

From Ozzie and Harriet to Raymond and Debra:
An Analysis of the Changing Portrayals of American
Sitcom Parents from the 1950's to the Present

Michael E. Palma
Boston College

Table of Contents

<u>Acknowledgements</u>	<u>ii</u>
<u>Abstract</u>	<u>1</u>
<u>Introduction</u>	<u>2</u>
<u>Background</u>	<u>4</u>
<u>Research Question</u>	<u>8</u>
<u>Rationale</u>	<u>9</u>
<u>Literature Review</u>	<u>11</u>
<u>Methodology</u>	<u>28</u>
<u>Findings</u>	<u>31</u>
<u>Discussion</u>	<u>56</u>
<u>Conclusion</u>	<u>68</u>
<u>Reference List</u>	<u>72</u>

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to dedicate this thesis to my parents, whose sacrifices and unending support helped me to flourish and mature here at Boston College. You both possess a diligence and strength that inspires me everyday of my life. This paper represents my gratitude for all you have given me, and the opportunities you have allowed me to explore over the past four years.

To Professor William Stanwood, whose confidence in my abilities means more to me than I can ever explain. Your continuous encouragement and guidance motivated me at a time when I needed it most. I can honestly say that without you, this could not have been completed. I am truly blessed that the greatest teacher I have ever known is also my close friend, and it has been an honor to be your student.

I would also like to thank Professor Bonnie Jefferson, whose Rhetorical Tradition course compelled me to make the best decision I have ever made: become a Communications major. To me, your enthusiasm and rapport with students is representative of the entire Communications department, and I am grateful that my experience within the major has allowed me to form lasting relationships with people like you.

Finally, I would like to thank all the friends that have kept me sane through this process, and whose patience and support will always be remembered fondly when I think of my time spent at Boston College.

Abstract

A content analysis exploring television shows from the 1950's to the present highlights the evolution of sitcom parents throughout the decades. It can be seen that traditional gender roles are reinforced in every decade, despite changes in dominance and overall portrayals of sitcom parents. A context is provided, showing the sociological changes in America during each decade, and how television shows represented these changes. A background into the genre is provided, detailing earlier representations of sitcom parents from the 1950's, up until the 1990's. Secondary research was used to discover what other researchers have found on the question. The primary research was the coding and content analysis of two episodes of one popular television show from each decade. The programs that were used were: *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet*, *The Dick Van Dyke Show*, *All in the Family*, *Growing Pains*, and *Everybody Loves Raymond*. Results show that portrayals of sitcom parents do indeed represent sociological changes and prominent ideologies indicative of the times in which they aired. Results also showed the reinforcement of traditional gender roles throughout each decade.

Introduction

Television is an instrument that is used daily in the lives of many Americans. Whether it is used for a temporary escape from reality, to gain vital information, or just to be entertained, television has become a vital component in many households in modern American society. As McKibben states, “Two thirds of Americans tell researchers they get ‘most of their information’ about the world from television... watching an average of fifty-six hours a week” (1993, p.18). Because we, as Americans, watch such a startling amount of television, it is important to ask exactly what are the messages TV is communicating to us, and what understanding about our world does TV leave us with?

One way of investigating these questions is to focus on the family sitcom. In general, research shows that representations of families on television are highly stereotypical, and are indicative of their time (Douglas, 2003). More specifically, the characterizations of parental figures in many sitcoms is in accordance with the labels and stereotypes that our society holds of typical males and females, and even fosters such views. As Douglas states in response to portrayals of modern parents, “it is made quite clear that the modern father is an overgrown adolescent, a boob, and a nitwit. At the same time, the modern mother has become his parent” (2003, p.96). It is important to examine family sitcoms because the representations of parents have indeed evolved from the 1950’s, and “such changes parallel those that have taken place inside real American families” (Douglas, Olsen, 1995, p.260).

According to Douglas, “research has also shown that spousal relations were often portrayed stereotypically so that males acted in instrumental ways and wives in expressive ways” (2003, p.98). Older domestic sitcoms portray fathers as the breadwinner

of the family, who does not take an active role in domestic chores and child rearing (Mackinnon, 2003). In the 1950's sitcom *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet*, the father, Ozzie Nelson, "is instrumental to family well-being...and none of the family succeeds without his help" (Douglas, 2003, p.86). Research shows that modern sitcom fathers are active in the household, and share responsibilities with their spouses, but are still rather inept and foolish in accordance with male social stereotypes (Scharrer, 2001), and repressive with their emotions (Skolnick & Skolnick, 2003). In the modern sitcom *Malcolm in the Middle*, for example, the father "is depicted as a barely disguised child himself, one who often joins his boys' scams and tomfoolery" (Mackinnon, 2003, p.83).

The underlying catalyst for the changing portrayals of TV dads was brought about by the sociological change in women's rights (Cantor, 1990). By the 1980's, "nearly half of all married women [were] in the labor force" (Skolnick & Skolnick, 2003, p.180), and with the roles of provider becoming increasingly blurred between fathers and mothers, a more egalitarian view of gender roles was beginning to take shape in many family sitcoms (Cantor, 1990). Today, fathers appear to be forced into traditional female actions around the house, and come across as being unskilled in dealing with their daily routine (Pilcher, Pole, Williams, 2003).

The domestic, family sitcom has been a popular genre since the beginning of television. Examining popular shows from each era can prove to be an effective way to determine how parental figures have been portrayed throughout the decades of television, and how these portrayals have changed. An analysis of shows in which the parental figures are among the main characters should provide a valuable insight into society's changing views of male and female roles in the house, and within family relationships.

Background

Related research offers some insight into the background of this question. Starting in the 1950's and early 1960's, with programs such as *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet*, *Leave It to Beaver*, and *Father Knows Best*, TV programs chronicled the migration of family life from the cities to the suburbs (Douglas, 2003). At this time, "the father was a professional, the mother was a housewife...[and] women and children were not depicted as having jobs (Cantor, 1990, p.2). In the 1950's sitcom *Father Knows Best*, the father, Jim Anderson, went to work during the day as an insurance agent, but when he came home, "there is no question that he dominates the household" (Cantor, 1990, p.6). His wife, Margaret, was a typical housewife who took care of the house and children in Jim's absence, and would frequently keep the family in line with the phrase, "Wait until your father gets home" (Cantor, 1990, p.5). As Douglas states, in the early era of television, "middle class husbands and fathers governed the family, accruing power, first, from their decision-making ability and, second, from their benevolent wisdom...[and] middle-class women...quickly came to be identified by their domestic subservience" (Douglas, 2003, p.97).

It is also important to make the distinction between middle-class families of the early era and working-class families. Another popular program of the time was *The Honeymooners*. The Kramden family lived in an apartment, not in the suburbs, and the husband, Ralph, was a working-class man who drove a bus (Scharrer, 2001). Contrary to the middle-class portrayals, "domestic comedies featuring working-class families present the father as more foolish than comedies featuring middle-class families" (Scharrer,

2001, p.2). Continuing, Scharrer says, “The working-class family man on sitcoms has been described as a buffoon whose stupidity is a frequent source of laughter” (2001, p.2). Thus, it was not uncommon, even in the early days of television, to see the lead male figure as inept and clumsy, but the majority of the TV landscape featured prominent, middle-class domestic sitcoms (Cantor, 1990).

In the 1970’s, a new sociological landscape was taking shape. For the first time, in the late 1970’s, “the census declared that a male was not automatically to be assumed to be the head of the household” (Skolnick & Skolnick, 2003, p.158). Women’s roles were changing in the socioeconomic culture, and more and more women were seeking and holding jobs (Pilcher, Pole, Williams, 2003). During this time, however, there was a media backlash towards the women’s movement, “manifested in a desire to return to more traditional gender roles in which the father is above criticism and ridicule” (Scharrer, 2001, p.13). Programs like *All in the Family* still showed the working-class father as aloof and insensitive, but marked a significant change (Cantor, 1991). The father, Archie Bunker, was loud, crude, and usually got his way. His wife, Edith, still showed submissive behavior, but on the rare occasion, she could manipulate or order her husband to get what she wanted (Cantor, 1990). This highlighted the transition in the decade to come. Nonetheless, the good-provider role of the American male was slowly becoming blurred, and television responded, which is more evident in the 1980’s (Day, Mackey, 1986).

The 1980’s marked the most significant change in the portrayal of the American father and husband on television. The number of programs that featured the “restored” nuclear family increased more than any other decade (Scharrer, 2001). It is during this

time in which the “rights and responsibilities in the family had become less gender specific” (Douglas, 2003, p.99). The decade showed women as “more likely to work outside the home and more likely to hold a professional position” (Douglas, 2003, p.99), and this had an effect on sitcom portrayals of men. Fathers were shown more frequently to be involved in domestic life, as well as child rearing (Day, Mackey, 1986), due to the absence of the mother as a traditional housewife.

Programs such as *Growing Pains* and *The Cosby Show*, show the father as “a man of the 80’s, sensitive, and caring...[and] sometimes cooks meals and always shows his concern for his children” (Scharrer, 2001, p.6). Both programs show working mothers, with Maggie Seaver being a newspaper journalist, and as a response, the father figures were shown to be more domestic (Cantor 1991). In *Growing Pains*, Jason Seaver and his wife “have developed open relationships in which they communicate freely and honestly and are willing to listen to each other” (Douglas, 2003, p.100). This kind of openness and mutual respect for each other exemplifies the changing roles of spouses in the 1980’s. However, fathers of this time were still portrayed as less adept at domestic chores than their wives (Douglas, 2003).

Also, in the 1980’s, shows such as *Married with Children* and *Roseanne* illustrated fathers that were always involved in some family initiated conflict, and were unable to manage their daily routines, including work and children (Douglas, 2003). Also, in regards to *Roseanne*, this show features a mother who is stronger than the father (Cantor, 1990). As Cantor states, “in any case, no matter what the topic, Roseanne usually emerges as the dominant partner” (1990, p.4). This marks a significant change in

the portrayal of television fathers because this shows that the mother is the leader of the household (Cantor, 1990).

Recent studies into modern television programs (since 1990), show an increasing trend of the father growing weaker, and becoming the butt of many of the jokes in modern sitcoms (Scharrer, 2001). Because men are not the sole means of support in a family anymore, it is suggested that male, father or husband figures are “losing their privileges in the home to which being the breadwinner has entitled them” (Scharrer, 2001, p.3). In the modern show *Malcolm in the Middle*, the father is depicted as another child, and the mother is the dominant member of the household (Mackinnon, 2003). As Mackinnon states, “She exceeds all of her family in their particular view of masculinity: She is more aggressive, more shrewd, and sufficiently attuned to her family’s whims” (2003, p.83). This dominance reversal exemplifies the transition of the American sitcom parents.

To further understand this transition, Scharrer explains “power distances between individuals are important determinants of humor...[and] jokes with males as the butt of the humor are more acceptable in countries such as the U.S...in which the power distance between the sexes is rather small” (2001, p.4). Due to the advances of women in the work place and in society in general, males are no longer seen as the dominant member of the household, and the programs of the 1990’s exhibited that through jokes. In his content analysis, Scharrer describes “the mother was making fun of the father...at a rate of over 2:1. [Also]...there are far more jokes between the mother and father in the 1980’s and 1990’s than in any other decade” (2001, p.12).

In general, the trend seems to show an increased “feminization” of the American family, and ultimately, the American father figure (Douglas, 2003). Fathers, throughout television, have undergone a significant change, from powerful provider, to being the punch line of other’s jokes (Scharrer, 2001).

Research Question

I am studying family sitcoms because I want to find out how the portrayals of the lead parental figures represent the views of the American mother and father held by society. I want to discover what attributes or characteristics they foster, as well as those they discourage, and how these characteristics have changed throughout the decades of television.

