted by shows like Cosby have distinctly negative consequences by creating a conservative and comfortable climate of opinion that allows white America to ignore widespread racial inequality." (Jhally and Lewis 72).

George Gerbner's findings reinforce the post-Cosby images of African Americans. From 1984-1989 African American characters on prime time television were portrayed as 4% clearly upper class, 96% clearly middle class with no characters portrayed as clearly lower class. (Gerbner, "Women and Minorities on Television"). This contrasts with 1990 census data that indicates that 37% of African American families were living below the poverty level. (Hacker 94).

On the surface, it would appear that intelligent, likable, and economically comfortable characters such as the Huxtables, offer a refreshing break from the old stereotypes of "Amos and Andy" , "Sanford and Son", and "Good Times" in which the black characters lean towards the minstrel combination of lazy, stupid but crafty, and ultimately foolish. Yet, the absence of any racial barriers or of black characters below middle income paints a false picture of racial reality. The gains in achievement and social mobility of African American characters on television provide a stark contrast to the structural barriers of race and the daily experiences of discrimination faced by African American people of all classes.

The conclusions drawn by Gerbner and by Jhally and Lewis combine to create the following television image of African American characters after 1984:

*above middle income

*college educated or currently a student

*clearly middle class

*employed in professional, highly regarded positions

*attractive, fair, and sociable

*lives in a two parent home (Jhally and Lewis) — ?

Thematically, post-1984 television programs that featured predominantly black casts had the following general characteristics:

*largely comic

*focus on family dynamics

*absence of racial barriers

*absence of racial themes

*absence of themes regarding class (Jhally and Lewis).

There is little range, depth or diversity in the themes presented in situation comedies that feature African Americans. The focus is almost entirely on interpersonal and family issues with virtually no confrontation of the broad societal problems of race and class.

While there is little explicit data available regarding the post 1984 interactions between African American characters and between white and African American characters, the thematic data suggests that these interactions are rarely, if ever, specifically about race. This array of themes is in dramatic contrast to Feagin and Sykes research that reveals the daily grind of racial discrimination experienced by middle-class African Americans. (75).

Alternatives to the Post Cosby Image

What would alternatives to these stereotyped characters and standardized themes and interactions look like? In order to topple the established image of African Americans, a set of characters who offer the flip side of the upper middle class, "nice" blackness won't do. Any composite of one-dimensional characters simply creates another set of stereotypes. In order to present an ideology that extends beyond enlightened racism individual characters need to suggest texture, diversity and range and the overall blend of major and minor characters need to offer contrasts in education, employment, wealth and personality. Alternative programmatic themes must provide information and questions about institutionalized and interpersonal racism. The study used the following criteria regarding African American characters to assess sthe degree to which an alternative and progressive ideology was established:

*range from low to high income

*range from no formal education through graduate school

* range from unskilled to professional, highly regarded positions

*live in various family configurations

*experience racial barriers to barriers to success

* show range in European to African and African American dress, language, and hair

*recurring characters vary in mood and behavior and show growth and change

*recurring characters are serious and comic

History of "Under One Roof"

CBS approached African American director Thomas Carter in 1993 (Schone) and said they wanted to work with him to develop a new series. Carter's agency suggested Paul Aaron and Michael Henry Brown (creators of the critically acclaimed HBO "Laurel Avenue") as writers and together the three men arrived at the concept of "Under One Roof" which was loosely based on Brown's family. The pilot was shot in the spring of 1994. (Holly Harold, interview).

In its six episode run in the spring of 1995, "Under One Roof" introduced the extended Langston clan, living in a two family house in Seattle. The patriarch of the family, Neb Langston (played by James Earl Jones) is a police sergeant . The pilot establishes that Neb's wife, Ruth, has died within the last year and that before she died Neb and Ruth took in a teenage foster son, Marcus (played by Marlin Santana) whose own mother died of a drug overdose. After Ruth died, their daughter Ayesha (played by Monique Ridge) moves back in with her father who insists on calling her by her given name, "Beverly". Ayesha is a young adult moving into an apparently struggling career in fashion design. Neb, Marcus and Ayesha occupy the first floor of the house.

