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TELEVISION AND MARRIAGE: AN ANALYSIS OF TELEVISION'S
INFLUENCE ON THE PUBLIC'S PERCEPTION OF
ROMANCE & CONFLICT IN MARRIAGE

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Television and Marriage:
An Analysis of Television's Influence on
the Public's Perception of Romance
& Conflict in Marriage

By

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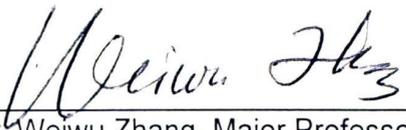
THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
of Master of Arts in Communication Arts from the
College of Arts and Letters Graduate Studies Program
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I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Crissy Marie Laubach-Young titled, "Television and Marriage: An Analysis of Television's Influence on the Public's Perception of Marriage." I have examined the thesis for content and form, and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Communication Arts from the College of Arts and Letters Graduate Studies Program at Austin Peay State University.



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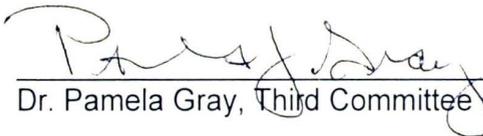
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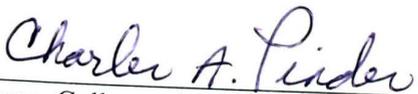


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ABSTRACT

Gerbner's cultivation theory has been applied to various television effects. Most commonly, it has been applied to the perception of violence. There has been little research, however, on how television's portrayal of marriage affects the public's perceptions of marriage. An experiment was conducted to determine if television does influence the public's perceptions of marriage. The hypothesis that as a result of watching marriage portrayed on television, individuals will attempt to incorporate characteristics they deem valued, as depicted on television, into their marriage was partially supported. Specifically, results indicated that television's portrayal of married couples using humor to lighten the situation affected the public's perceptions of the use of humor during an argument. The experiment did not find enough evidence to support the claim that people who watch marriage portrayed on television will rate romanticism as a more desirable characteristic of marriage than will those who are not exposed to the television episodes. Implications of these findings are discussed.

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Television has become an important part of daily life and for some people life revolves around television programming (de la Luz Casas Pérez, 2005). What many people do not recognize is the level of influence television can have on their perceptions. How many times after watching a television program have you been left wanting the big-screen television that was displayed in the character's living room, or wished you had a relationship similar to what was reflected on television? According to Sharp and Ganong (2000), being exposed to media images may contribute to the development of unrealistic perceptions and beliefs.

Psychologists and other professionals have directed the high divorce rate as a result of people's unrealistic expectations of marriage. In an interview with Ladies Home Journal, Dr. Phil McGraw comments, "What creates the biggest problem in marriage is not what happens once you are in it, it's whether it conforms to what you expected to happen," (Chin, 2006). Where are these unrealistic expectations of marriage derived from? Some may argue that variables such as changes in society's mores and economic factors are the cause behind unrealistic marital expectations. Still others argue the media are to blame. So, the question to ask is, to what extent does television influence people's perceptions of marriage?

Beginning with Gerbner, media's effects on public perceptions have been extensively researched. Gerbner and his associates investigated media's influence on public perceptions and found that the heaviest viewers of television were more inclined to be cultivated by its depiction of images and accept

television as reality (Perse, 2001). Gerbner introduced the cultivation theory which hypothesized that the more time one spends watching television, the more likely he or she is to report perceptions of “social reality that can be traced to television portrayals,” (Wimmer & Dominick, 2003, p. 413).

Gerbner’s theory has been applied to various television effects on public perception. The most common variable studied in association with the cultivation theory is television’s influence on the perception of violence. There has been little research conducted, however, on how television’s portrayal of marriage affects the public’s perceptions of marriage. The public needs to be made aware of the level of influence television can have on their perceptions. This study aspires to educate the public on the effects of television viewing and to caution them against accepting television’s portrayal of marriage as reality. Perhaps there is a link between television’s portrayal of marriage and the public’s misconceptions of marriage that factor into the high divorce rate. The intent of this study is to expand past research on the cultivation theory to contribute additional information in this area of mass communication research. The objective is to provide information on how the cultivation theory research might be extended to gain a clearer understanding of the influence of television viewing on individuals.

An experiment will be conducted to investigate the level of influence television’s portrayal of marriage has on the public’s perceptions of marriage. This paper will begin with a synopsis of the various phases the cultivation theory has undergone as it has advanced throughout the years. Next, past research on

the cultivation theory will be overviewed to emphasize the impact television has on public perception and to highlight the breadth of variables that have been researched in the past. Subsequently, a brief evaluation of marital dimensions will be discussed and studies regarding television's influence on the perception of marriage will be overviewed. Additionally, hypotheses and details of the experiment will be disclosed. Finally, implications of television's influence on perceptions of marriage will be assessed.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Background

Gerbner's cultivation theory is one of the most largely studied theories regarding the effects of television viewing. Perse (2001) defines media effects as entailing both cognitive and affective results. Cognitive effects involve the acquisition of information, such as what people learn and how beliefs are structured. Affective effects include the development of attitudes.

As previously mentioned, the cultivation theory is defined as the influence heavy television viewing has on perceptions of social reality that are consistent with the view of the world as presented on television (Wimmer & Dominick, 2003). A major assumption underlying the cultivation theory is that audience members are non-selective and ritualistic in their viewing habits. This presumption negates the "uses and gratification approach" which defines the audience as being active members. According to the uses and gratification approach, an active audience gives the media less power as a result of audience members making conscious decisions regarding their use of the media (Perse, 2001; Severin & Tankard, 1997). Another major assumption of the cultivation theory is that the emphasis is on the overall exposure to TV, without taking into consideration specific programs.

The original cultivation theory was first based on comparisons between light and heavy television viewers. Upon duplication of Gerbner's study, evidence found that the relationship between television viewing and perceptions of reality could be influenced by other variables. Specifically, researcher Paul

Hirsch wasn't fully convinced of the cultivation theory and believed that other variables were involved (Severin & Tankard, 1997).

As a result, mainstreaming and resonance were introduced as two new components of the cultivation theory. Gerbner established these components to refute former critics of the theory. According to Wimmer and Dominick (2003), when television supports what people see in real life, the increase in the cultivation effect is ascribed to resonance. Mainstreaming is when heavy TV viewing "washes out" perception differences usually attributed to other factors, such as demographics and society. Mainstreaming and resonance take into consideration that heavy television viewing might impact people differently. Rubin, Perse and Taylor found evidence that television viewing did influence perceptions of reality; however, they also found the influence was program-specific and dependent upon program content (Severin & Tankard, 1997).

Accordingly, first-order beliefs and second-order beliefs were introduced by Gerbner to further refine the cultivation theory. First-order beliefs are those relating to various facts about reality. Second-order beliefs refer to speculations from these facts to general expectations. Researchers believe second-order beliefs are deduced from first-order beliefs. Throughout the years, the cultivation theory has transformed to keep pace with the evolving field of mass communication research.

The cultivation theory does have limitations. According to Aubrey, Harrison, Kramer and Yellin (2003), one limitation to the cultivation approach is the assumption that the amount of television viewing will predict viewers'

attitudes and beliefs. This assumption ignores the viewing preferences of the audience. Critics question whether television shapes people's perceptions or if people watch television to reinforce preconceived concepts. The cultivation theory also makes the assumption that the more media content is consumed, the greater the likelihood of its effects.

An additional limitation is that the cultivation theory has not found conclusive evidence on how impact differs by gender and culture. Others question whether participants in cultivation theory research overestimate television viewing and its level of influence. If a researcher controls a number of variables at the same time during the study, the outcome strictly attributed to television is rather minimal (Severin & Tankard, 1997). Paterno (1998) comments that even minimal influences on social realities are important to understand and can greatly impact the public's perceptions.