Rationale

As stated earlier, “Two thirds of Americans tell researchers they get ‘most of their information’ about the world from television... watching an average of fifty-six hours a week” (Mckibben, 1993, p.18). Television has become a commonality between many Americans, and watching TV has become a shared experience between people all over the country. Because television is so common, “it has the effect of providing a shared way of viewing the world” (Littlejohn, 2002, p.317). This effect is one aspect of the cultivation theory, which is defined as “the continuing, cumulative, subtle shaping of public beliefs by the content dominant and typical in television programming” (Comstock, 1989, p.265). The theory goes further to include that “the repetitive pattern of television’s mass-produced messages and images forms the mainstream of a common symbolic environment” (Littlejohn, 2002, p.317). In other words, if people are predisposed to a certain representation or consistent portrayal, then they might begin to accept those representations as true, as described by the cultivation theory. As Mackinnon states, “[television] is the principal circulator of the cultural mainstream” (2003, p.66).

Similarly, “the importance of television’s messages in shaping peoples’ conceptions about families and family life is not trivial” (Bryant & Bryant, 2001, p.333). In examining the cumulative effect of the portrayals of fathers in modern times as foolish, weak, and inept, it could potentially be seen that American society may erroneously be led to believe that stereotypes and false representations of fathers to be true. As Bryant and Bryant state, “Home and family is one of the most common themes in network programs. It is found in more than 8 out of 10 programs” (2001, p.338). It is shown that

recent studies “clearly indicate that what is seen on television is related to viewer’s conceptions about families and marriage” (Bryant & Bryant, 2001, p.348).

Perhaps the most vulnerable to these messages are teenage children. In a study performed on teenagers, the researchers hypothesized that “the more people watch TV, the more closely will their ideas about sex roles match what is presented on TV” (Williams, 1986, p.272). The researchers subjected teens to models of male figures and female figures on television (Williams, 1986). In the experimental group, they showed representations of reversed gender roles (Williams, 1986). Their results show that “within the frame of cultivation, the boys reproduced more activities of the male model even when he engaged in sex-role reversal behavior” (Williams, 1986, p.274). These results are important because it raises the question of whether children will grow up with a distorted view of what it means to be a male, or even a father, based on the representations television is feeding them.

In one particular study, one wife “talked about watching relationships on shows, comparing them with her own and trying what seemed valuable at home with her spouse” (Bryant & Bryant, 2001, p.312). With television consistently portraying relationships and husbands in a particular light, it makes it necessary to understand what images and representations are being put forth by family sitcoms. Simply stated, “the TV male...stereotyped role models can be dealt with if parents and others...are aware of them” (McNulty, 1977, p.38). As Silverstone states, “It is television’s persistence...and pervasiveness at the heart of contemporary culture which secures its...uniquely powerful position as definer of cultural reality, particularly for those who watch it intensely” (Silverstone, 1994, p.139).

Undoubtedly, there have been great changes in how fathers and mothers are portrayed on television sitcoms. These changes likely mirror cultural and sociological changes taking place in America. Careful examination of representations of American parents on television provides insight into how society has viewed the roles of both males and females, and how these views have changed. If the portrayal of the American father is one of negative connotations and ineptitude, in response to the growing strength and independence of the American mother, then this could potentially distort the view of what a father should be for the next generation, specifically, those who are learning about their world through television.

Literature Review

This section reviews the literature of changing portrayals of the American father figure on family sitcoms. In “Prime-time Fathers: A Study in Continuity and Change,” Muriel Cantor’s qualitative research suggests that in modern family sitcoms, “the values expressed are traditional” (1990, p.8). Cantor conducted a metastudy, which offered an analysis of literature and television shows written from the 1950’s up until 1990, and reported the vast differences in portrayals of both men and women throughout the decades. The research stipulates that the role of fathers on sitcoms has changed, largely due to the increased advancements in women’s rights and the increase in gender equality (Cantor, 1990). However, Cantor explains that despite the changing gender roles, traditional values are still upheld in many middle-class family sitcoms (1990). Recent domestic comedies show “that certain beliefs about women and their relationship to men have remained constant, despite the changing position of men and women in the social

order” (Cantor, 1990, p.9). The long-established conceptions of the father as the moneymaker and not as the one who typically takes care of the house and children are essentially reinforced through more subtle ways in the domestic comedy (Cantor, 1990).

This is not to say that representations of fathers have not changed throughout the decades. Cantor also points out that in modern sitcoms, “competition and aggressive behavior are devalued [in fathers], and love and sensitivity help the family resolve the daily stresses that take place...inside the household” (1990, p.9). This observation highlights the overall trend that fathers, who would be seen as aggressive, are rarely seen in modern sitcoms. Instead, they have been replaced by men who are sensitive to their wives, and understand their hard work and emotions (Cantor, 1990). As Cantor states, “domestic comedies feature no ‘macho’ men” (1990, p.9), essentially because they are devalued in today’s society (Cantor, 1990).

In “From Wise to Foolish: The Portrayal of the Sitcom Father, 1950s-1990s,” Erica Scharrer conducted a quantitative content analysis experiment, which coded specifically for portrayals of foolish behavior and ineptitude exhibited by the father in domestic sitcoms, and compared this to statistics from earlier decades (2001). The researcher also examined the increasing trend of the father being the butt of many jokes within the sitcom (Scharrer, 2001). These were also compared to earlier statistics.

The study used a convenience sample of domestic situational comedies from the 1950’s through the 1990’s. Only those programs that featured a mother, a father, and at least one child were chosen for the study because family dynamics were the main focus of the study. Shows were divided into categories based upon the decade in which they originally aired. Programs chosen also had the distinction of being within the top 25

shows of their decade, or a popular long-running show that lasted five seasons or more. Coding was focused toward discovering who in the family was responsible for telling the most jokes, and who was the ultimate target of these jokes. Overall, 136 episodes of 29 shows representing each decade were used to compile data.

One important finding of this study is that “females do indeed tell more jokes at the expense of the father in later decades compared to earlier decades” (Scharrer, 2001, p.9). Scharrer goes further to state that “the theoretical principle in a power shift among male and female characters made apparent through the telling of jokes at the father’s expense appears to be largely supported (Scharrer, 2001, p.10). According to the statistics, the average number of times the father has been the butt of a joke has doubled from the 1950’s, showing a somewhat linear increase throughout the decades (Scharrer, 2001). In accordance with this, it is also shown that the average number of times the mother is the butt of a father’s joke has significantly declined, decreasing by more than one-half (Scharrer, 2001). This highlights the increasing trend that mothers are gaining more dominance and power in the traditional household, but at the expense of demeaning the father figure (Scharrer, 2001).

Another important trend discovered in this research is the increasing amount of foolishness exhibited by the father in domestic sitcoms (Scharrer, 2001). Foolishness was described by Scharrer as behavior which is “juvenile, and usually worsens situations due to a lack of understanding” (2001, p.8). In the 1950’s and 1960’s, seeing a middle-class father as anything other than the wise and dominant figure of the family was a rarity (Scharrer, 2001). In more recent shows, the portrayals of foolishness exhibited by the father have doubled since the 1950’s, showing an increasing trend throughout the decades

(Scharrer, 2001). As Scharrer states, “the data suggest that there has been a shift in the foolishness portrayal of the father over time” (2001, p.12). It is common today “that prime time television presents a situation in which ‘mother knows best’ more often than father” (Scharrer, 2001, p.13). It can be seen that the father is becoming more foolish, while the mother is becoming dominant in the household (Scharrer, 2001).

In a different study with similar findings, Jerry Suls and John W. Gastoff in their article “The Incidence of Sex Discrimination, Sexual Content, and Hostility in Television Humor” set out to discover whether women, and not men, were indeed the butt of most humor found in primetime television programs. The study was done in response to a feminist argument that women in primetime shows were victims of sexual discrimination due to the fact that they were often the recipients of degrading humor (Gastoff, Suls, 1981). The researchers looked specifically at who was telling the jokes, which person was the target, type of humor, and frequency of representations in principal roles (Gastoff, Suls, 1981).

The study was a quantitative content analysis, which utilized a week of primetime sitcoms that aired either on ABC, CBS, or NBC over the course of one week (Gastoff, Suls, 1981). Any humorous incident was recorded and classified by two separate coders, and these results were combined into one final set (Gastoff, Suls, 1981). Researchers considered an incident to be humorous if “it seemed as though it was intended to be funny by the creators of the program” (Gastoff, Suls, 1981, p.44). Coders tallied who was telling jokes, who was the recipient, and classified jokes as hostile or sexual (Gastoff, Suls, 1981). Hostile jokes were meant to disparage, and sexual jokes involved the direct or implicit reference to intercourse or sex organs (Gastoff, Suls, 1981).

An analysis of the results shows a wide range of results either supporting or disproving the feminist argument. One important finding was that “males were more frequently the butt of disparaging humor...[but] they are also more frequently the source of disparagement” (Gastoff, Suls, 1981, p.47). This illustrates that the male in many of the primetime sitcoms are the target of their spouses disparaging humor, but males also are the lead source of this type of humor to others in the family. Continuing, males “were the butt of as many sexual jokes as women, with women being the source of such jokes more frequently” (Gastoff, Suls, 1981, p.47). This is in direct opposition to the feminist argument, which stated that women were sexually objectified more frequently by their spouses in primetime sitcoms.

It is also important to note that females and males “were shown in principal roles with the same relative frequency (Gastoff, Suls, 1981, p.47). This result shows that for every main male character in a primetime sitcom, there is typically a main female character to balance the portrayals. This study ultimately shows that in the middle era of television, the late 1970’s, the foundations of changing spousal dynamics were being framed. These results show a departure from the traditional family dynamics, which could be seen in earlier decades of family sitcoms.

In another study entitled, “Tough Guys: The Portrayal of Hypermasculinity and Aggression in Television Police Dramas,” Erica Scharrer conducted a quantitative analysis which coded for portrayals of hypermasculine traits, such as violence and increased aggression in popular crime dramas (2001 B). Scharrer examined the correlation between hypermasculine traits, and those perceived to be “bad guys” and “good guys” within the shows (Scharrer, 2001 B).

The study was a content analysis of police crime dramas from the 1970's through the 1990's. The sample was a week of crime dramas that were videotaped from cable broadcasts. The male characters, both police and criminals, were coded for hypermasculine behavior, which includes antisocial behavior, callousness toward women or sex, aggression, increased violence, toughness and lack of emotion, and excitement or thrill seeking (Scharrer, 2001 B). In total, 75 episodes of 29 different programs were used in the study. Results were used to determine if the hypermasculine traits were considered to be detrimental or beneficial to the characters that exhibited them, and whether these values were favored or scorned by others in the show (Scharrer, 2001 B).

The major finding in this study was the association of hypermasculinity and representations of negativity. As Scharrer states, "those perceived as 'bad guys' exhibited a correlation with hypermasculine qualities" (2001 B, p. 629). Continuing, "good guys" were shown "to be were more often engaged in controlling their aggression... and being more open with emotions...[and] have gotten less hypermasculine over time" (Scharrer, 2001 B, p. 629). In effect, what Scharrer has found in these programs is that males considered to be "good" display control over their masculine qualities.

Another important finding found in this study is that the typical views of manliness are being redefined across the decades. Scharrer explains that many early male characters in these dramas showed "a strong contempt for affects that are believed to be inferior feminine traits like 'soft hearted emotions...and usually blocks attempts by women and others to appeal to emotions'" (2001 B, p. 617). On the other hand, male characters from later dramas demonstrate "surface masculinity...that is countered and

sometimes broken by others” (Scharrer, 2001 B, p.617). Although this study focuses on crime dramas, results can be directly related to what has been noticed in masculinity on sitcoms. It can be seen that a decrease in traditional masculine qualities over time is being favored in male representations across television.

In their study, “Beyond Family Structure: The Family in Domestic Comedy,” William Douglas and Beth M. Olsen investigated family relationships in sitcoms from the 1950’s to the 1990’s (1995). Among the relationships viewed were sibling interactions, parent-child interactions, and perhaps most importantly, spousal relations (Douglas & Olsen, 1995). This study was conducted in response to a popular belief that the American family is deteriorating, and this decline is represented in the way relationships in family sitcoms are portrayed (Douglas & Olsen, 1995).

The first part of this study involved a number of audiences giving ratings to television shows from each era. The thirteen highest-ranking shows were chosen for the study. Once this was completed, episodes deemed representative of both the program itself, and the time in which they aired were chosen for research. Participants were chosen from a convenience sample of 248 females and 132 males enrolled in undergraduate communication classes at a large, southwestern university (Douglas & Olsen, 1995). These participants were assigned to particular groups, and each of these groups were assigned one domestic comedy to view. Three taped episodes of their specific show were presented, after which, the students were asked to complete an assessment of the family relationships, and whether or not the family represented a desirable model (Douglas & Olsen, 1995).

