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The portrayals of minority characters in entertaining animated children's programs

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THE PORTRAYALS OF MINORITY CHARACTERS IN ENTERTAINING
ANIMATED CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS

A Thesis
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree
Master of Mass Communication

In
The Manship School of Mass Communication

By
Siobhan Elizabeth Smith
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to note, categorize, and discuss the stereotypes of African Americans in animated children's cartoons. The purpose is also to compare them to see how they changed.

A content analysis of two cartoons finds that characters do act in stereotypical ways. A quantitative analysis of 76 cartoons supports these findings. Overall, *The Proud Family*, a cartoon of the 21st century, is more stereotypical than *Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids*, a cartoon from 30 years ago. Though primary characters display the same amount of stereotypical behavior, secondary characters show an increase in the amount of stereotypical behavior.

This study extends the amount of research in the entertainment media field by focusing upon animated children's cartoons. This approach will add to our understanding of stereotypes and the manner in which they are presented to audiences.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Various types of cartoon fare await children when they awake on a Saturday morning. On an episode of *The Proud Family*, a young black girl, Penny, confides to her uniquely-named friends, Dijonay and LaCienega. On the Cartoon Network, a matronly woman, dressed in an apron and with a handkerchief on her head, scolds Tom for threatening Jerry. On an episode of *DragonBall Z*, Goku must save Bulma from danger once again. To quote Bugs Bunny, “What’s up, Doc?” The events are everyday occurrences in animated children’s programming. However, these stereotypical situations are actually problematic for young viewers.

Swan, Meskill, and DeMaio explain that Saturday morning cartoons are a source of learning for children (1998). The images presented on this medium affect children’s perceptions of themselves and others. Repetitive, stereotypical images can influence a child’s interpretations of his and other’s social roles (Swan et. al, 1998). In addition, cartoon creators and producers mostly ignore or stereotype minorities, as they do women (Greenberg & Brand, 1993; Van Evra, 1998). Social scientists must critically examine cartoons to see how their prevailing images and messages are affecting children’s thought processes.

Purpose and Rationale of This Study

The purpose of this study was to note, categorize, and discuss the stereotypes of African Americans in animated children’s cartoons. The researcher also wanted to compare them to see how they have changed. Researchers still do not completely know how these depictions differ in terms of positive and negative character traits. The existing debate about the characterizations of African Americans in cartoons, the creation of socially responsible programming, and the increased amount of cartoons on television are all reasons why this topic should be investigated.

First, there has been great debate concerning the portrayals of African Americans in cartoons. Some researchers and educators feel that these characterizations are often very negative. Stroman (1984) states that black characters on television shows are more likely to be unemployed and impoverished. These depictions are obviously not helpful for black children's self-confidence and self-esteem. On the other hand, others have found in scientific studies that black characters are often portrayed in positive ways. In a study of commercials, Peterson (2002), found that African American children are often portrayed in scholarly roles. However, many researchers would find this hard to believe. For example, twenty years earlier, Powell (1982) concluded from a study that many blacks on television are a reminiscent of minstrel shows; Swan et. al (1998) state that animated programs teach children that whites are the most important people in society.

Second, mass media researchers have always been interested in the influence of children's programming on its audience. They are also interested in the ways in which these programs affect children's interactions with their family, friends, and those outside of their social realms. Television influences the socialization process, "the process by which one learns...social roles, self-concepts, and behaviors that are generally accepted within American society" (Stroman, 1984, p. 79). Though a great amount of research has been performed in this area, there is still room for much more.

Third, children's programming has increased in the past five years. For example, Kids' WB, the Warner Brothers' network's Saturday morning cartoon block, and the Fox Box, the Saturday morning cartoon block of the Fox network, have seen increases in viewers. Though both blocks are relatively new, they have the highest ratings in some time slots. According to Icv2News, *Yu-Gi-Oh*, a series that airs on the Kids WB, reached its highest ratings by

dominating all other network and cable competition (Icv2News, 2002). In addition, Cartoon Network and Toon Disney have joined the Disney Channel and Nickelodeon on cable television. Network heads, parents and educators wonder if this increase has resulted in more stereotypical characters. Research could also answer this question.

The goal of this study was to explore studies and writings surrounding this subject. It was also to note, categorize, and discuss the stereotypes of African Americans in animated children's cartoons. While researchers have conducted scientific analyses of cartoons recently, only a few studies have been executed to analyze and compare minority characterization on animated children's programming with respect to entertaining programs.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Theoretical Framework: Schema Theory

In his book, *Public Opinion*, Lippmann recognizes the strength of schemas, which help produce stereotypes. “We shall assume that what each man does is based not on direct and certain knowledge, but on pictures made by himself or given to him (Lippmann, 1922, 16). In this quote, Lippmann’s “pictures” are stereotypes. *Schema theory* is the framework most often used to explain the development of stereotypes. This theory was first developed and used by cognitive psychologists to explain how people process, store, and retrieve information (Wilcox, 1990). Schemas have been referred to as “ideologically constrained belief systems,” “prototypes,” and “constructs” (Graber, 1984, 22). Robert Axelrod (1973) developed a model for the schema theory of information processing. He defines a *schema* (plural, schemata or schemas) as a “pre-existing assumption about the way the world is organized” (Axelrod, 1973, 1248). Each of the researchers that have used or studied schema theory has defined it in his own way and found more about the nature of schemas.

Axelrod states that people do not remember all of the information about a current situation; instead, they recall only separate bits (Axelrod, 1973). When people are presented with new information, they try to fit the information into patterns that they are used to or have previously encountered (Axelrod, 1973). When people come across information that does *not* fit into their schema, two outcomes might occur. If the source is considered credible, then the schema is either updated with the new knowledge or the schema is completely discarded. On the other hand, if people do not trust the source, then their schema remains intact (Axelrod, 1973).

Most important to the current study is Axelrod's explanation of stereotypes. He writes, "a stereotyping effect exists in which a subject underestimates certain groups and overestimates the differences between contrasting groups" (Axelrod, 1973, 1255).

Mandler (1984) states that there are two different types of schemas, event schemas and scene schemas. An *event schema* is a "hierarchically organized set of units describing general knowledge about an event sequence" (Mandler, 1984, 14). Event schemas often help people predict what events will happen in a certain situation, as well as the order in which these events will occur.

Fiske and Dyer (1985) define schemata as "cognitive structures that contain units of information and the links among these units" (839). If one link on the chain is activated, then other parts with strong relationships to the primary link are activated as well (Fiske & Dyer, 1985). In addition, they state that old schemas and new schemas might overlap with each other (Fiske & Dyer, 1985).

According to Graber (1984), a schema is a cognitive structure consisting of organized knowledge about situations and individuals that have been gathered from previous experiences. Graber states, "most schemas contain conceptions of general patterns, along with a limited repertoire of prototypical examples to illustrate these patterns" (Graber, 1984, 23). During processing, people separate essential information from the non-essential; fine details from stories are forgotten (Graber, 1984). However, this separation is necessary to process large amounts of information (Graber, 1984). The separation of facts also explains the "vagueness of memory", because people do not want to memorize details, but want to draw conclusions from details (Graber, 1984, 127). It is these conclusions that are reused (Graber, 1984).

Wilcox (1990) points out that schemas are not rigid. Instead, they are very flexible, growing and changing as one experiences more and more (Paterson, 1990; Wilcox, 1990). Schemata organize knowledge in memory as a coherent structure that influences what one sees and remembers and how one interprets reality (Wilcox, 1990). Li-Vollmer (2002) states people use role schemas to help judge others in new situations. She also emphasizes that children's role schemas are very influenceable. Therefore, children who are not exposed to people of difference races or cultural backgrounds depend on role schemas (Li-Vollmer, 2002). These schemas are most often drawn from television, because of its repetitive nature (Li-Vollmer, 2002). Schemas help people to organize information, as well as draw conclusions from this information. In fact, when details are vague or unclear, people use schemata to fill in the gaps. However, Fiske and Kinder (1981) explain that these shortcuts are imperfect at best. Schemata are cognitive shortcuts.

Schema theory is often used to explain race expectations (Grimes & Drechsel, 1996). For example, Grimes and Drechsel (1996) stated that most people had a hard time remembering photos showing blacks as victims of white perpetrators. People create race schemas (and gender schemas, as well) from previous experiences and news stories. Because many people of color are portrayed as criminals on the news, others see them as criminals, too—hence, Grimes and Drechsel's findings. This is because schemata help people match new topics or experiences to ones that they have encountered previously.

According to Lippmann, people do not let go of their stereotypical beliefs easily. "Any disturbance of stereotypes seems like an attack upon the foundations...of our universe, and...we do not readily admit that there is any distinction between our universe and the universe" (Lippmann, 1922, 63). If one can assume that this statement is truthful, then stereotypes,

wherever they are, are hard to change. This would also be true of children's television programs, including cartoons.

Children (and adults) can also use cartoons as tools for learning about the world around them. Cultivation theory discusses some of the effects that stereotypes can have everyday learning, even those found in children's programs.

George Gerbner first introduced cultivation theory in 1969 (Potter, 1993). This theory posits that as people are exposed to a certain view of the world on television, this perspective becomes their own view of reality (Potter, 1993). The theory also suggests that heavier viewers of television are more likely than lighter viewers to believe that situations true of television programs are also true in reality (Potter, 1993). Research in this area also implies that people are more likely to believe a message the longer they are exposed to it (Potter, 1993). Fujioka (1999) found that the mass media do often supply information about one racial group for another, especially when racial groups have no immediate contact with each other. Therefore, if a neighborhood does not have many black residents, others might come to depend upon cartoons like *The Proud Family* to build their knowledge. In addition, it is already a challenge to break racial tensions and to discuss racial differences (Leonard & Locke, 1993); the challenge seems doubled when one wants to correctly educate children.

Cartoon programs are a large part of the American culture and are an important genre of television. Cartoons are being produced in ways not previously imagined. They appeal to viewers for several reasons: they are entertaining, sometimes educational, thought provoking, and aesthetically pleasing (Nikken & van der Voort, 1997). Social scientists want to discover the types of characters that audiences come to recognize, as well as how children interpret them. Researchers have conducted content analyses of cartoons and their specific characteristics. A

review of the literature on this topic will explore the history of stereotypes and cartoons, content analyses, issues and effects, and different types of children's animated programming.

What Is a Stereotype?

Stereotypes are a part of life. It is virtually impossible to avoid perpetrating them or being affected by them. There are stereotypes about almost anything one can imagine. Stereotypes exist about members of socioeconomic classes, religious groups, and people from various states, regions, and countries, just to name a few.

According to LaViolette and Silvert (1951), a *stereotype* is a special category of attitudes. The term comes from the printing craft, in which casting molten metal into a mold made a printing plate. Like the metal, stereotypes are previously-shaped ideas. Social psychologists explain that stereotypes are attitudes. "They have the attributes of organized modes of behavior, they express a functional state of readiness, and they are organized around and toward some given object or set of objects" (LaViolette & Silvert, 1951, p.259).

In *Public Opinion*, Walter Lippmann writes that stereotypes are created from "the pictures in our heads." He states stereotypes are based upon "distortion and behavior based upon something which is contrary to fact" (LaViolette & Silvert, 1951, p. 258). Frederick G. Irion expands on Lippmann's idea, explaining that the world is much too large for people to come into contact with each other. Because of these limitations, mass communication relies on stereotypes to provide depth and background to information about others (LaViolette & Silvert, 1951, p. 528).

Stereotypes are formed by social interaction—or the lack thereof—between people. The problem with stereotypes is they are generalizations applied to all members of a certain group. According to Guichard and Connolly (1977), "the danger of stereotypes lies not in their

existence but in the fact that they become ‘for all people some of the time and for some of the people all of time substitutes for observation’ ” (p.345-6). They affect both the people who hold stereotypes as well as those who have stereotypes held about them.

Researchers want to discover *how*, *why*, and *when* stereotypes are created. These questions have lead researchers to explore stereotypes an area of research. “The concept [of stereotypes] has become academically entrenched; it now has an air of dignity and respectability as a result of empirical studies” (LaViolette & Silvert, 1951, p. 257). Though there are several examples of stereotypes, racial or ethnic stereotypes and sex-role or gender stereotypes are the areas that have garnered the most attention from researchers.

Racial Stereotypes and Empirical Research

Research in the field of racial stereotypes originated in the sociological and psychological fields. Daniel Katz and Kenneth W. Braly (1933) performed some of the earliest work done about racial stereotypes. In their experiment, they presented 100 students at Princeton University with a list of 84 traits or adjectives. They instructed the students to assign the traits to ten specific groups. These groups included Turks, Jews, Americans, and Negroes. After the experiment was completed, Katz and Braly noted which traits the students used to describe the ethnic groups, as well as compared which traits were used to describe more than one group. In addition, they noticed which traits were not used at all for descriptive purposes. However, true *measurement* of traits was not possible.

Katz and Braly’s study provided the basis for many other experiments about racial stereotyping for almost thirty years (Ehrlich & Rinehart, 1965, p.564). However, as decades passed, some researchers felt that the statistical methods used in previous studies, Katz and Braly’s included, made it difficult, if not impossible, to measure the data. Therefore,

modifications were made to Katz and Braly's instrument. For example, Ehrlich and Rinehart (1965) modified the use of the stereotype checklist by introducing an open-ended one. They discovered that the two different lists caused the subjects to respond differently.

Guichard and Connolly (1977) continued the search for a better method to measure racial stereotyping. Their study, which they repeated again in 1975, utilized a method in which the stereotypes could be weighted. This instrument allowed for true comparison of traits. "The amount of the trait found could be expressed as a percentage, or number, capable of mathematic manipulations such as adding, subtracting, or averaging" (Guichard and Connolly, 1977, p.344). The stereotypes could also be compared in ratio form. In the nineties, some researchers went back to the early methods. For example, Leonard and Locke (1993) used Katz and Braly's checklist to study interracial communication. They found that blacks and whites still hold stereotypical ideas about each other (Leonard and Locke, 1993). These stereotypical ideas prevent communication between the two groups. However, both groups described each other equally in intelligence (Leonard and Locke, 1993).