Television's Effects on Public Perceptions

Some of the first cultivation data collected came from studies regarding people's perceptions of violence. Today, it is the most common variable studied regarding the cultivation theory. Gerbner's results found that heavy television viewers were more inclined to overestimate the pervasiveness of violence in society and the likelihood of being involved in violence (Wimmer & Dominick, 2003). Some researchers did not wholly believe in the cultivation theory and claimed there were other variables that contributed to the influence on perceptions of reality.

Van den Bulck (2004) conducted a study to determine which of three hypotheses offered the best explanation for the effects on television viewing. Van den Bulck studied and compared the cultivation hypothesis, mood management hypothesis and the withdrawal hypothesis, as well as the null model. The mood management hypothesis claims that people who are afraid will watch more crime-related television programs to learn how to manage their fear. The withdrawal hypothesis claims that frightened people are afraid to leave their house, which leads to heavy television viewing. Van den Bulck's null hypothesis states that viewers will be impacted in ways that differ too much to show up through quantitative analysis.

Questionnaires were distributed to households in Belgium measuring which hypothesis was a higher factor in people's perception and the fear of crime. There is a possibility culture could have influenced the results. Van den Bulck's study found no significant results on the roles the mood management and withdrawal hypotheses play in television viewing and the fear of crime. The cultivation theory was determined to be a better explanation of television's influence on the public perception of crime when compared to the null hypothesis. Van den Bulck found that people's experience with crime was not directly related to fear, whereas television viewing was. As a result of this study, Van den Bulck provides evidence that the cultivation theory offers the best explanation for the effects of television viewing on public perception of crime.

Some researchers question if other variables can decrease the influence television has on public perception of reality. Busselle (2003) conducted a study

to explore the possibility that television not only influences people's perceptions of crime, but also plays a role in increasing interpersonal communication about crime. Specifically, Busselle researched if parents who watch television programs with crime communicated more frequently with their children about crime. He then explored if communication influenced the children's perceptions of crime. Busselle hypothesized that interpersonal communication about violence would be a deterrent on the level of influence television has on public perception. Even though this study was limited to college-age children, research findings demonstrate a link between parent's television viewing habits and their communication about crime, and their children's perceptions of crime. Busselle's study expands past research by introducing the interpersonal communication variable as a possible solution to the level of influence television has on public perception.

Krcmar and Vieira, Jr. (2005) also found that communication plays a role in the level of influence television has on public perception. They conducted a study to determine the impact television viewing and family environment can have on a child's moral reasoning and the role television violence plays in a child's moral reasoning. Krcmar and Vieira, Jr. found no significant link between parent's and their children's moral reasoning. They did find that television violence does have a negative impact on children's moral reasoning. Although parent's perceptions of violence did not directly influence their children's perspectives, Krcmar and Vieira, Jr. did find that family communication was an

important factor in the level of influence television had on their children's moral reasoning.

Since most research on the cultivation theory has been conducted on specific variables such as violence, Shrum (1995) conducted a study on how television viewing influences social reality construction. Although a little outdated, Shrum's study concentrated solely on Gerbner's first-order cultivation beliefs by using the heuristic mechanism. Findings from his research suggest that passive television viewers are more likely to be influenced by the cultivation effect as a result of heuristic processing. Shrum's research provides evidence that results from other cultivation studies is justifiable.

Hollywood's influence on women's self-image most recently has been a widely researched and debated topic. Is television's portrayal of superstars the reason behind the decreasing satisfaction of women's self-image? Hendriks (2002) devised a study to analyze idealized television images' influence on female perceptions of body satisfaction and self-image. Hendriks used both the cultivation theory and social cognitive theory as the basis for her research. The results from Hendriks' study are important due to original research in this area. Although her research is based on a review of literature, Hendriks builds a strong case for media's influence on body image. As a result, her findings were inconclusive, but demonstrate the necessity of future research on factors moderating the link between television exposure and body expectations, and the influence of ideal mediated portrayals on behavior and attitudes. Hendriks' study

provides yet another variable that needs to be further researched regarding the cultivation theory.

Research conducted by Harmon (2001) incorporated perceptions of materialism in relation to the cultivation theory. Harmon conducted a secondary analysis on this subject. The intent of Harmon's study was to provide further evidence on television's influence on public perception of materialistic value. As Wimmer and Dominick (2003) explain, secondary analyses often limit the researcher to boundaries of the original data collected. Furthermore, there is absolutely no guarantee that the data collected is worthy. Harmon's findings found a strong link in measures of materialistic attitudes, but results were not definitive enough to provide additional evidence in this area. Harmon suggests the cultivation theory is too broad of a model to understand television's influence on perceptions of materialism. Further research on this subject is needed in order to determine if the cultivation theory can be applied to people's perceptions of materialism.

Researchers of the cultivation theory suggest that other important variables such as age, gender, education and culture play a role between television viewing and influence on the public's perceptions of reality (Severin & Tankard, 1997). According to Kellner, a media culture has emerged which "helps produce the fabric of everyday life...shaping political views and social behavior, and providing the materials out of which people forge their very identities." He continues, "Media culture also provides the materials out of which many people construct their sense of class, of ethnicity and race of nationality..." (1995, p. 1).

De la Luz Casas Pérez (2005) studied the concept of cultural identity regarding the viewing of telenovelas (soap operas) in Mexico. Others have found that soap operas are considered real by many television viewers (Liebes & Livingstone, 1994). De la Luz Casas Pérez found that over the years, Mexican television has changed its content to culturally represent society at a particular time. She concludes that telenovelas do have such a significant impact on the public that they help construct cultural identity in Mexico.

Strelitz (2002) also conducted a study on media exposure and identity formation and found that culture played a significant role in his findings. Strelitz researched the relationship between television use, identity formation and the dispersion of global culture among students in South Africa. These students isolated themselves from the rest of the student body when watching TV at a viewing space they referred to as the "homeland." After numerous interviews and attending their viewing sessions, Strelitz determined that cultural identity was a key factor in the reasoning behind the "homeland" students isolating themselves. He found that the television programs these students watched played a vital role in cementing their identities. His findings reveal that culture, as well as television, contributes to the construction of social identity.

Press (1989) conducted a comparative study on how working-class and middle-class women identify with television characters and differ in their perceptions on the reality of television content. Her research found that working-class women criticized television programs for their lack of realism and were more inclined to evaluate programs partly on their success in mimicking real-life.

Middle-class women were more likely to personally identify with characters and their problems. Press' study illustrates that class differences are important when studying television and the level of influence on perceptions of reality.

One last variable that deserves to be mentioned due to heightened media attention is the perception of sexual expectations due to television viewing. Aubrey, Harrison, Kramer and Yellin (2003) expanded past cultivation theory research by analyzing gender differences in college students' perceptions of sex. Past cultivation research neglected to consistently show when and why gender differences exist. The primary goal of their study was to determine if exposure to sexually oriented television programs and sexual expectations differed by gender. Aubrey et al. solicited questionnaires to 202 university undergraduates. Findings demonstrate that sexual expectations, as a result of exposure to sexually oriented television programs, were dependent upon gender. Their findings further illustrate that television helps shape men's perception to seek as much sex as possible and female's perceptions to determine when to engage in sexual relations. This study provides evidence that future researchers need to take into consideration gender and other demographics when studying the cultivation analysis.

Other common variables analyzed are television's influence on the public perception of pornography, minority stereotyping (Severin & Tankard, 1997), and civic engagement (Hooghe, 2002).