In their discussion of the results, Douglas and Olsen discovered that “generation-to-generation shifts were consistently associated with changes in the portrayal of both spousal and parent-child relations, supporting the position that development of the television family is defined by systematic changes in family life and family relations” (1995, p.259). In short, the evolution of the television family has occurred in a step-wise fashion, and these changes are most evident in the ways spouses and children interact with each other. Specifically, these changes are represented in “increasing levels of receptiveness and expressiveness” (Douglas & Olsen, 1995, p.236).

Analysis shows that from the 1950’s to the 1990’s, spousal relationships show a marked increase in “relational receptiveness, that is, partners’ openness and mutual trust” (Douglas & Olsen, 1995, p.259). Also, relating to other studies, husbands and wives show an increase in expressiveness, or emotionality (Douglas & Olsen, 1995). The researchers comment that more modern couples “appear more overtly affectionate and more explicitly conflictual” (Douglas & Olsen, 1995, p.259). On one hand, spouses, particularly husbands, show a new openness with their emotions. On the other hand, wives demonstrate a new emphasis on voicing their opinions and showing their disapproval of their spouses, even if it means creating a conflict (Douglas & Olsen, 1995). Douglas and Olsen state that this evolution is due to an “increased similarity in rights and responsibilities between spouses in modern families” (1995, p.260). The researchers conclude that “such changes parallel those that have taken place inside real American families” (Douglas & Olsen, 1995, p.260).

In a similar study investigating family interactions and dominance, Honeycutt, Wellman, and Larson analyzed asymmetry in talking time between characters in *The*

Cosby Show (1997). The researchers conducted the study under the framework of social learning theory, theorizing that television set a model for what is expected behavior in regular social life (Honeycutt, Wellman, Larson, 1997). Within this framework, they set out to determine which characters exert more subtle forms of dominance, specifically through communicative control throughout a number of episodes (Honeycutt, Wellman, Larson, 1997). According to the researchers, the characters that exhibit more communicative control are more dominant, and exert more influence characters around them, as well as those viewing (Honeycutt, Wellman, Larson, 1997).

The study investigated transcripts of five episodes of *The Cosby Show* during the 1986-1987 season. Earlier research on the same subject provided an example of how to conduct the experiment, and possible results (Honeycutt, Wellman, Larson 1997). Each character was identified, and dominance was operationalized according to asymmetrical amounts of speaking time, who initiates talking, who talks last, and successful interruptions (Honeycutt, Wellman, Larson, 1997). From the transcripts, time-series models were constructed for each episode, which detailed a complete breakdown of time spent talking for each character. Results were recorded from these time-series models, and dominance patterns were established from these results.

A major finding that conflicted with earlier research was that the father figure, Cliff Huxtable, did not exert as much dominance or control as some studies had originally found (Honeycutt, Wellman, Larson, 1997). As the researchers state, “although Cliff talked the most of any character, he was not the most influential person in the sample episodes...at points being influenced by his son, daughters, and wife” (Honeycutt, Wellman, Larson, 1997, p.96). Honeycutt, Wellman, and Larson note that

this is contrary to earlier studies that have found that “the father sets a tone in which he knows best, or else bad consequences will follow” (1997, p.96). Findings show that the father did not exert much influence on any of his family members, “eliciting no reactions to his attempts at strong leadership” (Honeycutt, Wellman, Larson, 1997, p.96).

Other results of this study provided insight into which dyad of the family exhibits the highest amount of mutual influence. The research showed that dyads including the father and any of the children exhibited the most amount of mutual influence, while the dyad of Cliff and Claire, his wife, exhibited the most asymmetry (Honeycutt, Wellman, Larson, 1997). As the researchers explain, “mutual influence between wife and husband was not in great abundance, and usually favored Claire as being more influential than Cliff” (Honeycutt, Wellman, Larson, 1997, p.97). These findings show that contrary to previous studies, which show the father as the most influential and dominant, the father figure in the 1980’s was one who could be easily influenced by his wife, as well as his own children (Honeycutt, Wellman, Larson, 1997).

In a related study dealing with interpersonal relationships in family sitcoms, Comstock and Strzyzewski analyzed conflict strategies and jealousy between spouses in their study “Interpersonal Interaction on Television: Family Conflict and Jealousy on Primetime” (1990). The researchers theorized that representations of how family members handle and resolve interpersonal conflicts would have a direct influence on how viewers handle similar conflicts (Comstock & Strzyzewski, 1990). They used Gerbner’s theory of cultivation as a framework, and wanted to discover if primetime television shows portrayed similar ways of resolving conflicts (Comstock & Strzyzewski, 1990). Also, conflict resolution strategies were analyzed according to gender, in order to

discover if males and females utilize different approaches to handling interpersonal conflict (Comstock & Strzyzewski, 1990). According to Comstock and Strzyzewski, similar portrayals of conflict resolution across primetime television would essentially dictate to viewers how to deal with their own interpersonal conflicts (Comstock & Strzyzewski, 1990).

The researchers first recorded two consecutive weeks of primetime programming during the 1987-1988 programming season (Comstock & Strzyzewski, 1990). A total of forty-one shows, or twenty-one hours of interaction, from NBC, ABC, and CBS were recorded, and these shows were selected because of their representations of family relationships (Comstock & Strzyzewski, 1990). Conflict situations were coded on a number of criteria, including the character who initiates the conflict, character responding to the conflict, relationship between the characters, and strategies used by both characters (Comstock & Strzyzewski, 1990). Also, the overall reason for the conflict was noted, and these included jealousy, envy, and rivalry (Comstock & Strzyzewski, 1990). Each of these reasons were also coded for who experienced the jealousy, emotions expressed by both characters, behavioral responses to the jealousy, and the overall effect the emotions had on the relationship (Comstock & Strzyzewski, 1990).

In general, results show that “family conflict and the expression of jealousy are quite common on prime time television...and the message regarding interpersonal predicaments is generally consistent across program type (Comstock & Strzyzewski, 1990, p.277). Perhaps most importantly, “conflict is most prevalent on situational comedies (Comstock & Strzyzewski, 1990. p.277). Interestingly, Comstock and Strzyzewski discovered that family sitcoms present a more “prosocial picture of family

interaction, often engaging in resolution strategies that depend on effective dialogue between the characters” (1990, p.277).

When discussing gender roles and conflicts, the researchers found that “female characters engaged in conflict more often than males” (Comstock & Strzyzewski, 1990, p.277). Typically, females initiate conflicts using distributive strategies, which include blaming, negative evaluations of their husbands, and suggestions for behavioral change (Comstock & Strzyzewski, 1990). Similarly, Husbands initiated conflicts in much the same way, but when faced with a conflict, “husbands responded with avoidance” (Comstock & Strzyzewski, 1990, p.278). Analysis also showed relatively “few gender differences in reasons for conflict, but women proved to be more expressive with their emotions, and why they experienced jealousy” (Comstock & Strzyzewski, 1990, p.280).

To resolve the conflicts, females utilize integrative strategies, helping to preserve the relationship, which usually “result in de-escalation of the conflict, and constructive outcomes” (Comstock & Strzyzewski, 1990, p.278). On the other hand, “husbands simply avoid discussion of relational concerns initiated by wives, or attempt to either assert their ‘authority’ or shift blame” (Comstock & Strzyzewski, 1990, p.278). Although husbands and wives tend to initiate conflicts in the same way, wives resolve conflicts in a more constructive manner than their husbands (Comstock & Strzyzewski, 1990).

In their article, “Recognition and Respect Revisited: Portrayals of Age and Gender in Prime-time Television,” Lauzen and Dozier attempted to analyze whether or not specific demographic characteristics effected respect and recognition received from their counterparts (2005). The researchers viewed their study as a continuation on

previous research, which compared the distributions and representations of certain demographic populations on television to actual data from the U.S. population (Lauzen & Dozier, 2005). Lauzen and Dozier used the cultivation theory to hypothesize that if primetime television consistently portrayed certain demographics as less respected when compared to others, this would have a “negative effect on viewers perceptions of the competencies of those certain individuals” (Lauzen & Dozier, 2005, p.242).

The methodology for this study involved a random sampling shows from the 2002-2003 prime-time season (Lauzen & Dozier, 2005). Shows were selected from six networks, which included ABC, NBC, CBS, Fox, UPN, and WB (Lauzen & Dozier, 2005). One example was chosen from each station, and there was an even distribution of situation comedies and dramas (Lauzen & Dozier, 2005). In total, ninety-eight shows were used to investigate the hypotheses. Coders looked for whether characters were major or minor, their age, gender, leadership, occupational power, overall goals, and effectiveness in achieving those goals (Lauzen & Dozier, 2005).

Interesting findings include data that suggests that males and females in modern sitcoms share an increase in respect and recognition with age, but in vastly different ways (Lauzen & Dozier, 2005). According to the researchers, “Males in their 40s and 50s were more likely to play leadership roles than females of the same age, but specifically when represented in the workforce” (Lauzen & Dozier, 2005, p.252). Women, on the other hand, “gain more respect and recognition in the home than do males of the same age” (Lauzen & Dozier, 2005, p.252). Also, for both males and females, “respect and recognition in all facets declines for characters that reach 60 years old” (Lauzen & Dozier, 2005, p.253). This study concluded that the most represented characters on

prime-time television were males and females in their forties or fifties, and females are depicted as more respected in the home than their male counterparts (Lauzen & Dozier, 2005).

Some studies have been done not on the television shows themselves, but rather on the viewers. These studies focus on reactions to specific representations TV presents, and what viewers believe to be the effects these representations have on society. In her study, "The Public and Private Dialogue about the American Family on Television," Kelly Albada compared popular public conceptions about sitcoms to responses given by parents and children on how they view portrayals of families on television (2000). Albada believes that throughout the decades of TV sitcoms, stereotyped portrayals of families and gender roles have been presented, and these representations will effect viewers' perceptions on what a family should be, and what role each member plays in the home (2000).

To begin the study, Albada first completed research on prevalent public opinions about family portrayals and gender roles (2000). This was used for the purpose of comparison to the data from she would receive from the later part of the study. The second part of the study included primary research, in which parents and children would be interviewed about their viewing habits, and responses to portrayals on television. Twenty-five parent-child pairs were recruited using an instructional packet that was distributed at PTA meetings. Parent-child pairs were screened according to the content and frequency of their TV viewing. When appropriate pairs were chosen, questionnaires were sent to their homes. This was then followed up by an interview with a research team member. Interviews took place over a three-month span, and the questions centered

on information obtained from the questionnaire. The responses were coded into broad categories, and themes and trends were created, analyzed, and discussed (Albada, 2000).

The researcher discovered that viewers tend to look at modern television shows as more representative of their own families, citing earlier programs as “idealistic” (Albada, 2000, p.90). More importantly perhaps, results indicate, “televised family images reinforce viewers’ beliefs about themselves and their expectations for family life” (Albada, 2000, p.90). Albada has shown that the messages and representations of family life and roles on television do indeed dictate, to some degree, how viewers expect and interpret their own family life to be (2000).

This study also found viewers’ attitudes on family structure. Albada points out that the traditional nuclear family structure of “the male breadwinner and the female caretaker and their children represent the standard by which all other family forms are compared” (Albada, 2000, p.97). Results show that “parents associated traditional family structure with positive family values and the nontraditional family structure with negative family values” (Albada, 2000, p.97). In fact, children referred to traditional family structures as “normal” (Albada, 2000, p.98). The use of this terminology indicates that despite changes in portrayals of specific characters, like fathers and mothers, overall, the traditional family structure is still considered ideal, because it has been reinforced since the 1950’s (Albada, 2000).

Similar findings were discovered in a related study by Ex, Janssens, and Korzilius in their article, “Young Females’ Images of Motherhood in Relation to Television Viewing” (2002). The researchers analyzed whether representations of mothers in popular sitcoms and soaps affected how young females interpret the role of mothers in

the home. They hypothesized that the more the young females watched television, the more traditional view they held about motherhood (Ex, Janssens, Korzilius, 2002). The team utilized the cultivation theory to provide a framework for their results and analysis (Ex, Janssens, Korzilius, 2002).

