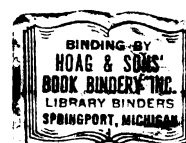
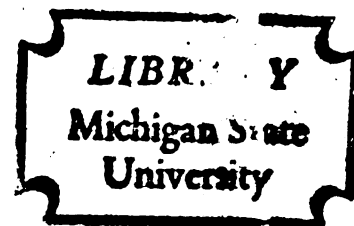


BLACK REACTION TO:
"BIRD OF THE IRON FEATHER"

Thesis for the Degree of M. A.
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
THOMAS ANDREW HARDY
1972



ABSTRACT

BLACK REACTIONS TO "BIRD OF THE IRON FEATHER"

By

Thomas A. Hardy

The general area of investigation is that of television programming for specifically Black target audiences. More specifically, what types of program formats are most effective in programming for Black viewers.

The format type under investigation was the soap opera, that is, "an on-going series of dramatic productions, usually programmed daily, which consists of a core group of characters and a plot line which continues through succeeding productions."

Chicago's educational television station produced a Black soap opera entitled "Bird of the Iron Feather" which was produced almost entirely by a Black staff. Two examples of this series, "Cry of the Silent" and "Rotten Apples", were used as basic stimulus for this study.

Staff members representing the Corporation for Public Broadcasting presented the series examples to middle class and working class Black viewers representing five major metropolitan areas (Cleveland, Miami, New Orleans, Philadelphia, and Los Angeles).

Criticism of the series examples came in the form of guided group discussions in which respondents were asked to react to four basic questions.

1. What did you like about the series?
2. What did you dislike about the series?
3. Do you think (Black) people will watch this series?
4. Should this series be put on 180 stations nationally?

All of the discussions were audio-taped and a content analysis was conducted on the tapes.

As additional points of reference, group critique sessions were conducted by the author, using:

1. A group of four White graduate students of Television and Radio.
2. Two Black graduate students in Communication who criticized the realism of the productions, in terms of Black life-styles.

The results of these critique sessions were both used as an aid for the tape coders and compared with the results derived from the Black viewer responses.

From the original tapes, 334 usable responses were obtained. The responses were transcribed from the originals, together with information regarding: 1) the city, 2) the class, 3) the question asked, and 4) the number of responses. These were used to facilitate coding procedures. Coders rated responses on a scale representing either intensity or degree of acceptance. The coders used in the study had the following qualifications: they were Black students above the sophomore level of college and majoring in television and radio or a related subject (advertising, communications, etc.).

The language laboratory facilities were used in conducting the study.

Analysis of the data obtained was conducted using class and city as independent variables and the following results were obtained from ten hypotheses formulated:

- Black viewers feel that the series, "Bird of the Iron Feather", should be distributed nationally. Confirmed.
- "Cry of the Silent" will receive a more positive response than "Rotten Apples". Confirmed.
- Middle class Black viewers have a more positive response to "Cry of the Silent" than to "Rotten Apples". Confirmed.
- Black viewers feel that Black people will watch this series. Confirmed.
- Middle class Black viewers have more negative responses to "Rotten Apples" than to "Cry of the Silent". Confirmed.
- Student reactions will be generally more positive than the adults'. Confirmed.
- Black viewers have a greater positive response than negative response for the soap opera format. Not confirmed.
- Middle class Black viewers have a greater negative response to the series than do working class Black viewers. Not confirmed.

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..... Working class Black viewers have a greater negative response to "Cry of the Silent" than to "Rotten Apples". Not confirmed.

..... Working class Black viewers have more positive response to "Rotten Apples" than to "Cry of the Silent". Not confirmed.

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A THESIS

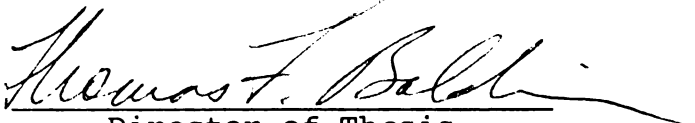
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Minority oriented public television programming must not, because of the relative position both socially and economically of its target audience, simply address itself to the entertainment and peripheral social issues which confront the community. It must provide a medium of information for the ghettos through which the daily problems and pressures of minority existence in this country can be exposed and discussed. In addition, minority oriented public television programming should also begin to provide a positive self-image for the Black community by portraying Black people in natural positive and negative positions.

In order to portray Blacks in natural situations, which incidentally are those which few Whites could witness for any extended period of time or adequately write about for Black consumption, it is necessary to train and provide experience for Black writers, producers, directors and technicians along with providing means through which these persons can provide programming for consumption by the Black community. This situation can only come about through the increase of Black employment at the professional and managerial level.¹

¹National Association of Educational Broadcasters, Office of Minority Affairs. "Minority Employment Practices of Public Television Stations." October, 1971.

In order to reach Black target audiences with programming that is acceptable, informative and entertaining, research must be undertaken in order to ascertain Black viewing preferences in terms of: (1) program format, (2) reactions to present use of Black talent, (3) most advantageous viewing periods, and (4) the present needs of the target audience that relevant Black programming could supply. Black audiences must be given an opportunity to voice their opinions regarding programming that is aimed at them. In other words, researchers should begin to communicate to Black producers how Blacks from varied socio-economic backgrounds evaluate and perceive television in general and specifically television programming about themselves. In this way television can be used as a tool in treating the myriad of problems which are a part of life in the Black community.

Black television viewers' reaction to television and their roles in it have been areas that have been traditionally barren in terms of published research. Some general information regarding Black viewing habits has been obtained, notably from Greenberg,² who studied the impact of Blacks on Television and the use of media by the Urban poor, and Clark, who studied racial and psychological identification generated by television.³

²Bradley Greenberg and Brenda Dervin. "Use of the Mass Media by the Urban Poor" (New York: Praeger Publishing Company, 1970).

³Cedric Clark, Race, Identification and Television Violence: Part I Theory (Abstract).

Two studies conducted by Greenberg,⁴ yielded some surprising information regarding both black reactions to television and the portrayal of Blacks by white writers. Below are two quotes which tend to capsulize white media use of Blacks in television:

The typical black in a commercial is a male in his 20's or 30's usually in a minor role. He seldom speaks, usually doesn't touch the product, dresses according to white standards and is shown with a lot of other people.

The typical black in a dramatic show is a male, works for a law enforcement agency, plays a minor role, is in his 20's or 30's, seldom plays a villain and again dresses and talks according to white standards.⁵

In spite of the white orientation of Black actors seen on the screen, Greenberg's study of Cleveland Black adults⁶ showed that 89.7 percent of the Blacks there viewed at least one television news program per day, but that the programs most talked about (34 percent) were soap operas as compared to 9 percent for the news.⁷ In addition, 72 percent of the Cleveland respondents voted in the last presidential election and 86 percent viewed the election returns on television.⁸

⁴Joseph R. Dominick and Bradley S. Greenberg, "Blacks on TV: Their Presence and Roles." Michigan State University, Department of Communications (CUP Project No. 8). Also, Joseph R. Dominick and Bradley S. Greenberg, "Television Behavior Among Disadvantaged Children." Michigan State University, Department of Communications (CUP Project No. 9).