In conclusion, the cultivation theory has been widely studied and modified over the years. A great deal of research on this theory, with a concentration on

identifying key variables, is needed to expand our knowledge of the cultivation process.

Dimensions of Marriage and Marital Expectations

Today, television is saturated with programs featuring an assortment of married couples. When analyzing the dimensions of marriage, it is important to discuss marriage categories. Fitzpatrick has extensively researched the dimensions of marriage and categorizes them into three main areas: traditionals, independents and separates (Stewart & Logan, 1993). Traditionals are those who have more conventional ideas about the roles each spouse should play. The traditional relationship is characterized by interdependence, with an emphasis on sharing. Conflicts are discussed, rather than avoided.

Independent marriages have many nonconventional ideas. Spouses commonly see themselves as autonomous and are highly expressive which often leads to conflict. Independent marriages emphasize originality and change in their marriage. Separates are spouses who are not dependent on each other. They tend to avoid conflict altogether, and focus on being autonomous. It is important to note that marriages are often mixed and will not always fit into exactly one of these categories (Stewart & Logan, 1993; Signorielli, 1991).

While television portrays all three types of marriage, the most common one depicted on television is the traditional marriage. According to Signorielli (1991), television presents divorced or separated characters that refer to marriage as negative. However, conflict is rarely found in television marriages.

Signorielli states that most television programs present an ambivalent picture of marriage. Sitcoms especially present happily married couples and a positive view of marriage, whereas serial dramas present a less positive view of marriage (Signorielli, 1991).

Douglas (1996) is renowned for studying television's affects on public perception, and in particular, the portrayal of families in domestic comedies. According to Douglas, television families offer lessons on family life and affect how people perceive family. While his study focuses on the family as a whole, his findings are significant and demonstrate to what degree people perceive television as reality. Findings from his study illustrate people judge television's portrayal of family as being moderately realistic, even when the television family was judged undesirable. Douglas believes reality ratings would have been much higher, but attributes the lower ratings to television humor and participants rating the television family against their own family. He claims that participants tend to rate their own families as more desirable. Past research by Douglas and Olson (1996) also have found evidence that television portrayals of family affect the way people think about family.

Critics such as Shulman, Rosenheim and Knafo (1999) believe that perceptions and expectations of marriage are derived from other sources apart from the media. They conducted a study to determine to what degree parental marital expectations influence adolescent marital expectations. Results conclude that parent's marital expectations shape the marital expectations of their children. Specifically, Shulman et al. found maternal expectations and the quality of

attachment to her child(ren) provided the best explanation in the variance of adolescent's marital expectations. Fathers contributed more on the expectation of an adolescent's individuality than marital expectations. This study does provide evidence that other factors besides the media influence the public's perception of marriage.

Sharp and Ganong (2000) conducted a study to explore the level of influence integrative teaching techniques have in altering college students' unrealistic and romantic beliefs about marriage. They hypothesized that students who are exposed to integrative teaching about marital beliefs would lower their unrealistic expectations and romantic beliefs more than those students not exposed to integrative teaching. Their hypothesis was only partially supported. Results showed that the integrative teaching group significantly lowered their romantic beliefs, but there was little variation between the two groups' unrealistic expectations. Sharp and Ganong believe this is due to the integrative teaching activities focusing more on romantic beliefs than unrealistic marital expectations.

Bradford, Rhodes and Edison (2005) conducted a study to determine how the media affects people's expectations of romantic relationships. Specifically, they examined the accessibility of relationship constructs as a method for media affects, both as a result of habitual and short-term media exposure (Bradford, Rhodes & Edison, 2005). Results revealed that exposure to media portrayals of relationships lead to people holding more idealistic expectations of relationships and to more accessible relationship-related themes.

While considering interpersonal agents and personal experiences to factor into perceptions on marriage, Signorielli (1991) believes mass communication plays a vital role in shaping public perception of marriage. She states, "Television may be the single most common and pervasive source of conceptions and actions related to marriage," (1991, p. 121).

Signorielli conducted a study to examine the portrayal of marriage on television. A content analysis revealed that 85% of prime-time programs depict a theme of "home-family-marriage." She also distributed a survey to high school seniors to determine if there was a relationship between television viewing and inconsistent feelings about marriage. Signorielli's research revealed that television viewing was indeed connected to the participant's prediction of getting married, having children and staying married to the same person. This study provides evidence that there is a relationship between television viewing, and expectations of marriage and interpersonal relationships. The results indicate that the public believes their marriage will mirror the marriages portrayed on television. Signorielli concludes that television serves to cultivate perceptions of marriage and intimate interpersonal relationships.

Segrin and Nabi (2002) conducted a study to provide evidence to support the claim that the media are a major contributor to the public's marital expectations and perceptions. Surveying university students that have never been married, they sought to determine if a correlation exists between television viewing, and people's intentions to marry and idealistic expectations of marriage. Segrin and Nabi's research found that marital perceptions and expectations were

program-specific. Overall, their study provided evidence that television viewing had a negative correlation on the public's marital expectations and perceptions. They did find, however, that programs such as romantic comedies and soap operas positively influenced their marital expectations and perceptions. Although the correlation may depend on the type of programming, this study provides evidence that there is a correlation between television viewing and people's perceptions of marriage. Segrin and Nabi conclude that the media do play a role in developing and reinforcing the public's beliefs about marriage.

Overall, there has been little research to date on television's influence on the public perception of marriage, outside of the studies previously mentioned by Signorielli, and Segrin and Nabi. What little research exists, specific effects have not been singled out. The purpose of this study is to determine to what extent television's portrayal of marriage influences the public's perceptions of marriage. Specifically, the paper will address the following hypotheses.

H1: As a result of watching marriage portrayed on television, individuals will attempt to incorporate characteristics they deem valued, as depicted by television, into their marriage.

Television's portrayal of marriage is inclined to promote unrealistic perceptions of marriage. While many factors contribute to the development of unrealistic perceptions, television is considered to have considerable impact (Sharp & Ganong, 2000). "People tend to use fictional portrayals of marriage as a source of information and guidance even when they realize that such portrayals are unrealistic or even distorted" (Paterno, 1998, p. 3). Research demonstrates the mass media have considerable influence on romanticized and idealized

views of marriage and many people enter into marriage with romanticized expectations (Segrin & Nabi, 2002; Weaver & Ganong, 2004).

H1a: People who watch marriage portrayed on television will rate romanticism as a more desirable characteristic of marriage than will those who are not exposed to television episodes involving marriage.

Research indicates that higher levels of unrealistic perceptions are associated with less marital satisfaction (Sharp & Ganong, 2000). If this study discovers a link between television exposure and a high rate of romanticism, which leads to unrealistic perceptions of marriage, there could be evidence to support the claim that the media are a contributing factor in the high divorce rate.

According to Wilmot and Hocker (1998), the presence of conflict is not a determinant of marriage quality; instead, how couples handle conflict determines the quality of the relationship. Research demonstrates that positive affect (humor and affection) during conflict is a predictor of marital stability among couples. Higher everyday interactions are attributed to couples' ability to use humor and affection during conflict (Driver & Gottman, 2004). Couples who learn to use positive affect (humor and affection) often de-escalate conflict (Sherlock, 2000).

H1b: People who watch television episodes presenting married couples using humor to de-escalate or resolve a conflict, will rate humor as a desirable mechanism for solving marital disagreements than will those who have not been exposed to episodes depicting married couples using humor during a conflict.

Past research indicates that humor during conflict is a predictor of marital stability. Humor is considered one of the keys to a stable and satisfactory long-term marriage, (Bachand & Caron, 2001; Kaslow & Robison, 1996). Therefore,

not all of television's influence can be labeled negative. By depicting married couples using humor during conflict, perhaps television can teach people to mirror the use of humor during disagreements, which in turn, can lead to more satisfying marriages.