On the second floor is Neb's son Ron (played by Joe Morgan) and his family. Ron completed a long stint in the marines during which time he and his family lived in Germany. They have only recently returned to Seattle, where Ron is opening a new business, a hardware store with his white marine buddy, Siggy (played by Terence Knox). Siggy is the only regular white character on the program. The rest of the upstairs clan consists of Maggie, Ron's wife (played by Vanessa Bell Calloway); Charlie, (played by Essence Watkins) their

beautiful and often self-centered teenage daughter; and Derrick, (played by Ronald Joshua Scott) their nine year old, slightly chubby, diabetic son.

According to Mark Schone, Carter pitched "Under One Roof" to Peter Tortorici, who was then the number two programmer at CBS. Tortorici said "yes" and Carter began the program as a co-production with CBS Entertainment Productions, the network's in-house studio. However, "Under One Roof" didn't make it in the fall 1994 CBS line-up. Schone reports that while Kelly Goode, highest ranking African American woman at CBS, Vice-President of CBS Entertainment Productions n Los Angeles, supported and shepherded the program; ultimately the New York executives "got nervous". Schone quotes Carter as saying, "There's really a lack of confidence on the part of senior management that you can put non-white characters in a compelling drama and deliver the audience." (Schone)

According to Goode one hour dramas other than police or medical series "...have been a hard genre to pitch. White families haven't worked either. We all knew from the beginning that it was a tough arena." (Kelly Goode interview).

While in June 1994, the Los Angeles branch of the Black Filmmaker Foundation screened the pilot to a standing ovation, CBS gave Carter the right to shop "Under One Roof" to other networks. In August 1994, CBS ordered six episodes as a mid-season replacement for "Rescue 911" and began shooting in January of 1995. "Under One Roof" made its debut on March 14 to ratings on par with "Rescue 911". (Schone).

Holly Harold, Development Specialist at Thomas Carter Productions, says that "Under One Roof" was never designed to be about racial issues but rather to be about a "family that happens to be black." Harold says that the

producers wanted a program in which an African American family lived its life and faced its problems which would inevitably include issues of race. (Harold interview).

The episode in which Ron faces overt racial discrimination from a white contractor, agonizes over it and confronts his white business partner; evolved from one of the writers experience and observation of the difficulties of black entrepreneurs, according to Harold. In the episode in which Charlie is torn between her white friend, Janet, who shares her love of classical music and her African American friend, Tamika, who angrily and violently accuses Charlie of selling out and acting like a "wanna-be"; Harold says the writers were specifically "looking to explore the race issue". Ultimately, Charlie decides that she wants to be friends with both girls and that she is not going to let Tamika's behavior intimidate her. According to Harold, the writers wanted to explore all sides of the issue of race loyalty without neatly tying it up at the end of the program. (Harold interview).

The creation of the character of Marcus was a deliberate attempt "to put conflict in the show and make the household in flux and multi generational." According to Harold, Carter wanted a young "hip hop guy" representative of the African American culture to introduce some strife within the family and create tension and texture between the two sons, Marcus and Ron. The idea was to portray Marcus as a "guy who grew up on the streets and had to do what he needed to do to survive." Once the demand for street survival was removed by Neb and Ruth taking him in as a foster child, Marcus still struggled with his old survival behavior in the new environment. (Harold interview)

The decision to cast Ayesha as a large woman was a deliberate one based on Carter's experience with large, dieting women in his own family.

Harold says, "Thomas (Carter) set out specifically to create an African American drama that is not portrayed on TV. Thomas and the writers were very specific about creating complex characters in situations that were difficult and representative." (Harold interview).

Overall, "Under One Roof" received critical and audience acclaim. John J. O'Connor described it as the "best new family drama of the season." (New York Times 4/11/95). Dorothy Rabinovitz describes what's daring about the program: "...the show's introduction of thorny issues normally left to public TV and similarly safe sub academic precincts." (Wall Street Journal, 3/28/95). In an earlier article Rabinovitz reviews "Under One Roof's" first episode and expresses surprise at the rare endeavor of commercial television to have a program in which people, especially black families, lead their lives as they might in real life." (Wall Street Journal, 3/20/95). Yet, despite this critical acclaim, "Under One Roof" didn't make it to the CBS fall 1995 line-up.