⁵Ibid., No. 8, p. 17.

⁶Bradley S. Greenberg, "Communication and Related Behaviors of a Sample of Cleveland Black Adults." Michigan State University, Department of Communications (CUP Project No. 13).

⁷Ibid., p. 2.

⁸Ibid., p. 32.

In spite of the overwhelmingly White orientation of even Black actors in television, Blacks tend to consume as much or more of the media out-put.⁹ The questions which would obviously follow would be: What are the effects of the dichotomy between the Black viewers' life style and what he views on the screen? and, what type of self-image does a Black viewer internalize as a result of this dichotomy?

Clark conducted a study inquiring into the Black consciousness and identification and present television programming.¹⁰ In it he put forth three major postulates regarding Black psychological views of television:

- (1) All human systems require maintenance inputs
- (2) Legitimation is an important type of maintenance input
- (3) Blacks have been denied legitimacy, both from Whites and other Blacks.

Postulate three, Clark feels, becomes part of a belief sub-system which included "(1) feelings of competency and personal adequacy, (2) feelings of legitimacy and social worth."¹¹ All of these factors tend to act negatively on the Black viewer, when, as Clark says, "The competent identification model most often presented in the mass media is the

⁹Bradley S. Greenberg and Brenda Dervin, "Mass Communication Among the Urban Poor." Michigan State University, Department of Communications (CUP Project No. 5).

¹⁰Cedric Clark, Race, Identification and Television Violence: Part II Empirical Research (Abstract).

¹¹Ibid., p. 5.

White male."¹² A major reaction from this situation would be, as the Greenberg study pointed out, that 100 percent of the White fourth and fifth graders responding identified with White characters, and 32 percent of the Blacks also chose White characters for identification.¹³ One major objective of Black-oriented programming would be to create positive Black characters to generate a higher degree of identification in Black viewers and therefore a larger amount of information that could be derived from the programming offered.

There are many studies which show a high percentage of television households in non-White communities. A Rand Corporation study published in 1969 states that "As of June of 1967, eighty-seven point seven percent of the non-white homes had television."¹⁴ The Cleveland study by Greenberg states that, "As of 1970, ninety-five point five percent of Cleveland black adults reported one or more television sets."¹⁵ The Greenberg study even suggests greater media consumption by Blacks. Few present programs attempt to educate and entertain a specifically Black target audience with any information that would help to eliminate the problems of the Black community.

¹²Ibid., p. 5.

¹³Greenberg, op. cit. (CUP Project No. 9).

¹⁴R. Bretz, Dordick, Chester, and Firstman, Telecommunication in Urban Development. Rand Corporation, July, 1969, p. 16.

¹⁵Greenberg, op. cit. (CUP Project No. 13), p. 30.

The Rand study also gives information and direction regarding potential areas of research and problems within the Black community that local television programming could aid in alleviating. The report named nine potential areas for testing and evaluation of media usage for Urban Development. The studies would be used to:

1. Increase communication in the ghetto
2. Test study hypotheses
3. Find preferred viewing and listening times for target viewers
4. Find appropriate content and style
5. Find the time necessary to alter present target audience viewing habits
6. Find the time necessary to create credibility in the media
7. Find the time needed to make media function in an urban area
8. Find the cost of program operation
9. Find the types and means of non-broadcast organizations required to make the system work.¹⁶

A concurrent step would be to formulate areas of concern to the Black community, which would in turn create a foundation of program subject matter. The Rand report gives some potential program subject areas:

1. employment
2. education
3. city government
4. business
5. Black culture
6. community interaction.¹⁷

¹⁶Bretz et al., Telecommunication in Urban Development, op. cit., p. 43.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 45.

These types of programs could be produced on both the national and local level to begin a concerted media effort to alleviate problems in the Black community. "Bird of the Iron Feather" was a series which purported to do just that.

Two examples of "Bird of the Iron Feather" were used as a foundation for this study. The films were used to generate discussion by Black viewers in order to determine their reactions to this program format type. From this and other related studies a greater knowledge of the most effective program formats to be aimed at the Black community may be obtained.

"Bird of the Iron Feather" was something new for the Chicago area, in that not only was the target audience for the soap opera series Black, but also nearly all of the entire one hundred sixty-man crew and staff were Black as well.¹⁸

The foundation for the series was a pattern set by a similar project initiated in the Denver area entitled "Operation Stop-Gap".¹⁹ This series also employed minority actors and writers to produce a soap opera format. "Operation Stop-Gap" was also unique in that the series itself was step two of a three phase program which included: (1) a series of pre-program interviews, (2) airing of eight television soap

¹⁸"Soul Opera: Soap Opera," Newsweek, February 27, 1970, p. 68.

¹⁹Richard J. Meyer, "ETV and the Ghetto," The Educational Broadcasting Review, August, 1968, p. 22.

operas with commercials, and (3) post series evaluation of the programs. On the basis of this program information, a \$600,000 grant from the Ford Foundation was obtained by Educational station WTTW-TV to produce thirty shows.²⁰ The final product of the grant was twenty-one half-hour shows which were aired three times weekly.²¹ The series ended after completing twenty-one shows for two reasons: (1) the cost per production was more than had been originally anticipated, and (2) the Ford Foundation did not continue its financial support.

"Bird" received a variety of both positive and negative responses from the Chicago area. A favorable response came from the Coalition for United Community Action, a group of sixty-one community agencies which labeled the series "The series of the decade."²² Unfavorable responses regarding the profanity used in the series prompted a programming change from 7:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. Predictably, the White response to the series was generally negative, but despite this problem, the series received very good ratings.

"Bird" also received reviews in national publications as well. Most of them considered the series to be rough technically, but encouraging. A prime example was Richard

²⁰"Soul Drama, Chicago's New Series Entitled: 'Bird of the Iron Feather'", Time, February 23, 1970, pp. 59-60.

²¹Ibid., p. 60.

²²Newsweek, op. cit., p. 68.

Christiansen, writing in the April issue of Educational Television,²³ saw the series as being "erratic, at best and embarrassingly amateurish at worst." His major complaints seemed to rest with the formation and administration of the series itself. Christiansen believes that his test of professionalism which he places on a largely inexperienced, amateur production team seems to be over-shadowed by the ratings and high degree of community involvement with the series.

"Bird of the Iron Feather" differed from many other public television attempts at minority programming in that it represented not only an on-going Black dramatic series as exemplified in WGBH's "On Being Black" series. It also presented a higher degree of series continuity through the use of a core group of actors and plot lines which continued through succeeding segments.

Other attempts by public television stations around the nation at minority programming differed drastically from "Bird's" soap opera format. The "Fiesta" series initiated by KUAT-TV in Southern Arizona employed a variety show format which relied heavily on entertainment (sixty percent of programs) to maintain a basically Chicano viewing audience.²⁴

²³Richard Christiansen, "Review--'Bird of the Iron Feather'", Educational Television, April, 1970, p. 27.