METHODOLOGY

The researcher conducted an experiment to test the aforementioned hypothesis and its two subparts. Only a posttest was used due to the researcher's concern of subject sensitization.

Sample

Participants in this study were 18-27 year old undergraduate students enrolled in an entry-level journalism course at a northwestern university. The researcher strived to have an equal number of male and female subjects. Participation in the experiment, which was conducted in the regular classroom setting, was completely voluntary. To increase subject participation, students were given extra credit. Young adults were selected as the target population due to past research providing evidence that the cultivation analysis has the greatest effect on the younger population (Paterno, 1998).

Procedures

To ensure external validity, participants were randomly assigned to one of two groups. Group 1 was exposed to a series of clips taken from television programs depicting married couples. The second group was the control group and did not receive the experimental treatment—exposure to television programming depicting married couples. Both groups were then asked to fill out a questionnaire. Any variance in responses between these two groups was attributed to the exposure of television programs.

Television programs for this experiment were selected from a current TV listing. Both currently airing and syndicated television programs were selected for this study. Only situational comedies were used for the experiment due to high television viewing and the increased likelihood of the presentation of married couples (Signorielli, 1991). The shows were recorded over a three-day period from Tuesday, November 26, 2006, through Thursday, November 28, 2006, and again on Tuesday, January 16, 2007. Specific television programs selected for the experiment included: *Yes, Dear*; *King of Queens*; *My Wife and Kids*; *Til Death Do Us Part* and *According to Jim*. The television shows were recorded on four different stations—TBS, WGN, The CW and KYES, a locally owned station and UPN affiliate. The selected television programs typically aired during the afternoon and early evening. On any given weekday, *Yes, Dear* aired an average of twice per day; *King of Queens* four times per day; *My Wife and Kids* once per day, *Til Death Do Us Part* twice per day and *According to Jim* once per day.

Specific clip selection of these television programs was based on the following characteristics: 1) couples interaction 2) word choice such as the use of sarcasm, humor, and compliments, 3) body language such as touching, kissing, embracing and angry hand gestures, 4) facial expressions, 5) tone of voice, 6) couples arguing or engaging in conflict with one another and 7) the major themes of each episode.

The selected clips were edited together to make a nine-minute segment; four and a half minutes each of clips showing couples engaged in conflict and romance.

Mini Content Analysis of TV Clips

To ensure intercoder reliability, the study utilized two different coders. The intercoder percent of agreement was approximately 94%. The coders found that overall, conflict portrayed in these clips was a little exaggerated and the use of sarcasm, rhetoric and humor to lighten the situation was prevalent. In general, romance portrayed in these clips was glamorized and a little far fetched. The romantic scenes frequently displayed over the top romantic gestures (see Appendix A).

Measures

The questionnaire (see Appendix B) is comprised of four sections and a small demographic segment. The researcher felt it was important to include age, gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status on the survey since past research demonstrates that these variables play a role in measuring television's affects on the public (Severin & Tankard, 1997; Aubrey et. al., 2003).

The first section of the questionnaire consists of a variety of questions to address subpart A of the previously stated hypothesis. These questions test the role romance plays in a relationship, how romance compares to other characteristics of marriage and if subjects are content with the level of romance

in their relationship. The section also consists of one open-ended question, "*What makes a person romantic?*" to determine what characteristics or actions individuals determine to depict romance.

Questions in section two of the survey address subpart B of the hypothesis previously stated. These questions reveal how individuals respond to and manage conflict. A series of questions using the Likert scale will determine if individuals approve or disapprove of the use of humor during conflict.

Section three contains six questions using the Likert scale to measure individual's perceptions of marriage. The researcher included the question, "*I want to have a marriage like my parents,*" because past research demonstrates a parent's marriage also is a determinant in an individual's perception of marriage (Shulman, Rosenheim, & Knafo, 1999). Whether or not individuals look at other couples' marriages as being idealized also was included on the questionnaire. The researcher purposely placed this section after the segments on romanticism and conflict to keep from influencing the participant's responses.

The last section pertains to each individual's television use. In order to determine if individuals are light or heavy television viewers, a question asking how many hours per day the individual engages in watching television was incorporated into the survey. Past research illustrates that television's effect on people's perceptions of marriage is program specific (Severin & Tankard, 1997). As a result, the survey contains a question on the type of television programming the individual most frequently views. Questions on how sitcoms make people feel and if individuals admire the relationships of television couples also were

included in section four. The researcher intentionally placed questions regarding television use at the end of the survey to help prevent participants from deciphering the purpose of the survey.

FINDINGS

Descriptive Statistics

Of the 91 students enrolled in the entry-level journalism course, only 50 chose to participate in the study. A total of 23 participants were in the control group and 27 participants in the experimental group. The average age of the subjects was 19.8 years old, with only 8% being 23 years of age or older. Fifty-four percent were male and 46% were female. Every participant was single, although many of the subjects further stated they were currently in a relationship. Approximately 92% of the subjects have never been married, however, 8% chose not to answer this particular survey question.

The researcher had anticipated there would be more ethnic diversity amongst the students. Eighty-six percent of the participants were Caucasian/white, 4% were Hispanic, 4% were Native American, 4% were "other" and 2% chose not to answer the question.

Approximately 82% of the participants' income level was under \$10,000; with 12% between \$10,000 and \$19,999; 2% between \$20,000 and \$29,999; and 4% again chose not to address the question. The mean was 1.2 and the standard deviation .4. The researcher was not surprised that the majority of the subject's income level was below \$10,000 as most of the participants are full-time students.

The survey includes several questions measuring romance which addresses subpart A of the hypothesis (see Table 2 below).

Table 2: Questions measuring romance

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Rate yourself as being romantic	7.0	1.9
Content with level of romance in your life	1.2	2.4
More romantic than significant other	2.3	3.0
Open-minded in learning ways to improve romance	2.1	2.8
Level of affection in relationship is adequate	3.1	3.7
Compare romance level to other couples	2.0	3.3
Rate romanticism as important characteristic	7.5	1.7
Better to stay at home than go out	3.2	.9
Touching is important component of a relationship	4.5	.6
Compliments are an important component of a relationship	4.2	.7
Intimacy is an important component of a relationship	4.4	.7
Chivalry is a concept of the past	2.5	1.0
How often you tell significant other "I love you"	3.8	3.0

Approximately 52% of the subjects said they were not content with the level of romance in their life, 40% said they were content and the question was not applicable for 8%. Fifty-eight percent felt they were more romantic than their partners and 80% were open-minded in learning new ways to improve their skills in romance. Fifty-six percent of the subjects felt the level of affection in their relationships was adequate, 16% felt it was not adequate and 28% marked the question was not applicable to them.

Eighty-eight percent of the subjects rated themselves as five or higher, on a scale of one to ten, as being romantic. Ninety-four percent of the subjects rated romance as a five or higher, on a scale from one to ten, as an important characteristic of a relationship.

Variation in how subjects rated themselves differed by gender. Men rated themselves higher than women on being romantic. Women rated romance as an important characteristic of a relationship higher than men. The researcher concludes that just as subjects tend to downplay not so desirable characteristics such as the number of hours they watch television, they also will more highly rate desirable characteristics such as their level of romance and romance as an important characteristic of a relationship.

The survey also measured touching, compliments and intimacy as important components of a relationship. Touching was rated the highest with a mean of 4.5, followed by intimacy with a mean of 4.4 and compliments came in last with a mean of 4.2.