Goode said that CBS hired an independent publicist and blanketed the older, black and urban markets they thought were a natural for the program. But she said, "Ultimately, it didn't build over the six episodes by publicity or word of mouth. In fact, the numbers eroded. The public for network TV goes it's own way. My reaction was oh my god, they're watching 'Martin' rather than 'Under One Roof'." Goode said CBS was looking for a 15-17 share of the audience and that the program was consistently in the 11-12 share range in contrast to "ER" which almost immediately had a 30 share. CBS was the number three network in the 1994-95 season and decided to cut many of it losses according to Goode. "Its not a philanthropic effort", Goode said. (Goode interview).

In July 1995, Leslie Moonves replaced Peter Tortorici as President of

CBS Entertainment. According to Gail Pennington of the St. Louis Post Dispatch, "In the 1994-95 season, the network (CBS) finished completely out of the money among viewers 18-49, those in demand by advertisers...Immediate changes will include a more youthful, hipper look in promos, ads on cable channels like MTV and a stylish new version of the CBS eye." (7C).

In part, it appears that "Under One Roof" fell victim to these sweeping changes.

The history of "Under One Roof" indicates that while at least one high ranking African American executive of the CBS in-house production company enthusiastically supported and promoted the program, the network itself was less than committed from the start. Serial family dramas depicting any race were not gaining high marks in rating and African American family dramas seemed to appeal to an even narrower audience. The shake-up in the programming division of the network and the attempt to shift CBS's image all crashed in on "Under One Roof". Add to this set of conditions working against the program one more phenomenon. That is, "Under One Roof" was the first African American drama on prime time television. Audiences have not been prepared, trained, or conditioned to immediately find a program like this entertaining.

For over twenty years prime time television has offered one dimensional African American characters who were either too false to be real ("Amos and Andy", "Sanford and Son") or too good to be true ("Julia", "Cosby"). With relatively few available programs offering black characters or themes, this narrowness is a relentless drill - a constant reprise of the same song. Can prime time television create and sustain new melodies that shift from this one note to offer black Americans in all their complexity and subtleness? Does

"Under One Roof" begin to accomplish this task?

Analysis of "Under One Roof"

In order to assess whether "Under One Roof" presents an alternative ideology beyond enlightened racism, three main elements of the study will be synthesized :

*How do the demographics and depiction of race in "Under One Roof" square with the reality of life for African Americans?

*Does "Under One Roof" deliver complex and diverse themes, characters, and interactions between characters?

*How do the characters and themes in "Under One Roof" compare to the post-Cosby stereotypes?

One way of examining authenticity of African Americans in the program is to compare the demographics of the African American characters to the demographics of African Americans in the U.S.

According to Andrew Hacker, in 1990 14.5% of African American families earned over $50,000; 19% earned $25,000 to $50,000; 29.5% earned $15,000 to $25,000 and 37% earned under $15,000. (98). According to Time Magazine only 2% of all African Americans earned over $100,000 in 1992. "Under One Roof" offers African American characters of whom 5% are clearly upper income, 85% middle income and 2% clearly lower income.

In the area of broad work categories, the most glaring discrepancies are in professional/management positions and service employment. A full 60% of African American characters in "Under One Roof" fall under the professional/management category in contrast to only 17 % of African Americans in 1992. It is noteworthy that there is not one black character depicted in a service position in "Under One Roof" while in 1992 24% of all

blacks were employed in the service category. The data of field of activity and occupation by category substantiate the data regarding income. Overall African American characters in "Under One Roof" are depicted as higher income and in higher levels of occupation than any demographic data of African Americans reflect.

In 1990, unemployment for African Americans was 11.3% while there was virtually no unemployment among African American characters in "Under One Roof". (Hacker 193). There were two episodes in which Maggie was seeking employment; one in which she was rejected and another in which she got the job she sought.

The occupations of the continuing adult characters in "Under One Roof" are police sergeant, struggling entrepreneur, independent fashion designer, and full time mother in transition to work. While these working adult characters all fall within the range of middle income it is apparent, at least in Ron's case, that the opening of the hardware store is a financial risk which puts pressure on the family and limits expenditures. Neb, as police sergeant, could be categorized as working class or middle class. He lives a plain life with no frills in the house or on his person. Ayesha, does her design work from home, and sells her wares at an open air market. Maggie has just completed college and with eagerness and trepidation embarks on a job search. The class of the main characters is ambiguous , none of them are flush and all either convey a modest lifestyle or directly address financial strain.