In total, one hundred and sixty-six females were selected from different educational settings (Ex, Janssens, Korzilius, 2002). Seventy-nine participants were between twenty and twenty-two years old, and eighty-seven participants were between fifteen and seventeen years old (Ex, Janssens, Korzilius, 2002). Each participant was given a questionnaire, which evaluated how they expected an ideal mother to function, and how they expected themselves to function if they had children (Ex, Janssens, Korzilius, 2002). Results were categorized into two groups (Ex, Janssens, Korzilius, 2002). The first was a traditional orientation, which included characteristics that demonstrate a caring attitude, the fact that the mother should play a principle role in raising children, and a general over-concern for her family (Ex, Janssens, Korzilius, 2002). The other category was a self-assertive orientation, which were those that demonstrated a strong degree of independence, self-reliance, and openness to others outside the family (Ex, Janssens, Korzilius, 2002).

Along with expectations of motherhood, viewing behaviors were assessed. Individuals were asked how much TV they watch per day, and whether they watch more soap operas or family sitcoms (Ex, Janssens, Korzilius, 2002). Females were, again, separated into categories, based on the type of programs they frequently watched. These factors were used to evaluate whether or not heavy television viewing of specific programs correspond to views about motherhood (Ex, Janssens, Korzilius, 2002).

The results of the study showed a correlation between the type of show and amount of viewing with views about motherhood (Ex, Janssens, Korzilius, 2002). As Ex, Janssens, and Korzilius state, “a traditional view of motherhood is related to watching a sample of family-centered television sitcoms” (2002, p.967). Continuing, “a more self-assertive view of motherhood is related to viewing less family oriented soap operas” (Ex, Janssens, Korzilius, 2002, p.967). Younger viewers tended to have more traditional views of motherhood, while the older participants showed a more self-assertive view (Ex, Janssens, Korzilius, 2002). Analysis from this study confirmed a direct relationship between representations of motherhood on television and viewers’ conceptions of the role of mothers in the home (Ex, Janssens, Korzilius, 2002).

In summary, research shows that the roles of parents on sitcoms throughout the decades have changed in very significant ways. The portrayals of fathers as breadwinners, and mothers as housewives have given way to an increase in shared responsibilities (Honeycutt, Wellman, Larson, 1997). Despite this transition, fathers are increasingly becoming more foolish in recent times, and have become the targets of jokes by others in the family, especially their spouses (Scharrer, 2001 A). As a result, fathers are seen to be more respected in the work place, while mothers have taken control of the home (Lauzen & Dozier, 2005). These representations effect viewers’ expectations of familial roles, and how family interactions should take place (Albada, 2000). In conclusion, each era of television, from the 1950’s to the present, has shown a gradual change in traditions and family relationships, and these changes mirror societal changes happening in America (Douglas & Olsen, 1995).

Methodology

To get started with the study, I first utilized the libraries and online databases available to Boston College. First, I searched the online databases to find previous studies and related information on the question at hand. The specific databases used to obtain data were Communication Abstracts, Communication and Mass Media Complete, and Sociological Abstracts. These databases led me to a number journal articles that either relate to my topic directly, or provide social context to support my question. The keywords used in the searches were: family, father*, lead, male, mother*, TV, television, American, sitcom, stereotype, gender roles, effects, portrayals, and represent*.

Next, using Quest, I found books that had pertinent information on my topic. Many books found contained studies, sociological context, and relevant information around the question at hand, and in regards to women and how their development related to the topic. These books were used to create a background, which serves as a base for the study.

I also conducted primary research. A content analysis was conducted using popular television shows from each era. These programs included: *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet*, *The Dick Van Dyke Show*, *All in the Family*, *Growing Pains*, and *Everybody Loves Raymond*. The content analysis utilized a convenience sample of two separate, thirty-minute episodes of each show. Episodes of *The Dick Van Dyke Show*, *All in the Family*, and *Everybody Loves Raymond* were obtained through syndication on TV Land and TBS respectively. Episodes of *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet* and *Growing Pains* were chosen from DVD's. There were four episodes per DVD, and an advisor arbitrarily chose the second and third episodes from each disk to be analyzed.

I focused on the main parental characters, and aspects of the shows that pertain to them, for this study. The programs were chosen because they feature the entire family, but specifically focus on interactions between wives and husbands. These shows also portray dominance structures within the home, which is vital in examining the research question. The parents within these shows are the protagonists, and the plots typically center on these characters.

For the purposes of this study, data for mothers and fathers were separate and distinct, and parental figures are not considered one cohesive unit. I specifically coded for how parental figures are portrayed in their interactions with each other, as well as their extended family and children. Also, I coded for their actions in dealing with certain problems or conflicts they encounter. I noted when either the mother or father was the butt of jokes, whether they emotionally affect other members of the family, their personality traits when compared to others in the show, or when either is blamed or directly responsible for hurtful actions. I carefully noted interactions with children, spouses, and extended family, and if either parent handled situations with skill, or if they made the situation worse either through words or actions, intentionally or non-intentionally. Also, I observed how much of the total show mothers and fathers spend with their spouses, kids, at work, etc. Finally, I noted which character was able to resolve a conflict situation, and specifically how they were able to do so if the conflict was resolved at all.

Specific codes were used to quickly note when something of interest was happening. Among these codes were: FF, which referred to anytime the father is portrayed as foolish or childlike. Similarly, FM is used for if the mother is seen as

foolish. In this sense, acting foolish refers to any action that makes light of the situation at hand, is childlike in nature, or generally immature. FB and MB refer to whether the mother or the father was the butt of jokes, and the character delivering the joke was also noted. FSC and MSC were used to determine whether the mother or father character started a conflict or argument. WS was used when a character was found to make a situation worse by their words or actions. FI and MI were used to indicate when either character appeared to be clueless or inept at dealing with situations. Finally, FD and MD were used to indicate when either character appeared more dominant. The study was not limited to these codes, and an emergent design was used in order to account for any unexpected results.

With the information gathered from this study, I looked for any overlying trends in the data. I evaluated the data in light of my research question, and observed whether my data corresponds to previous studies. I also looked for the negative case to see if any of my data does not correspond to previous data. The data from this study is extremely limited, due to the fact that only two episodes from each show were being utilized, and I understand that the results are not universal or generalizable.

Findings

1950's- The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet

The first episode opened with an ideal representation of traditional gender roles, which the 1950's are known quite well for. Traditional gender portrayals show the father working, earning the money for the family, while the wife tends to the house and children in her husbands absence. Ozzie is shown walking in the door with his briefcase, presumably returning from along day of work. He sees his son Ricky eating cookies, to which Ozzie states, "You're going to spoil your dinner with those cookies" (The adventures of ozzie and harriet, 1952 A). Ricky explains that Harriet is at a Woman's Club meeting, and Ozzie responds, "Oh dear! You sure you left enough cookies for dinner?" (The adventures of ozzie and harriet, 1952 A). This is a clear indication that without the wife to cook dinner, the family would go without food until she came home and prepared a meal. It is portrayals such as these that were among the most prevalent in these episodes.

Throughout the episode, more representations of traditional gender roles could be found. In one scene, Ozzie and Ricky are seen sitting at the table eating, while Harriet is going back and forth between cleaning the dining room, and cooking on the stove (The adventures of ozzie and harriet, 1952 A). Ozzie also appeared to be the patriarch of the house, and his sons would often come to him first for advice, while Harriet was busy serving drinks and being sure not to meddle in the affairs of the men in the house (The adventures of ozzie and harriet, 1952 A).

Coupled with the portrayals of traditional gender roles was the consistent representation of Ozzie being the dominant member of the house. He was seen to make

essentially all of the decisions within the house, even those concerning money. At one point in the episode, a group of neighborhood boys called the Tiger Club, in which Ozzie is an honorary member, needed baseball uniforms. The boys show up at the door, stating that they waited for Ozzie to come home “to talk real business” (The adventures of ozzie and harriet, 1952 A). At the end of the conversation, Ozzie decided to purchase all of the uniforms for the twelve boys, without consulting his wife (The adventures of ozzie and harriet, 1952 A).

Another example of Ozzie’s dominance appears when Harriet comes home from her Woman’s Club meeting. She explained that they scheduled a dance for Saturday afternoon, and before Harriet could explain that the dance was for children, Ozzie responds, “The guys are playing golf and I’m going. Who’s crazy idea was this” (The adventures of ozzie and harriet, 1952 A). Once he discovers that the dance is for little children, Ozzie proceeds to make Harriet look foolish by saying, “you must be crazy if you think little boys are going to want to dance on a Saturday afternoon. They’d rather be out riding bikes or playing baseball” (The adventures of ozzie and harriet, 1952 A). This scene exemplifies how Ozzie’s plans override those of Harriet, and how he knows what is best.

Other examples of Ozzie’s dominance are shown when he belittles Harriet’s problems, and eventually solves them for her. When it appears no boys will come to the dance, Harriet explains her problem, and Ozzie responds with, “oh come on now, it’s not as serious as all that” (The adventures of ozzie and harriet, 1952 A). He then thinks to get the Tiger Club to go to the dance. After convincing them to go, Harriet thanks Ozzie for solving her problem, saying, “it would have been so embarrassing if all those girls

showed up and had no one to dance with. Thank you, Ozzie, you really helped me out” (The adventures of ozzie and harriet, 1952 A). Harriet was represented as inept at handling her own problem, and it was eventually Ozzie that remedied the situation.

Overall, within the first episode, the father was consistently portrayed as the dominant member of the house. Harriet appeared to be dependent on Ozzie, and often seemed to be confused or clueless without his help. The main problem the episode centered on was ‘created’ by Harriet, and solved by Ozzie. Ozzie was portrayed as adept at handling situations, and his actions always worked to rectify the problems caused by others (The adventures of ozzie and harriet, 1952 A).

In total, Ozzie was never shown to engage in foolish behavior, while Harriet was shown only once to exhibit foolishness. The humor in the show did not depend on either the husband or wife being the butt of jokes, but both Ozzie and Harriet were shown to be the butt of one joke each. Great disparity can be seen in respect to dominant behavior. Ozzie was shown to exhibit dominance nine times (100%), while Harriet was never shown to be dominant. Harriet was shown to cause conflicts, and make them worse, and generally be inept in handling these conflicts (The adventures of ozzie and harriet, 1952 A).

The second episode contained similar results to the first episode. The plot centers on a joke that Ozzie’s friends are trying to play on him. They are trying to get Ozzie to take a picture of a flying saucer, and have him look foolish in the process. In dealing with these friends, Ozzie still appears to be dominant, and seems to understand what they are trying to do, and is portrayed as always being in control. (The adventures of ozzie and harriet, 1952 B).

Interestingly, in this episode, there is a particular scene where Ozzie does appear to be acting foolish. He is talking to himself, trying to figure out how to reverse the joke on his friends. Harriet catches him, and asks, “Are you talking to yourself dear?” (The adventures of ozzie and harriet, 1952 B). Ozzie simply answers yes to her question, laughs at himself, and no further joke is made (The adventures of ozzie and harriet, 1952 B). No attempt is made by Harriet to make Ozzie the butt of any joke, and the event is simply dismissed. Harriet is shown standing behind her husband, and does not question or poke fun at the trivial game he is engaged in.

Again, traditional gender roles are represented in this episode. Harriet can be seen cleaning the house and serving her family at the dinner table. Ozzie is clearly the dominant character once again. In one scene, Ozzie orders his son to get him a tea saucer, and Ricky replies with a simple, “yes pop” (The adventures of ozzie and harriet, 1952 B). He then orders Harriet to make some coffee for his friends, and she replies by saying, “right away dear” (The adventures of ozzie and harriet, 1952 B). At one point, while Ozzie and Ricky are discussing a plan to get back at Ozzie’s friends, Harriet requests permission to talk, asking, “fellas, may I say a word?” (The adventures of ozzie and harriet, 1952 B). Harriet is portrayed as submissive and obedient to Ozzie within the house.