Approximately 52% of the students disagreed to strongly disagreed that chivalry is a concept of the past. Thirty-six percent of the students were neutral and only 12% agreed to strongly agreed with the above statement.

The survey included a question to measure how often the subject's say, "I love you" to their significant other. Forty-six percent say, "I love you" 1-2 times per day, 16% 2-3 times per week, 8% say it both 4-5 times per week and weekly, and 22% marked "other." The "other" category included responses such as not

applicable, it depends on the relationship, as often as possible, haven't said, "I love you" yet and five times per day.

Six questions measure how the subjects respond to and manage conflict which addresses subpart B of the hypothesis (see Table 3 below).

Table 3: Questions measuring how conflict is responded to and managed

	Mean	Std. Deviation
You are more likely to (walk away or confront the person) when in an argument	1.7	.5
I handle a problem once it arises	2.0	.6
When arguing, I avoid discussing the problem	2.3	1.2
In an argument, I use humor to lighten the situation	3.4	1.0
I am offended when humor is used in an argument	2.5	1.0
During an argument, I take offense when the subject matter is not taken seriously	3.6	1.0

Sixty-eight percent of the subjects will confront a person when in an argument and 30% will walk away. The majority of the subjects handle a problem once it arises. The mean was 2.0 which represents the subjects "often" handle a problem once it surfaces. Fifty-two percent disagree that when arguing, they avoid discussing the problem, 24% strongly disagree, 4% were neutral, 14% agree and 6% strongly agree. Overall, this study found that the majority of the subjects are confrontational once a problem arises and open to discussing the problem.

The other three questions addressing subpart B of the hypothesis focus on the use of humor during an argument. Thirty-eight percent of the subjects

agreed they use humor to lighten the situation when in an argument, 10% agreed, 40% were neutral, and 6% both disagreed and strongly disagreed.

Forty-two percent of participants disagreed that they are offended by the use of humor in an argument, 12% strongly disagreed, 32% were neutral, 10% agreed and only 4% strongly disagreed.

The subjects responded differently to the question regarding being offended when the subject matter isn't taken seriously. Fifty percent agreed with this statement, 14% strongly agreed, 24% were neutral, 8% disagreed and 4% strongly disagreed.

The researcher concludes that participants are able to differentiate between the use of humor during an argument and when the subject matter is not taken seriously. The questionnaire responses demonstrate that the use of humor during an argument is viewed as a more positive mechanism in lightening the situation; however, the situation not being taken seriously is viewed in a more negative light.

Section three of the questionnaire includes a series of six questions measuring the subject's perception of marriage (see Table 4 below).

Table 4: Questions measuring perception of marriage

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Marriage is an institution	3.5	1.1
I would rather be married than date	2.8	1.2
Marriage is a natural part of life	3.8	1.1
I want a marriage like my parents have	2.9	1.5
I look to other couples' relationships and perceive them to be ideal	2.8	1.1
A perfect marriage does not exist	3.6	1.2

Forty-two percent disagreed to strongly disagreed that marriage is an institution, 30% were neutral and 28% agreed to strongly agreed. Approximately 42% disagreed to strongly disagreed they would rather be married than date, 30% were neutral and 28% agreed to strongly agreed. The researcher anticipated more women than men would agree they would rather be married than date, and was surprised to find the reverse was true for this study.

Approximately 70% of the subjects agreed that marriage is a natural part of life. Again, more men than women agreed with this statement. The students were fairly evenly split with their responses to the question referencing wanting a marriage like their parents have. Forty-two percent agreed, 46% disagreed and 12% were neutral. The researcher included this question on the questionnaire as a result of Shulman, Rosenheim and Knafo's (1999) findings that a parent's marriage is a factor in their child(ren)'s perception of marriage. Findings from this questionnaire neither reinforce nor negate Shulman, Rosenheim and Knafo's results.

Thirty-six percent of the subjects disagreed to strongly disagreed they look at other couples' marriages and perceive them to be ideal, 38% were neutral and 26% agreed to strongly agreed. On this particular question, more women than men agreed with the above statement.

The researcher thought it was interesting that 40% of the subjects compare their relationship to other couples, yet the majority disagreed they look to other couple's relationships and perceive them to be ideal. These results suggest that the public do compare their relationships to others, yet they don't necessarily perceive other's relationships to be ideal.

Approximately 66% of the students agreed with the statement, "A perfect marriage does not exist." Again, there was a significant difference in responses between men and women. Overall, the results of this study demonstrate that gender does play a role in the subject's responses measuring the perception of marriage.

Section four of the questionnaire measured television use (see Table 5 below).

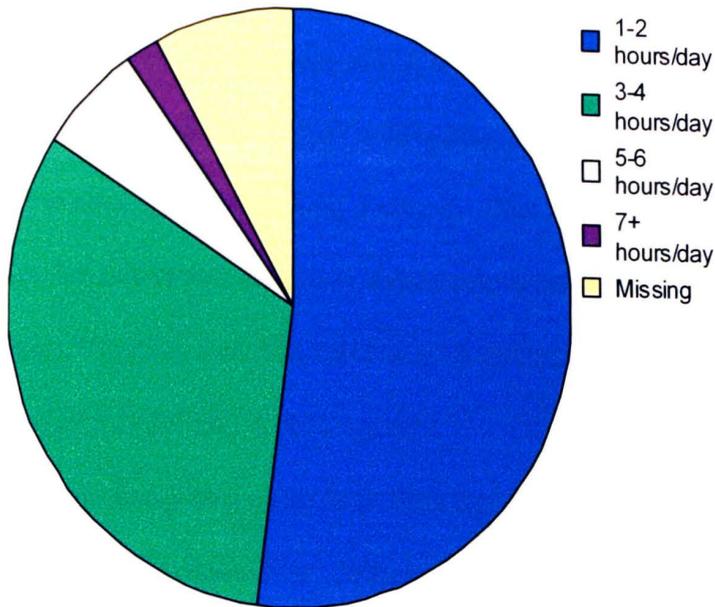
Table 5: Questions measuring television use

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Hours per day television is watched	1.5	.7
Television is watched most often in the (morning, afternoon, evening)	2.9	.3
Do you watch dramas	.4	.5
Do you watch game shows	.0	.2
Do you watch reality TV	.2	.4
Do you watch science fiction	.0	.1

Do you watch sitcoms	.5	.5
Do you watch soap operas	.1	.2
Do you watch talk shows	.2	.4
Do you watch "other" programs	.4	.5
Watch TV for education purposes	.2	.4
Watch TV to escape	.2	.4
Watch TV to unwind	.6	.5
Watch TV when I'm bored	.4	.5
Watch TV for "other" reasons	.2	.4
After watching a sitcom I feel happy	.3	.5
After watching a sitcom I feel sad	.0	.0
After watching a sitcom I feel envious	.0	.2
After watching a sitcom I feel content	.4	.5
After watching a sitcom I feel "other"	.3	.5
I am able to see how others live by watching a sitcom	2.4	1.0
I admire the relationships couples have on television	2.7	1.0

Of the 50 students, none watch TV in the morning, 8% watch it in the afternoon, 86% watch it in the evening and 6% chose not to answer the question. Fifty-two percent of the subjects watch TV 1-2 hours per day, 32% watch it 3-4 hours per day, 6% watch it 5-6 hours per day, 2% watch it 7 hours or more each day and 8% chose not to answer the question (see Figure 1). Therefore, these students would not be classified as heavy television viewers.

Figure 1: Hours per day television is watched



Of the types of television programs students watch most often, sitcoms led with 44%, followed by “other” with 40%, next was drama with 38%, reality TV was at 20%, talk shows were at 18%, soap operas 6%, game shows 4% and science fiction 2%. The top three answers in the “other” category consisted of sports, cartoons and news; however, other responses included PBS, movies, Discovery Channel and Animal Planet.