²⁴Dr. E. B. Eiselein and Wes Marshall, "Fiesta--Experiment in Minority Audience Research and Programming." Educational Television, February, 1971, p. 22.

Like "Operation Stop-Gap", KUAT-TV carried on extensive pre-program research in order to ascertain the needs and preferences of the target audience.

Helen Y. Sloan, working for the South Carolina State Educational Television System, began a series entitled "The Job Man Caravan,"²⁵ which, as the title implies, was a televised employment service for Blacks around the state. This series applied both entertainment and remote productions to draw Black viewers. This series differed from most locally produced public television programming in that the series enjoyed state-wide distribution and developed a working relationship with state employment agencies. Though differing in format from "Bird of the Iron Feather" the concept of television programming serving the direct needs of a minority community is maintained throughout. A staff member of the "Fiesta" series, writing in the February, 1971 issue of Educational Television said:

Public television can effectively compete with both locally produced and nationally produced commercial material. It also seems evident that viable minority programming can be undertaken. But to do this successfully demands a very thorough understanding of and interrelationship with the target audience.²⁶

This relationship can be formed through both direct research into the area of Black or minority programming

²⁵Helen Y. Sloan, "The Job Man Caravan," Educational Television, May, 1971, p. 8.

²⁶Eiselien, "Fiesta," op. cit., p. 23.

preferences and the development of some level of credibility within the minority community. Before relevant, entertaining, and informative programming can be initiated, the producers must have some idea of how Black people respond to television about themselves. This study is an attempt to provide at least a part of that information.

CHAPTER II

INVESTIGATION

Content analysis, the method of investigation for this study may be generally defined as, "The process of reducing lengthy verbal responses to essentials and then grouping similar responses into categories which are represented numerically."¹ At this point the numerical values may be subjected to statistical analysis. In this study we will be analyzing Black public television viewers' cognitive evaluations of the two filmed examples from the Black soap opera series entitled, "Bird of the Iron Feather".

In attempting to verbalize their evaluations, each individual respondent, in receiving the stimuli (series example films), had to ascribe values to the two productions in relation to former productions to which they had previously been exposed. In other words, the productions were evaluated in terms of the pre-set production and content standards of each respondent. In addition, the productions were evaluated in terms of what the respondents felt Black dramatic productions should be.

¹Doris Muehl, Editor, "A Manual for Coders." University of Michigan Research Center. Ann Arbor, 1961, p. 9.

A previous study conducted by Carl I. Hovland and others² for the United States Army applied a similar technique of production evaluation through the use of the group interviews. The studies analyzed soldiers' verbal evaluations of the production technique of United States Army orientation and training films. Hovland also indicated three major variable areas which he viewed as those which related to the evaluation of the films viewed:

1. Population variables--the demographic nature of the audience which must affect the presentation (reaction of respondents)
2. Film variables--film content variables which effect audience reactions
3. External variables--those variables which may affect viewer reaction to the film but have no direct relationship to it.³

In the present study, the film-variable became the major consideration. How the two series examples effect Black viewer reactions to the four major dependent variables is of major importance.

The area of investigation to which this study will address itself is that of the effectiveness of Black-oriented television programming. Many programs have been supposedly aimed at the Black community, but the relative effects and community viewer support for these programs have not been adequately investigated. This study will attempt to evaluate

² Carl I. Hovland, A. Lumsdaine, and F. Sheffield. Experiments in Mass Communication. Princeton University Press, 1949.

³ Ibid., pp. 9-10.

one dramatic format type in terms of positive and negative reactions from Black viewers.

The format used as the basis for evaluation was that of the 'soap opera'. Generally it is defined as an on-going series of dramatic programs, usually aired on a daily basis, which makes use of a core group of characters around which the story revolves. There is more likely, than not, a dilemma or question left in the mind of the viewer which will not theoretically be resolved until the following episode. Supposedly an audience is generated and maintained through time by this means.

Methodology

A content analysis was conducted from audio tapes of group interview evaluations of two film examples from the series, "Bird of the Iron Feather". The first production entitled "Rotten Apples", dealt mainly with the problem of young drug addicts in the Black community and the system which supports them (see appendix-code book outline). The second dealt with the problems of Blacks buying a new home and the welfare system (see appendix-code book outline), entitled "Cry of the Silent". It was agreed upon by two groups of graduate students in television and radio, who criticized the filmed examples and the respondents involved in the study that the second production, "Cry of the Silent" was closer to the soap opera tradition.

In order to facilitate the analysis and coding, two informal viewing sessions of the series examples were conducted. The first involved a group of four White Master's candidates in television and radio. The group was asked by means of an open-ended questionnaire and informal discussion (see appendix) to evaluate the production aspects of the series examples. The questionnaires were divided into four major subject areas where the following results were obtained:

1. Camera positioning and movement--there seemed to be complete consensus of opinion regarding camera positions in each of the set plots given for each production.
2. Staging and character movement--the entire group felt that the staging did not detract from the effectiveness of the story. On the other hand, two persons reacted with questions regarding furniture positioning in relation to camera positioning in Bobby's (the addict in "Rotten Apples") apartment.
3. Direction and show continuity--reactions to "Cry of the Silent" tended to be much more positive than for "Rotten Apples". Three persons reacted to what they termed "unnatural cuts" in "Rotten Apples". All persons said that there was a distinct improvement technically between the first production, "Rotten Apples", and the second, "Cry of the Silent".
4. Over-all evaluation--three of the four critics felt that the medium of television was used to its best advantage in the productions. The fourth person's criticism came mainly in the areas of set decoration, lighting and lack of visual references to the world outside.

In terms of the level of production expertise shown in the production, there was a clear consensus on the superiority of "Cry of the Silent" voiced by all of the White critics. This group felt that both productions would be rated favorably when compared to present network soap operas.

The second critique session involved two Black Master's candidates who evaluated the writing style, character interaction, and realism of the plot line. The first was completing thesis requirements in Radio and Television while producing a "Soul" radio show for a local radio station. The second was completing requirements in communications research. Their reactions to the series examples were placed in another open-ended type questionnaire (see appendix II) which cover four major subject areas relating to the realism associated with the productions:

1. Sets, living situations:

"Rotten Apples"--both critics recognized the appropriate setting in this production, especially that of the addicts' room. One person also brought to light, the contradiction (possibly unintended) involved with the very large clenched fist, indicating some political awareness and the use of narcotics. This point was also raised by some of respondents in the group interviews.

"Cry of the Silent"--The critics agreed that both very drab living situations typified life as it exists in a black ghetto. The sets were according to them, quite realistic.

2. Acting and character interaction:

"Rotten Apples"--there seemed to be unanimity in a positive reaction to the acting and language of the addict, and a negative reaction to both policemen (Jonah, main character, and Summerville, the White lieutenant). The relationship between the addict, Bobby, and the policeman, Jonah, seemed to one person to be highly unnatural. In addition, both critics viewed the subject of pay-offs (Bobby by Summerville), as the real, but not in the manner portrayed in the film.