Within the second episode, Ozzie was represented as dominant four times (100%), while again, Harriet was not seen exhibiting dominant behavior at all. Traditional gender portrayals were enforced throughout the episode, and Ozzie always appeared to be in control of situations, and those around him. Ozzie is also seen

rectifying the overarching conflict in the episode, and eventually comes out on top over his friends (The adventures of ozzie and harriet, 1952 B).

Within both episodes, it is continually portrayed that Ozzie is more dominant than his wife in the home. Ozzie was seen as dominant 100% of the time (13 of 13), and Harriet was subservient to Ozzie and her family. Traditional gender roles were clearly seen, with Ozzie as the principal breadwinner of the family, while Harriet stayed at home, tended the house, and cooked meals. Whenever problems arose, Ozzie was the one to resolve them, with Harriet being perceived as inept in handling such situations.

The humor over the two episodes did not center on making either spouse the butt of the jokes. Much of the humor relied on the hilariousness of the situations and responses, and both Ozzie and Harriet did not, for the most part, tell jokes at the other's expense. Also, perhaps stemming from the understanding of gender roles, conflicts between husband and wife were non-existent. Each seems to understand their role in the family, and both are satisfied with it. Ozzie and Harriet did not start conflicts with each other, and their relationship was portrayed as a satisfactory partnership in which each member fills a certain role, and these roles are respected.

The results from these two episodes are summarized in Table 1 on the next page.

Category	Father	Mother	Total
Butt of joke	2 (50%)	2 (50%)	4
Foolish behavior	1 (33.3%)	2 (66.6%)	3
Starting Conflict	0 (0%)	1 (100%)	1
Worsening Conflict	0 (0%)	1 (100%)	1
Inept or clueless behavior	1 (16.6%)	5 (83.3%)	6
Dominant behavior	13 (100%)	0 (0%)	13

1960's- The Dick Van Dyke Show

The opening scene of the first episode contained an interesting variation from the 1950's. The scene shows Rob and Laura in the kitchen, and Rob is fixing a toaster. He then goes into a long speech about how the power from Niagara Falls is flowing through the copper wire connected to the toaster (The dick van dyke show, 1962 A). Rob then presses the bread down, and nothing happens, to which Laura replies, "You have to plug it in Rob" (The dick van dyke show, 1962 A). When Rob finally plugs it in, the toaster begins to smoke, and they both quickly run to unplug it. Rob's friend then arrives, and drops off a projector he borrowed, and said that the projector started smoking when he tried to use, to which Laura quips, "Rob must have fixed that too" (The dick van dyke show, 1962 A). The father is the butt of these two jokes, which marks a slight change from the type of humor of the 1950's, which did not feature either spouse as the butt of any jokes.

Traditional gender roles were often portrayed in the first episode as well. Rob was seen either at work, or returning home, and Laura could be seen making dinner, cleaning the house (The dick van dyke show, 1962 A). Despite the numerous representations of such traditional gender roles, evidence existed in the first episode that highlights another change. When Rob is fixing the toaster, Laura says, "I'll leave you to fix that. I'm going shopping" (The dick van dyke show, 1962 A). In another scene, Laura visits Rob at work, stating, "I was shopping in the area, and I thought I'd stop in and say hi" (The dick van dyke show, 1962 A). This shows a slight departure from the traditional view of a mother's role in the house, which holds that women should remain home and take care of things around the house to help their husbands. Although Laura

was often seen doing customary housewife activities, she is also seen escaping the house, and being more independent (The dick van dyke show, 1962 A).

Continuing, Rob is undoubtedly the dominant member of the household. He is most often portrayed as making important decisions within the home. In one scene, Laura asks Rob for twenty dollars, and Rob replies, “what did you do with the money I gave you yesterday...well, here’s ten” (The dick van dyke show, 1962 A). This scene makes clear that the money comes from Rob, and it is at his discretion that money will be distributed.

In a later scene, Rob discovers Laura’s private bank account. Rob is visibly bothered by this, and decided to discuss it with his co-workers. When his co-workers say that he will not go home and confront Laura about it, Rob exclaims, “you want to come home with me and watch” (The dick van dyke show, 1962 A). Rob then goes home and confronts Laura about the bankbook, and Laura gets angry that he looked through her things, to which Rob replies, “well it’s my house, and besides it was an accident” (The dick van dyke show, 1962 A). Rob is shown as the master of the house, and clearly is the dominant figure.

Rob and Laura are shown to argue in this scene as well, which is another change from the 1950’s. When Rob confronts Laura about the secret bank account, Laura explains that she wanted money that was her own (The dick van dyke show, 1962 A). Rob then asks calmly, “and where did you get this money”, and Laura replies “from you...I guess after it sits for a while I forget it comes from you and think its for me” (The dick van dyke show, 1962 A). Rob is then shown to resolve the conflict by reducing Laura’s hysterics, and calmly discussing the issue. He discovers that the bank account is

for a gift for him, and he responds, “now that I know, things will be easier for you. Now when you ask for money, it will be a pretty soft touch” (The dick van dyke show, 1962 A). Rob is represented as dominant throughout this scene, and capable of resolving conflicts that are started by his wife’s emotionality.

Throughout this episode, Laura was seen as the only character to start conflicts, and make them worse. She was not, however, the butt of any jokes, or portrayed as foolish. Rob on the other hand was seen once acting foolishly. One scene showed him crawling around on the floor like a child, searching for his birthday present. At one point, his son Ritchie comes out and says, “it’s not under there dad” (The dick van dyke show, 1962 A). Despite this foolish behavior, Rob’s status in the house was still respected, and is continually portrayed as the more dominant member of the home (8 of 9).

The second episode centered on Rob’s attempts to get his brother Stacey to show off his talent before his boss, Alan Brady, and possibly get him a spot on his show (The dick van dyke show, 1962 B). In the first scene, Rob decides that the way he will get Alan Brady to see his brother perform is to have a house party. Rob simply turns to Laura and says, “we will have a house party tomorrow night, you can cook, and Alan can come over and hear him play” (The dick van dyke show, 1962 B). Laura explains, “I can’t get all that ready by tomorrow,” to which Rob responds, “honey you’ll have to” (The dick van dyke show, 1962 B). This shows Rob’s dominance in the house, expecting his wife to put the party together on a moments notice because it would benefit him and his brother.

Once again, traditional gender roles were prevalent, but more differences can be seen from the 1950's representations. At the house party, Laura is actually seen sitting and enjoying the party, and at one point, orders Rob to check on the food she's cooking, and Rob replies, "sure thing dear" (The dick van dyke show, 1962 B). Also, in dealing with trying to get Stacey to perform for Alan Brady, Rob seeks the advice of his wife, including her in decision-making. Although traditional gender portrayals still dominate, changes can be seen from the representations of the 1950's.

Regardless of this change, Laura, throughout this episode, can be seen as inept or clueless in handling the situation. Despite Rob asking her for advice later in the show, Laura is shown not knowing how to help Rob, and trying to frantically to contribute. Earlier in the show, Rob and Laura are trying to figure out how Stacey can perform for Alan Brady. Laura suggests that Rob bring Stacey to work with him, and Rob immediately responds, "now that's ridiculous Laura. We need to get Alan here" (The dick van dyke show, 1962 B). Rob is shown to not only know what is needed to handle the situation, but simultaneously depicts Laura as inept in dealing with the problem.

Over both episodes, Rob was definitely portrayed as the more dominant member of the household (10 of 11). He was consistently seen making important decisions, and clearly demonstrated more authority in the home. Laura was seen to engage in typical housewife behavior, but was represented as slightly more independent than previous portrayals in the 1950's. Despite this change, Laura was shown to start all conflicts over the course of the episodes, and make them worse with her emotional responses.

The humor over these episodes also reflected a change from the 1950's. Rob was seen as the butt of some jokes, and was even portrayed foolishly compared to his wife.

He does, however, retain his status in the house, and as stated earlier, is continually portrayed as the dominant character. There is still a low volume of humor directed at either spouse, and overall humor from the shows are situation-based, and not reliant on making either the husband or wife the target.

The results from these two episodes are displayed in Table 2 below.

Category	Father	Mother	Total
Butt of joke	2 (66.6%)	1 (33.3%)	3
Foolish behavior	1 (50%)	1 (50%)	2
Starting Conflict	0 (0%)	3 (100%)	3
Worsening Conflict	0 (0%)	2 (100%)	2
Inept or clueless behavior	1 (20%)	4 (80%)	5
Dominant behavior	10 (90.9%)	1 (9.1%)	11

1970's- All in the Family

The first episode began with traditional gender representations, and the portrayal of Archie's dominance over Edith. Archie is seen returning from work, and immediately scolds his wife for not having things ready for his friend who is visiting that night, even though she is seen cooking the meal. Archie proceeds to take a cheap bottle of whiskey, and pour it into an expensive Whiskey bottle that he had saved. Edith stared on like a child, and asked Archie questions until he scolded her again, and told her to prepare for his friend's arrival. Edith is not shown to argue with Archie, and does whatever she is told by him. It can be seen that Archie's dominance in this episode comes at the expense of Edith's foolish and inept portrayals (All in the family, 1974 A).

Archie can be seen throughout the episode as ordering Edith around, and Edith blindly follows these orders. When his friend, Joe Tucker, arrives, Archie goes to greet him, but only after telling Edith to "get out of the way" (All in the family, 1974 A). Before Edith can properly greet Joe, Archie orders her serve some food, saying, "hurry up Edith, get some snicks and snacks will ya" (All in the family, 1974 A). Edith, without any contention, goes to the kitchen, and promptly brings out chips and dip. Archie's dominance does not only affect his wife, but also his children. At one point, Archie commands his son in law to "get upstairs and change, you look like a slob" (All in the family, 1974 A).

The complete dominance of Archie is emphasized by Edith's foolish behavior and ineptitude. For example, when Joe Tucker arrives, Archie and Joe sit down to have a drink, and Archie asks Edith to get them some ice cubes. Edith, however, comes back with a block of ice instead. Archie scolds her, and Edith is depicted as a child being

reprimanded by the father. Edith then asks what she should do with the ice, and Archie responds, “take it in the kitchen and wait for the Titanic to come sailing by” (All in the family, 1974 A). All within this scene, Archie is clearly portrayed as dominant, while Edith is shown as foolish, inept, and the butt of her husbands jokes (All in the family, 1974 A).

This lack of awareness by Edith also tends to start conflicts and arguments, which in and of itself is a major change from previous decades. In one particular scene, Edith explains that she forgot to tell Archie that the personnel manager from his plant called. Archie becomes livid, and exclaims, “Why don’t you write things down. You know you always forget” (All in the family, 1974 A). Edith explains that she did not think it was too important because Archie could see him tomorrow, and Archie then has to explain the importance of such phone calls. It is through Edith’s clueless actions that conflicts arise between herself and Archie (All in the family, 1974 A).

This first episode featured a different type of humor, and that humor being mainly jokes target either Archie or Edith. Edith, however, was usually the main target of this humor. In the end of the episode, Joe Tucker comes back and wants to take the Bunkers out to dinner on him. Edith asks what she should do with the dinner she already made, and Archie responds, “same as you always do...burn it” (All in the family, 1974 A). Humor of this nature makes Edith seem incompetent and unskilled, and work to demean her role in the house.

Within this episode, Archie was obviously the dominant character in the house, and was always depicted as in control (7 of 7). Conversely, Edith was almost always depicted as foolish, inept, and the butt of many of the jokes. Edith, through her lack of

awareness, started all conflicts (2 of 2), and made them worse. Traditional gender roles were consistently portrayed, with Edith being the subservient housewife, and Archie shown as the dominant breadwinner. Archie is also shown as being extremely insensitive, and under-appreciative of his wife's role and contributions to the house.

The second episode showed similar results from the first episode. The first scene shows Edith cooking for the family, and making a doctor's appointment for her daughter, Gloria. Gloria has a cold and a fever, and is sneezing continuously, and Edith is depicted as completely overwhelmed by her symptoms, and unable to help her (All in the family, 1974 B). Archie is, again, shown coming home from work, and immediately begins to berate Edith for getting too close to Gloria, because if he gets sick, then he'll get sick. Archie then proceeds to give orders to Edith, including, "get dinner on the table will ya" (All in the family, 1974 B). Traditional gender roles are extremely evident within this scene, and throughout the episode.