Also important to the study of racial stereotypes is the idea of symbolic racism. Entman (1994) states that overtly demeaning stereotypes of blacks, like those presented in *Amos and Andy*, are no longer popular. Instead, more covert forms of racist imagery exist. His study (1994) showed that network news tends to show blacks in few positive roles as compared to whites. This is an example of symbolic racism (Sears, 1988). Sears and Kinder (1971) define *symbolic racism* as "a new form of racial attitude, a form of resistance to change in the racial status quo based on moral feelings that blacks violate such traditional American values as individualism and self-reliance, the work ethic, obedience, and discipline" (p.416).

For example, the majority of black crime news involved violence or drugs (Entman, 1995). Yet, viewers did not see many white alleged criminals involved in these types of crimes. Campbell (1995) points out that minority anchors and reporters are important because they prove that all people of color are not criminals. In spite of this, “it seems that minority journalists may indeed be inadvertently playing a role in advancing the sophisticated attitudes of contemporary racism” (Campbell, 1995, p. 92).

Though Entman’s research was concerned with network news, minority portrayals have changed in other areas of television programming as well. Therefore, it was interesting to see how African American characters have evolved during a thirty-year period.

Cartoons: A Brief History

A *cartoon* can be defined as a combination of still drawings that give the illusion of movement. Cartoons often tell humorous stories, and are mostly geared towards young audiences. The very first cartoons were animated shots shown during the Great Depression (Wikipedia, 2001). Ever since their beginnings in the 1930s, cartoons have portrayed minorities in negative ways (Wikipedia, 2001). Animators often depicted blacks as animalistic. For example, Terrytoons’ “The Lion Hunt” featured big-lipped natives dressed in loincloth (Purple Planet Media). This studio was not the only one involved in such offenses. Disney’s *Dumbo* featured dancing and singing crows that were supposed to represent blacks. Tex Avery’s cartoons, as well as episodes of *Popeye*, often presented blacks as ignorant, yet entertaining buffoons. However, black people were not the only victims of these stereotypes. During World War II, Warner Brothers’ studios created Asian characters with slanted eyes, bucked teeth, and sneaky personalities (Purple Planet Media).

Unfortunately, many of these stereotypical portrayals of minorities still endure in the present. These characters have interested social scientists, though research in this area is fairly limited. One study (Swan, Meskill, and DeMaio, 1998) focused on minority characterizations in cartoons; another (Greenberg & Brand, 1993) focused on cultural diversity during Saturday morning cartoons. Most of the research in this area concentrates on the gender roles of characters.

Specifically, Swan et. al's (1998) findings from a content analysis of Saturday morning cartoons are in agreement with Thompson and Zerbinos' (1995, 1997). Males were usually depicted as authority figures, while women were portrayed in stereotypical roles (Swan et. al, 1998). The research also concluded that minority representation on cartoons was very small. In 1992, 60% of minorities in cartoons were found on one show, *Kid and Play* (Swan et. al, 1998). Almost half of the cartoons had no minority characters (Swan et. al, 1998). Swan also found that while cartoons usually portrayed minorities in a positive manner, "the figures for Black females and the total lack of older ethnic characters seem unjustifiable in terms of the actual demographics of the American population" (Swan et. al, 1998, p. 94).

As previously mentioned, Greenberg & Brand (1993) gathered 10.5 hours of cartoons from the three major broadcast networks and four hours of PBS shows for young viewers. Their content analysis found that the best source of racial diversity during children's programming occurred on PBS. Among the major networks, NBC had the most racially diverse characters, while CBS had no minority characters in a major or regular role. The picture was also bleak for Native Americans and Asian Americans, who were rarely seen at all. However, commercials during the cartoon blocks on the major networks were more racially diverse than some of the cartoons.

Scholarly journals are not the only places where cartoon criticism can be found. Trade publications and magazines for the general public are also concerned with this topic. For example, Cochran (1998) gathered seven of Disney's most recent animated features to examine the roles of the hero/heroine, the love interest, the sidekick, the mentor, the villain, and the henchman (Cochran, 1998). Cochran also rated each of the characters in terms of how well they contribute to the plot development.

Cochran points out that cartoons often follow the same formulaic patterns as fairy tales. More importantly, cartoon characters act in stereotypical ways. For example, female characters, even when they are the heroines, must be rescued or depend upon others for help (Cochran, 1998). In spite of Cochran's focus on Disney's animated films, these conclusions can still be applied to other cartoons. The points illuminated in this article should be fortified with empirical study. A quantitative analysis could be performed to count the specific number of times these stereotypical roles occur.

The content analyses examined in this section are the most pertinent forms of research in the area of cartoon characters and their depictions. Swan et. al's study is the only one of its kind; most studies focused upon the occurrence of gender-role stereotypes. Social scientists have recognized that the effects of animated children's programs are just as important as the characters themselves.

Animated Children's Programs: Issues and Effects

Researchers and educators have long recognized the influence that animated children's programming holds over its audience. Researchers have performed a great deal of empirical study in the area of television and the ways in which it affects viewers. Therefore, while most studies do not focus specifically upon cartoons, the conclusions drawn from these research

projects can still be applied to cartoons. Social scientists have paid the greatest attention to racial stereotyping, violence and other negative behaviors, and prosocial behaviors.

Television and Racial Stereotyping

As previously mentioned, racial stereotypes on cartoons have not been greatly explored through empirical studies. However, researchers have devoted effort to the subject matter of racial stereotyping and television. Many social scientists have found, that like women, minorities are often underrepresented on television programs. Van Evra (1998) states that the examinations of minority characters on television are more important than research projects that are dedicated to counting the specific number of minorities on television. Many times, minority characters are depicted in stereotypical roles.

Greenberg (1972) sought to discover the extent that television is a primary source of information about another race, specifically for white and black children, and some of television's influences upon black children. The researcher found that black children watch more television overall than whites (Greenberg, 1972). In addition, both white and black children could name black characters with whom they identified. Greenberg (1972) also concluded that white children do use black characters as social learning tools. Greenberg's research project is unable to provide reasons why white children identify with black characters. In addition, the results are over 30 years old. New research could provide new data in this area, and maybe a longitudinal analysis could be conducted.

Greenberg et. al (1980) found that television characters do not represent the general population. Women were outnumbered three to one, and were primarily young and over-represented in lower jobs. In addition, a disproportionate number of black characters were

confined to mainly situation comedies. Only Saturday cartoons featured African Americans in a more representative proportion.

Powell (1982) executed a meta-analysis of the research on television's impact on the self-concept development of minority children. Like Powell, Stroman (1984) was also concerned with television's influence on minority children and how it affects their perceptions of themselves. Stroman's main focus was black children, however (Stroman, 1984). Though Powell's article does not give any quantitative data, she examines many of the shows that were popular in the 1980s. Both researchers emphasize that many series contained stereotypical characters. For example, George of *The Jeffersons*, J.J. of *Good Times*, and Sanford of *Sanford and Son* are categorized as comic buffoons (Powell, 1982). Powell and Stroman state that knowledge of children's self-concepts is fundamental to understanding them. In addition, television also reflects what the world at large feels about different groups, including minorities (Powell, 1982; Stroman, 1984).

Fujioka (1999) measured the effects that African-American stereotypes had on other racial groups who did not come into regular contact with blacks. The respondents for this study were white and Japanese international college students (Fujioka, 1999). The results of this study imply that the mass media can reduce negative stereotypes (Fujioka, 1999). Also, different ethnic groups do not have the same belief in negative stereotypes. For example, counter-stereotypic information has a greater effect on Japanese students than it does on white students (Fujioka, 1999).

Cartoons, Violence, and Other Negative Behaviors

The effects of violence on young audiences have been of great concern to social scientists over many years. Researchers have executed a great deal of studies in this field. Some of these

projects have focused specifically on cartoons. For example, de Leon (n.d.) reported that a *T.V. Guide* study of television programs in 1992 found cartoons had the greatest number of violent scenes in one day with 471 counted. This figure was greater than even the number of violent scenes in promos for movies and reality shows. Like deductions made about gender-role and racial stereotyping, the conclusions made about violence on television can also be applied to animated children's programming. The topic is also highly controversial because researchers continue to disagree over the strength of impact of televised violence on its viewers (Van Evra, 1998).

Bushman and Huesmann (2001) conducted a meta-analysis of all of the previous research done about children and violence on television. This area is very large, so the researchers summarized the content of these projects. Media is one significant factor of violence in our society. Televisions are more widespread than ever, and programs contained 60% of violence, while only 4% of shows contained an anti-violence theme (Bushman and Huesmann, 2001). Bushman and Huesmann (2001) concluded that children act more aggressively immediately after exposure to television, and that longer periods of exposure lead to greater amounts of aggression.

Stereotypic and violent images are not the only problems that affect children. Frightening or overly-intensive images can also have negative influences on children's behavior. Many intense images can be found in cartoons. For example, one episode of *DragonBall Z* showed a villain cutting off the hand of a main character. Though this particular series is geared toward older youth, it is likely that younger children watch it. Cantor (2001) summarized the findings of research in this area. For example, scary images on television can cause nervousness, depression and phobias. The effects of a frightening picture can last anywhere from 3 days to six years (Cantor, 2001). The researcher also found that abstract images were more upsetting for older

children, but that concrete images frightened young children (Cantor, 2001). Cantor concludes that children do like to be frightened, however, not much.

Social scientists are not the only ones concerned about animated characters and their influence on children's behaviors. Rich (1999), a medical doctor, states that programs that are created for children are often full of negative depictions and behaviors. He points out that alcohol consumption and cigarette use are quite common in animated features such as *All Dogs Go to Heaven* and *The Great Mouse Detective* (Rich, 1999).

Cartoons and Prosocial Behaviors

Rich (1999) maintains that children are able to learn at any given moment. If children can learn negative behaviors from television, the same logic holds that children can also learn positive behaviors as well. Rich (1999) states that television can strengthen prosocial behaviors, such as gender equality and cooperation.

Mares and Woodard (2001) conducted a meta-analysis of several studies concerning the topic of television's prosocial effects on children's behavior. Researchers have defined *prosocial* in various ways; Mares and Woodard describe *prosocial behavior* as actions that foster nonviolent social interactions. Most projects have tried to measure the strength of prosocial behaviors. Overall, the studies maintained that prosocial effects are twice as strong as antisocial effects, or at least equal in strength (Mares and Woodard, 2001). The researchers discovered that prosocial messages are often paired with depictions of aggression, and that such mixed messages cause confusion for young viewers (Mares & Woodard, 2001). In addition, the strength of prosocial effects depends on age (Mares & Woodard, 2001). Younger children, specifically preschoolers, are much more likely to respond to prosocial behaviors (Mares & Woodard, 2001).

Defining Children's Entertaining and Educational Cartoons

Children's Entertaining Cartoons

Entertaining programs often come in the forms of continuing adventure or chase-and-pratfall (Thompson & Zerbinos. 1995). These programs do not make a concentrated effort to teach viewers a lesson. Examples of continuing adventure cartoons are *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, *Thundercats*, and *He-Man and the Masters of the Universe*. Tom and Jerry and Bugs Bunny episodes fall into the chase-and-pratfall category. Many social scientists state that these programs do not particularly encourage children to learn a new skill or increase their knowledge (Swan et. al, 1998; Van Evra, 1998).

Children's Educational Cartoons

On the other hand, educational cartoons focus on sharing a lesson or factual knowledge with their viewers. Though *educational* is hard to define, Huston and Wright (1998) define the term as programs that emphasize mental development or learning certain skills, such as addition or subtraction. Though many people have made arguments against educational programming, data imply that earlier viewers of educational cartoons and other programs have higher English, math, and science grades.

Hybrid Programming

Engstrom (1995) concluded that the most effective educational programming is also entertaining. The researcher names *Schoolhouse Rock* as a cartoon that achieves a perfect balance between the two categories. *Schoolhouse Rock* combined music, visuals, and educational facts to teach children about various topics. The show featured parts of speech, such as interjections and conjunctions, and historical events, such as the American Revolution. Nikken and van der Voort (1997) found that children considered comprehensibility and aesthetic

quality the two most important standards of children's programming. *Schoolhouse Rock* met these criteria, for children who saw the cartoon found it "fun to look at" and "easy to understand" (Engstrom 1995). Engstrom found that many children who were exposed to this program retained a great deal of the information; some even remembered facts after they reached adulthood.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Based on the review of the literature, these research questions were formulated.

R1: What are the most prevalent stereotypes in *Fat Albert*, an entertaining cartoon from 30 years ago?

R2: What the most prevalent stereotypes in *The Proud Family*, an entertaining cartoon of the 21st century?

R3: Over thirty years, has the amount of stereotyping changed? How?

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

This research project was a combination of two studies: a qualitative content analysis and a quantitative analysis. This triangulation process allowed the researcher to first find variables within the sample, and then count the number of times they occurred. Triangulation, the process of executing both qualitative and quantitative research methods, was appropriate for this study. Some of the broad categories and concepts that the researcher discovered during the qualitative analysis could then be measured using quantitative analysis.

During the qualitative analysis, the researcher watched two episodes of both cartoons four times. Notes were taken each time until the researcher did not note any new observations. During the quantitative analysis, two coders watched and coded 76 episodes, or 1057 scenes of the cartoons.

About the Cartoons

The first cartoon, *Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids*, first aired on CBS in 1972. The second, *The Proud Family*, began in September 2001 and originally aired on the Disney Channel. Both are thirty minutes long and were created by blacks.

Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids centers on the title character and his friends, urban adolescents growing up in Philadelphia (<http://www.bugkid.com/fatalbert>). The cartoon, based on Bill Cosby's 60s childhood, is one of the longest-running cartoons in Saturday morning history (<http://www.bugkid.com/fatalbert>). *Fat Albert* lasted for twelve years, from 1972-1984, and re-aired in 1989 on NBC (<http://www.bugkid.com/fatalbert>). According to the *St. Petersburg (Florida) Times*, it was created to show positive images of black people, as well as provide ethical, moral messages to its viewers, primarily children

(http://www.sptimes.com/2002/03/04/Floridian/Hey_hey_hey_Fat_Al.shtml). Recently, *Fat Albert* has made a comeback, as its episodes are offered in a video collection from TimeLife. In addition, Fat Albert's face can be seen on urbanwear t-shirts, denim, and other clothing. A live-action movie is also currently in production (http://www.filmfodder.com/archive/fat_albert/).