"Cry of the Silent"--both critics tended to be much less critical of this production, even to the point of complementing the actors on their realism. The

single negative comment came in regard to the love scene between Jonah and his wife. This point was also brought up by many respondents in the group interviews.

3. Subject and theme:

"Rotten Apples"--The reactions of both individuals seemed to coincide in their positive responses to drugs as a subject area. Although both critics detected problems regarding the time factor (half-hour time limit) and developmental writing for minor characters, specifically the lieutenant and the dope pusher.

"Cry of the Silent"--The theme as perceived by the two critics was housing with an underlying theme involving the Black family structure. For some reason, the subject of welfare, which was regarded by every other person who viewed the film as being the major theme, was never mentioned.

4. Learning experience:

"Rotten Apples"--The problem of police aid in perpetuating the drug problem was agreed upon as the major point put across by this production.

"Cry of the Silent"--Although the two critics' reactions were favorable, neither critic mentioned either welfare structure or the problem of Blacks buying homes.

The main areas of criticism for this group, came in response to the writing for some minor character. The sets or the realism of the situations created were never questioned, although, there were some questions regarding individual reactions within these situations. The majority of the points of criticism came as a result of acting, not writing discrepancies.

Both groups' reactions to a question regarding the relationship of each production to the soap opera format was, the "Cry of the Silent", while being technically well done,

was also closer to the image of the soap opera. The major reason being the lack of concrete conclusion and an obvious preview of future occurrences.

In terms of adding additional perspectives to this author's understanding of the two productions, these critics were quite helpful. Both groups' reactions were capsulized, placed in outline form, and placed in Section II of the code book to further aid the coders in their sessions.

Respondents questioned for the study were groups of Black viewers representing five metropolitan areas (Philadelphia, Los Angeles, Cleveland, Miami, New Orleans). Each group viewed two black and white (the originals are color) film examples of the series, after which questionnaires were filled out and the groups divided into working and middle class respondents, by staff members from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. At this point, guided group interviews were conducted by the staff members.

The interview procedure consisted of the interview leader questioning each of the respondents in turn, so that each respondent gave at least one response to each of the four questions asked.

Edited from the audio tape recordings of each session, three hundred and thirty-four useable responses were obtained which represented the four major questions put to the respondents. All useable responses were subsequently transcribed from the original tapes together with verbal introductions to each question, giving:

1. The question asked of the respondents
2. City of the respondents
3. Class of the respondent
4. Number of responses.

Test tones were also placed on the tapes, by the author, dividing individual responses. All of the above procedures were conducted in order to facilitate coding.

In each group interview, the Black respondents were asked four basic questions from which the four major dependent variables were derived. Data was obtained from Black viewers' reaction to four basic questions. They were:

1. What did you like about the productions? (Likes)
2. What did you dislike about the productions? (Dislikes)
3. Do you think (Black) people will watch it? (local viewing)
4. Do you think that this series should be put on one hundred eighty stations nationally? (National distribution)

Eight dependent variables were extracted from the responses to the four basic questions by the coders. These variables were divided in terms of the independent variable. The variables tested are as follows:

Independent--

Five cities--Philadelphia, Cleveland, Miami, New Orleans, Los Angeles

Classes--Working class, middle class, students (used as a test group for the coders, not statistically significant)

Dependent--

Likes--Production I, Production II, general*

Dislikes--Production I, Production II, general*

Local viewing--general*

National distribution--general*

Eleven hypotheses were formulated through use of the following assumptions and an application of independent and dependent variables. After listening to a similar interview conducted with the same film stimuli, but with White respondents who gave overwhelmingly negative responses to the series, it was assumed that the middle class Black group whose attitudes, we assume more closely coincide with those of Whites, would have an equally negative response in relation to the working class Black group. Also, the relatively simple production of "Rotten Apples" would have a greater appeal for the working class groups. Conversely it was assumed that the middle class respondents would gravitate to the more involved plot of "Cry of the Silent". A positive response was also predicted for the viewing and distribution questions, because of the author's feeling that the general Black population is keenly aware of the need for programming aimed at them. From these assumptions and the variables, the following hypotheses were formulated:

1. Black viewers have a greater positive response than negative response for the soap opera format type.
2. The series "Bird of the Iron Feather" should be distributed nationally.

*Specific references to: Production I--"Rotten Apples", or Production II--"Cry of the Silent": General--numerical value given to the entire response.

3. Black viewers feel that other Black people will watch this series.
4. "Cry of the Silent" has less negative response from Black viewers than "Rotten Apples".
5. Middle class Black viewers have a greater negative response to the series than working class Black viewers.
6. Working class Black viewers have a greater positive response to the series than middle class Black viewers.
7. Middle class Black viewers have a greater positive response to "Cry of the Silent" than to "Rotten Apples".
8. Working class Black viewers have a greater positive response to "Rotten Apples" than to "Cry of the Silent".
9. Middle class Black viewers have a greater negative response to "Rotten Apples" than "Cry of the Silent".
10. Working class Black viewers have a greater negative response to "Cry of the Silent" than to "Rotten Apples".

As previously stated, it was necessary to convert the verbal responses given to numerical values for analysis. In order to eliminate as much error as possible, three coders were chosen to listen to the taped sessions. They were required to have the following qualifications:

1. They must be black
2. They must be upper classmen, above junior level in college
3. They must major in Radio and Television or a related field (communications, advertising, etc.).

Coders with the above qualifications will have already developed the skills and knowledge of broadcasting while also retaining a working knowledge of Black speech and inflection patterns. This knowledge would aid in eliminating the level

of inferences that would have to be drawn by non-Blacks during coding sessions and also aid in reliability between coders.

The coders were asked to view the series examples after first reading the code book critiques (see Appendix). This was done in order to prepare the coders for references to specific productions that respondents might make during the course of an interview.

A five point psychological scale was applied by the coders to each individual response. The scale ranged from +2 to -2 with allowances made for "specific references" to individual productions in the likes and dislikes question areas. For the questions requiring positive responses (likes), only values of zero or above were used for the analysis. For questions requiring negative responses (dislikes), only values of zero or below were used. (In the case of the negative questions, the useable values were later converted to positive numbers for ease of analysis.) In the case of questions requiring no sign exclusion the simple arithmetic means were used.

All coding sessions were conducted in language laboratory facilities in order to eliminate or minimize any outside distractions. To eliminate error the coders were also allowed to confer regarding numerical values given to the response.

CHAPTER III

RESULTS

The following hypotheses were confirmed:

-Black viewers feel that the series, "Bird of the Iron Feather", should be distributed nationally.
-"Cry of the Silent" will receive a more positive response than "Rotten Apples".
-Middle class Black viewers have a more positive response to "Cry of the Silent" than to "Rotten Apples".
-Black viewers feel that Black people will watch this series.
-Middle class Black viewers have more negative responses to "Rotten Apples" than to "Cry of the Silent".
-Student reactions will be generally more positive than the adults'.