Archie's dominance is also quite clear in the second episode. When Archie returns from work, he wants dinner served immediately. When his daughter wants him to wait until her husband, Michael, Archie makes it clear that he is not willing to wait. Gloria reminds Archie that the rest of the family always waits for him to come home before they eat, and Archie replies, "that's because I'm the breadwinner in the house and I make the rules" (All in the family, 1974 B). This is an obvious indication that Archie is in control within the house, and the fact that he earns money entitles him to make such decisions.

Edith is portrayed as inept and foolish also within this episode. Archie's dinner for the night was beef and mushroom stew, and Michael comes home and frantically

explains that a certain brand of mushrooms has been recalled for causing food poisoning. Michael exclaims, “mom, don’t you read the news” (All in the family, 1974 B). It is through Edith’s lack of attentiveness that puts her family in danger. Archie then scolds her, and is trying to figure out if Edith used the brand that was recalled. Edith begins to bumble, and she can’t remember, which causes Archie to dismiss her, saying, “you don’t know what you’re talking about” (All in the family, 1974 B). Edith is portrayed as unintelligent, and constantly confused by simple everyday situations.

Overall, within the second episode, Archie was still portrayed as dominant (6 of 6), and Edith was portrayed as foolish and clueless more often than Archie. Edith was seen to have started all conflicts as well. Traditional gender roles were prevalent, and Edith was once again subservient and dependent on Archie (All in the family, 1974 B).

Looking at the results over both episodes, it can be seen that Edith is never once shown as exhibiting dominant behavior, and Archie is portrayed as dominant in all instances (13 of 13). Edith was also shown starting all conflicts (3 of 3), and was the cause of the escalation of these arguments. The humor in these episodes did, in fact, feature either Archie or Edith as the butt of the jokes, with the bias being in favor of Edith 3:1. Edith was also shown as being more inept in handling situations than Archie, and was often represented as clueless or unaware.

The results from these two episodes are shown in Table 3 on the next page.

Category	Father	Mother	Total
Butt of joke	2 (25%)	6 (75%)	8
Foolish behavior	2 (22.2%)	7 (77.8%)	9
Starting Conflict	0 (0%)	3 (100%)	3
Worsening Conflict	0 (0%)	2 (100%)	2
Inept or clueless behavior	3 (18.75%)	13 (81.25%)	16
Dominant behavior	13 (100%)	0 (0%)	13

1980's- Growing Pains

The first scene of the first episode contained both instances of traditional gender roles, and gender role reversals. Maggie is shown cleaning the house after her children, yet in the same scene, exclaims that “she can’t keep cleaning up after everyone because I have a story to research” (Growing pains, 1985 A). This is the first time we see the wife holding an important job outside of the home, and while Jason is a respected psychiatrist, he is not the sole breadwinner in the house. Jason works from his house, so his wife can work as a journalist. There is evidence of a mutual partnership, in which both husband and wife share the same responsibilities.

Continuing with gender role reversals, Jason at one point is seen cooking for his children in his wife’s absence. In one scene, the children are sitting at the table, and Jason comes rushing in from the other room saying, “Oh, my chicken sauce! I hope it didn’t stick” (Growing pains, 1985 A). It is the mother who is seen coming home from work, and they all sit down to a dinner prepared by Jason. Jason is also seen as extremely open with his feelings for Maggie, referring to her at one point as, “the woman I was lucky enough to find” (Growing pains, 1985 A). In this episode, traditional gender roles seem to be both present, and reversed.

Despite the reversal of gender roles, the mother started the main conflict within the first episode, and it stemmed from tension coming from the fact that she works outside the house. Jason made reservation for lunch to celebrate their anniversary, but plans get canceled when Maggie has to fly to Washington D.C. to get an exclusive interview (Growing pains, 1985 A). Later in the episode, Maggie worsens the conflict by not being able to return until the next day, completely ruining any plans Jason made for

their anniversary. In the end, though, both Jason and Maggie meet up and resolve the conflict together, through constructive dialogue and expression of emotions (Growing pains, 1985 A).

Maggie is also seen as sharing dominance in the house with her husband. She is an integral component to the household, making decisions, earning money, and not being easily dissuaded or ordered by her husband. When she initially gets the call to fly to Washington D.C. for the interview, she tells Jason, "I'm going to the interview, and I will be back tonight for dinner...on me" (Growing pains, 1985 A). Maggie is not seen asking her husband for permission, but rather explaining to Jason the way things must be.

Statistically, in the first episode, the mother is not seen as inept or foolish, while the father is represented once as being unskilled. Humor in this episode was not directed at making either partner the butt of jokes. Maggie was also seen as dominant in this episode, outweighing Jason 2:1. Maggie, however, was seen to have started the episode's only conflict, and worsened that conflict as well.

The second episode, again, portrays Maggie as an independent, working, woman, whose dominance is respected within the home. The first scene shows Maggie's story making the front page of the newspaper, and she immediately receives the love and adoration from her children. When Jason jokingly suggests that instead of going by Maggie Seaver, she should be credited as Mrs. Maggie Seaver, she sarcastically replies, "don't hold your breath" (Growing pains, 1985 B). Maggie is seen as independent of Jason, making a name for herself by her own merits.

Traditional gender roles are reversed in this episode as well. Maggie is again seen leaving for work, and Jason remains at home to take care of the children. In one scene,

Maggie is walking out the door for work, and asks Jason, “Honey, I’ve got to run. Can you do that extra load of laundry?” (Growing pains, 1985 B). Jason does not refuse his wife, and replies with a simple, “yes dear” (Growing pains, 1985 B).

Maggie’s dominance is also apparent in this episode. In the opening scene, Carol needs to follow someone to work and write about it for school. The person she originally was supposed to shadow became ill. Jason suggests she should go to work with “someone close to you, who is a consummate professional, a snappy dresser, and heads up this family” (Growing pains, 1985 B). Carol thinks about his words, and replies, “of course...mom!” (Growing pains, 1985 B). When Jason explains that he was talking about himself, Carol says, “but I need someone with a real job” (Growing pains, 1985 B). This scene demonstrates Jason’s diminished role and dominance in the house.

Maggie’s job, however, is still a cause for conflict between the two. Jason, in this episode, gets an offer to be the head of the psychiatric department at a local hospital, but taking the job would mean Maggie must quit her job. In the end, Jason declines the job, and allows Maggie to flourish in her journalism career. When Maggie asks Jason why he chose to decline the job, Jason explains, “although there were many reasons to take the job, there’s one main reason not to take the job, and her name is Maggie, and she means more than all the rest” (Growing pains, 1985 B). The father is shown sacrificing his career for the sake of his wife.

The second episode, overall, shows a reversal of traditional gender roles. Maggie is dominant over Jason by a ratio of 2:1. Foolishness and ineptitude are rarely shown by either character, and jokes are, again, not directed at either Maggie or Jason. Maggie’s job, also, is shown to start another conflict.

The results from these two episodes are summarized numerically in Table 4 below.

Category	Father	Mother	Total
Butt of joke	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0
Foolish behavior	1 (50%)	1 (50%)	2
Starting Conflict	0 (0%)	2 (100%)	2
Worsening Conflict	0 (0%)	2 (100%)	5
Inept or clueless behavior	2 (66.6%)	1 (33.3%)	3
Dominant behavior	6 (33.3%)	12 (66.6%)	18

1990's/Present- Everybody Loves Raymond

The first episode opened with Raymond and Debra getting ready to go to a tee-ball game. Within the opening scene, Raymond was shown foolishly singing a rendition of "Take Me Out to the Ball Game", while Debra struggled to dress their twin boys (Everybody loves raymond, 1999). Raymond was shown making no attempt to help with the children (Everybody loves raymond, 1999). Also, within the first scene, Debra complains to Raymond, saying that he signed the kids up for tee-ball, and she was stuck with the task of getting them ready (Everybody loves raymond, 1999). Raymond made the situation worse by saying, "I was too busy writing this song", and this was answered by Debra saying, "Allie, I'm going to need that bat" (Everybody loves raymond, 1999). All within the first scene, the father was shown as foolish, starting a conflict, making the conflict worse, and being the butt of a joke from his wife (Everybody loves raymond, 1999).

Throughout the episode, Debra was also seen as a more dominant figure when compared to Raymond. In a scene when an argument was started at the tee-ball game, Debra was shown as more aggressive and confrontational, while Raymond was seen standing behind his wife (Everybody loves raymond, 1999). She was also shown giving orders to Raymond, taking charge of situations, and being honest and upfront (Everybody loves raymond, 1999). When asked by Raymond if she was intimidated by him, Debra responds with a sarcastic "oh yea" (Everybody loves raymond, 1999). This furthers the concept of gender role reversals.

Traditional gender roles were often portrayed, despite the numerous representations of role reversals. Ray was never seen taking an active role in caring for

the children, and his job was mentioned a small number of times. On the other hand, Debra was seen tending to the children, cooking for the family, and cleaning the dishes afterwards, with which Ray never helped.

Overall, within the first episode, Raymond was consistently shown as acting foolish. Through such foolishness, he started conflicts, and made them worse. After the argument at the tee-ball game, Debra scolded Raymond for not sticking up for her because “that’s what husbands do” (Everybody loves raymond, 1999). By not taking her side, Raymond created a conflict with his wife. He was also rarely shown rectifying the situations. He was portrayed as inept with the children, and incapable of handling his daily routine without Debra’s help. Also, Raymond was the butt of almost every joke delivered by his wife, with Debra rarely deviating from this pattern. Debra, on the other hand, was rarely the butt of the jokes, seen as foolish, appeared more dominant, and was more likely to resolve conflicts.

Statistically, jokes with Raymond as the recipient made for 75% of the total jokes between him and Debra (6 out of 8). In regards to foolish actions, the ratio was 7:1, with Raymond engaging in nearly all foolish acts. Deboarah was portrayed as dominant 4 times, while Raymond appeared submissive. Also, Raymond was shown to make conflicts worse in all cases, and Debra was shown to resolve them in all cases.

In the second episode, the story centers on Debra going to a new aerobics class (Everybody loves raymond, 2001). Raymond discovers that her aerobics trainer is a handsome, muscular, younger man, and feels that Debra is only exercising in order to see this new instructor (Everybody loves raymond, 2001). This causes Ray to feel insecure, and to try and prove that he is handsome and athletic (Everybody loves raymond, 2001).

In doing so, the entire episode shows Raymond acting foolishly out of jealousy (Everybody loves raymond, 2001). Through these foolish acts, he creates conflict with his wife, and makes situations progressively worse, instead of engaging in open conversation to resolve them (Everybody loves raymond, 2001).

One scene in particular is when Raymond joins Debra at the aerobics class to keep an eye on her. In trying to show Debra that he can be athletic, he winds up foolishly flailing instead of doing the exercises, tripping over the equipment, and breaking the CD player that was providing the music for their workout (Everybody loves raymond, 2001). When they arrive home, Debra states, “just call yourself an idiot and save me the trouble” (Everybody loves raymond, 2001). This scene exemplifies how Raymond’s foolish actions usually lead to the start of a conflict, the worsening of that conflict, and his ineptitude in resolving the situation through rational or reasonable means.

One thing that stood out about this particular episode was that the jokes directed toward Raymond appealed to his masculinity (Everybody loves raymond, 2001). For instance, when asked if Debra found the instructor attractive, she sarcastically replied, “oh no, a real man can break a CD player with his butt” (Everybody loves raymond, 2001). Jokes of this type emphasize the paradox of the modern father: there is a need for them from their spouses to exhibit traditional feminine qualities and actions, like child rearing and being open with their emotions, but at the same time, there is still a desire for them to exhibit masculine qualities, such as strength and power.

Raymond was the butt of 100% of the jokes exchanged with Deboarah (6 of 6). Raymond was also seen to exhibit foolish behavior in a ratio of 5:0, meaning Debra was never depicted as acting foolish in this episode. Also, Ray started 2 conflicts, and in both

instances, he worsened these conflicts. Again, Debra is shown being dominant and forceful, consistently correcting Raymond's foolishness.