In the area of education, in 1989, 82.2% of African Americans ages 25-35 completed high school and 12.7% completed 4 years or more of college. In "Under One Roof" the highest level of education achieved among blacks was the completion of college, in which it was clear that 12% had completed 4 years

of college. The rest of the adult black characters level of education was unknown. The percentage of those who explicitly completed college is absolutely in line with the reality of African American education.

It is clear that, overall, the demographics of black characters in "Under One Roof" skew towards the middle when compared to recent data regarding the status of African Americans in the U.S. The class of many of the characters remains ambiguous.

A second element through which authenticity of African American characters and themes can be assessed is by comparing evidence of institutional and interpersonal racism in the U.S. contrasted with evidence of the same in scenes, themes, characters and interactions.

In the six episodes of "Under One Roof" there were 21 scenes that were explicitly about race. These scenes appeared in three of the six episodes. Of these scenes 58% offered in depth discussion or interaction about race and 86% presented tension or conflict about race. In 71% of these scenes there was major or minor evidence of racism and in 76% of the scenes about race there was evidence of racial barriers that provided obstacles to success.

While it is difficulty to quantify how this depiction of race equates with real life; it is possible to look at some of the documentation provided by other studies regarding the most common instances of institutional, interpersonal and internalized racism and to determine if and to what extent these elements were present in "Under One Roof". Using a variation of Ellis Close's "dozen demons" that confront the black middle class, (58) Table 16 summarizes this comparison.

Table 1: Portrayal of Racism and Racial Barriers in U.S. and "Under One Roof"

Common themes of racism	Appearance in "Under One Roof"
obstacles to success in education,employment, income	Ron and white contract
inability to fit in to all white society	no
lack of respect for blacks	Ron and Seaton
low expectations of blacks	Ron and Seaton
shattered hopes of blacks about race	Ron and Siggy
faint praise for blacks	no
coping fatigue for blacks facing the tedium of racism	Ron, Siggy and Seaton
racial identity troubles	Charlie,Tamika and Janet
pigeonholing	no
self-censorship and silence	Ron and Seaton
collective guilt	Marcus and Nate
exclusion from the "club"	no
internalized racism	Marcus's friends caught up in crime, Tamika's race disloyalty accusations of Charlie
hostility in public facilities	no

Nine of these thirteen common themes of racism appear in "Under One Roof." The episode in which Ron faces a bigoted white contractor and struggles with his white business partner account for six of these elements. Ron's store loses income when Seaton withdraws his business because of his own racism. As Ron discusses the complexity of the issue with Maggie, his rage at Seaton and his anger and sense of betrayal from his friend and partner, Siggy; he talks about how hard it is to sort it all out and know what to do. Ron questions his

own motives for going into business with Siggy and Maggie knowingly commiserates, "Some things never change." (Episode 4). This portrayal is a compelling reflection of Feagin and Spikes findings about independent African American business people who face insults and slights and have to ponder the difficult question of whether to risk losing business or to remain silent and risk resulting stress and loss of self-esteem. (87). "Under One Roof" provides rich detail in Ron's range of reactions to Siggy and Seaton, from anger to resignation.

Issues of racial identity appear in Episode 5 when Charlie is challenged as to her cultural taste, race loyalty and friendship. Tamika accuses Charlie of being a traitor to her race by listening to" dead white musicians" and through her friendship with Janet, who is white. Charlie agonizes over Tamika's allegations and cruelty; ultimately deciding that she can identify as black and have white friends and enjoy classical music. Tamika is portrayed both as a jealous and Afrocentric adolescent who mourns losing Charlie's full attention, particularly to a "skinny, wanna-be white girl." The interactions between Charlie and Tamika are loaded with tension and conflict about what it means to be black and to have race loyalty.