The following hypotheses were not confirmed:

-Black viewers have a greater positive response than negative response for the soap opera format.
-Middle class Black viewers have a greater negative response to the series than do working class Black viewers.

.....Working class Black viewers have a greater negative response to "Cry of the Silent" than to "Rotten Apples".

.....Working class Black viewers have more positive response to "Rotten Apples" than to "Cry of the Silent".

The results of this study will be discussed in terms of the original eleven hypotheses. In Chapter Four I will attempt to discuss trends and specific production criticisms put forth by the individual respondents. Appropriate tables with complete statistical information are cited and appear in the Appendix.

1. Black viewers have a greater positive response than negative response for the soap opera format.

A comparison of mean values of the general like response and general dislike response showed a significantly greater negative response level. This trend also held true in the case of the responses referring to specific productions; the single exception being a higher mean value for positive responses to "Cry of the Silent". This hypothesis was not confirmed.

2. Black viewers feel that "Bird of the Iron Feather" should be distributed nationally.

Regarding the question of national distribution for the series, the responses tended to be overwhelmingly positive. The mean values showed a surprizingly positive response from the middle class group. This over-all positive response substantiated the hypothesis.

3. Black viewers feel that other Black people will watch the series.

Two of the cities responding to this question gave negative mean values. Cleveland in particular yielded negative mean values for both classes interviewed. The two most negative mean values were received from the Cleveland working class group and the middle class group from Miami. However, the over-all mean value was overwhelmingly positive and despite the negative reaction from two relatively small respondent groups, this hypothesis was confirmed.

4. "Cry of the Silent" will receive a less negative response than "Rotten Apples".

"Cry of the Silent" received a favorable response from both middle and working class groups. This production received not only a less negative response value over-all, but it also received a higher level of positive response than did "Rotten Apples". There are some significant differences between classes which will be discussed in later hypotheses. This hypothesis was confirmed.

5. Middle class Black viewers have a greater negative response to the series than do working class Black viewers.

In all three dislike cases (Production I, Production II, and General) the middle class mean values were significantly lower than those of the working class groups. Although the working class groups tended to be more vehement in their negative criticism, it will be shown in the following chapter

that the middle class reactions were more pointed and aimed at specific aspects of the productions. This hypothesis was not confirmed.

6. Middle class Black viewers have a more positive response to "Cry of the Silent" than to "Rotten Apples".

Comparing middle class like responses to the two productions we find that the mean values for the "Cry of the Silent" are significantly higher. Therefore this hypothesis is confirmed.

7. Working class Black viewers have a more positive response to "Rotten Apples" than to "Cry of the Silent".

Working class like responses to the individual productions showed little difference in mean values between "Rotten Apples" and "Cry of the Silent". The mean value for "Cry of the Silent" was slightly higher. Since the mean value for "Rotten Apples" was not significantly higher than that for "Cry of the Silent", the hypothesis was not confirmed.

8. Middle class Black viewers dislike "Rotten Apples" more than "Cry of the Silent".

A comparison of middle class dislike values yielded greater negative responses in the case of "Rotten Apples". The mean value for dislikes of "Rotten Apples" was significantly higher than that for "Cry of the Silent". The trend of a greater negative response to "Rotten Apples" holds true in this case also, confirming the hypothesis.

9. Working class Black viewers dislike "Cry of the Silent" more than "Rotten Apples".

The hypothesis in this case was not confirmed. A higher dislike mean level by the working class group was recorded for "Rotten Apples" than for "Cry of the Silent".

10. Student responses will be generally higher (more positive or less negative) than those of the adults'.

In every case, with the exception of dislike mean for "Cry of the Silent" and the viewing mean, the student group was both more positive (in the case of positive and variable response question, a higher mean value) and less negative (in the case of negative response questions, a lower mean value) than the adult groups tested. This hypothesis was confirmed.

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

The objectives of this study are similar to the majority of studies of audience response to media production with the exception being the nature of the target audience. Hovland has best stated the two major objectives of audience evaluation based research:

... To find out what kinds of comments by the audience are related to effects of the films and an attempt to arrive at generalizations about what kinds of film contents elicit desirable and undesirable comments by the audience.¹

In this chapter we will attempt to discuss the productions themselves together with the positive and negative points of the study itself. The productions will be discussed in terms of the aspects which elicited positive or negative criticism from the respondents and in terms of the previously formulated hypotheses. In addition specific quotes will be drawn from the response tapes to further illustrate major points. This information will hopefully become both an aid for future producers of Black oriented programming and a guide for future study.

¹Carl I. Hovland, Experiments in Mass Communications. Princeton University Press (1949), p. 81.

Two major factors which may have effected, to some extent, the reactions of the respondents were the quality of the picture and sound presented. The original productions were produced on color video tape while those presented to the respondents were black and white transfers to film in which the contrast range of the pictures was sorely limited. This gave the impression of a drab picture. In addition, the quality of the sound track accompanying the film was at some points distorted. Although these factors were at some points explained to the respondents, they may have had some unconscious effect on their responses.

Also interviewer bias may have had indirect influence on the responses given. In this study three different interviewers were used. Although the question put to the respondents were basically the same, the differences in sex inflection and manner of presentation may have affected the responses.

The evaluation of trend or attitudes prevalent in the responses will be discussed in terms of the four major questions put to the groups, together with the hypotheses associated with that question.

1. What did you like about the productions? The themes or subjects portrayed were of major importance to most of the people questioned, as predicted by the Black master's candidates. Another factor which was an obvious positive point for the productions was the use of White actors as

villains. Many persons voiced positive responses to this point:

"The White public assistance aid ("Cry of the Silent"), he was fabulous; he played his butt off. He was really good; that is a typical honky; he came in there and you just felt it."

"I liked it bringing out for the first time that the White man (lieutenant--"Rotten Apples") is guilty of something."

"... to snatch the White boy, that lieutenant, the top dog, and point out that he was the ace number one villain, that was worthwhile."

It seems that there is a place for competent White actors in Black dramatic productions.

In general, the respondents reacted much more favourably to "Cry of the Silent" than to "Rotten Apples". The respondents also stated that "Cry of the Silent" followed more closely the soap opera tradition, which concurs with the responses given by both student critique groups.

A comparison by class revealed a surprisingly higher positive response level of the middle class group. Their responses, it was assumed, were to be closer to those of the negative White group tested.

a. "Rotten Apples". All of the groups interviewed formed a consensus regarding the importance of the drug theme of this production. While many persons voiced negative comments regarding the acting of the main character, there were few negative comments about the acting of the dope addict (see Appendix). The theme of this production seemed to be its main redeeming factor.

b. "Cry of the Silent" received by far the more positive response. Not only was it considered to be of better quality, but also closer to the soap opera tradition:

"When I saw it [the production] the first thing I thought of was soap opera."

"It's no worse than the soap box operas you see every day."

"It was true to the form of the soap box opera, and it was a different soap box opera from what I had ever seen before.... I enjoyed it ... and I would like to see more of that on soap box operas."

"It would be fine as a soap opera."

The respondents perceived the use of stereotyped roles in this production which they believed did not detract from the effectiveness of the programs.