In the show, it is consistently shown that Raymond, as the father, is depicted as engaging in more foolish actions in comparison to his wife Debra. In total, there were 14 instances of foolishness depicted, either performed by Raymond or Debra. Of these 14 instances, Raymond engaged in 12 foolish acts, which was 92.3%, while Debra only engaged in 1, which was 7.7%. In regards to joke telling, Raymond was the butt of 85.7% of the total jokes exchanged between himself and his wife, while Debra was only the butt of 14.2% of the jokes, showing a strong bias toward the father. Raymond, in all cases, was shown to start conflicts, and make them worse, while Debra was shown mostly resolving situations. Finally, Debra exhibited 80% of dominant behavior, and Raymond was portrayed only once showing dominance.

It can also be seen that some traditional roles were upheld throughout the episodes. Raymond was rarely seen tending to the children or helping with household responsibilities. On the other hand, Debra was shown taking care of the children, cooking and preparing meals, and cleaning the house throughout all episodes. These representations are relics from the traditional 1950's and 1960's domestic comedies that, despite the changing role of both women and men, have endured even today.

The results of the coding over the two episodes are shown in Table 5 on the next page.

Category	Father	Mother	Total
Butt of joke	12 (85.7%)	2 (14.2%)	14
Foolish behavior	12 (92.3%)	1 (7.7%)	13
Starting Conflict	5 (100%)	0 (0%)	5
Worsening Conflict	5 (100%)	0 (0%)	5
Inept or clueless behavior	5 (100%)	0 (0%)	5
Dominant behavior	1 (20%)	4 (80%)	5

Discussion

1950's

In analyzing the results in light of the research question, the 1950's show a male dominated society, where the husband/father makes the rules. He is entitled to dominate over all in his house because of his breadwinner status, while his wife's role is in service of him. The results from the coding portray Ozzie as the only member of the house who exhibits dominant behavior, and family life is content, with each member fitting comfortably within traditional gender roles.

The episodes of *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet* strongly represent the post-World War II attitudes of many Americans. During this time, "males assumed a strong provider role, and retained authority...while females were relegated to a domestic and subservient role in service of the family" (Douglas, 2003, p.74). Continuing, for women at the time, "getting married and becoming a mother were the only valued activities" (Douglas, 2003, p.73).

Results from *Ozzie and Harriet* confirm these sentiments, showing traditional, conservative gender roles, and the father as the sole dominant figure in the house. Although results show that both are depicted as intelligent and capable adults, Harriet is seen as completely dependent on Ozzie. Ozzie gives her direction and practical solutions to conflicts she created, and cannot handle. Essentially, Harriet's only role in the house is to provide dinner for Ozzie when he gets home, clean the house while he is at work, and to answer his commands whenever he issues them.

The results also show contentment with these roles, and both husband and wife are aware and satisfied with their status within the house. Conflicts pertaining to power struggles in the household were non-existent in these episodes, which suggests an understanding and satisfaction regarding gender roles. As Douglas explains, the authority males held in the home derived from their roles as the central providers (2003). Because women were not prevalent in the workforce, they, therefore, were not entitled to have authority in the home, and were “satisfied with an exclusively domestic role” (Douglas, 2003, p.83). Society was generally satisfied, experiencing a sort of “suburban bliss...where conflicts disappeared because there was plenty of everything to go around” (Taylor, 1989, p.26). This contentment was represented by the lack of conflict situations, and acceptance of Ozzie’s dominance by his family members, specifically Harriet.

Not only do Ozzie and Harriet respect their own roles within the home, but they also respect each other’s as well. It is evident that Harriet appreciates Ozzie’s role as dominant breadwinner based on her complacent behavior in regards to his dominance, and her apparent dependence on Ozzie’s guidance and support. It is also obvious that Ozzie values Harriet as a dependable housewife. At one point in the episodes, after Ozzie orders Harriet to make coffee for him and his friends, Harriet, without hesitation, begins to make the coffee, to which Ozzie replies, “what would we do without you” (*The adventures of ozzie and harriet*, 1952 B). Overall, the results show that the portrayals of parents on *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet* are representative of life in the 1950’s, and value traditional gender roles and male dominance within the home.

1960's

Although the male dominance from the 1950's continues in the 1960's, changing tides in women's roles in the house can be noticed. Results show that traditional gender roles are reinforced, with Rob still being the breadwinner of the house, while Laura prepares meals, and engages in typical housewife activities. Despite this, Laura can also be seen escaping the home, going shopping and even attempting to begin her own bank account, separate from her husband. This is representative of the more progressive changes that had their beginnings in the 1960's.

Results of the coding indicate that Rob and Laura were "modern in lifestyle, but traditional in values" (Taylor, 1989, p.39). This means that while traditional gender portrayals are favored, signs can be observed that the spousal dynamics in the home are changing, albeit these changes are not extraordinary. One way in which this is evident is in the increased amount of conflict and argument that is seen in the episodes. When Laura opened a bank account without Rob knowing, this leads to a conflict because Laura defends her right to have her own money. The simple fact that this argument takes place highlights the changing relations between spouses.

The Petries, however, are traditional in values, and Rob can still be seen as dominant because of his breadwinner status. In the end, Rob decided that there was no need for Laura to have the bank account, mainly because the money in the account came from his pocket anyway (The dick van dyke show, 1964 B). Results show that Rob, again, receives a sense of authority from being the sole wage earner, and Laura "was generally content with her role as a supportive and sensible spouse and mother" (Taylor, 1989, p.32). All of the conflicts throughout the episodes were started, and worsened, by

Laura's feelings of entitlement. These conflicts, however, were always resolved and subdued by Rob's dominance, and Laura would ultimately accept Rob's solution.

At this time in America, alternative representations of family were being explored, such as the union of two widowed parents in *The Brady Bunch* (Taylor, 1989). Many in society felt television was losing its traditional values and gender portrayals, and for the most part, many still felt that "traditional is best" (Taylor, 1989, p.29). As Taylor describes Rob and Laura represented "media filtered sensibility...showing only minor misunderstandings, and family life as stable and supportive" (1989, p.31).

Results confirm this hesitance to relinquish the traditional values that were so prevalent in the 1950's. Women still established their identities through their husbands and by being housewives, and men still felt entitled to dominate the household based on their wage earning (Hutton, 1998). Representations in *The Dick Van Dyke Show* portray the contentment with suburban affluence that both fathers and mothers enjoyed, while hinting at the slight changes in spousal dynamics that would be more prevalent in later decades.

1970's

The results from the 1970's showed a reversal in progress coming from the 1960's. Higher instances of joke telling between spouses can be observed, and the wife is most often the target of these jokes. In analyzing *All in the Family*, Edith can be seen as overly submissive to her brutish, insensitive husband Archie. Traditional gender roles are, again, reinforced, but whatever progress housewives made in the 1960's is effectively erased in the 1970's, based upon Edith's portrayal. She is seen as inept and clueless when dealing with any kind of problem, and is seen to start conflicts due to her lack awareness. Archie, on the other hand, is seen as completely dominant over his entire house. He is the sole means of finance, and as he plainly puts it, "I'm the breadwinner in the house and I make the rules" (All in the family, 1974 B).

In general, the family in the 1970's "leaped into the foreground as a veritable circus of conflict and change" (Taylor, 1989, p.7). As represented in the tension between Archie and his son-in-law Michael, generations were beginning to clash (Hutton, 1998). The more conservative Archie enforces traditional, conservative gender roles, and is satisfied with life as it was. Michael, on the other hand, represents the newer, liberal progressive, mode of thinking, and routinely disagrees with Archie on many of issues. As a result, sitcoms in the 1970's "moved away from the consensual mood of the 1950's and 1960's toward a more abrasive style that featured more open confrontation" (Taylor, 1989, p.44). Results from the coding clearly exemplify this switch in showing more conflicts, and these conflicts often manifest themselves in the form of jokes directed at either spouse, and the crass assertion of dominance displayed by Archie.

One major change occurring at this time was the feminist movement.

Undoubtedly, *All in the Family* highlights the anxiety many felt about the changing social climate in the U.S., and the backlash the feminist movement faced during this time (Hutton, 1998). Continuing, many felt that women leaving the home would be the downfall of the traditional family, and the battle of modernity vs. tradition was created (Hutton, 1998).

These fears are represented in spousal relationship between Archie and Edith. As a result of this backlash against feminism, results show that Edith was shown to be the butt of Archie's jokes, foolish when compared to her husband, and inept in handling many situations. She was never once portrayed as dominant, with Archie accounting for 100% of dominant behavior in the episodes. Archie's dominance is further boosted by Edith's childish portrayal, and Archie seems like more of a father to Edith than a husband. Edith is shown as the subservient housewife, never contending Archie's orders. Traditional gender roles are exaggerated due to the anxiety felt over the possibility of changing family dynamics in America (Taylor, 1989).

In total, results overwhelmingly support these sentiments from the 1970's. Archie was indeed portrayed as overly dominant, and his wife as overly submissive. Edith was represented as completely dependent on Archie, due to her foolish and inept behavior. Edith's role in the house was to serve her family, while Archie's was to support it.

1980's

The 1980's represent the most egalitarian view of dominance in the home. A mutual respect is evident between husband and wife, and this can be seen in the humor demonstrated in *Growing Pains*. Results show that neither spouse told jokes at the other's expense, and foolish behavior was extremely minimal across the episodes. Both parents were breadwinners for the home, and not surprisingly, dominance was not exclusive to the father. Maggie is actually seen demonstrating more dominant behavior than her husband Jason. Inept and clueless behavior was also at a minimum, which supports the view that both parents are seen as independent, fully capable adults, who are maturely able to handle situations.

Traditional gender roles were also blurred during the 1980's. Because both parents worked, "for the first time, wives felt entitled to participate in dominance within the home" (Hutton, 1998, p.118). Continuing, "the more hours women work in the paid labor force, the less fair they see the division of labor in the home" (Skolnick & Skolnick, 2003, p.123). The 1980's represent a change in the contentment with traditional gender roles seen in the past, and because of the growing dissatisfaction, women are shown leaving the home, while men are shown cooking for the children, and taking a more active role in the home. Results from the coding show this change, and Jason can be seen cooking, and taking orders from his wife to do the laundry while she is at work (*Growing pains*, 1985).

Despite the more egalitarian view of the home presented in *Growing Pains*, the desire to retain traditional gender roles can still be seen. This is most evident in the conflicts that arise in the show. In each episode, the main conflict centered around

Maggie's exodus from the home, and the tension and instability it brings to her and Jason's relationship. As Taylor states, "the 1980's are at best a rehearsal of the costs of careerism for women, and at worst, an outright reproof for women seeking challenging work" (1989, p.159). The conflicts that arise in the home due to the fact that mothers are leaving for work is again, "translated into a backlash against feminism itself" (Taylor, 1989, p.159). It is in this way, that traditional gender roles are still alluded to as the correct and most stable way to preserve a healthy home.

In even more subtle ways, women can still be seen as dependent upon men for their newfound independence. When Maggie got her story published on the front page of the local newspaper, she immediately gives the credit to Jason, saying, "if you hadn't moved your practice home I would haven never made page one" (Growing pains, 1985 B). Jason's sacrifice and sensitivity to Maggie allow her to leave the home and pursue her dreams, but it is clear that if Jason had refused to move his practice home, then she would be the one staying home tending to the house and children. Despite the more equal representations depicted in the 1980's, and the shared dominance exhibited in the home, traditional gender roles are still the model for families to follow.

1990's/Present

The 1990's represent a return to traditional values, especially coming from the 1980's. The major difference now, however, is that although women have returned to the home, and men continue to be the main provider, wives are valued for the housework, and derive entitlement from their importance in keeping the home running smoothly (Skolnick & Skolnick, 2003). This can be seen in the results from *Everybody Loves Raymond* in the increased amount of conflicts started by the father. Many of these conflicts arise out of Raymond's insensitivity to the vital and important work Debra handles in order to keep the house running. In the first episode, this is evident when Debra complains to Ray that he signed the children up for T-ball, but it is ultimately Debra's job to take them to their games and get them ready (Everybody loves raymond, 1999). The conflict arose out of Raymond's lack of understanding of just how much his wife accomplishes within the house.