Production of *The Proud Family* was originally ordered by Nickelodeon in 1999, as sort of a black version of the *Rugrats* (<http://www.rugratonline.com/ntnot.htm>). Bruce Smith, an African American, is both the creator and executive producer of the show. In this series, 14-year-old Penny Proud is battling with adolescence, while trying to cope with her unique family (<http://familyscreenscene.allinfoabout.com/tv/proud.html>). *The Proud Family* airs regularly on the Disney Channel, during Zoog Disney. It is also a part of ABC Kids, ABC's Saturday morning cartoon block, as the network is owned by the Disney Channel Corporation (<http://familyscreenscene.allinfoabout.com/tv/proud.html>).

Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids and *The Proud Family* were selected as the texts for this study for many reasons. First, African Americans are the main characters in both cartoons. Most cartoons continue to center around white characters, though efforts were made as far back as the sixties to include minority characters in cartoons. For example, Hodji, Johnny Quest's best friend, is from India. In spite of this, the trend to focus upon white characters remains prevalent. Kids' WB's *X-Men Evolution* does have several minority characters. For example, Evan Daniels and Amanda Sefton are both black, while Roberto DaCosta is Hispanic, and Piotr Nikolaievitch is Russian. However, these characters receive little or no screen time, as they are absent from the major adventures of their white counterparts. They are sub-characters, at best. Fat Albert and Penny Proud are the main protagonists of their respective shows, not the token black characters.

Secondly, both cartoons focus on the main characters as they mature into young adults. Both shows deal with issues like peer pressure, problems with parents and other family members, as well as other examples of teen angst. Since these are important issues to children, they obviously pay more attention to these shows. They are also more affected by them. For example, using in-depth interviews, Thompson and Zerbinos (1997) found that children do indeed notice the differences in the portrayals of male and female characters in cartoons. They also concluded that these portrayals have an influence on the types of jobs children prefer for themselves (Thompson and Zerbinos, 1997).

Third, *Fat Albert* and *The Proud Family* have large fan bases and are generally well-received by their audiences. For example, on www.pbskids.org, children can leave their opinions about *The Proud Family*. Jalisa, a 14-year-old from Austin, Texas, writes, "I love this show because...as an African American there's not too many shows with people of our culture. This also give (sic) an encouragement that this race is not left out, discriminated on T.V." (www.pbskids.org, 2003). The Internet is also the home to several *Fat Albert* shrines. On these sites, visitors can read episode summaries, character bios, look at *screencaps* (still pictures of a television show) and even read the lyrics to the theme song. Mohammad's Fat Albert Page (www.fortunecity.com/lavender/turnpike/237/fat.htm) is just one example of such a site. Not only that, but both cartoons had excellent ratings. VH-1.com stated that one episode featuring the voice of Lil' Romeo garnered the series' highest ratings. Meanwhile, when UPN aired *Fat Albert's* Christmas Special in 2001, the show had the highest ratings during the 8 p.m. slot among adults 18-34 and children 2-11 (upn11tv.com).

Last, the cartoons were chosen because they aired almost thirty years apart. By comparing them, one can see how things have changed. Specifically, *Fat Albert* aired throughout

the 70s and 80s; on the other hand, *The Proud Family* started airing quite recently, in 2001. Therefore, both cartoons were examined to find the most prevalent stereotypes in each and to discover if cartoons have become more progressive. In summary, the cartoons were chosen because of their many similarities and their differences in time frame.

This study used both qualitative and quantitative methods so that the results could be triangulated. Triangulation was appropriate for this study. The process of triangulation, or performing both qualitative and quantitative research methods, helps to understand the research problem more fully (Wimmer and Dominick, 2000). Some of the variables that were noted during the qualitative content analysis were measured with quantitative analysis. Quantitative research helped the researcher discover just how many times a character acted in a certain manner. Triangulation makes the results from a research project more valuable. If hypotheses are only partially supported by the results, triangulation can help researchers to gain additional perspectives on data (Wimmer and Dominick, 2000).

Qualitative Analysis

This study was based upon a close textual analysis of two episodes each of two animated cartoons. Textual, or discourse, analysis, is used to discover meanings within a text. The word *text* itself is most often used to refer to something in print. For example, Meyers (1994) examined two articles, or texts, in the *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, to discover how these texts portrayed battered woman. Lester (1992) also conducted a textual analysis of the Banana Republic Catalog, an advertising tool, to find what dominant ideologies exist in the text. However, the term can also be used to refer to shows that are broadcast on television if they are examined in a narrative format, as a *text* (Van Leewen & Jewitt, 2001).

Textual analysis was chosen as a methodology for several reasons. First, Berg et al (1998) state that discourse analysis is used to explore how television texts and the social and ideological contexts interact (1998). Unlike quantitative research, which produces findings by using mathematical theories and statistical analysis, textual analysis allows for the discovery of a “pattern of binary oppositions in the text,” and for the organization of “the ideological relationship[s]” of those oppositions (Berg et al, 1998, 243).

This feature of textual analysis is linked to an important characteristic of texts: they are polysemic, meaning they can be interpreted in many different ways (Berg et al, 1998). Hall (1980) supports this statement. He writes that all television texts can be read from three positions: from the *preferred* reading position, which supports the status quo; from the *negotiated* reading, which points out contradictions within the status quo, but does not challenge it; or from the *oppositional* position, which goes against the dominate reading, therefore challenging the status quo (Hall, 1980).

Second, not only can texts be examined from the three positions, it is also understood that most, if not all texts, have both manifest and latent meanings. When a textual analysis is performed, it is understood that the reader’s individual decoding strategies are related to his own interpretations, which are the result of background, personal experiences, and beliefs (Hall, 1980). Third, because textual analysis is reflexive, new concepts and patterns can constantly emerge. In addition, these concepts can be organized into unique categories, or even into more than one category.

For all of these reasons, textual analysis was the best method to answer the research questions. In order to answer these questions, different reading positions were taken to examine the texts. Both latent and manifest meanings were noted and explored. Concepts seldom emerge

during research when a quantitative content analysis is being performed, but always occur in ethnographic content analysis (Altheide, 1987). In addition, the texts were examined and reexamined to find and organize as many new concepts as possible. Quantitative content analysis does not follow this circular pattern; its pattern is serial, progressing straight from data collection, to analysis, to interpretation (Altheide, 1987). Lastly, textual analysis is concerned with building theory, as opposed to testing theory. Therefore, textual analysis was chosen as the method for this study. Also, after the textual analysis was performed, it provided the basis for the quantitative analysis.

It is also important to note that textual analysis does not try to generalize variables from a population. Therefore, a random sample was not needed for this portion of the study.

The intention of this study was to note, categorize, and discuss the stereotypes of African Americans in animated children's cartoons. First, a comparison between the cartoons was made to see if and how stereotypical images changed over a period of thirty years. The characters' verbal and non-verbal behaviors were coded. Also, the study sought to find which portrayals remained the same. Second, textual analysis allowed for several different concepts to be placed under broad headings. Therefore, the stereotypes that were discovered through the analysis were organized in terms of how they relate to one another. This allowed the researcher to see the larger patterns that emerge from careful, through readings of the texts. Last, the researcher discusses how the stereotypes relate to ideas that already exist in our culture.

Specifically, two episodes of *The Proud Family* ("Makeover" and "Monkey Business") and two episodes of *Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids* ("Four Eyes" and "Readin', 'Ritin', and Rudy") were watched. During each viewing, the researcher took notes about observations,

without looking at previously-gathered notes. No new observations were made after each episode had been seen four times.

Quantitative Analysis

Researchers conduct quantitative analyses to measure how often a specific phenomenon occurs in media messages (Wimmer and Dominick, 2000). This research method has several advantages. First, results can be recorded precisely because results are recorded numerically (Wimmer and Dominick, 2000). Second, it allows for easy, exact comparisons between different variables (Wimmer and Dominick, 2000). Researchers can discover increases or decreases of a certain variable easily.

Procedure

First, a comparison between several studies to create the research instrument was executed. The researcher kept in mind several of the behaviors that were noted during the “long preliminary soak” (Hall, 1975).

The researcher chose to follow Katz and Braly’s two studies (1933, 1935) because these studies are preeminent in stereotype research. From Katz and Braly’s list of 84 traits, 40 traits were chosen initially. Though this selection was subjective, the researcher kept in mind the characters that had been seen and eliminated the adjectives that were not applicable to the characters. For example, Katz and Braly list evasive and radical on their list of adjectives. However, these traits were not selected because the researcher could not imagine any characters that could be described in these terms. Mayes and Valentine also stated “intelligent” and “aggressive” on their list. This made the researcher feel secure in the adjectives selected for the new list. The “aggressive” trait was also measured in Sternglanz and Serbin’s (1974), which supported the selection of this adjective for the new list.

Also, a comparison of the researcher's list with Ehrlich and Rinehart's table of traits that respondents assigned to Negroes, showed that the two lists had 25 traits in common. A comparison of the researcher's list with Guichard and Connolly's (1977) list of ten traits revealed that the two lists had six out of ten of Guichard and Connolly's traits in common. Since Grant and Holmes (1981) and Leonard and Locke (1993), created their list from Katz and Braly's (1933, 1935) list, practically all of the traits between Grant and Holmes personality clusters and Leonard and Locke's adjectives were the same as the researcher's adjectives.

After comparing several different lists, the researcher decided to add three traits to the list. This was because these traits kept surfacing, though they were not chosen initially. These three traits were "athletic," "lazy," and "superstitious."

After these procedures, 43 adjectives were chosen for the study. However, by collapsing categories and removing those that were not likely to have a high number of incidences, the researcher finally came to a total number of 13 adjectives and an extra "other" category. Seven of these traits (jovial, ignorant, deceitful, lazy, athletic, musical, and aggressive) are considered stereotypical of blacks (Katz and Braly, 1933). The other six traits (intelligent, honest, industrious, loud, witty, and arrogant) are considered astereotypical of African Americans (Katz and Braly, 1933). The "other" category was grouped with the astereotypical characteristics because it contained such ideas as "brave", "concerned", and "sad", which have no particular racial connotations, but are emotions.

Sample

A pool of both *Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids* and *The Proud Family* episodes were gathered. 30 episodes of *Fat Albert* and 46 episodes of *The Proud Family* were coded. During the time period that *The Proud Family* episodes were being taped, four episodes ("Strike", "Who

You Callin' a Sissy?", "One in a Million," and "Duck Story") were not aired. In addition, two new episodes ("Thelma and Luis" and "Twins to Tweens") were aired after the coders had finished watching the episodes. Therefore, these six episodes could not be coded. This resulted in a census of 46 (out of 52) episodes. Also, the *Fat Albert* DVD collection did not offer eight of the episodes ("The Hospital", "Fish out of Water", "Mom or Pop", "What Say?", "Sign Off", and "How the West Was Lost", the Halloween and Christmas specials"). This resulted in a census of 30 (out of 38) episodes.

Each episode of both shows was thirty minutes long. The two coders were randomly assigned 15 episodes each of *Fat Albert* and 24 episodes of *The Proud Family*, resulting in both coders responsible for 38 total episodes. *Fat Albert* episodes were ordered from TimeLife Video, and the *Proud Family* episodes were taped.

The unit of analysis was the scene. According to Iedema (2001) there are six levels of tele-film analysis. According to Iedema, during a scene the camera stays in a single time-space. Iedema defines a *scene* as a "reconstruct[ed] unit still experienced as being "concrete": a place, a moment in time, an action, compact and specific (Iedema, 2001, 188). Scenes are made up of many shots. Iedema defines a *shot* as "uncut camera actions" (Iedema, 2001, 188). This means that the camera movement is unedited. The camera angle may change, but the camera movement itself is uncut. A scene is often ended with a "fade to black." In addition, an extreme long shot or long shot of the scenery often begins a scene. All of the scenes for each of the cartoons were coded, producing $N=1057$.

Coding Sheet

The coding categories were 13 adjectives which resulted from collapsing categories: jovial/happy, intelligent/knowledgeable/shrewd/scientifically-minded, ignorant/stupid/naive/dull,

honest, deceitful/lawbreaking/dishonest, industrious, lazy, athletic, musical, loud/talkative, aggressive/quick-tempered/argumentative, witty, and arrogant/boastful. The 14th category was “other”, which the coders entered themselves. Operational definitions are as follows. A character is:

Jovial/happy if his/her verbal or nonverbal behavior is marked by good-humor, merriness, contentedness, or gladness;

intelligent/knowledgeable/shrewd if his/her verbal or nonverbal behavior is marked by good judgment, sound thought, skillfulness, cleverness, or rationality;

ignorant/stupid/naive/dull if his/her verbal or nonverbal behavior is marked by a lack of knowledge, education, or intelligence, shows a lack of intelligence or awareness, a slowness of mind, dumbness, or simple-mindedness;

honest if his/her verbal or nonverbal behavior is marked by truthfulness, legitimacy, genuineness, realness, or trustworthiness;

deceitful/law-breaking/dishonest if his/her verbal or nonverbal behavior is marked by deceptiveness, dishonesty, is misleading, or violates the law;

industrious if his/her verbal or nonverbal behavior is marked by diligence, zealousness, or business-mindedness;

lazy if his/her verbal or nonverbal behavior is marked by indolence, slothfulness, or is disinclined to activity or exertion;

athletic if his/her verbal or nonverbal behavior is marked by vigorousness or activeness, a talent or interest in athletics or sports, or is sporty;

musical if his/her verbal or nonverbal behavior is marked by an interest or a talent for music.

Loud/talkative if his/her verbal or nonverbal behavior is marked by clamorousness, noisiness, raucousness, rowdiness, or is given to tedious conversation;

aggressive/quick-tempered/argumentative if his/her verbal or nonverbal behavior is marked by combative readiness, or is easily angered or disputatious;

witty if his/her verbal or nonverbal behavior is marked by a quickness or readiness to see or express illuminating or amusing relationships or insights, or makes wisecracks;

arrogant/boastful if his/her verbal or nonverbal behavior is marked by a sense of overbearing self-worth or self-importance, bragging, pretentiousness, or showiness;

other if a character's verbal or nonverbal behavior is marked by none of the categories previously listed.

A character's behavior fell into a certain category according to the greatest amount of time he displayed a primary characteristic. Even though a character might display a particular characteristic initially and then behave another way, the coders selected how the character was acting for the greatest amount of time during the scene. Therefore, selections were mutually exclusive (only *one* box, per character, per scene). Characteristics were displayed through both verbal and nonverbal behavior. If a character said nothing or did nothing in a scene (*i.e.*, he was not there, or none of the focus fell on him) then the coders left his box blank (Please see Appendix II: Coder Instruction Sheet).