"'Cry of the Silent', while it did deal with some stereotypes, I think they're true."

"Cry of the Silent" received, not only a more positive response than "Rotten Apples", but also a high degree of identification from each class, both middle and working.

In terms of the hypotheses based on positive responses, we find the working class responses were not correctly predicted. They did not react as positively to the less involved production of "Rotten Apples" as was predicted in hypothesis eight and they did not react more positively than their middle class counterparts as had been predicted in hypothesis six.

The middle class group followed a predicted path in which they gave considerably higher positive responses to "Cry of the Silent", because of the improved production

techniques and a level of empathy developed for the deaf mute couple in this production. In terms of the positive responses it was by far the most forceful of the two productions.

2. What did you dislike about the productions? The majority of the negative comments came in reference to the acting in general and the acting of the main character specifically. There were also some comments regarding the pacing of the productions, specifically a scene which introduced the deaf mute couple. (These comments were similar to those expressed by both groups of Master's candidates.) It was approximately five minutes long and was completely devoid of sound. Few of the comments questioned either themes portrayed or the writing as the Black graduate students did. One of the general negative comments is found below:

"Black people will sit in front of their screens and cry to see themselves depicted like this, especially that dumb cop (the main character). Taking the same content and putting capable actors in it you would have mass appeal."

Regarding the pacing of the programs seen, some individuals believed that the shows were "draggy" while others attempted to justify these reactions by referring to the commercial television viewing background of the respondents. These comments are typical of those discussions.

"I got the feeling that this thing was going to drag on forever. I was sitting there saying, 'When is the end going to come?'"

"One of the reasons that they seemed to go so slow, both of them, was that we have become so used to commercials. There was no commercial break to give you a breather, you just had to sit there and wonder when was it going to be over."

Another point which generated some heated discussion among the Miami and New Orleans groups, most obviously, and throughout all of the other cities tested generally, was the varied reactions to the speech patterns used by the actors. This point corresponds favorably with similar responses given by the Black Master's candidates. The unnatural situations created, not by the roles or actions of individual characters, but by the verbal statements which they gave. A Miami respondent made a typical comment:

"One of the first things that was lacking in the whole thing was what they call urban English. The English was too perfect to depict the type of people they were talking about. No da's or dem der's; everything was perfect English."

Surprisingly, the roles or life styles of the characters were, not with one exception, questioned. The policeman's (the main character) role and acting style were constantly being questioned by both classes of respondents, although not by either group of graduate critics. Negative criticism regarding the policeman, especially in "Rotten Apples", was the point in many discussions that generated a majority of the negative criticism. His role as well as his acting generated questions regarding the use of a policeman as a main character:

"I just feel a Black officer does not represent the average Black man in the community ... may be a common laborer to portray content."

This negative pre-set attitude toward police by members of the Black community may have affected the respondents' reactions to the series. We can also postulate that one of

the reasons for greater negative responses to "Rotten Apples" by all of the Blacks viewing the film was the more dominant role played by the policeman in this production.

Two of the three hypothesis regarding the negative responses to individual productions by class, were not confirmed.

a. "Rotten Apples". The negative responses directed at this production lie mainly with the acting of the main character. His lack of "Urban English", his "histrionics" and his role as a police officer detracted from his believability.

"He (the main character) came on so phoney, like with this poetic jargon, you don't see cops like this. It isn't their bag."

"I didn't appreciate his histrionics..., the preaching and flailing his arms around."

As previously stated the negative response of the respondents to the main character, may have been equally the product of both his role as a policeman and his acting.

The working class respondents, whom we predicted would have a less negative response to "Rotten Apples", had equally high negative responses to both productions. The middle class responses which were believed to be more negative in terms of "Rotten Apples" as compared to "Cry of the Silent" and in relation to working class groups, proved to be less negative generally, than the working class, toward the series, and more negative in terms of their responses to "Rotten Apples" as compared to "Cry of the Silent".

b. "Cry of the Silent". Negative comments regarding this production were twofold. The introduction of the deaf mute the respondents said was good, but much too long; the lack of sound or music was a major criticism. The second point of negative criticism came as a result of a scene in which the main character is seen with his shirt off, with his wife on the couch. The following comment typifies the negative attitude displayed:

"I don't think that this type of thing needs to be brought in front of our youngsters, in front of people period.... That statement that the school teacher (wife) wanted to be used on her day off, that gets next to me."

As a result of the more involved plot, better production techniques, and we must assume, limited use of the main character, this production received substantially less harsh criticism than "Rotten Apples". Class made little difference in the types of negative responses given, while the level of these responses was significantly higher in the working class group. However, overall negative response to "Cry of the Silent" was significantly lower.

As has been stated previously, in terms of class differences, the middle class groups' positive responses were higher generally and specifically for "Cry of the Silent". They, like the working class, disliked the character and role of the Black policeman in a dominant position. They verbalized the fact that familiar Black stereotypes were being used, but gave no negative responses to them. Their response to the

lack of "urban English" was not as pointed as that of the working class group, but their knowledge of specific production problems and techniques was greater, rivaling that of the White graduate critics. In essence, the middle class responses were more pointed (and longer) but their areas of concern did not differ drastically from those of the working class groups.

The working class respondents showed a higher degree of identification with both series examples. They were less technical in their appraisal of the productions and dealt on a level of realism of situations and characters similar to that of the Black graduates. They were generally more negative in their responses while giving the highest positive value for "Rotten Apples" basically as a reaction to and identification with, the dope addict in this production.

3. Do you think people will watch it? (the series)--
Despite a few extremely negative comments regarding the series, the majority of persons questioned felt that this series would be enjoyed by Black viewers, partially because of its unique Black qualities and partially because of the themes portrayed. The following responses are typical:

"I feel that most people that view it would enjoy it and get something out of it."

"As bad as the acting is, I feel that it would have widespread appeal and it would go over quite well, because you don't get a show like this very often and it would be watched for that reason...."

"I was willing to overlook the acting because it had a worthwhile story to tell."

"The point is, on these soap operas, people enjoy watching other people' miseries. This is really what they are.... They will watch."

Two major questions which arose during the course of this section of the interviews, which revealed a surprising sophistication among Black viewers, were about when the programs would be scheduled and whether or not they would receive proper promotion.

"I would certainly hope that it is not shown at 7:00 o'clock Sunday morning."

Negative responses to these questions, when given, were completely against the series being shown. The area of concern for these respondents came mainly as a result of the acting and technical aspects and not the content or themes used.

("Would you watch the series?") "Not with that policeman, (main character), no."

"The content is there, but we don't have the acting ability and the proper direction."

The majority of the respondents supported the program and believed that Black viewers would watch the series if they were made aware of the fact that it would be aired, and it was not placed in a time slot which would restrict viewing. The question regarding national distribution of the series received a similar positive response.

4. Do you think that the program should be put on 180 stations nationally? Responses similar to that of the question regarding viewing, were received from most respondents. An additional point discussed was the feeling of the

respondents that this type of program would be an effective means of informing the public of the problems of the Black community.