Fifty-six percent of the subjects watch TV to unwind, 42% watch it when they are bored, 20% for both educational purposes and to escape, and 16% for “other.” The “other” category was composed of responses such as because others are watching a particular program and I find myself watching it, for background noise, I don’t watch TV and to see a particular program.

Thirty-six percent of students feel content after watching a sitcom, 32% feel happy, 28% “other” and 4% feel both sad and envious. Common responses in the “other” category included feeling indifferent, bored, disgusted, brain dead, hatred, annoyed, wishing I hadn’t watched it and how I feel depends on which sitcom I watched. The researcher had anticipated that more of the students would have felt envious after watching a sitcom. The researcher also predicted that students in the experimental group would rate envy higher than students in the control group. Results indicate there is an equal number of responses between the experimental and control groups.

The subjects disagreed more than they agreed that by watching television, they are able to see how others live. Although the majority of the students were neutral, more students disagreed than they agreed that they admire the relationships couples have on television.

Statistical Differences Between Experimental & Control Groups

In using the cultivation hypothesis, the researcher infers television will have a greater influence on the experimental group’s perceptions of romance and conflict.

This study’s results indicate that the experimental group watches more television than participants in the control group (see Table 6). However, neither the experimental group nor the control group would be classified as heavy television viewers.

**Table 6: Television watched hours/per day * Group
Cross Tabulation**

	N of Participants	Mean	Std. Deviation
Experiment	25	1.7	.8
Control	21	1.3	.6
Total N of Participants	46		

Forty percent of the subjects watch sitcoms on television and this study's results indicate that students in the control group watch sitcoms more than the experimental group.

More subjects in the experimental group than subjects in the control group agreed that marriage is both an institution and a natural part of life. The control group subjects agreed to strongly agreed that a perfect marriage doesn't exist and the experimental group's subjects disagreed with the statement.

**Table 7: A perfect marriage does not exist * Group
Cross Tabulation**

	N of Participants	Mean	Std. Deviation
Experiment	27	3.4	1.3
Control	23	4.0	1.1
Total N of Participants	50		

The researcher concludes the experimental group believes a perfect marriage exists more than the control group because of the way the television clips painted a glamorous picture of marriage.

The experimental group also agreed to a higher degree than the control group that they look to other couple's marriages and perceive them to be ideal.

**Table 8: Other couples marriages are ideal * Group
Cross Tabulation**

	N of Participants	Mean	Std. Deviation
Experiment	27	2.9	1.1
Control	23	2.7	1.1
Total N of Participants	50		

The experimental group agreed more than the control group that they admire the relationships couples have on television.

**Table 9: Admire relationships couples have on television * Group
Cross Tabulation**

	N of Participants	Mean	Std. Deviation
Experiment	27	2.9	1.0
Control	23	2.4	1.0
Total N of Participants	50		

Again, the researcher infers the difference in responses between the experimental and control groups is due to the experimental group's exposure to the television clips idealized depiction of marriage.

The experimental and controls groups displayed signs of variance in their responses regarding the section of the questionnaire that measured romance. First, the subjects in the experimental group rated compliments and intimacy as

more important components of a relationship than did subjects in the control group. Experimental subjects also agreed more with the statement that it is better to stay at home with a significant other than go out. The romance-related television clips the experimental subjects were exposed to showed television couples staying in and spending time together. The clips also showed couple's complimenting each other, particularly the *My Wife & Kids* clip. As a result, the researcher believes the clips influenced the difference in responses between the experimental and control groups.

Interestingly, a greater number of subjects in the experimental group claimed they did not compare their romance level to others (see Table 10). The researcher had anticipated that subjects exposed to the video segment would compare their level of romance higher than the control group. This study found the reverse was true. Past research indicates that subjects are sometimes apprehensive in answering certain questions on a survey. The researcher believes this may have factored into how the subjects in the experimental group responded to this particular question. There is a possibility the experimental group subject's downplayed how much they compare their relationship to others. Perhaps the experimental group subjects felt a sense of insecurity in comparing their level of romance to the level of romance depicted in the television segment.

**Table 10: Compare romance level to other couples * Group
Cross Tabulation**

	N of Participants	Mean	Std. Deviation
Experiment	27	1.6	3.2
Control	23	2.5	3.5
Total N of Participants	50		

There was only a slight variance in responses between the group's answers to the open-ended question, "What makes a person romantic?" The experimental group gave answers that encompassed more physical aspects of romance such as holding your hand, kissing your forehead, opening the door for you, staring at you and expressing their feelings. The control group gave answers that encompassed a more emotional aspect of romance such as deeply caring for someone, expressing affection/feelings and doing special things for you.

The experimental group subjects claimed they were not more romantic than their partner. Additionally, a significant amount more of control group subjects stated they were more romantic than their partner. The researcher infers that experimental subjects felt less romantic as a result of their being exposed to the video segments featuring couples with over the top romantic gestures. As a result, the researcher concludes that television can impact how people perceive themselves as being romantic.

More students in the experimental group claimed they were not content with the level of romance in their relationship than did their counterparts in the control group (see Table 11 below).

Table 11: Level of romance * Group Cross Tabulation

	N of Participants	Mean	Std. Deviation
Experiment	27	1.1	2.3
Control	23	1.4	2.4
Total N of Participants	50		

As Signorielli (1991) pointed out, sitcoms tend to present a more positive view of marriage. As previously mentioned, the romance depicted in the television clips was over the top and far fetched. Therefore, subjects exposed to the TV clips (experimental group) compared their level of romance with what was depicted on TV and as a result, claimed they were not content with the level of romance in their lives. This study implies that television can have a negative impact on the public's contentment with the level of romance in their relationships.

The results of the experiment indicate that television did impact how experimental group's subject's felt about the role romance plays in marriage. However, the study's results do not infer that the experimental group's subjects would rate romanticism as a more desirable characteristic of marriage than subjects in the control group. Therefore, the study did not find enough evidence to support subpart A of the hypothesis.

The study also found a difference in responses between the experimental and control groups regarding how conflict is responded to and managed. Subjects in the experimental group claimed they walk away during a conflict more than did the participants in the control group (see Table 12).

**Table 12: Reaction during an argument * Group
Cross Tabulation**

	N of Participants	Mean	Std. Deviation
Experiment	26	1.6	.5
Control	23	1.8	.4
Total N of Participants	49		

There was a slight difference in responses in how subjects avoid discussing the problem when in an argument. Experimental participants agreed they avoid discussing a problem more than the control group participants did.

The researcher concludes that the television clips used in the experimental group displayed more of an aggressive reaction to conflict. Therefore, when answering the previously mentioned questions, the experimental group participants compared how they handled conflict to how the television couples' managed conflict and as a result, they tended to downplay their reaction to conflict.

Subjects in the experimental group rated they use humor to lighten the situation higher than their counterparts in the control group did (see Table 13 below).

**Table 13: Use of humor to lighten the situation * Group
Cross Tabulation**

	N of Participants	Mean	Std. Deviation
Experiment	27	3.5	1.0
Control	23	3.3	1.0
Total N of Participants	50		

The experimental group disagreed more than the control group that they are offended by the use of humor in an argument (see Table 14 below).

**Table 14: Offended by use of humor in an argument * Group
Cross Tabulation**

	N of Participants	Mean	Std. Deviation
Experiment	27	2.4	.8
Control	23	2.6	1.2
Total N of Participants	50		

The researcher concludes that television did impact how the subject's in the experimental group responded to conflict. The study's results indicate that subjects in the experimental group rated humor as a more desirable mechanism for resolving conflict than did participants in the control group. Therefore, evidence from this study supports subpart B of the hypothesis.