The issue of race appears again in the episode that involves Marcus's friends robbing Ron's hardware store. Ron agonizes over nearly being shot and is particularly focused on the vacant eyes of the young man with the gun. Ron tells Neb, "I expected to be shot at when I was in the Marines, but I didn't expect to be shot at less than two miles from my home by one of my own." Both Nate and Damian impress two things upon Marcus: one, that stealing is the only way to survive and two, that the law of the street is not to "rat on your homeboy". When Marcus decides not to turn them in to the

authorities he is faced with both a personal and broader sense of responsibility when Nate is killed in an attempted robbery. Not only does Marcus believe he is to blame at some level for Nate's death, but he is troubled that he has managed to survive and transcend the law of the street by moving in with Neb. (Episode 5).

These three episodes go a long way towards illustrating some of the complex racial barriers that African Americans confront regardless of income and class. Ironically, despite the fact that income and occupations in "Under One Roof" are unrealistically skewed toward the middle, this largely middle income depiction tends to strengthen the illustration of racial barriers. The message is, even these nice middle income people have to face interpersonal racism and institutional racial obstacles to success in their lives.

Another way to determine to what degree "Under One Roof" offers an authentic view of African Americans is to determine to what extent there is range and diversity among characters as well as depth, texture and complexity within each of the continuing characters. The greater the diversity and range between and among black characters; the more likely the program is to offer an alternative depiction of race.

As major and minor black characters in "Under One Roof" are analyzed to examine range, depth and diversity among them in age, gender, personality traits, role, romance, sex and crime and interaction the study demonstrates moderate to high representation in range and diversity and a high representation in depth.

Another measure used to gauge character authenticity is that of range, depth, and diversity within the seven continuing characters. This analysis is based on the assumption that people are often complex, ambiguous,

inconsistent, and three dimensional. The key question is do the continuing characters in "Under One Roof" reflect this complexity or do they tend to appear as simple, consistent and one-dimensional characters? An analysis of three of the seven continuing characters sheds light on this question.

As the patriarch of the family, Neb is portrayed as strong and unflappable. At one point he leaves Marcus at the police station to stew over the trouble he has gotten into and to make a decision whether to come home. But when Ron and Ayesha question if Marcus will really come home Neb rushes off in his car to retrieve Marcus. Neb returns to find Marcus home and gruffly pretends he went out for a paper - not wanting to expose his softness.

In several episodes he is a stickler for the rules; he openly and vocally disapproves and intervenes when Ayesha stays all night with her boyfriend; he is completely unsympathetic when Marcus breaks a school rule by wearing a hat in the building; and comes down hard on Ron when he accosts and assaults the young man he thought had robbed him at gun point. In other episodes there is a mix of sadness and gruffness as he thinks of his recently deceased wife. When Ron asked Neb if he misses her Neb replies with a combination of harshness and pain, "I woke up next to her every day for over thirty years. What do you think?" (Episode 2).

Neb's relationship to other family members who easily drift up and down the stairs from the two different households suggests a rambling extended family with three generations, love and conflict. While Neb is undoubtedly a "good guy", the salt of the earth; he is a mix of bellowing and stern father, loving grandfather and older man who is active and vital.

Ayesha has changed her name from Beverly; often wears African clothing, head ware and jewelry; and wears her hair in a variety of styles which

rarely appear to be chemically processed. Ayesha uses black vernacular particularly when she talks with Marcus. She is frequently frustrated by Neb's strictness and rigidity with Marcus and challenges him on many occasions. Ayesha is somewhere in her twenties, a large woman, whose weight is rarely mentioned. She is proud and clearly sexual.

Her relationship with Roger demonstrates some of the complexity of Ayesha. When she returns home early in the morning from an overnight stay at Roger's apartment, Neb is furious and Ayesha is defiant. Later when Neb learns that Roger, who is a police officer in Neb's precinct, has more than one woman who stays with him, he confronts Ayesha with this information. Ayesha's face changes, she is surprised and hurt; yet she quickly recovers to save face with her father and says, "I knew that." But she didn't and later follows Roger in her car, while saying outloud to herself, "Don't do this, girl." The next time she is with Roger she tells him she knows about his other relationships and with much difficulty explains that she can't continue that way. Yet, she is still furious when she learns that Neb has intervened and gotten Roger transferred to an undesirable position. (Episode 4).