"The man who produced this, he was Black and this showed, he was aware of the problem.... He was facing the problem."

"I was shocked by the impact and power of the message that was given out. I really didn't think anybody would be making statements like that."

A result which is worth noting was that, although the mean values for the negative response questions were generally higher than mean values from positive response questions (the single exception being a larger positive mean for "Cry of the Silent"). This fact may be off-set by the generally positive responses given to the questions favoring local viewing and national distribution.

While attempts at generalization of the entire Black population of this country from this study is questionable, there are some major points of discussion which merit consideration. We can conclude from the information given that the responses of Black viewers from differing socio-economic backgrounds differ by degree rather than by type. We can also conclude that the Black viewing audience are more sophisticated viewers of television than they have in the past been given credit for. This can be concluded, not only because of their awareness of the need for programming aimed at, and modified for them, but also because of their awareness of dramatic values, program promotion, and the effect of audience

size on the time slot for a program. In addition, we can see that while Black viewers are highly critical of productions about themselves (equally or more so than the White graduate critics), they will overwhelmingly support an on-going dramatic production series about themselves which has capable actors, themes and content which accurately represent problems, life style and language in the Black community and is technically well done.

Hopefully, this study will be one of many conducted in the area of Black reactions to differing forms of television presentation. There are many areas of Black media consumption which need to be explored. Not only the study of the relative effectiveness of differing format types, but also black responses to differing personality and acting portrayals. In addition, a library of information should be developed covering differing responses to media presentations of Blacks from diverse demographic and socioeconomic backgrounds. There are divergent opinions and levels of perception in the black community and without a basic knowledge of the effect that these differences can make in viewer reactions, the producer of Black oriented programming can only guess at the feelings, attitudes and perspectives of that community.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

TABLES

TABLE 1
GENERAL LIKE AND GENERAL DISLIKE VALUES*

	General Like ^a	General Dislike ^b
<u>City</u>		
1. Philadelphia	.8333 (n=18)	1.3333 (n=12)
2. Los Angeles	.9000 (n=20)	1.1818 (n=11)
3. Cleveland	1.0000 (n=11)	1.4286 (n=7)
4. Miami	1.0000 (n=17)	1.0769 (n=13)
5. New Orleans	1.0000 (n=20)	.9474 (n=19)
<u>Class</u>		
Middle class	.9787 (n=47)	1.0244 (n=41)
Working class	.8974 (n=39)	1.3809 (n=21)
Total	.9419* (n=86)	1.1452* (n=62)

*All mean values have been rounded to four decimal places.

^aThe following values represent the positive arithmetic mean response values (0-2) from the question: "What did you like about the series?"

^bThe following values represent the negative arithmetic mean response values (0 to -2) from the questions: "What did you dislike about the series?" (For means of comparison these values have been converted to positive values.)

TABLE 2
LIKE VALUES BY PRODUCTION*

	Production I ^a Like	Production II ^b Like
<u>City</u>		
1. Philadelphia	1.1250 (n=16)	1.2308 (n=13)
2. Los Angeles	.8000 (n=10)	1.5000 (n=14)
3. Cleveland	.5000 (n=2)	.6667 (n=9)
4. Miami	1.1000 (n=10)	1.000 (n=9)
5. New Orleans	1.0000 (n=11)	1.1429 (n=14)
<u>Class</u>		
Middle class	.963 (n=27)	1.2121 (n=33)
Working class	1.0455 (n=22)	1.077 (n=26)
Total	1.0000 (n=49)	1.1525 (n=59)

*The following values represent positive responses (0-2) from the question, "What did you like about the production?" which referred to a specific production.

^aProduction I is "Rotten Apples"

^bProduction II is "Cry of the Silent"

TABLE 3
DISLIKE VALUES BY PRODUCTION*

	Production I ^a Dislike	Production II ^b Dislike
<u>City</u>		
1. Philadelphia	1.4167 (n=12)	.7500 (n=4)
2. Los Angeles	1.0000 (n=7)	1.5000 (n=4)
3. Cleveland	1.2500 (n=4)	1.3333 (n=3)
4. Miami	1.3000 (n=10)	1.0000 (n=6)
5. New Orleans	1.0000 (n=10)	.8889 (n=9)
<u>Class</u>		
Middle class	1.1739 (n=23)	1.0000 (n=22)
Working class	1.2500 (n=20)	1.2500 (n=4)
Total	1.2093 (n=43)	1.0325 (n=26)

*The following values represent negative responses (0 to -2) from the question: "What did you dislike about the production?" which referred to "specific productions".

^aProduction I--"Rotten Apples"

^bProduction II--"Cry of the Silent"

TABLE 4
TOTAL ADULT VALUES^a AND STUDENT VALUES^b

Class	Production I--Like	Production II--Like	General Like
Student	1.0909 (n=11)	1.2222 (n=9)	1.2727 (n=11)
Total	1.0000 (n=49)	1.1525 (n=59)	.9419 (n=86)

Class	Production I--Dislike	Production II--Dislike	General Dislike
Student	1.0000 (n=6)	1.2500 (n=4)	1.0909 (n=11)
Total	1.2093 (n=43)	1.0385 (n=26)	1.1452 (n=62)

Class	Distribution*	Viewing**	
Student	1.3077 (n=13)	.6000 (n=10)	
Total	1.2245 (n=49)	1.0678 (n=59)	

^aThese values represent all adult values (both middle and working class) for each category.

^bThese values represent a test group of Philadelphia students.

* This value represents responses to the question, "Do you think that this program should be distributed to 180 stations nationally?"

** This value represents responses to the question, "Do you think (Black) people will watch it?"

APPENDIX II

CODE BOOK

BLACK REACTIONS TO "THE BIRD OF THE IRON FEATHER"

Thesis: Thomas A. Hardy

CODE BOOK SECTIONS

Section I. General Information

Section II. Plot Breakdown (outline)

Section III. Coding Sheets

CODE BOOK

The following study is being conducted in cooperation with the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. It is one of the few studies being done nationally which deals with the area of Black program preferences. The study came about as a result of a series produced by the Educational station, WTTW, in Chicago, entitled "Bird of the Iron Feather". The series was somewhat unique in that it applied both "soap opera" format and an almost entirely Black staff and crew. In this study, we will attempt to find whether this type of program would be effective in terms of Educational television programming for the Black community.

The method of investigations is Content Analysis. You as coders will be applying a five point psychological scale to individual responses given by Black viewers of two examples of "Bird". The taped responses were supplied by the Corporation and represent both middle class and working class reactions from five major cities (Philadelphia, Cleveland, Miami, New Orleans, and Los Angeles). The tapes have been pre-edited, with a verbal introduction to each section and test tones between individual responses.

In order to facilitate your coding session, you will be provided with a plot breakdown of the series examples in an outline form and you will also be asked to view the

series examples seen by the respondents, twice, in order to completely familiarize yourself with any specific reference a respondent might make to a program.