On *The Proud Family* coding sheet, the 8 main characters (Penny, Dijonay, LaCienega, Zoë, Sticky, Mr. Proud, Mrs. Proud, and Suga Mama) were displayed; on the *Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids* coding sheet, those main characters (Fat Albert, Dumb Donald, Weird Harold, Mushmouth, Bucky, Rudy, Bill, and Russell) were displayed.

Indices Creation

Two different sets of indices were created, one for each character in each shows, and one for each trait. The first set of indices for each show was creating by summing the 8 characters for *Fat Albert* and by summing the 8 characters for *The Proud Family*. For example, the figures for Fat Albert were added to Dumb Donald's, Weird Harold's, Mushmouth's, Bucky's, Rudy's, Bill's, and Russell's. This procedure was also done for the 8 *The Proud Family* characters, summing Penny, Dijonay, LaCienega, Zoey, Sticky, Mr. Proud, Mrs. Proud, and Suga Mama.

The second set of indices were created for the traits by summing of all the jovial categories. For example, the figures for Fat Albert- jovial, were added to Dumb Donald- jovial, Weird Harold- jovial, Mushmouth- jovial, Bucky- jovial, Rudy- jovial, Bill- jovial, and Russell- jovial to create a new category. Then, the same procedure was done for Fat Albert- intelligent, which was added to Dumb Donald- intelligent, Weird Harold- intelligent, Mushmouth- intelligent, Bucky- intelligent, Rudy- intelligent, Bill- intelligent, and Russell- intelligent to create a new category. This procedure was done for each trait.

Another set of indices was created by combining the stereotypical traits and the astereotypical traits from the second set of indices. For the stereotypical traits, jovial, ignorant, deceitful, lazy, athletic, musical, and athletic were summed. For the astereotypical traits, intelligent, honest, industrious, loud, witty, arrogant, and other were summed.

Coders

The coders were both male, approximately 35 years of age. One coder was white and the other was black.

Coder Training

Two independent coders were trained and coded 10% of the stories. Reliability was calculated using Scott's *Pi*. The individual reliabilities were: Fat Albert $r = .76$; Dumb Donald $r = .78$; Weird Harold $r = .78$; Mushmouth $r = 1.0$; Bucky $r = 1.0$; Rudy $r = .76$; Bill $r = .92$; Russell $r = 1.0$; Penny $r = .87$; Dijonay $r = .71$; LaCienega $r = .85$; Zoey $r = .78$; Sticky $r = .78$; Mr. Proud $r = .71$; Mrs. Proud $r = .73$; Suga Mama $r = .88$.

CHAPTER 5

RESULTS

Qualitative Analysis

For this portion of the analysis, two episodes of *The Proud Family* (“Makeover” and “Monkey Business”) and two episodes of *Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids* (“Four Eyes” and “Readin, ‘Ritin’, and Rudy”) were watched. During each viewing, the researcher would take notes about observations, without looking at the notes gathered previously. Each episode was watched four times, at which time it was discovered that no new observations were being made.

The Proud Family

Introduction Analysis

The Disney Channel’s narrator introduces the show by saying, “Next, get off the heezy with the Proud Family.” In addition, after the second commercial break, the narrator says, “Get on back to *The Proud Family*,” as opposed to “Get back...” The introductions to a few of Disney’s other animated programs were watched to compare. *Lilo and Stitch* opened with, “*Lilo and Stitch the Series* is back.” “It’s time for *Dave the Barbarian*” opened Dave the Barbarian and “Get ready to do the impossible with *Kim Possible*” introduced *Kim Possible*. The researcher watched *Sister, Sister* (“Stick around for *Sister, Sister!*”) and *That’s So Raven* (“Here’s more *That’s So Raven!*”) to see how they were introduced, since they are the two other series on the Disney Channel that star primarily black characters. None of the other shows seems to make such a conscious effort to use slang. Perhaps Disney chose this dialogue to appeal to a greater number of viewers, especially minority watchers.

In spite of this, some viewers might find this conscious effort to use slang offensive. For example, Brent Batten of the *Naples (Florida) Daily News*, wrote an article on December 2,

2003, that used hip-hop slang to convey the story (Batten, 2003). After each paragraph, Batten provided the reader with “an English translation.” Batten wrote:

Home slice was gettin' Cris at his crib when he gets a dime sayin' there's a sitch at the show. 'Fo he gets back to the areous, all the boyz and shorties rolled. So he's like, "This is wack." (A representative of concert promoter Mojo Entertainment, who declined to give his name, said he went to the hotel where Ludacris was staying to bring him to the fairgrounds. While there, he received a phone call indicating there was a problem. He declined to go into specifics, but said by the time he got back, the concert had been shut down and everyone had left. "We've done shows in many cities and never encountered a situation like this," the nameless spokesman said.)

Eric Deggans of the *St. Petersburg Times* explains that what Batten thought was harmless fun, was actually derogatory to African Americans (Deggans, 2003). He writes, “Though hip-hop fans include people of all races, the music and its culture come from black culture. Black artists and producers still dominate the form. And the patterns of speech come directly from black culture.” For this same reason, some people might find Disney’s introductory script for *The Proud Family* to be offensive.

Character Analysis

Characters on *The Proud Family* could be put into two separate categories: those that act in mostly racial stereotypical ways, and those that act according to stereotypical personality types, regardless of race. Specifically, Oscar Proud, Wizard Kelly, Dijonay Jones, and BeBe and CeCe are characters that embody several negative portrayals of blacks. On the other hand, Zoey and LaCienega Boulevardez act like “the nerd” and “the snob,” respectively. These personality types do not carry racial connotations. For the purposes of this methodology, the researcher analyzed the characters that act in racially stereotypical ways.

Oscar Proud, the Minstrel Show On the surface, Oscar Proud, Penny’s father, seems harmless. Oscar also appears to be the most reminiscent of a “Coon.” Oscar is a business failure, is

dominated by his own wife, a prop used for physical humor, and is usually loud and argumentative. He is one of *The Proud Family*'s main characters, and appears on almost every show. He is the male character that viewers see the most. However, several of his character traits are dangerous when considered on a larger scale. In fact, he seems to mirror "The Coon" in many ways. Pilgrim (2000) defines this stereotype: "The coon caricature is one of the most insulting of all anti-Black caricatures...the coon was portrayed as a lazy, easily frightened, chronically idle, inarticulate, buffoon...The coon acted childish, but he was an adult; albeit a good-for-little adult."

The business failure. For example, Oscar is unemployed. His company, Proud Snax, flounders under his lack of knowledge. One of the series' running jokes is that his products are so disgusting that they regularly make people (and animals) sick. For example, during the "Monkey Business" episode, it is Oscar's snacks that make Francois, Mariah Carey's monkey, so sick that he needs medical attention. Though several comic situations occur in relationship to Oscar's company, they all end in the same result: he is a failure. His shortcomings usually are the result of his quick temper and ignorance. For example, in the "Monkey Business" episode, Oscar fusses at his pet monkey, Mr. Chips. He thinks that Mr. Chips has not prepared enough Proud Snax, and chastises the monkey. Yet, it was really Oscar who dropped guacamole onto the order sheet, causing all of the problems. Oscar even uses child labor in the form of Peabo, a little boy who is smitten with Penny. When Peabo refuses to work for Oscar any longer (by operating a crane), Oscar tries to work it himself:

Oscar: You're not the only one who can operate heavy machinery. (He gets into the crane's driver's seat and starts pulling leavers.)

Peabo: I wouldn't do that if I were you, Mr. Proud. That's a highly complicated piece of equipment, that only me and Mr. Chips are certified to operate.

Oscar: Oh, save the chatter for the unemployment line, Peabo. I can do anything that a nine-year-old and a monkey can do. Watch this!

He ends up injuring Mr. Chips. Ironically and sadly, Oscar *cannot* do something both a monkey and a nine-year-old can do, at least in this situation. In conclusion, Oscar's inability to use machinery or produce safe foods, both of which are important skills for his company, are examples of his "coon"-like behavior.

Dominated by his wife. Not only do small children and primates best him, but Oscar is also "out-done" by his wife, Trudy. Oscar's behavior is also reminiscent of the "coon" in this respect as well. Pilgrim (2000) states, "If [the coon] was single, he sought to please the flesh without entanglements. If he was married, his wife dominated him." Trudy is self-employed and usually performs stable, thoughtful actions. For example, Trudy is not awestruck when Carey brings her sick monkey to her veterinarian office. Though she presents initial shock, she acts like a responsible physician by examining the animal and writing a prescription for him. Meanwhile, Oscar is smitten with the superstar. He explains to Trudy that he does not want Carey to get the idea that he is "unavailable," though he is married. Once again, Oscar's foolish antics and his unfaithfulness to his wife (only by his words) are evidence that he acts like a coon.

Use as a human prop. This situation provides the basis for one of Oscar's comic mainstays: "physical humor." This type of action calls for characters to be hurt, though it is amusing. For example, Chuck Jones' Wile E. Coyote often falls off cliffs when chasing the Road Runner, yet he never receives lasting injuries. When Oscar asks Carey to autograph his chest, Trudy yanks his heart--through his chest--and then his whole body, backwards. Pilgrim (2000) writes that coon characters were "often verbally and even physically abused by white characters." Though Trudy is not white, she abuses Oscar almost regularly. Suga Mama is also mean to or physically violent with Oscar. For example, in the "Monkey Business" episode, when he makes a witty remark about her being so old that she was Beethoven's piano teacher, she

happily bangs his head into the piano keys. Also, Suga Mama chides Trudy for trying to speak to Oscar in Pig Latin (so that the twins do not overhear), because he does not even understand English. In the same episode, Trudy also physically abuses Oscar when she comes home tired after a long day at work. Oscar is obstinate. “Feed me and my monkey!” he yells at her. In the very next scene, the rest of the Prouds are congratulating Oscar on a job well done on an excellent dinner. When Oscar appears to offer the family dessert, he has a black eye, several teeth missing, and his left arm in a sling. It is implied that Trudy beat Oscar into submission. Not only does Oscar’s behavior parallel that of a coon, it suggests that he is not even human, but an animal that can be mistreated (Pilgrim, 2000).

Loud and argumentative. Oscar is almost always loud and argumentative. Specifically, during the “Monkey Business” episode, Oscar is arrogant and makes snide remarks to Wizard Kelly, until he realizes that his plan to make money will not work. Then, he kneels on the ground and cries. He is also stubborn and foolish in the “Makeover” episode as he attempts to make the twins into celebrities. He tries to make demands of the director, but only makes himself look foolish:

Oscar: Look pal, I’ve got a few problems with these contracts you sent over. First of all, I don’t see anything about video rights.

Director: It’s a commercial. It won’t be on video.

Oscar: And another thing: they do not do nudity. It’s non-negotiable.

Director: This is a diaper commercial. They’ll have to be nude, or we’ll get someone else.

Oscar: Hey, don’t get me wrong. They’ll sing “Dixie” butt-naked if they have to.

Oscar’s behavior in this situation is also reminiscent of “the coon.” Pilgrim states, “[The coon] thought he was as smart as White people; however, his frequent malapropisms and distorted logic suggested that his attempt to compete intellectually with Whites was pathetic.” However, it

is important to note that Oscar's ignorance is not displayed just in the company of whites, or especially in the company of whites. Oscar is usually stupid, regardless of the situation.

In conclusion, Oscar is the most prominently-featured male character on *The Proud Family*. While his antics are amusing, his stubborn and ignorant behavior plays upon many negative stereotypes, specifically that of "The Coon." Oscar is a "lazy, bewildered, stammering, shuffling, and good-for-little [man] except [for] buffoonery" (Pilgrim 2000). His failures in the realm of business, the fact that women characters dominate him and often use him as a human prop, his argumentativeness and ignorance are all examples of this behavior.

Wizard Kelly, the Black Athlete Wizard Kelly, or "The Wizard," ex-basketball player and business mogul extraordinaire, is the cartoon's main example of a successful black man. Yet, like Oscar, he embodies a stereotype. In spite of all that The Wizard has accomplished, the viewer can never forget that he was an athlete first. This portrayal supports stereotypical thinking. Wallace (n.d.) writes:

According to a 1989 content analysis of televised sports commentary by Derrick Jackson, a reporter for *The Boston Globe*, stereotypes run rampant when sports broadcasters describe athletes. Seven college basketball games and five NFL playoff games were analyzed in the survey. The analysis found that, while 77 percent of comments made about white players pertained to intelligence, only 22.5 percent of comments about black athletes concerned intelligence.

The Wizard owns hotels, movie theaters, and travels in private jets because, in his own words, "The Wizard doesn't walk anywhere except to the bank." He has a son, Wizard, Jr., whom he lavishes with attention and expensive gifts. However, "The Wizard's" character also reflects stereotypical thinking. Many people, including blacks, assume that blacks have more naturally athletic ability than those of other races. Campbell (1995) quotes Ahmad Rashad:

If you close your eyes and listen, you can tell whether a commentator is discussing a white or a black athlete. When he says that somebody is a 'natural'...you know he's talking about a black performer. When you hear that this

other guy's a hard worker...[and has] guts and intelligence, you know that the player in question is white. Just open your eyes.

In spite of being a businessman, The Wizard's character usually involves references to his former career. It is common knowledge among characters and viewers that The Wizard is obviously a wealthy entrepreneur, but one rarely sees him as the "Donald-Trumpesque" character he is. During the "Makeover" episode, he bounces a basketball and spins it on his finger even while he negotiates with Oscar. The jewel that adorns his pinkie-ring is a small basketball. The Wizard's shoes constantly squeak like he is playing on a basketball court. In spite of this, he is dressed in a business suit, a tie and dress shoes. Though Bruce Smith, who created *The Proud Family*, is African American, it seems that Wizard Kelly embodies a stereotype with which more white viewers might be more comfortable. Campbell (1995) explains that the "positive image of blacks" is one of those "who have found success as athletes, singers, comedians, and actors" (p. 62). However, "This 'positive' stereotype, then, is hardly positive, especially when it undermines coverage which might offer a more accurate perspective of America's minority communities" (Campbell, 1995, p. 62). MacDonald (1983) suggests that non-black Americans find more pleasure in this image than "serious, penetrating images of black men and women" (p. 236). This image also has a great affect on black children, states Vice-Provost of University of Virginia, Alex M. Johnson, Jr. (Wood, 2004). Wood quotes Johnson, "Perhaps because of pervasive media images of successful African-American athletes, 'poor blacks view sports as a vehicle to escape poverty; poor whites don't. It's kind of troubling to me that young black men see the only way out is a profession that is only one in a million' " (Wood, 2004). In summary, The Wizard's successful business endeavors (which are the extreme opposite of Oscar's failures) are eclipsed by his former career. One never learns how The Wizard achieved his wealth, but he knows that Kelly obviously got his start from basketball. Instead of

focusing on evidence of Wizard Kelly's intelligence, the show constantly reminds the viewer that his physical athleticism resulted in his success. Therefore, Wizard Kelly embodies the "positive," yet really negative stereotype of the black athlete.