In the attempt to make husbands more active and appreciative of a woman's value on the home, Raymond's character is portrayed as foolish and inept. Results show Raymond accounting for nearly all foolish and inept behavior. Raymond is most often showed as clueless and unskilled when relating to matters regarding his children, and his wife's emotions. Through demonstrating this kind of behavior, the message is being sent that the modern father/husband should be more than just a breadwinner, and learn to take a more active and productive role in understanding what it takes to run a house (Hutton, 1998). In a way, the humor directed at Raymond mocks him for ineptitude in these types of situations, and Raymond is shown as being the butt of many of his wife's jokes.

The results show that traditional gender roles were indeed reinforced in the 1990's, with Raymond as the sole wage earner, and Debra as the sole housekeeper. An interesting observation during the 1990's, however, suggests that the father is losing the respect that came with being the breadwinner. As Skolnick and Skolnick describe, "more and more, families are beginning to realize that housework is as strenuous and essential to the overall maintenance of the home" (2003, p.124). Raymond's foolish behavior, coupled with a shift in dominance represent this change. He is frequently depicted as just another child that Debra has to take care of, rather than the dominant father and husband that had a measure of control over his wife. Results from *Everybody Loves Raymond* indicate that men's roles as breadwinner are still valued, but respect and dominance are no longer solely based on earning money for the home. Fathers are seen as foolish and antagonizing conflict when they do not acknowledge the work of their wives, and are seen as inept when dealing with housework when compared to their spouses. Women, in turn, gain a degree of power in their homes, and this power is derived from their value as housewives.

1950's-Present

In looking at the results across all decades, interesting observations and trends can be seen. Portrayals of parents have undoubtedly changed and evolved with the changing times in society. Regardless of the type of change, though, many of television's depictions are seemingly based in society's views of traditional gender roles, and how these roles affect spousal dynamics and dominance.

Shows like *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet* "incorporated a similar ideology to those of postwar audiences" (Douglas, 2003, p.74). It was this ideology that created the traditional gender roles that have lasted even to today. Family life was depicted as stable and blissful. Results from the 1950's show a male dominated household, with the father making the rules, and the wife contently following his orders. Despite the extreme asymmetrical nature of dominance in the house in the 1950's, every member of the family was happy and content with their status in the home. Viewers recognized this harmony, and eternally linked traditional gender roles to this kind of happiness (Douglas, 2003). It is this link that would come to effect portrayals of parents in the decades to come.

Programs like *The Dick Van Dyke Show* were undoubtedly molded in the cast of the 1950's. Although Laura was shown to have gained slight freedoms, such as leaving the house to shop for herself, it was clear that traditional gender roles were still reinforced, and Rob was still dominant. Representations of parents and family life like those in *The Dick Van Dyke Show* support traditional gender roles, and make the statement that "a solid, traditional family life still provided the ingredients for stability and the smooth progress of upward mobility" (Taylor, 1989, p.32). Portrayals showed

that incorporating more progressive attitudes was accepted as long as traditional gender roles within the home were upheld.

The portrayals of parents in *All in the Family* are in direct response to the challenge that feminism posed to counter traditional gender roles. Anxiety over the potential for power dynamics within the family to change caused many from earlier generations to adopt a hyper-traditional stance (Taylor, 1989). Results from the 1970's clearly show exaggerated gender role representations, with Archie being the abrasive, but solely dominant member of the house, and Edith as the inept and foolish mother who is completely dependent on her husband. Their children, Gloria and her husband Michael, represent the threatening new ideology, which serves to disrupt the traditional family structure, and their progressive attitudes lead to conflict within the house. Overall, the results from the 1970's demonstrates the hesitation American society had in letting go of traditional gender roles in the home.

Growing Pains offered the most equal representations between mothers and fathers, showing a more symmetrical dominance in the home. At this time, women were entering the work force, and were leaving the home to pursue their independent dreams (Hutton, 1998). Despite this more egalitarian 'rule' in the family, results show that conflicts between husband and wife arose from the tension this had on traditional values. Throughout the episodes, Maggie started all conflicts, and these conflicts based around the fact that Jason had to stay home with the kids instead of Maggie. In a way, the 1980's can be seen as an experiment in the effects of traditional role reversals (Skolnick & Skolnick, 2003). Results, however, indicate that these reversals caused problems

within the home, and these problems could be solved if mothers re-adopted typical housewife responsibilities, thus supporting the efficiency of traditional gender roles.

The 1990's/Present appear to be a reversal of the 1970's. It is the father who is inept, foolish, and practically an overgrown child. Results from *Everybody Loves Raymond* show that the father is losing dominance in the home, while the mother is gaining entitlement through her housewife status. Regardless of this change, the father is still seen as the breadwinner, while the mother is left at home to take care of the children and tend to the household. One main difference is that being the sole wage earner does not grant fathers complete dominance over their families anymore, and mothers are gaining more respect for their contributions in the home. Yet, in the end, traditional gender roles are reinforced. The simple fact that traditional roles are still portrayed so many years after their inception hints at America's fundamental view that "tradition is best" (Skolnick & Skolnick, 2003, p.20).

Conclusion

The evolution of television parents has been a gradual process throughout the decades, beginning in the 1950's. In the earliest middle class family sitcoms, the father was shown as the wise and dominant breadwinner, who was rarely shown tending to children or helping with household chores (Cantor, 1990). On the other hand, the wives at this time were characterized by their domestic subservience, and were always shown in the role of a typical housewife (Cantor, 1990).

This traditional representation would prove to be the model for stability within families for the decades to come. The 1960's and 1970's showed a hesitation and

reluctance to move away from these traditional values, and were marked by anxiety toward any threat that might possibly change these values. The 1980's showed a response to the changing social climate pertaining to women, and men's roles in family sitcoms became noticeably different (Douglas, 2003). Fathers began to share in the responsibilities of the home, but the mother's exodus led to increased conflict between spouses. In recent times, fathers have been depicted as growing weaker, more foolish, and the butt of jokes, but he is still shown as the breadwinner, and traditional gender roles are ultimately reinforced. The results from the primary research highlights these changing portrayals, while also emphasizing the ideology that traditional gender roles are highly valued.

Of course, this study has significant limitations with respect to the data. The findings were collected using only two episodes of each program, and the results obtained are only generalizable to this specific show, and not others in the genre. The results are only representative of portrayals on this particular show. Also, the episodes chosen were from a convenience sample of those available to me, and were not randomly chosen. More research is needed to gain further insight into other programs of the domestic sitcom genre, and what portrayals such programs may propagate. Perhaps more episodes can be coded, so extensive data may be utilized in an attempt to provide further answers to the research question.

Ultimately, there are implications for the American public who view these representations of sitcom parents. Today, it seems as if the identity of the American father is in limbo. There is an obvious call for the father or husband to become "feminized", taking more active roles in traditionally feminine characteristics and actions

in the household, while at the same time, gaining a new appreciation for a mother's role in the house. Traditional masculine views and portrayals, however, are still valued in today's culture. The American father or husband is presented with this paradox. It is made evident from depictions of modern fathers and husbands in sitcoms, that our society is extremely confused on how to balance this paradox.

Similarly, the increasing empowerment of women in our society has caused many changes in the representations of both males and females. Today, women are no longer depicted as subservient to men, and rightfully so. In response, mothers and wives are shown as gaining more respect and dominance. As the research shows, however, women are still typically shown in the traditional housewife role. In this way, the woman's identity is also confused. She is depicted with an increasing amount of independence, yet she is still confined to the role of the housewife. In order to rectify this, men are shown to be foolish, inept, and less dominant in comparison to their wives.

In conclusion, it is difficult to say with certainty whether portrayals of sitcom parents are improving or becoming worse. Undoubtedly, there are recognizable variations in both mothers and fathers throughout the decades, but these variations are culturally relevant based upon the times in which they aired. The ultimate aim of this study was to show that representations of parents are in a state of change, and this change is dictated by the sociological climate of American society. What is certain, however, is that traditional gender roles from the happy and stable 1950's are valued to such an extent that sitcoms from ensuing decades have been unable to break away from their influence. Even more modern sitcoms, like those from the 1980's and 1990's, that attempt to

reverse these roles, still use them as the model. As the song says, “those were the days” (All in the family, 1974 A), and apparently, we still believe it.

Reference List

Albada, K.F. (2000, Autumn). The public and private dialogue about the american family on television. Journal of Communication, 50 (4), 79-111.

Bryant, J., & Bryant, J.A. (2001). Television and the american family. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Inc.

Cantor, M.G. (1991, Summer). The american family on television: from molly goldberg to bill cosby. Journal of Comparative Family Studies, 22 (2), 205-216.

Cantor, M.G. (1990, September). Prime-time fathers: a study in continuity and change. Critical Studies in Mass Communication, 7 (3), 275.

Comstock, G. (1989). The evolution of american television. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications Inc.

Comstock, J., & Strzyzewski, K. (1990, Summer). Interpersonal interaction on television: family conflict and jealousy on primetime. Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 34 (3), 263-283.

Day, R.D., & Mackey, W.C. (1986, Autumn). The role image of the american father: an examination of a media myth. Journal of Comparative Family Studies, 17 (3), 371-388.

Douglas, W. (2003). Television families: is something wrong in suburbia?. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Inc.

Douglas, W., & Olsen, B.M. (1995, Spring). Beyond family structure: the family in domestic comedy. Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media, 39 (2), 236-262.

Dozier, D.M., & Lauzen, M.M. (2005). Recognition and respect revisited: portrayals of age and gender in prime-time television. Mass Communication and Society, 8 (3), 241-256.

Ex, C.M., Janssens, J.M., & Korzilius, H.P.L.M. (2002, December). Young females' images of motherhood in relation to television viewing. Journal of Communication, 52 (4), 955-972.

Gastoff, J.W., & Suls, J. (1981, Spring). The incidence of sex discrimination, sexual content, and hostility in television humor. Journal of Applied Communication Research, 9 (1), 42-50.

Honeycutt, J.M., Larson, M.S., & Wellman, L.B. (1997, Winter). Beneath family role portrayals: an additional measure of communication influence using time series analyses of turn at talk on a popular television program. Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media, 41 (1), 90-99.

- Hutton, M. (1998). The changing family. 3rd ed. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Leonard, S. (Executive Producer). (1962 A). The dick van dyke show. California: CBS
- Leonard, S. (Executive Producer). (1962 B). The dick van dyke show. California: CBS
- Lear, N. (Executive Producer). (1974 A). All in the family. California: CBS.
- Lear, N. (Executive Producer). (1974 B). All in the family. California: CBS.
- Littlejohn, S.W. (2002). Theories of human communication. 7th ed. Albuquerque, NM: Wadsworth Thompson Learning.
- Mackinnon, K. (2003). Representing men: maleness and masculinity in the media. London: Arnold.
- Marlens, N. (Executive Producer). (1985 A). Growing pains. California: ABC.
- Marlens, N. (Executive Producer). (1985 B). Growing pains. California: ABC.
- Mckibben, B. (1993). The age of missing information. New York, NY: Penguin Books.
- McNulty, E.N. (1977). When television is a member of the family. St. Meinrad, IN: Abbey Press.
- Nelson, O. (Executive Producer). (1952 A). The adventures of ozzie and harriet. California: ABC.
- Nelson, O. (Executive Producer). (1952 B). The adventures of ozzie and harriet. California: ABC.
- Pilcher, J., Pole, C., & Williams, J. (2003, November). Rethinking adulthood: families, transitions, and social change. Sociological Research Online, 8 (4).
- Scharrer, E. (2001, Winter). From wise to foolish: the portrayal of the sitcom father, 1950s-1990s. Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 45 (1), 18-23.
- Scharrer, E. (2001 B, Fall). Tough guys: the portrayal of hypermasculinity and aggression in televised police dramas. Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 45 (4), 615-635.
- Silverstone, R. (1994). Television and everyday life. New York, NY: Routledge
- Skolnick, A.S., & Skolnick, J.H. (2003). Family in transition 12th ed. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Smiley, S. (Executive Producer). (1999). Everybody loves raymond. New York: CBS.

Smiley, S. (Executive Producer). (2001). Everybody loves raymond. New York: CBS.

Taylor, E. (1989). Prime-time families. Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press.

Williams, T.M. (1986). The impact of television. Orlando, FL: Academic Press, Inc.