Only Marcus is portrayed as being selfish as much as Charlie. Interesting to note that while Neb is frustrated that Marcus won't consistently conform to his new life; Ayesha frequently points out that Marcus' biggest problem is that he is a teenager. Ron points out the same about Charlie. Marcus and Charlie provide a thought provoking contrast in their disparate class and cultural backgrounds and similarities in their developmental behavior.

Marcus is an adolescent with plaited hair, rapper clothes, a cowrie shell necklace, and street language through and through. When Marcus is hurt or confused, he explodes. When Ron and Neb tell Marcus that he can't have a

clock that belonged to Neb's wife, Marcus storms out of the room and throws himself on his bed and won't speak to anyone. This event triggers his sense of loss about his mother and how little she has left him . While Marcus trades insults with Charlie and argues and yells with Neb; there is a soft, vulnerable and often confused side to him. He has a strong sense of guilt and responsibility for not being able to prevent his mother's overdose or his friend's death. He is protective of and playful with Derrick and bails Charlie out of her frightening encounter with an older man, gallantly draping his jacket around her shoulders.

Marcus struggles between his current life of relative comfort and his previous life on the street. He tries to sell stolen speakers and yet he resists an offer to join Nate and Damian in their criminal activities. He defies and shoves a teacher and gets suspended and is excited and proud of a science project for which he earns an "A".

His relationship with Neb is stormy and tentative with everyone else in the family except Ayesha and Derrick. He cautiously and often defiantly attempts to find his place in the Langston family. Marcus is complex and inconsistent; a teenager in a middle income home struggling with his previous life of survival on the street.

A recap of post-Cosby themes in programs that featured predominantly black casts compared to the themes in "Under One Roof" reveals the following:

Table 2: Comparison of Post Cosby and "Under One Roof" Themes

Post Cosby	"Under One Roof"
*largely comic	*largely dramatic with some comic scenes
*focus on family dynamics	*family themes represent 30% of major themes and only 10% of all themes
*absence of racial barriers	*racial barriers were present in 2 of 6 episodes
*absence of racial themes	*racial themes represented 5% of all; themes and 20% of major themes
*absence of class themes	*absence of class themes

In the area of themes, "Under One Roof" is a dramatic departure from the general themes in the post-Cosby era. Even in the area of class, which is notably missing as an explicit theme, it is important to observe that while financial stress is never a major theme it represents 7% of all themes. The Langston family is financially in a very different category from the wealthy Huxtables.

It appears that the black characters and themes in "Under One Roof" offer a significant alternative to the standard recurring post-1984 images of blacks.

With regard to the ideology and myths perpetuated by the post-Cosby African American entertainment programs , "Under One Roof" is mixed in its ability to offer alternatives. The four myths that comprise the ideology of "The Cosby Show" are reiterated below in the context of "Under One Roof".

Myth #1: Racism is a thing of the past. The American Dream is real for everyone. Anyone with the will can make it.

While "Under One Roof" depicts professional racial barriers that Ron

Table 4: Comparison of Stereotypes, Alternatives and "Under One Roof" Depiction of Black Characters

characteristics of Post 1984 black characters	alternative characteristics of black characters	characteristics of black characters in "Under One Roof.
*primarily above middle income	*range from low to high income	*primarily lower-middle to middle income
*primarily college educated or current student	*range from no formal education through graduate school	*primary range from uncertain education through college
*employed in professional, highly regarded positions	* range from unskilled to professional, highly regarded positions	*primarily lower to middle range professionals and managers
*live in two parent home	*live in various family configurations	*lives in two parent home among extended family , foster child, and returning adult child
*experience little or no racial barriers to success	*experience racial barriers to success	*experience some racial barriers to success
* speak standard English and have other conventional cultural attributes	* show range in European to African and African American dress, language, and hair	*moderate range in language, dress and hair
*recurring characters consistent in role and behavior	*recurring characters vary in mood and behavior and show growth and change	*moderate to high range in recurring characters mood, behavior, change and growth
*recurring characters are largely comic	*recurring characters are serious and comic	*recurring characters are primarily serious with minor comic moments

faces and personal racial barrier that Charlie faces , ultimately their ability to succeed as individuals and people seems to hinge only marginally on racism. In the six episodes neither Maggie, Ayesha, Marcus, Derrick nor Neb seem thwarted by racism.