Dijonay, the "Ghetto Girl" Oscar Proud and Wizard Kelly are not the only examples of stereotypical characters on *The Proud Family*. Dijonay, Penny's best friend, uses excessive amounts of slang, possesses an unusual name, and is an irresponsible person. All of these adjectives reveal stereotypical thinking.

Uses a great deal of slang. Like Oscar, Dijonay is usually boisterous. She also seems to use the most slang in the group. The opening scene to "Makeover" illustrates this:

Penny: Zoey, once we get done with you, you are going to look so fabulous!
Dijonay: Yeah, girl, once you put this on, you gonna be the bomb-diggity!
Zoey: I don't know. I'm more of the hot-diggity-dog type.
LaCienega: No, you're more of the corn-dog type.
(The perspective spins, representing Zoey's makeover)
Zoey: Well, how do I look?
LaCienega: Like a scarecrow.
Dijonay: Yeah, baby don't exactly got back.
Zoey: I knew this wouldn't work.
Penny: Look, we just need to make a few adjustments. Come on girls, we're going back in.
Penny: I think we've done it, ladies.
LaCienega: You're going to be turning down boys like mad at the school dance.
Dijonay: Yeah, all the boys are gonna be sweatin' you. Except my man Sticky, of course.
Penny: Check it out.
Zoey: Well, I-- I look you guys.
Penny: Which means there are three words to describe you.
Penny, LaCienega and Dijonay: FAB-U-LOUS!
Zoey: Heeeeeeeey!

Each one of Dijonay's lines involves slang, such as "the bomb diggity" and "sweatin'." "Baby don't exactly got back" also is a pop culture reference to Sir Mix A Lot's "Baby Got Back," a song that praised the female buttocks. Dijonay's dialogue is similar to that used by some caricatures of black women, such as "She-nay-nay" and "Wanda." Felton (2001) writes, "Does

articulate speech equal white, and slang and broken English equal black? The popular depiction in Hollywood mistakenly suggests this is true.” Unfortunately, this depiction also seems to be popular on *The Proud Family*.

Why such a strange name? It is curious that her name is Dijonay and that one of her younger sisters is named Tabasco. This plays upon the stereotype that blacks have exotic names. *Dijonay* could be a combination of Dijon (mustard) and mayonnaise. Gotjokes.net posts jokes from Spencer et. al (1997). Specifically, “You might be ghetto if your name begins with ‘La’, ‘Ta,’ or ‘Sha’” draws attention to this stereotype. Though Miller (2002) writes [some of the] names are concocted all in fun, such characterization can be dangerous. For example, Maxwell (2003) writes, “Researchers at MIT and the University of Chicago graduate schools of business tested whether applicants with black-sounding names received a fair chance when applying for jobs. The finding: no”. Dijonay’s name (and like that of LaCienega Boulevardez) is an example of a racial stereotype.

The reluctant demi-parent. In addition, Dijonay also has at least seven brothers and sisters, of whom she is responsible. Viewers might find this portrayal to be negative. First, she is never extremely worried about her siblings; the children are quite misbehaved. Second, she is always trying to give her responsibility to others. For example, during “Monkey Business,” she attempts to leave her siblings in Penny’s care. When Penny firmly reminds Dijonay “the office is not a playground,” she becomes irritated. One cannot help but wonder: where are Dijonay’s parents? This stereotype plays upon the idea that African American parents are negligent. Campbell (1995) states that many news stories are still reflecting this idea. “[These stories seem] dictated by stereotypical thought processes that have mythologized black behavior: Look at how horrible these mothers are, out carousing instead of tending to their children.” In conclusion,

Dijonay's responsibility for her siblings in addition to her excessive use of slang and her unique name, are all examples of racial stereotypes.

BeBe and CeCe, Modern-day Picaninnies BeBe and CeCe Proud, Penny's twin siblings, must also be discussed with reference to African American child-rearing. BeBe has a large Afro, and both babies are dressed in nothing but diapers, tee shirts, and socks. Their attire supports "The Picaninny" stereotype. This stereotype was the most popular caricature of black children in America (Pilgrim, 2000). Pilgrim (2000) states:

The picaninny caricature shows Black children as either poorly dressed -- ragged, torn, old oversized clothes -- or, and worse, they are shown as nude or near-nude. This nudity suggests that Black children, and by extension Black parents, are not concerned with modesty. The nudity also implies that Black parents neglect their children. A loving parent would provide clothing. The nudity of Black children suggests that Blacks are less civilized than Whites (who wear clothes).

BeBe and CeCe regularly get into mischief, such as abusing Suga Mama's dog, Puff, or even leaving their house. Their misadventures, like those of Dijonay and her siblings, make the viewer wonder why their parents are not being more attentive.

In conclusion, several characters of *The Proud Family*, including Oscar Proud, Wizard Kelly, Dijonay Jones, and BeBe and CeCe Proud are all modern-day examples of racial stereotypes.

Miscellaneous Racial Stereotypes Unlike the stereotypical characters that are the focus of the first portion of this qualitative analysis, these are minor examples of stereotypical behavior in *The Proud Family*. Specifically, the cartoon refers to the physical differences between characters of other races, and supports the idea that Asians tend to be smarter than others.

Zoey is usually kind. She also displays her intelligence and sensitivity as much as Penny does. For example, in "Makeover," she helps Penny to see that she is trying to control one of their friends, in spite of her good intentions. However, Zoey makes a distinction between herself

and the others two times during this episode. The first is during the intro, while Penny, Dijonay, and LaCienega are helping her with her clothes and makeup. Penny gives Zoey her sweater, LaCienega her flower, and Dijonay stuffs a pillow into Zoey's pants to accentuate her bottom. After they are done, Zoey says, "I look like you guys." The second is during the show's second act. The girls ask Zoey why she has gone back to her old look. Zoey explains that Sergei, of whom she has a crush, said that her new look made her look like a "capitalist fly girl."

The Proud Family also displays racially stereotypical characters with the Chang triplets. During the "Makeover" episode, Nubia, the resident bully, demands the Changs to give her the homework assignment. The trio refuses. This small exchange supports the idea that Asians are smart, and even more so than other races. Nubia does not ask Zoey, who is white, or Penny, an African American, for the assignment, even though other characters acknowledge that they are both smart.

Though these examples are not major, they are still worth nothing. Overall, some popular stereotypes were not supported by the series. For example, there were no instances of crimes being perpetrated by African Americans. However, Nubia and her sisters regularly threaten the other characters, characteristic of bullies.

Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids

When compared to *The Proud Family*, *Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids* has little racially stereotypical behavior. For example, Fat Albert is usually intelligent, fair, and sensitive, while Russell is a smart aleck who tends to be very frank. These are just personality types that do not seem racially motivated. The characters display their athletic and musical talents very often in *Fat Albert*. However, these traits do not seem to have a racially stereotypical basis. The characters' athletic abilities are portrayed in a display of youth: many children enjoy their time

on the playground and participating in sports with their friends. Also, Fat Albert and his friends perform a song at the end of each episode. These songs are about the particular subject of which the episode is dealing, and are montages of the scenes from the episode. These songs do not seem to exploit the “legendary” musical talent of blacks, but seems to be another method of getting across the episodes’ message.

However, it would not be fair if a few interesting occurrences were not noted. These include Mushmouth’s distorted speech, Dumb Donald’s ski mask, and the Cosby Kids’ “struts.”

Mushmouth’s Speech

Mushmouth, named appropriately, uses garbled speech. For example, he greets Fat Albert, “How-ba doin’, Fabba Dabba?” Though one can usually discern what he is saying, his behavior echoes that of The Coon. Pilgrim (2000) states, “[The coon’s] use of bastardized English delighted White audiences and reaffirmed the then commonly held beliefs that Blacks were inherently less intelligent.” In spite of this, Mushmouth is one of the most intelligent, sensitive, and intuitive of the Cosby Kids.

Dumb Donald’s Ski Mask

In addition to Mushmouth’s speaking voice, Dumb Donald wears a pink ski mask—over his whole face. This visual might echo images that people see of African Americans on the news, especially during crime stories. Campbell (1995) writes that television news coverage routinely presented nonwhites in aggressive and criminal roles (69). Campbell writes,

The newscasts viewed for this study were pervaded with threatening images of minority crime suspects—many shown in police mug shots, others bound in handcuffs closely guarded by police. Considering the general dearth of minority coverage on the evening news, these may be the most dominant images of nonwhite Americans. (Campbell, 1995, 69).

Though Dumb Donald is never engaged in criminal activity, his wardrobe might have a negative stereotyping effect. Many people are used to seeing criminals, wearing ski masks to conceal their identities, on the news. For example, WBRZ, Baton Rouge's ABC affiliate, archives transcripts of its broadcasts. A transcript from April 11, 2003, states, "And the ski mask robbers have struck yet again...In each incident, the robbers wore black ski masks with eye holes cut out and dark clothes." The *Pittsburgh Pulp*'s January 22, 2004 issue featured an article titled "Who was that Masked Man?" The article states that 7-Eleven stores now post signs that prohibit the wear of ski masks, because the masks "risk the safety of anyone inside." From these examples, it is safe to say that ski masks are often synonymous with crime on the news. One might also wonder why Donald has on the mask in the first place. Rudy and Russell both wear hats, but in a more traditional fashion.

The Struts

In addition to Mushmouth's speaking voice and Dumb Donald's ski mask, another one of *Fat Albert*'s oddities is the characters' personal struts. These exaggerated walks might remind one of the "jive-talking" crows from *Dumbo* (1941), who walked rhythmically. According to Michael Dyson, professor of African-American studies at Columbia University, "If you go back and look at cartoons from the '30s and the '40s and the '50s, they're full of racism. And it's deliberate. And *Dumbo*, the black crows, were meant to remind you of black people" (Okwu). Strutting often has racist connotations. A 2001 Broadway production of *The Full Monty* presented an example of such ideas. " 'Big Black Man,' where De Shields's James Brown-like pimp-strutting purports to tweak white stereotypes of well-hung black machismo...only succeeds in reinforcing this modern brand of minstrelsy" (Murphy). None of the other characters on this show walked in over-stylized fashions.

Fat Albert does not possess any of the stereotypes based on race that the researcher noticed in *The Proud Family*. Neither of the male characters are emasculated, nor are there any athletes who are not recognized for their intellectual merit. *Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids* also has no examples of irresponsible siblings or neglected children.

Overall, *The Proud Family* seemed to have more evidence of racial stereotypes than *Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids*.

Quantitative Analysis

Ordering the *Fat Albert* DVDs from TimeLife Video produced 30 episodes, and taping *The Proud Family* on television produced 46 episodes, resulting in a census of 76 episodes. There were 1057 scenes total ($N=1057$), 365 from *Fat Albert* and 692 from *The Proud Family*.

As previously mentioned, six episodes of *The Proud Family* could not be coded. This was because the episodes either did not air during the time period that they were being videotaped, or they aired after the coders had finished. This resulted in a census of 46 (out of 52) episodes. In addition, the *Fat Albert* DVD collection did not offer eight of the episodes, so they could not be coded either. This resulted in a census of 30 (out of 38) episodes.

All of the episodes were 30 minutes long. *Fat Albert* had an average of 12.2 scenes per episode, while *The Proud Family* had an average of 15.04 scenes per episode. This finding reveals that the length of cartoon scenes has become shorter.

RQ1: What are the most prevalent stereotypes in *Fat Albert*, an entertaining cartoon from 30 years ago?

Fat Albert characters were musical ($M= .0164$, $sd= .18057$) and lazy ($M= .0027$, $sd= .05227$) the least. Characters were most often aggressive ($M= .4180$, $sd= .4180$), intelligent ($M= .3115$, $sd= .61598$), and witty ($M= .3033$, $sd= .63964$). See Table 1.

TABLE 1: FAT ALBERT AND THE COSBY KIDS CHARACTER BEHAVIORS*
(In order of mean)

FAT ALBERT AND THE COSBY KIDS				
CHARACTER-ISTIC	%	M	sd	STEREO or ASTEREOTYPICAL
Aggressive	28.1	.4180	.7956	Stereotypical
Intelligent	24.6	.3115	.6160	Astereotypical
Witty	22.7	.3033	.6396	Astereotypical
Jovial	18.0	.2377	.6332	Stereotypical
Ignorant	16.1	.2240	.6273	Stereotypical
Other	13.1	.1694	.5168	Astereotypical
Loud	8.2	.1175	.4501	Astereotypical
Athletic	6.6	.1120	.5450	Stereotypical
Industrious	7.4	.0956	.3905	Astereotypical
Deceitful	4.9	.0874	.5053	Stereotypical
Arrogant	4.1	.0628	.3685	Astereotypical
Honest	3.8	.0437	.2416	Astereotypical
Musical	1.1	.0164	.1806	Stereotypical
Lazy	0.3	.0027	.0523	Stereotypical

*All characters (1-8)

RQ2: What are the most prevalent stereotypes in *The Proud Family*, an entertaining cartoon of the 21st century?

The Proud Family characters were industrious ($M = .0188$, $sd = .14624$) and lazy ($M = .0072$, $sd = .08482$) the least. Characters were most often jovial ($M = .6903$, $sd = 1.08863$), aggressive ($M = .5673$, $sd = .87611$), and intelligent ($M = .4616$, $sd = .70786$). See Table 2.