DISCUSSION

In conclusion, the study did find evidence to support the main hypothesis, which states that as a result of watching marriage portrayed on television, individuals will attempt to incorporate characteristics they deem valued, as depicted by television, into their marriage. Specifically, results found that individuals in the experimental group used humor to de-escalate or resolve conflict more than subjects in the control group as a result of their being exposed to episodes depicting married couples using humor during conflict.

The study did not find enough evidence to support the claim that people who watch marriage on television will rate romanticism as a more desirable characteristic of marriage than will those who are not exposed to television episodes. The researcher feels the questions on the survey measuring romance should have been worded differently to better suit what the hypothesis was trying to find.

A major question regarding cultivation theory research is whether television shapes people's perceptions or if people watch television to reinforce their preconceived concepts. According to Barich and Bielby (1996), "As one's beliefs about the social world develop, one begins to use those beliefs to gain some understanding of marriage and to weigh what one would want out of marriage," (p. 161). This experiment provides evidence support that the media do, in fact, play a role in shaping the public's perceptions of marriage.

The researcher feels it is important to point out that not all of media's effects have a negative impact on the public. Past research indicates that the

use of humor during conflict is a sign of marital stability (Sherlock, 2000; Driver & Gottman, 2004). This study found that students did incorporate the use of humor to de-escalate conflict into their lives as a result of being exposed to television episodes depicting married couples using humor during conflict. Therefore, one could conclude that in certain situations, the media can have a positive impact on the public's relationships.

One limitation to this study is the limited number of participants. The researcher had hoped for a better response rate in student participation. Results of this study would be more definitive if additional subjects would have participated. If this study is duplicated in the future, the researcher suggests a sample size of at least 200 subjects.

According to Severin and Tankard, "Heavy television viewers often give answers that are closer to the way the world is portrayed on television," (1997, p. 299). Although the subjects of this study would not be classified as heavy television viewers, the results indicate that exposure to the television clips did influence the viewer's perceptions. The researcher would recommend not using college students for future research as they tend to be busy with school and social activities, and the majority appears not to be high television viewers.

As with any study using a questionnaire, there is always the possibility that participants will downplay undesirable characteristics such as television use and embellish on more desirable characteristics such as their level of romance. Wimmer and Dominick have termed this concept "prestige bias" because respondents may "feel inadequate or lack the knowledge about a particular topic

so they provide 'prestigious' answers rather than admit to not knowing something" (2003, p. 195). There is the possibility that subjects also will purposely be deceitful by giving incorrect answers to survey questions.

Past research indicates that variables such as age, gender, and socioeconomic status contribute to the level of influence television has on public perception. Results of this study provide evidence that gender did play a role in the subject's responses measuring romance. However, the study lacked ethnic and socioeconomic diversity. The researcher suggests that future research include more diversity in ethnicity and socioeconomic status.

This study found that many of the subjects were neutral on their response regarding the use of humor to lighten the situation. Future research should explore when subjects feel it is appropriate to use humor to lighten the situation and de-escalate conflict.

Douglas and Olsen state, "Not only do television portrayals of marriage affect the way in which people think about marriage and the family, but both married and divorced persons report using such portrayals to guide their own marriage behavior" (1996, p. 77). The researcher suggests future studies be conducted to determine if there is a correlation between the public's unrealistic expectations of marriage and the high divorce rate.

APPENDIX A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF TELEVISION CLIPS

Coder 1

Yes, Dear

The husband and wife are arguing over the purchase of materialistic items such as a big screen television, bread maker and gelato machine. The husband puts these items on his credit card and plans to return them before the credit card bill is due in 30 days. The wife points out that with two little kids, the chances of these items getting broke are high so he needs to take them back to the store immediately.

The couple handles conflict by using sarcasm and humor.

King of Queens

The husband and wife are arguing over the husband's ex-girlfriend spending time with his mother. His wife is jealous that her mother-in-law would rather spend time with her husband's ex than with her. The husband and wife mock each other, use sarcasm, insults and humor to get their points across. Their approach to conflict is more of an aggressive one.

My Wife & Kids

This clip depicted a couple in both a conflict and a romantic situation. The scene starts off with the husband and wife in an argument over the wife spending too much time at work and not enough time with her family. She says she can be Superwoman and do both work and take care of her family. The husband says she can't do it all. Humor is used to lighten the conflict.

Romantic scene shows the couple lying in bed complimenting each other. They are talking about their roles as Superwoman and Superman and how each other and their children are their kryptonite. They reach the conclusion that they wouldn't be who they are if it wasn't for each other.

Til Death Do Us Part

The husband and wife are drinking Sangria on their front porch and discussing the last time they stared up at the stars together, which was when they took a vacation to Cape Cod. The wife tells the husband the last few days they have spent together have been great. As they are making a to-do list of the things they want to accomplish together in the future, the husband states they should go back to the Cape for a romantic get away.

According to Jim

Two guys are giving the third guy a hard time for being romantic. He gives his wife a gift for the anniversary of their first date. He also has 118 roses, which is the dinner tab amount of their first date, and champagne waiting for her at home.

As a result of the women's reaction to this romantic gesture, one of the other two guys decides to surprise his wife with a room full of flowers. When she walks in the room he is laying on the bed reading poetry and has a glass of champagne for her. He gives her an old mixed cassette tape they used to listen to when they were dating. Unfortunately, they do not have a cassette recorder anywhere in their house. A later scene shows the husband had the tape made into a CD for his wife. The scene concludes with the husband and wife dancing

in the kitchen to the CD and kissing. This clip paints a glamorized portrayal of romance with its over the top romantic gestures.

Coder 2

Yes, Dear

The husband is all about buying boy toys (big screen TV and stereo system) and not paying for them. The wife is upset because he would do something like this without consulting her about it first. The wife gave the guy "the look" and eventually he gave in. The wife was very serious in this scene and the husband tried to lighten the mood by using rhetorical statements.

King of Queens

This scene was an argument about the fact that the husband's mother enjoys spending more time with the husband's ex-girlfriend than his wife. The husband describes her reaction to the statement of her jealousy with a sarcastic "cat" reference. The wife becomes defensive and argumentative by taking cheap shots at her husband about his weight.

My Wife & Kids

The husband is upset that his wife is putting her profession before her family. The wife takes offense and pokes fun at him as a defense mechanism. The husband rebuts with references to comic book heroes and refers to her as a substandard comic book character. She vows to show him that she can be Superwoman and not a substandard comic book character.

As the man and woman prepare to go to bed, they recap the events that took place earlier. The husband realizes his wife is an above average comic

book character and refers to her as Superwoman. He states that even Superwoman has faults and that Superman should be around to help her with those faults. The wife metaphorically states that the husband should be around to straighten out her Superwoman cape. The husband admits his weakness is his family and the wife concurs.

Til Death Do Us Part

The scene begins with the husband and wife reminiscing about a trip they took and about the events that transpired during the trip. The couple then decides to relive that memory by putting it on a list of things to do in the future. The clip ends with them cuddling on the front porch and talking about how wonderful the last few days were with them spending time together.

According to Jim

The main character has been married to his wife for quite some time and perhaps has forgotten some of the flare of romance. The wife pressures the husband by making comments about a gift given on an anniversary of another couple's first date. The husband then decides to cave and create a romantic evening to surprise his wife. The romantic evening entails a rose filled room, champagne and a mixed cassette from their past containing music from their early relationship.

The clip ends with the husband transferring the songs from cassette to CD and dancing with his wife to one of their songs in the kitchen. Romance in the beginning of this clip seems a little far-fetched. I don't know anyone who would

spend an outrageous amount of money to commemorate a specific amount of money spent on a first date.