Myth #2: Social mobility for African Americans can be achieved with ease.

The Langstons are not upper middle class and financially as comfortable

as the Huxtables nor as highly educated. Yet race is not clearly delineated as an obstacle to their social mobility.

Myth #3: Once African Americans reach the middle and upper middle income levels, racial barriers melt away.

This is one myth that "Under One Roof" undermines with Ron's encounter with racism in business and Charlie's encounter with racial barriers in pursuing her interests and friendships without regard to race. The message here is that race continues to be an issue that won't go away.

Myth #4: The United States is a classless society.

The Langston family and other minor characters have only modest financial success compared to the Huxtables and company. The only characters shown clearly at a level less than middle class are criminals and drug addicts. Neb, employed as a uniformed police sergeant, could be considered working class.

Conclusion

According to Jhally and Lewis, "The Huxtables are unusual because the combination of race and class barriers works against most black people. The system is neither fair nor equal, yet many black viewers are seduced, through an argument about stereotyping, into a logic that claims that it is. After all, if the world is like it is on 'The Cosby Show', what is the problem?" (128).

And, after all, what is the world like on "Under One Roof"? It offers a mix of themes including significant racial barriers and moderate financial stress. It presents characters who have a range in depth and diversity and it shows a personally successful yet modestly professionally successful family that faces racism.

The content and fate of "Under One Roof" offers cause for despair and

reason for hope for prime time television. The creation of "Under One Roof" was a collaboration of network and creative talent that produced authentic images of African Americans and themes about race. This is cause for hope. That "Under One Roof" fell victim to the vagaries of ratings, network image, and the drive for corporate profit is troubling, yet predictable.

The history and fate of "Under One Roof" was dictated by the structure and pressures of network television, it's fate might have been clear from the start. While "Under One Roof" provided black characters who were skewed more towards the middle class as compared to African American life; it offered an original dramatic format in which black characters led their daily lives with love, friendship, personal and family triumph and struggle blended with large and small doses of racism as obstacles to success. Issues of class did not appear directly, yet modest lifestyles and financial struggles were part of the Langston's daily lives. Thorny, ethical issues of race were raised regularly and the temptation to answer these questions simply and unambiguously was, for the most part, resisted.

The Langston's are "nice" people with moderate income, modest education, and personal and professional conflict and struggles shared by many Americans. What made them different was that they resembled the demographics of African American life more closely than other post-Cosby black characters. What made them different was that as characters they were largely diverse and complex in personality and success. What made "Under One Roof" different was that the Langston's were not a black family in "white face"; they were a family that faced many of the difficult racial issues that confront most African Americans in the United States. What made these racial

themes different was that here was a nice family with good values and still racism was woven into the fabric of their lives. "Under One Roof" informed the American pubic about African Americans in a way that was significantly different from the "Cosby Show".

Ultimately, the ideology presented by "Under One Roof" is that racism exists for African Americans independent of income, class, values or sheer "niceness". This ideology differs significantly from the dominant ideology (advanced by the post -Cosby fare of prime time television) of the myth of the American Dream, in which anyone with the will can make it.

Ron Limbo says, "In a commercial mass communication system, corporate interest rarely gives way to public interest." (253). Limbs thoughts are echoed by Kelly Goode, Vice-President of CBS Entertainment, "This is not a philanthropic effort.". (Goode Interview).

In the case of race, the public interest lies in telling the truth about racism in order to contribute to the process of dismantling racism and healing. The corporate interest lies in generating a profit and according to Jhally and Lewis, "the prejudices of the audience have to be played to. To challenge and try to change those prejudices would result in financial failure within the present arrangements of American commercial television." (144).

"Under One Roof" was trapped in the crossfire of a vicious cycle. The racial beliefs and prejudices of audiences preexist. Post-Cosby entertainment television reinforces the beliefs that the key to African American success and equality is individual rather than institutional. A program comes along that in six short episodes, gently suggests that institutional barriers to racial equality still exist for all African Americans. The audience does not build for "Under One Roof", the ratings are not enough according to network standards. The program

is canceled and the audience can return to “Fresh Prince of Bel Air”, “Martin”, and “In the House” in which their beliefs about race will be reinforced.