TABLE 2: THE PROUD FAMILY CHARACTER BEHAVIORS*
(In order of mean)

THE PROUD FAMILY				
CHARACTER-ISTIC	%	M	sd	STEREO or ASTEREOTYPICAL
Jovial	38.4	.6903	1.0887	Stereotypical
Aggressive	38.5	.5673	.8761	Stereotypical
(table con'd.)				

Intelligent	36	.4616	.7079	Astereotypical
Ignorant	26.3	.2938	.5402	Stereotypical
Other	15.6	.2026	.5512	Astereotypical
Loud	15.1	.1997	.5281	Astereotypical
Deceitful	6.7	.0854	.3806	Stereotypical
Witty	7.2	.0796	.3013	Astereotypical
Athletic	4.1	.0695	.4285	Stereotypical
Musical	2.3	.0507	.3942	Stereotypical
Arrogant	3.3	.0362	.2018	Astereotypical
Honest	1.6	.0203	.1690	Astereotypical
Industrious	1.7	.0188	.1462	Astereotypical
Lazy	1.7	.0072	.0848	Stereotypical

RQ3: Over thirty years, has the amount of stereotyping changed? How?

Overall, when the main characters (characters 1 through 8) were compared, analysis showed that there was a significant difference in how stereotypical characters were displayed (*Cramer's V* = .0001). *Fat Albert* characters performed stereotypical behavior in 60.1% of the scenes ($M = 1.0984$, $sd = 1.32464$), as compared to *The Proud Family* characters, which performed stereotypical behavior in 81.9% of the scenes ($M = 1.7641$, $sd = 1.40111$). *Fat Albert* characters performed astereotypical behavior in 64.2% of the scenes ($M = 1.1038$, $sd = 1.18905$), while *The Proud Family* characters performed astereotypical behavior in 60.3% of the scenes ($M = 1.0188$, $sd = 1.10385$).

After the previous findings were discovered, a pattern was noticed between the two main or primary characters and the secondary characters. By combining the figures of the two primary characters (characters 1 and 2 {*Fat Albert*: Fat Albert and Dumb Donald}; {*The Proud Family*: Penny and Dijonay}), analysis showed that there was no significant difference in stereotypical behavior of the primary characters. See Table 3.

TABLE 3: PRIMARY CHARACTERS' PERCENTAGE OF STEREOTYPICAL BEHAVIOR

Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids		The Proud Family	
Character Name	% Stereo	Character Name	% Stereo
Fat Albert	34.4	Penny	39.5
Dumb Donald	13.4	Dijonay	14.6

However, by combining the figures of the six secondary characters (characters 3 through 8 {*Fat Albert*: Weird Harold, Mushmouth, Bucky, Rudy, Bill, and Russell}; {*The Proud Family*: LaCienega, Zoey, Sticky, Mr. Proud, Mrs. Proud, and Suga Mama}), analysis showed that there was a significant difference in stereotypical behavior of the secondary characters. See Table 4.

TABLE 4: SECONDARY CHARACTERS' PERCENTAGE OF STEREOTYPICAL BEHAVIOR

Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids		The Proud Family	
Character Name	% Stereo	Character Name	% Stereo
Weird Harold	9.6	LaCienega*	15.8
Mushmouth	4.1	Zoey*	15.3
Bucky	4.9	Sticky	5.6
Rudy	19.1	Mr. Proud	42.1
Bill	13.4	Mrs. Proud	23.3
Russell	10.7	Suga Mama	20.1

Therefore, the amount of stereotyping in primary characters has neither increased nor decreased, but the amount of stereotyping in secondary characters has significantly increased. In addition, *The Proud Family* has significantly more examples of stereotypical behavior than *Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids* does overall.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION

The main purpose of this project was to note, categorize, and discuss the portrayals of minority cartoon characters. One of the main research questions of this content analysis was to see how the amount of stereotyping has changed over a period of about thirty years. This desire also led the researcher to choose *Fat Albert* and *The Proud Family* as the sample cartoons. One unexpected result of the content analysis was that the more recent cartoon, *The Proud Family*, employed more stereotypes than one produced in the seventies, *Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids*. In addition, some findings were supported and explained by the literature; some findings were not.

Characters on *Fat Albert* were most often aggressive, intelligent, and witty. Only the aggressive behavior is considered stereotypical of African Americans; the other two are astereotypical (Katz and Braly, 1933). They were less likely to be lazy, which is considered stereotypical of black people (Katz and Braly, 1933). On the other hand, *The Proud Family* characters were most often jovial, aggressive, and intelligent. Only the intelligent behavior is considered astereotypical of blacks; the other two are stereotypical (Katz and Braly, 1933). They were least often lazy. Therefore, there was behavior on both cartoons that supported and disputed people's perceptions of African Americans.

The study yielded some surprising results. There was no large difference in the amount of stereotypical behavior displayed by the primary main characters, but between the two shows there was big difference in the amount of stereotypical behavior displayed by the secondary main characters. Fat Albert and Penny Proud were portrayed in stereotypical ways about the same amount of time. The primary character finding reveals that while the amount of stereotypical

behavior has not increased, it has not lessened, either. In this aspect, there has been no progression among minority characters.

This is very surprising, given today's "politically correct" atmosphere. For example, *South Park*'s lone black character is the appropriately-named Token, who can play the bass guitar and is rumored to have large genitals. However, the difference is that *South Park* is recognized as political satire (Nuckols, 1997), while *The Proud Family* is not. It is a cartoon primarily geared towards children. One would expect *The Proud Family* characters to have moved towards less stereotypical characters, especially since *Fat Albert* seems to have laid a positive foundation in this direction. In addition, one of the main concepts of the Kerner Commission was the *social responsibility theory*. According to Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm (1956), this theory requires a "truthful, comprehensive, and intelligent account of the day's events in a context which gives them meaning" and to produce a "representative picture of the constituent groups in society" (p. 141). Almost fifty years later, it would seem that the media still are—or should be—striving towards these goals. In *The Proud Family*'s case, it should be producing primary characters that are less stereotypical.

The secondary character finding, like the primary character finding, was a surprise. The secondary character finding reveals that while the primary characters have not increased in stereotypical behavior, one could discover it among the secondary characters. *The Proud Family*'s creators more than likely did not set out to design mostly astereotypical primary characters, which would satisfy cautious viewers, while their secondary characters could pass under the proverbial radar. Or, perhaps this is an example of everyday racism at work. Essed (1991) states that *everyday racism* "involves racist practices that infiltrate everyday life and become part of what is seen as 'normal' by the dominant group" (p.288). This echoes

Lippmann's (1922) ideas of the pictures in our heads. If stereotypical behavior is seen as normal, and astereotypical behavior, then, as abnormal, then it seems that it will be difficult for cartoon programming to progress.

The finding that *The Proud Family*'s characters are more stereotypical than *Fat Albert*'s characters *overall* makes one wonder why the creators chose—even unknowingly—to continue racist notions. This could be an example of schema theory at work. Graber (1984) states, “most schemas contain conceptions of general patterns” (23). Perhaps when *The Proud Family*'s creators formulated the characters, they wanted to help the viewers understand the characters without a great deal of exposition. Therefore, the creators might have relied on stereotypes to perform the explanations for them. Also, the creators themselves might have been more comfortable with African American stereotypes, and did not make a conscious effort to create characters that would dispute stereotypes. The reliance on stereotypes might make one a bit worried about future cartoons. Obviously, creators need to move in the opposite direction.

For example, Oscar Proud spends almost all of his time being the butt of many jokes, abused by his wife and mother, and displaying his ignorance. Powell (1982) states that many black characters on television are reminiscent of minstrels, such as Sherman Hensley's George Jefferson and Red Fox's Sanford. Oscar behaved ignorantly or stupidly in 18.7% of the scenes he was in. This is a large difference from Rudy (the corresponding character 6), who spent 3.3% ($f=12$ scenes) being ignorant. Oscar is also unemployed, though he does have his own floundering business. According to Stroman (1984) African Americans are more likely than white characters to be unemployed on television shows. Oscar's lack of a job supported this finding. However, there seemed to be no character on *Fat Albert* who acts in this manner.

On the other hand, according to Peterson (2002), African Americans are often portrayed in scholarly roles during television commercials, supplying viewers with some positive images of blacks. Both cartoons did possess intelligent black characters. It can be argued that Fat Albert and his friends (and even some antagonists) often show that they are capable of rational thought. For example, the boys regularly play games that require them to use their imaginations. For example, in “Beggin’ Benny,” Benny gives a very convoluted, but creative reason to explain why he was not shot with imaginary bullets during play. Also, in the “Creativity” episode, the boys make musical instruments out of junk when they do not have the money to buy real ones. Fat Albert and his friends are also usually attentive in their classroom studies.

Characters on *The Proud Family* are intelligent as well. For example, in the “Spelling Bee” episode, Penny makes it to the final round of the bee before she loses. In spite of this, Zoey is the known “nerd” (seemingly because she wears glasses) and the Asian Chang triplets are known as “the smartest kids in school.” Unfortunately, since the Change triplets were guest characters, they were not one of the eight main characters that were coded. Intelligence was also one of the behaviors that were most displayed in both cartoons (*Fat Albert*: %= 24.6, *The Proud Family*: %= 36).

What is interesting about *Fat Albert*’s characters is that their behavior falls into personality types, meaning that no racial bias was attached to them. For example, Rudy is an obnoxious, know-it-all-rich kid, while Russell is Bill’s annoying, smart-mouthed little brother. Their personalities are independent of their race, and are commonly found in people of all races. Similarly, *The Proud Family*’s characters do fall into personality types as well. LaCienega is snobby, stubborn, and conceited, making her very similar in personality to Rudy. However, other characters on the cartoon do embody racial stereotypes, such as the Twins (Pickanninies) and

Wizard Kelly (the Black Athlete). MacDonald (1983) states that non-black Americans enjoy amusing portrayals of African Americans more than serious images. Perhaps this statement could be made of *all* Americans, regardless of race. This might explain why *The Proud Family* characters display certain behaviors that *Fat Albert* characters do not. Literature was found to explain and discuss Oscar Proud (the Minstrel or the Coon) and Wizard Kelly's (the Black Athlete) behaviors. However, the researcher could not find literature to explain Dijonay (the Ghetto Girl)'s character, though her stereotype was actually popularized in the early nineties by comedians such as Martin Lawrence and Jamie Foxx. Now, this character-type can be found on comedy shows such as *Saturday Night Live*.

Perhaps Dijonay represents the evolution of new stereotypes about African Americans. However, when Dijonay was compared to Dumb Donald (the other character 2), she was not significantly more racially stereotypical than he was (See Table 3). Dijonay was stereotypical 14.6% of the time, while Dumb Donald was stereotypical in 13.4% of his scenes. In fact, Dijonay performed astereotypical behavior 13% of the time, while Dumb Donald performed astereotypical behavior 5.7% of the time. Maybe this finding is skewed, since Dijonay's character type is gaining popularity. In fact, some have even poked fun at the stereotype by showing white characters who act in a "black" manner. For example, one of the main characters on "Whoopi" is Rita, who "talks and dresses like a 'sister' " (nbc.com).

It is fairly obvious that *Fat Albert* and *The Proud Family* are very different cartoons. This could be the result of many factors. First, the cartoons' *raison d'être* are different. While introducing the show, the Disney Channel's narrator encourages the audience to "get off the heezy with the *Proud Family*." Off the heezy has many meanings, but in this case, it means to have fun. Therefore, *The Proud Family* is promising a good time: some laughs as parents and

others spend time with children. The cartoon is there to entertain. However, this is different from *Fat Albert's* goal. Bill Cosby states during the opening sequence, "You'd better be careful, or you might learn something before you're done [watching the show]." This means that this cartoon, though certainly entertaining, wanted to teach children a lesson. In case youngsters are not sure about the moral lesson, the characters reinforce the idea with a song. From stealing to watching too much television, *Fat Albert* seeks to teach a lesson. That is not to say that *The Proud Family* is not concerned with sharing life knowledge with young people. For example, both cartoons have episodes that deal with racism and cultural diversity, divorce, and teen crushes. Simply, *Fat Albert* teaches moral lessons more obviously than *The Proud Family* does.

In addition, the subject matter that the writers chose to tackle was also considerably different. For example, *Fat Albert* devotes episodes to emphasizing the importance of good personal hygiene ("Suede Simpson") and the importance of being creative ("Creativity"). On the other hand, *The Proud Family* displays its modernity with an episode that spoofs *American Idol* ("The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly"). While *Fat Albert's* subject matter is still important for children to understand, *The Proud Family* shows that some issues seem to be moot. Of course, that is to be expected in the 30 years that have passed since *Fat Albert* aired on television. At present, as the Federal Communications Commission is punishing greater amounts of obscenity; taking (or not taking) a bath seems to be the least of a child's worries. Also interesting is that *The Proud Family* did not touch on issues like drugs but did examine health care for the elderly ("Thelma and Luis"), self-love ("Makeover"), and diversity and acceptance ("Culture Shock"- which even involves an anonymous person telling a Muslim family "America is for Americans").

In addition to encouraging children's learning, *Fat Albert* also encourages children to talk to their parents about certain issues. For example, *Fat Albert* often goes to his parents when he

has a problem that he cannot resolve by himself. During Bill Cosby's narratives, he often tells viewers to talk to their parents if they have questions. Though Penny does confide in her parents from time to time, she usually solves her problems independently or with her friends, but without her parents. Also, *The Proud Family* does not explicitly encourage children to talk with their parents the way *Fat Albert* does. This is ironic, since today's media often support parent-child discussions. For example, anti-drug public service announcements state, "Talk to your children. They'll listen." Califano agrees that "Parent power is the most potent and underutilized tool we have to help...children journey through [childhood]" (Califano, 2000).

(<http://www.rainbowpediatrics.net/faq/21.5.html>) If *The Proud Family* does encourage families to discuss certain issues, then these discussions are tangential, for the cartoon's main purpose is to entertain its audiences.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS

Summary of Findings

In summary, images on *Fat Albert and The Cosby Kids* and *The Proud Family* show that a stereotyping effect does indeed exist in cartoons. Several of the characters' behaviors do agree with Lippmann's "pictures in our heads" (1922, p.16).