APPENDIX B
SAMPLE QUESTIONNAIRE

Thank you for taking the time to fill out this questionnaire. All responses are anonymous, confidential and voluntary. Please answer the questions as completely and honestly as possible.

Section 1: This section measures romance.

On a scale from 1-10 (10 being best), how would you rate yourself as being romantic?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Are you content with the level of romance in your life?

Yes No Not applicable

Currently or in the past, have you found yourself to be more romantic than your significant other?

Yes No We're equally romantic Not applicable

Do you find yourself open-minded in learning ways to improve your romance?

Yes No Not applicable

Do you agree with the following statement?

The level of affection in my relationship is adequate.

Yes No Not applicable

Do you compare your romance level to other couples?

Yes No Not applicable

On a scale from 1-10 (10 being best), how would you rate romance as an important characteristic of a relationship?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

It is better to stay at home with a significant other than go out.

Strongly agree
 Agree
 Neutral
 Disagree
 Strongly disagree

Touching is an important component of a relationship.

Do you:

Strongly agree
 Agree
 Neutral

- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Compliments are an important component of a relationship.

Do you:

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Intimacy is an important component of a relationship.

Do you:

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Chivalry is a concept of the past.

Do you:

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

How often would you tell your significant other "I love you?"

- 1-2 times per day Weekly
- 2-3 times per week Other (please specify) _____
- 4-5 times per week

What makes a person romantic? (open-ended question)

Section 2: This section measures how conflict is responded to and managed.

When you are in an argument, are you more likely to:

- Walk away
- Confront the person

I handle a problem once it arises.

- Always Seldom
 Often Never

When arguing, I avoid discussing the problem.

- Strongly agree
 Agree
 Neutral
 Disagree
 Strongly disagree

In an argument, I use humor to lighten the situation.

- Strongly agree
 Agree
 Neutral
 Disagree
 Strongly disagree

I am offended when humor is used in an argument.

- Strongly agree
 Agree
 Neutral
 Disagree
 Strongly disagree

During an argument, I take offense when the subject matter isn't taken seriously.

- Strongly agree
 Agree
 Neutral
 Disagree
 Strongly disagree

Section 3: This section measures perception of marriage.

Marriage is an institution.

Do you:

- Strongly agree
 Agree
 Neutral
 Disagree
 Strongly disagree

I would rather be married than date.

Do you:

- Strongly agree
 Agree

- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Marriage is a natural part of life.

Do you:

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

I want to have a marriage like my parents have.

Do you:

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

I look to other couples' marriages and perceive them to be ideal.

Do you:

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

A perfect marriage does not exist.

Do you:

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Section 4: This section pertains to television use.

How many hours per day to you watch television?

- 1-2 hours/day
- 3-4 hours/day
- 5-6 hours/per day
- 7 hours or more/day

Do you watch television most often in the:

- Morning
 Afternoon
 Evening

What type of television programs do you watch most often?

- Drama Science fiction
 Games shows Sitcoms (comedy) Talk shows
specify) _____ Other (please
 Reality Soap operas

My reason for watching television is:

- Education purposes To unwind
 To escape When I'm bored Other (specify) _____

After watching a sitcom, I feel:

- Happy Envious Other (please specify) _____
 Sad Content

By watching television, I am able to see how others live.

Do you:

- Strongly agree
 Agree
 Neutral
 Disagree
 Strongly disagree

I admire the relationships couples have on television.

Do you:

- Strongly agree
 Agree
 Neutral
 Disagree
 Strongly disagree

Demographic section:

Age: _____ Gender: Female Male

At this time are you:
 Single Married

Have you ever been married? Yes No

Separate Divorced

Please mark one answer:

- Caucasian/White
- African American
- Hispanic
- Native American
- Other

My annual income level is:

- Under \$10,000
- \$10,000 - \$19,999
- \$20,000 - \$29,999
- \$30,000 - \$39,999
- \$40,000 - \$49,999
- More than \$50,000

Thank you!

**APPENDIX C
CODING SCHEME**

Section 1:

Group:

Control-1

Experimental-2

Being romantic:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Level of romance:

Yes-1

No-0

NA-9

More romantic than partner:

Yes-1

No-0

Equal-2

NA-9

Improving romance:

Yes-1

No-0

NA-9

Level of affection:

Yes-1

No-0

NA-9

Compare romance level:

Yes-1

No-0

NA-9

Romance as important characteristic:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Home vs. going out:

SA-5

A-4

N-3

D-2

SD-1

Touching:

SA-5

A-4

N-3

D-2

SD-1

Compliments:

SA-5

A-4

N-3

D-2

SD-1

Intimacy:

SA-5

A-4

N-3

D-2

SD-1

Chivalry:

SA-5

A-4

N-3

D-2

SD-1

Saying "I love You"

1-2 X-3

2-3 X-2

4-5 X-1

Weekly-0

Other-9

What makes a person romantic:

Open-ended

Section 2:

Argument:

Walk Away-1

Confront Person-2

Handling a problem:

Always-1
Often-2
Seldom-3
Never-4

Avoid discussing problem:

SA-5
A-4
N-3
D-2
SD-1

Use of humor:

SA-5
A-4
N-3
D-2
SD-1

Offended by humor:

SA-5
A-4
N-3
D-2
SD-1

Subject matter not taken seriously:

SA-5
A-4
N-3
D-2
SD-1

Section 3:

Marriage as institution:

SA-5
A-4
N-3
D-2
SD-1

Married vs. dating:

SA-5
A-4
N-3

D-2
SD-1

Marriage is natural:

SA-5
A-4
N-3
D-2
SD-1

Marriage like parents have:

SA-5
A-4
N-3
D-2
SD-1

Other's marriages are ideal:

SA-5
A-4
N-3
D-2
SD-1

Perfect marriage doesn't exist:

SA-5
A-4
N-3
D-2
SD-1

Section 4:

Hours per day:

1-2X - 1
3-4X - 2
5-6X - 3
7+ - 4

Time TV is watched:

Morning-1
Afternoon-2
Evening-3

Type of TV programs watched:

Drama

Yes-1

No-0

Game Shows

Yes-1

No-0

Reality

Yes-1

No-0

Scifi

Yes-1

No-0

Sitcoms

Yes-1

No-0

Soaps

Yes-1

No-0

Talk Shows

Yes-1

No-0

Other

Yes-1

No-0

Reason for TV watching:

Education

Yes-1

No-0

Escape

Yes-1

No-0

Unwind

Yes-1

No-0

Bored

Yes-1

No-0

Other
Yes-1
No-0

Effects of watching sitcoms:

Happy
Yes-1
No-0

Sad
Yes-1
No-0

Envious
Yes-1
No-0

Content
Yes-1
No-0

Other
Yes-1
No-0

See how others live:

SA-5
A-4
N-3
D-2
SD-1

Admire relationships on TV:

SA-5
A-4
N-3
D-2
SD-1

Demographics:

Age:

Gender:
F-1

M-0

Relationship status:

Single-1

Separated-2

Married-3

Divorced-4

Ever married:

Yes-1

No-0

Ethnicity:

Cauc/Wh-1

African Am-2

Hispanic-3

Native-4

Other-9

Annual income:

Under \$10,000-1

\$10-19,999-2

\$20-29,999-3

\$30-39,999-4

\$40-49,999-5

\$50,000+-6

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I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Crissy Marie Laubach-Young titled, "Television and Marriage: An Analysis of Television's Influence on the Public's Perception of Marriage." I have examined the thesis for content and form, and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Communication Arts from the College of Arts and Letters Graduate Studies Program at Austin Peay State University.

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