Specifically, characters on contemporary *The Proud Family* perform more stereotypical behaviors than characters on the *Fat Albert* of 30 years ago. However, there has been no increase in the stereotypical behavior of primary characters. In this case, things have not gotten worse. However, they have not gotten better, either. In the case of the secondary characters, there has been an obvious decline. Secondary characters on *The Proud Family* are more stereotypical than characters on *Fat Albert*. Some might think that since the stereotypical behavior is being performed by the secondary characters and not the primary characters, that this is acceptable. However, whether performed by primary or secondary characters, stereotypical behavior can be dangerous, especially to young children. Two theories, the cultivation theory and the social learning theory, imply the effects that stereotypes can have on people. As previously mentioned, cultivation theory states that some television viewers come to expect "television reality" as their own. Therefore, children who watch a great deal of *The Proud Family* might come to believe that all black men are failures or athletes.

Like cultivation theory, the social learning theory also is directly related to this idea of how stereotypes affect people's learning. Albert Bandura presented first this theory in 1977 (Severin & Tankard, 2001). Social learning theory states that people can learn how to behave from watching others act (Severin & Tankard, 2001). This includes watching behaviors from

real people, such as parents and teachers, or from other sources, such as the media. It implies that viewers can learn various roles and how to perceive others from television programs. In recent years, the theory has been renamed the *social cognitive theory* or the observational learning theory (Singer & Singer, 2001). This theory is basically the same as social learning theory. However, it emphasizes that active thinking and observation are essential to social learning. Dorr states that childhood is the period when many people acquired the most important elements of social learning (Dorr, quoted in Swan et. al, 1998). As previously mentioned, Rich (1999) found that children do learn from the media, and that they use this information in their daily living. This obviously has an effect on how children see themselves and how they should relate to each other. Stroman (1984) found that black characters on television were more likely than white characters to be unemployed. Seeing these images might suggest to black children that they cannot be successful, or worse, that they should not even try to be.

Therefore, cartoons like *Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids* and *The Proud Family* can—and do—have an effect on their viewers. The hope is that these effects are positive, and not negative.

Future Studies

Animated cartoons can provide an almost endless supply of samples that could be used for research. For example, it would be interesting to compare a cartoon that centered around white people to one that focused on blacks. For example, *Kim Possible* could be compared to *Fat Albert* or to *The Proud Family*. Using the same traits that are considered stereotypical and astereotypical of blacks, one could examine the behaviors of white characters. One could find if white characters have the same set of most prevalent characteristics that *Fat Albert* characters do (aggressive, intelligent, and witty) or that *The Proud Family* characters do (jovial, aggressive,

and intelligent). One could also compare the behaviors of white cartoon characters to those discussed in Katz and Braly's (1933, 1935) studies.

Different genres of cartoons can also be sources for research. For example, *anime*, or Japanese animation, is different when compared to Western cartoons. For example, *Sailor Moon* has few if any African American characters, and one could study the similarities or differences in their portrayals in *anime*. In spite of these ideas, the most logical study to undertake would be one that compared an entertaining cartoon with white main characters to an educational cartoon with white main characters. Then, these figures could be compared to the ones in this study. This would increase the literature in this field, and provide more information for social scientists, television programmers, parents, and others.

Implications Beyond This Study

As cartoon programming increases, so will the number of African American cartoon characters. Things have already changed since 1992, when more than half of the minorities in cartoons were found on one cartoon series, *Kid and Play* (Swan et al, 1998). Even now, cartoons like Bill Cosby's *Little Bill* are being aired. Kids' WB's *Static Shock* chronicles the adventures of the first teenage black superhero. The number of black creators, writers, producers, and animators can explain the number of African American-centered cartoons. Just as an increase of blacks in newsrooms will result in a more diversified, more representative news product, a greater number of black people in cartoon production will increase the number of African American cartoons and therefore, African American cartoon characters. As this number increases, it is hoped that the number of stereotypical portrayals of blacks in cartoons, and in the media in general, will decrease.

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APPENDIX I: CODING SHEETS

Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids Coding Sheet

Coder initials: _____

Episode: _____

Scene Number: _____

Fat Albert (check the characteristic that is primarily displayed):

- | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|--|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jovial/Happy | <input type="checkbox"/> Intelligent/Knowledgeable/Shrewd/Scientifically-minded | <input type="checkbox"/> Ignorant/Stupid/Naive/Dull | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Honest | <input type="checkbox"/> Deceitful/Lawbreaking/Dishonest | <input type="checkbox"/> Industrious | <input type="checkbox"/> Lazy | <input type="checkbox"/> Athletic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Musical | <input type="checkbox"/> Loud/Talkative | <input type="checkbox"/> Aggressive/Quick-tempered/Argumentative | <input type="checkbox"/> Witty | |

Dumb Donald (check the characteristic that is primarily displayed):

- | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|--|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jovial/Happy | <input type="checkbox"/> Intelligent/Knowledgeable/Shrewd/Scientifically-minded | <input type="checkbox"/> Ignorant/Stupid/Naive/Dull | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Honest | <input type="checkbox"/> Deceitful/Lawbreaking/Dishonest | <input type="checkbox"/> Industrious | <input type="checkbox"/> Lazy | <input type="checkbox"/> Athletic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Musical | <input type="checkbox"/> Loud/Talkative | <input type="checkbox"/> Aggressive/Quick-tempered/Argumentative | <input type="checkbox"/> Witty | |

Weird Harold (check the characteristic that is primarily displayed):

- | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|--|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jovial/Happy | <input type="checkbox"/> Intelligent/Knowledgeable/Shrewd/Scientifically-minded | <input type="checkbox"/> Ignorant/Stupid/Naive/Dull | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Honest | <input type="checkbox"/> Deceitful/Lawbreaking/Dishonest | <input type="checkbox"/> Industrious | <input type="checkbox"/> Lazy | <input type="checkbox"/> Athletic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Musical | <input type="checkbox"/> Loud/Talkative | <input type="checkbox"/> Aggressive/Quick-tempered/Argumentative | <input type="checkbox"/> Witty | |

Mushmouth (check the characteristic that is primarily displayed):

- | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|--|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jovial/Happy | <input type="checkbox"/> Intelligent/Knowledgeable/Shrewd/Scientifically-minded | <input type="checkbox"/> Ignorant/Stupid/Naive/Dull | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Honest | <input type="checkbox"/> Deceitful/Lawbreaking/Dishonest | <input type="checkbox"/> Industrious | <input type="checkbox"/> Lazy | <input type="checkbox"/> Athletic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Musical | <input type="checkbox"/> Loud/Talkative | <input type="checkbox"/> Aggressive/Quick-tempered/Argumentative | <input type="checkbox"/> Witty | |

Bucky (check the characteristic that is primarily displayed):

- | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|--|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jovial/Happy | <input type="checkbox"/> Intelligent/Knowledgeable/Shrewd/Scientifically-minded | <input type="checkbox"/> Ignorant/Stupid/Naive/Dull | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Honest | <input type="checkbox"/> Deceitful/Lawbreaking/Dishonest | <input type="checkbox"/> Industrious | <input type="checkbox"/> Lazy | <input type="checkbox"/> Athletic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Musical | <input type="checkbox"/> Loud/Talkative | <input type="checkbox"/> Aggressive/Quick-tempered/Argumentative | <input type="checkbox"/> Witty | |

Rudy (check the characteristic that is primarily displayed):

- | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|--|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jovial/Happy | <input type="checkbox"/> Intelligent/Knowledgeable/Shrewd/Scientifically-minded | <input type="checkbox"/> Ignorant/Stupid/Naive/Dull | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Honest | <input type="checkbox"/> Deceitful/Lawbreaking/Dishonest | <input type="checkbox"/> Industrious | <input type="checkbox"/> Lazy | <input type="checkbox"/> Athletic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Musical | <input type="checkbox"/> Loud/Talkative | <input type="checkbox"/> Aggressive/Quick-tempered/Argumentative | <input type="checkbox"/> Witty | |

Bill (check the characteristic that is primarily displayed):

- | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|--|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jovial/Happy | <input type="checkbox"/> Intelligent/Knowledgeable/Shrewd/Scientifically-minded | <input type="checkbox"/> Ignorant/Stupid/Naive/Dull | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Honest | <input type="checkbox"/> Deceitful/Lawbreaking/Dishonest | <input type="checkbox"/> Industrious | <input type="checkbox"/> Lazy | <input type="checkbox"/> Athletic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Musical | <input type="checkbox"/> Loud/Talkative | <input type="checkbox"/> Aggressive/Quick-tempered/Argumentative | <input type="checkbox"/> Witty | |

Russell (check the characteristic that is primarily displayed):

- | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|--|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jovial/Happy | <input type="checkbox"/> Intelligent/Knowledgeable/Shrewd/Scientifically-minded | <input type="checkbox"/> Ignorant/Stupid/Naive/Dull | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Honest | <input type="checkbox"/> Deceitful/Lawbreaking/Dishonest | <input type="checkbox"/> Industrious | <input type="checkbox"/> Lazy | <input type="checkbox"/> Athletic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Musical | <input type="checkbox"/> Loud/Talkative | <input type="checkbox"/> Aggressive/Quick-tempered/Argumentative | <input type="checkbox"/> Witty | |

_____ (check the characteristic that is primarily displayed):

- | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|--|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jovial/Happy | <input type="checkbox"/> Intelligent/Knowledgeable/Shrewd/Scientifically-minded | <input type="checkbox"/> Ignorant/Stupid/Naive/Dull | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Honest | <input type="checkbox"/> Deceitful/Lawbreaking/Dishonest | <input type="checkbox"/> Industrious | <input type="checkbox"/> Lazy | <input type="checkbox"/> Athletic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Musical | <input type="checkbox"/> Loud/Talkative | <input type="checkbox"/> Aggressive/Quick-tempered/Argumentative | <input type="checkbox"/> Witty | |

_____ (check the characteristic that is primarily displayed):

- | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|--|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jovial/Happy | <input type="checkbox"/> Intelligent/Knowledgeable/Shrewd/Scientifically-minded | <input type="checkbox"/> Ignorant/Stupid/Naive/Dull | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Honest | <input type="checkbox"/> Deceitful/Lawbreaking/Dishonest | <input type="checkbox"/> Industrious | <input type="checkbox"/> Lazy | <input type="checkbox"/> Athletic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Musical | <input type="checkbox"/> Loud/Talkative | <input type="checkbox"/> Aggressive/Quick-tempered/Argumentative | <input type="checkbox"/> Witty | |

_____ (check the characteristic that is primarily displayed):

- | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|--|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jovial/Happy | <input type="checkbox"/> Intelligent/Knowledgeable/Shrewd/Scientifically-minded | <input type="checkbox"/> Ignorant/Stupid/Naive/Dull | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Honest | <input type="checkbox"/> Deceitful/Lawbreaking/Dishonest | <input type="checkbox"/> Industrious | <input type="checkbox"/> Lazy | <input type="checkbox"/> Athletic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Musical | <input type="checkbox"/> Loud/Talkative | <input type="checkbox"/> Aggressive/Quick-tempered/Argumentative | <input type="checkbox"/> Witty | |

_____ (check the characteristic that is primarily displayed):

- | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|--|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jovial/Happy | <input type="checkbox"/> Intelligent/Knowledgeable/Shrewd/Scientifically-minded | <input type="checkbox"/> Ignorant/Stupid/Naive/Dull | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Honest | <input type="checkbox"/> Deceitful/Lawbreaking/Dishonest | <input type="checkbox"/> Industrious | <input type="checkbox"/> Lazy | <input type="checkbox"/> Athletic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Musical | <input type="checkbox"/> Loud/Talkative | <input type="checkbox"/> Aggressive/Quick-tempered/Argumentative | <input type="checkbox"/> Witty | |

_____ (check the characteristic that is primarily displayed):

- | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|--|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jovial/Happy | <input type="checkbox"/> Intelligent/Knowledgeable/Shrewd/Scientifically-minded | <input type="checkbox"/> Ignorant/Stupid/Naive/Dull | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Honest | <input type="checkbox"/> Deceitful/Lawbreaking/Dishonest | <input type="checkbox"/> Industrious | <input type="checkbox"/> Lazy | <input type="checkbox"/> Athletic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Musical | <input type="checkbox"/> Loud/Talkative | <input type="checkbox"/> Aggressive/Quick-tempered/Argumentative | <input type="checkbox"/> Witty | |

_____ (check the characteristic that is primarily displayed):

- | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|--|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jovial/Happy | <input type="checkbox"/> Intelligent/Knowledgeable/Shrewd/Scientifically-minded | <input type="checkbox"/> Ignorant/Stupid/Naive/Dull | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Honest | <input type="checkbox"/> Deceitful/Lawbreaking/Dishonest | <input type="checkbox"/> Industrious | <input type="checkbox"/> Lazy | <input type="checkbox"/> Athletic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Musical | <input type="checkbox"/> Loud/Talkative | <input type="checkbox"/> Aggressive/Quick-tempered/Argumentative | <input type="checkbox"/> Witty | |

The Proud Family Coding Sheet

Coder initials: _____

Episode: _____

Scene Number: _____

Penny (check the characteristic that is primarily displayed):

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jovial/Happy | <input type="checkbox"/> Intelligent/Knowledgeable/Shrewd/Scientifically-minded | <input type="checkbox"/> Ignorant/Stupid/Naive/Dull |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Honest | <input type="checkbox"/> Deceitful/Lawbreaking/Dishonest | <input type="checkbox"/> Industrious <input type="checkbox"/> Lazy <input type="checkbox"/> Athletic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Musical | <input type="checkbox"/> Loud/Talkative <input type="checkbox"/> Aggressive/Quick-tempered/Argumentative | <input type="checkbox"/> Witty |

Dijonay (check the characteristic that is primarily displayed):

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jovial/Happy | <input type="checkbox"/> Intelligent/Knowledgeable/Shrewd/Scientifically-minded | <input type="checkbox"/> Ignorant/Stupid/Naive/Dull |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Honest | <input type="checkbox"/> Deceitful/Lawbreaking/Dishonest | <input type="checkbox"/> Industrious <input type="checkbox"/> Lazy <input type="checkbox"/> Athletic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Musical | <input type="checkbox"/> Loud/Talkative <input type="checkbox"/> Aggressive/Quick-tempered/Argumentative | <input type="checkbox"/> Witty |

LaCienega (check the characteristic that is primarily displayed):

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jovial/Happy | <input type="checkbox"/> Intelligent/Knowledgeable/Shrewd/Scientifically-minded | <input type="checkbox"/> Ignorant/Stupid/Naive/Dull |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Honest | <input type="checkbox"/> Deceitful/Lawbreaking/Dishonest | <input type="checkbox"/> Industrious <input type="checkbox"/> Lazy <input type="checkbox"/> Athletic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Musical | <input type="checkbox"/> Loud/Talkative <input type="checkbox"/> Aggressive/Quick-tempered/Argumentative | <input type="checkbox"/> Witty |

Zoë (check the characteristic that is primarily displayed):

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jovial/Happy | <input type="checkbox"/> Intelligent/Knowledgeable/Shrewd/Scientifically-minded | <input type="checkbox"/> Ignorant/Stupid/Naive/Dull |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Honest | <input type="checkbox"/> Deceitful/Lawbreaking/Dishonest | <input type="checkbox"/> Industrious <input type="checkbox"/> Lazy <input type="checkbox"/> Athletic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Musical | <input type="checkbox"/> Loud/Talkative <input type="checkbox"/> Aggressive/Quick-tempered/Argumentative | <input type="checkbox"/> Witty |

Sticky (check the characteristic that is primarily displayed):

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jovial/Happy | <input type="checkbox"/> Intelligent/Knowledgeable/Shrewd/Scientifically-minded | <input type="checkbox"/> Ignorant/Stupid/Naive/Dull |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Honest | <input type="checkbox"/> Deceitful/Lawbreaking/Dishonest | <input type="checkbox"/> Industrious <input type="checkbox"/> Lazy <input type="checkbox"/> Athletic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Musical | <input type="checkbox"/> Loud/Talkative <input type="checkbox"/> Aggressive/Quick-tempered/Argumentative | <input type="checkbox"/> Witty |

Mr. Proud (check the characteristic that is primarily displayed):

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jovial/Happy | <input type="checkbox"/> Intelligent/Knowledgeable/Shrewd/Scientifically-minded | <input type="checkbox"/> Ignorant/Stupid/Naive/Dull |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Honest | <input type="checkbox"/> Deceitful/Lawbreaking/Dishonest | <input type="checkbox"/> Industrious <input type="checkbox"/> Lazy <input type="checkbox"/> Athletic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Musical | <input type="checkbox"/> Loud/Talkative <input type="checkbox"/> Aggressive/Quick-tempered/Argumentative | <input type="checkbox"/> Witty |

Mrs. Proud (check the characteristic that is primarily displayed):

- | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|--|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jovial/Happy | <input type="checkbox"/> Intelligent/Knowledgeable/Shrewd/Scientifically-minded | <input type="checkbox"/> Ignorant/Stupid/Naive/Dull | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Honest | <input type="checkbox"/> Deceitful/Lawbreaking/Dishonest | <input type="checkbox"/> Industrious | <input type="checkbox"/> Lazy | <input type="checkbox"/> Athletic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Musical | <input type="checkbox"/> Loud/Talkative | <input type="checkbox"/> Aggressive/Quick-tempered/Argumentative | <input type="checkbox"/> Witty | |

Suga Mama (check the characteristic that is primarily displayed):

- | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|--|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jovial/Happy | <input type="checkbox"/> Intelligent/Knowledgeable/Shrewd/Scientifically-minded | <input type="checkbox"/> Ignorant/Stupid/Naive/Dull | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Honest | <input type="checkbox"/> Deceitful/Lawbreaking/Dishonest | <input type="checkbox"/> Industrious | <input type="checkbox"/> Lazy | <input type="checkbox"/> Athletic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Musical | <input type="checkbox"/> Loud/Talkative | <input type="checkbox"/> Aggressive/Quick-tempered/Argumentative | <input type="checkbox"/> Witty | |

The Twins (check the characteristic that is primarily displayed):

- | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|--|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jovial/Happy | <input type="checkbox"/> Intelligent/Knowledgeable/Shrewd/Scientifically-minded | <input type="checkbox"/> Ignorant/Stupid/Naive/Dull | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Honest | <input type="checkbox"/> Deceitful/Lawbreaking/Dishonest | <input type="checkbox"/> Industrious | <input type="checkbox"/> Lazy | <input type="checkbox"/> Athletic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Musical | <input type="checkbox"/> Loud/Talkative | <input type="checkbox"/> Aggressive/Quick-tempered/Argumentative | <input type="checkbox"/> Witty | |

_____ (check the characteristic that is primarily displayed):

- | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|--|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jovial/Happy | <input type="checkbox"/> Intelligent/Knowledgeable/Shrewd/Scientifically-minded | <input type="checkbox"/> Ignorant/Stupid/Naive/Dull | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Honest | <input type="checkbox"/> Deceitful/Lawbreaking/Dishonest | <input type="checkbox"/> Industrious | <input type="checkbox"/> Lazy | <input type="checkbox"/> Athletic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Musical | <input type="checkbox"/> Loud/Talkative | <input type="checkbox"/> Aggressive/Quick-tempered/Argumentative | <input type="checkbox"/> Witty | |

_____ (check the characteristic that is primarily displayed):

- | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|--|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jovial/Happy | <input type="checkbox"/> Intelligent/Knowledgeable/Shrewd/Scientifically-minded | <input type="checkbox"/> Ignorant/Stupid/Naive/Dull | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Honest | <input type="checkbox"/> Deceitful/Lawbreaking/Dishonest | <input type="checkbox"/> Industrious | <input type="checkbox"/> Lazy | <input type="checkbox"/> Athletic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Musical | <input type="checkbox"/> Loud/Talkative | <input type="checkbox"/> Aggressive/Quick-tempered/Argumentative | <input type="checkbox"/> Witty | |

_____ (check the characteristic that is primarily displayed):

- | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|--|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jovial/Happy | <input type="checkbox"/> Intelligent/Knowledgeable/Shrewd/Scientifically-minded | <input type="checkbox"/> Ignorant/Stupid/Naive/Dull | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Honest | <input type="checkbox"/> Deceitful/Lawbreaking/Dishonest | <input type="checkbox"/> Industrious | <input type="checkbox"/> Lazy | <input type="checkbox"/> Athletic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Musical | <input type="checkbox"/> Loud/Talkative | <input type="checkbox"/> Aggressive/Quick-tempered/Argumentative | <input type="checkbox"/> Witty | |

_____ (check the characteristic that is primarily displayed):

- | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|--|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jovial/Happy | <input type="checkbox"/> Intelligent/Knowledgeable/Shrewd/Scientifically-minded | <input type="checkbox"/> Ignorant/Stupid/Naive/Dull | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Honest | <input type="checkbox"/> Deceitful/Lawbreaking/Dishonest | <input type="checkbox"/> Industrious | <input type="checkbox"/> Lazy | <input type="checkbox"/> Athletic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Musical | <input type="checkbox"/> Loud/Talkative | <input type="checkbox"/> Aggressive/Quick-tempered/Argumentative | <input type="checkbox"/> Witty | |

_____ (check the characteristic that is primarily displayed):

- | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|--|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jovial/Happy | <input type="checkbox"/> Intelligent/Knowledgeable/Shrewd/Scientifically-minded | <input type="checkbox"/> Ignorant/Stupid/Naive/Dull | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Honest | <input type="checkbox"/> Deceitful/Lawbreaking/Dishonest | <input type="checkbox"/> Industrious | <input type="checkbox"/> Lazy | <input type="checkbox"/> Athletic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Musical | <input type="checkbox"/> Loud/Talkative | <input type="checkbox"/> Aggressive/Quick-tempered/Argumentative | <input type="checkbox"/> Witty | |

APPENDIX II

CODER INSTRUCTION SHEET

- A. Please write your initials.
- B. Write the name of the episode.
- C. Write the number of the scene. Remember, a *scene* is defined as “a reconstruct[ed] unit still experienced as being ‘concrete’: a place, a moment in time, an action, compact and specific” (Iedema, 2001, 188). Scenes are made of several shots. A scene is often ended with a “fade to black.” In addition, an extreme long shot or long shot of the scenery often begins a scene.

The following questions require the coder to determine whether each individual character displays a certain characteristic. On *The Proud Family* coding sheet, the main characters (Penny, Dijonay, LaCienega, Zoë, Sticky, Mr. Proud, Mrs. Proud, Suga Mama, and the Twins) are displayed; on the *Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids* coding sheet, those main characters (Fat Albert, Dumb Donald, Weird Harold, Mushmouth, Bucky, Rudy, Bill, and Russell) are displayed.

On each coding sheet, there are a few boxes without names. These boxes are for guest characters (characters who only show up for a one episode), or characters who do not show up a great deal. In case these boxes are used, please write in the name of this character.

For all characters, look for the **primary** characteristic or behavior. This means that even though a character might display a particular characteristic initially and then behave another way, please select how the character is acting for the greatest amount of time during the scene. Therefore, your selections must be mutually exclusive (only *one* box, per character, per scene).

Characteristics may be displayed through both verbal and nonverbal behavior. For example, if a character tells a joke, that is an example of being witty. However, if a character makes a fist with one hand and pounds it into the palm of his other hand, yet says nothing, that is an example of aggression.

If a character says nothing or does nothing in a scene (he is not there, or none of the focus falls on him) then leave his box blank.

Jovial/Happy

A character is jovial or happy if his/her verbal or nonverbal behavior is marked by good-humor, merriness, contentedness, or gladness.

For example, in the “Makeover” episode of *The Proud Family*, Zoë smiles and cheers, “Heeeey!” after she sees her new look.

Intelligent/Knowledgeable/Shrewd/Scientifically-minded

A character is intelligent/knowledgeable/shrewd if his/her verbal or nonverbal behavior is marked by good judgment, sound thought, skillfulness, cleverness, or rationality.

For example, in the “Monkey Business” episode of *The Proud Family*, Trudy displays her veterinarian skills by caring for Mariah Carey’s sick monkey. In the “Readin’, ‘Ritin’, and Rudy” episode of *Fat Albert*, the boys display their intelligence by correctly answering questions from their teacher.

Ignorant/Stupid/Naive/Dull

A character is ignorant/stupid/naive/dull if his/her verbal or nonverbal behavior is marked by a lack of knowledge, education, or intelligence, shows a lack of intelligence or awareness, a slowness of mind, dumbness, or simple-mindedness.

For example, in the “Monkey Business” episode of *The Proud Family*, Dijonay demands Penny to give her what she thinks is a cookie, but is really a dog biscuit. In the “Readin’, ‘Ritin’, and Rudy” episode of *Fat Albert*, Rudy shows his ignorance by pronouncing *Italy* “I-taly.”

Honest

A character is honest if his/her verbal or nonverbal behavior is marked by truthfulness, legitimacy, genuineness, realness, or trustworthiness.

For example, in the “Suede Simpson” episode of *Fat Albert*, Fat Albert tells Suede that he has a hygiene problem.

Deceitful/Law-breaking/Dishonest

A character is deceitful/law-breaking if his/her verbal or nonverbal behavior is marked by deceptiveness, dishonesty, is misleading, or violates the law.

For example, in the “Lying” episode of *Fat Albert*, Edward tells the gang a tall tale about wrestling alligators.

Industrious

A character is industrious if his/her verbal or nonverbal behavior is marked by diligence, zealously, or business-mindedness.

For example, in the “Makeover” episode of *The Proud Family*, Penny does not give up on Zoë’s makeover. “Come on, girls!” she cries. In the “Creativity” episode of *Fat Albert*, the boys wash windows and collect bottles to buy musical instruments.

Lazy

A character is lazy if his/her verbal or nonverbal behavior is marked by indolence, slothfulness, or is disinclined to activity or exertion.

For example, in the “Makeover” episode of *The Proud Family*, Oscar Proud refuses to make dinner for the family, until Trudy beats him. In the “TV or Not TV” episode of *Fat Albert*, Monroe does not want to go outside to play because he only wants to watch television.

Athletic

A character is athletic if his/her verbal or nonverbal behavior is marked by vigorousness or activeness, a talent or interest in athletics or sports, or is sporty.

For example, in the “Little Tough Guy” episode of *Fat Albert*, Fat Albert displays his athletic ability by trying to teach Pee Wee how to play different sports.

Other

If a character’s verbal or nonverbal behavior is marked by none of the categories listed, then please select *other*. However, please only use other when ***no other category can be chosen***. Please use the line to name an adjective that does describe the character’s behavior.

Musical

A character is musical if his/her verbal or nonverbal behavior is marked by an interest or a talent for music.

For example, in the “Tween Idol” episode of *The Proud Family*, LaCienega shows of her vocal abilities. In most of the episodes of *Fat Albert*, the gang performs a song to reinforce the moral lesson of the show.

Loud/Talkative

A character is loud/talkative if his/her verbal or nonverbal behavior is marked by clamorousness, noisiness, raucousness, rowdiness, or is given to tedious conversation.

For example, in the “Monkey Business” episode of *The Proud Family*, Oscar yells, demanding for Mr. Chips to play the piano.

Aggressive/Quick-tempered/Argumentative

A character is aggressive/quick-tempered/argumentative if his/her verbal or nonverbal behavior is marked by combative readiness, or is easily angered or disputatious.

For example, in the “Makeover” episode of *The Proud Family*, Oscar Proud argues with the commercial director about the twins being naked. In the “The Bully” episode of *Fat Albert*, the resident bully threatens to beat up Bill.

Witty

A character is witty if his/her verbal or nonverbal behavior is marked by a quickness or readiness to see or express illuminating or amusing relationships or insights, or makes wisecracks.

For example, in the “Monkey Business” episode of *The Proud Family*, Oscar declares that he is “trying to be hospitable,” not “go to the hospitable.” In the “Four Eyes” episode of *Fat Albert*, Russell tells Rudy he’s “like school in the summer: no class.”

Arrogant/Boastful

A character is arrogant/boastful if his/her verbal or nonverbal behavior is marked by a sense of overbearing self-worth or self-importance, bragging, pretentiousness, or showiness.

For example, in the “Teacher’s Pet” episode of *The Proud Family*, Oscar says that he was the “coolest cat in middle school.”

Please remember that you will use one coding sheet per scene. After each scene, get a new coding sheet.

VITA

Siobhan Elizabeth Smith was born on March 23, 1980, in Pine Bluff, Arkansas. She graduated from Xavier University of Louisiana in 2002 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in mass communication. Upon graduation, she began her study in the Manship School of Mass Communication at Louisiana State University. She will receive her master's degree in mass communication August 2004.