You will be asked to place each response into one of five categories:

Categories +2 and -2:

These categories indicate that the respondent expresses an attitude at one end of the scale with definite or strong feeling. If there is any doubt, the response should be coded +1 or -1.

- a. a positive or negative answer which is supported by a thorough and spontaneous explanation.
- b. a positive or negative answer expressed in an emphatic way.

Categories +1 and -1:

Some positive or negative feeling expressed.

- a. positive or negative feeling not supported by a spontaneous explanation or expressed without emphasis.
- b. a largely positive or negative answer with some reservations in the opposite direction so that the net effect is either positive or negative.
- c. positive or negative feeling expressed with hesitation: "I suppose", "It's probably".

Category 0:

This category indicates that the respondent is "on the fence" or neutral, that he clearly does not wish to place himself or cannot place himself in either half of the scale.

- a. pro-con: a combination of both positive and negative attitudes expressed with equal emphasis.
- b. a neutral attitude which is expressed by the respondent: "It doesn't make any difference to me", etc.
- c. conditional attitudes expressed without any leaning in either direction.

Investigation of the coding sheets will reveal that there are a maximum of three possible values that can be given to any one response. At least one numerical value should be given to each response under the "general" heading. Numerical values should also be given for "specific" references to any one production (such as "I liked the first one but not the second", "the dope addict was very good" (Production I), "The social worker acted his butt off!" (Production II)). The "General" response area should be your estimation of the entire response.

During the course of the listening period, certain responses may be interrupted by clarifications of the discussion leader or extraneous comments by other group members. Please disregard when evaluating the responses.

Each coder must be as objective as possible. Do not make inferences from what is not there. Attempt to void your personal objective reactions to the given responses.

THESIS: BIRD OF THE IRON FEATHER--CRITIQUE

I. Segment title (pertinent information)

- A. Subject area (area of education)
 - 1. specific references to subject area
- B. Production elements
 - 1. direction (camera placement shots, etc.)
 - 2. staging (character positioning)
 - 3. lighting
 - 4. sets
 - 5. writing (style, relationships, etc.)
- C. Plot breakdown
 - 1. character interactions
 - 2. situation formation

II. "Rotten Apples" (playdate April 9, 1970)

- A. Youth drug addiction problems in Black community
 - 1. initial references were made to an entire self-perpetuating system
 - a. 16,000 in the Chicago area
 - b. system is aided and abetted by the police
 - 2. futility of Jonah's position within this system
 - a. he can only effect a small part
 - 3. the unseen commander (white powerstructure) is aware and either part or party to the drug system
 - 4. references to the life style of the young addicts
 - a. robbery
 - b. sleeping with his hat on
 - c. gets up feeling bad needing stuff
 - 5. some reasons for Black disrespect of Police
 - a. bribery of Bobby
 - b. Black cop's (vines) attitude of live and let live
 - c. he had "made it" and didn't worry about what really happened in the ghetto
- B. Production elements
 - 1. direction
 - a. two camera set (cross shooting)
 - b. boom mike system
 - c. maximum use of close-ups and reaction shots
 - 2. staging
 - a. most characters were positioned for cross shooting
 - i. facing each other

- b. use of differing levels in positioning used
 - i. vines between Lieutenant and Jonah
 - 3. lighting--quality
 - a. may or may not have been good
 - b. reproduction problems may have been caused by the kinescope
 - 4. sets draw on type written paper
 - 5. writing
 - a. style over all was natural for the situations
 - b. time factor may have restricted some sequences
 - c. room was left within the writing for the actors interpretation
- C. Plot breakdown
 - 1. general--Jonah (middle level police) attempts to catch some higher level people in the dope system with aid of a young friend, Bobby, who is a junkie (potential addict)
 - 2. Jonah wants to use Bobby partially because of a former close relationship which he had had with Bobby and his brother who had Od'd (took an over-dose)
 - a. a new relationship had to be formed because of both men's new roles (cop vs addicts)
 - b. the new relationship was also to be a means of Bobby obtaining treatment for his habit
 - c. first a new level of trust had to be created
 - 3. a split was also apparent within the police ranks as to Jonah's techniques
 - a. between Jonah and Summerville (the narcotics division lieutenant)
 - b. Jonah's new techniques represented a "negative" reaction within the dope world system
 - 4. unknown cooperation between Buggy (the dope dealer) and Summerville
 - 5. Bribery Bobby was set-up by Jonah in order to uncover higher level dope people
 - a. the success of the bribery plan only uncovered a small part of the over-all police collaboration scheme

III. "Cry of the Silent" (November 17, 1969)

- A. The Fairness of the Welfare (Government supported) program
 - 1. the facts of the couples' existence
 - a. Blackness
 - b. deaf mutes
 - c. living in a basement apartment, on partial welfare and family help

- d. living on the bare necessities
 - 2. Mrs. Rhodes (Jonah's wife) comments to the white social worker
 - a. they pay state, local and Federal taxes
 - b. if there is government subsidy (billions) for major corporations and farmers being paid not to grow food, why can't her relatives receive a little more
 - 3. Simon and Amanda (deaf-mute couple) only need the money until work can be found
 - a. they want to be contributing members of society
 - 4. the wide cultural gulf which is apparent between the Black characters and the white social worker
 - a. the difference between the social worker's reactions in Jonah's home and in Simon's
 - b. he reacted from a position of power only in the second case
 - c. covert racism which even the social worker is unaware of
 - 5. subtle hate and distrust shown by Jonah's family
- B. Production aspects
- 1. direction
 - a. first section was very drawn-out
 - b. no sound caused loss of attention
 - c. fewer close-ups were used in the basement segments
 - 2. staging
 - a. first segment may have been too staged
 - b. same character level differences, Simon and Amanda between Jonah's brother and the social worker
 - 3. lighting
 - a. it may have been intentional but the relative lighting between Jonah's home and Simon's was very evident (Simon's was lower)
 - 4. sets
 - a. as realistic as possible the basement rooms were well done even to the furnishing
 - 5. writing
 - a. problems of Jonah's brother speaking to his aunt and uncle only in the second half
 - b. problem between emotional changes and the time factors involved
- C. Plot breakdown
- 1. general--Jonah's aunt and uncle (deaf-mutes) have applied for increase in welfare benefits
 - a. reasons
 - i. the original payments were not enough
 - ii. support from Simon's nephews was decreasing. One, a barber had afros to contend with, and the other, Jonah, was attempting to buy a new home

2. the new white social worker attempts a perfunctory check on the couple's financial situation
 - a. through Jonah first
 - b. second--directly with Simon and Amanda
3. Jonah must make a decision as to which part of his family will stay in the ghetto and which will leave
4. the social worker reactions are
 - a. first of all that he cannot help them
 - b. but if Jonah (a policeman) will talk to his commissioner then he could help them
 - c. to him this playing by the rules(?)
5. Jonah's brother is disgusted by this whole situation
 - a. his reaction give indications of leading some future action

APPENDIX III
CRITIQUE OF "BIRD OF THE IRON FEATHER"
WHITE GRADUATE STUDENTS
PRODUCTION ASPECTS

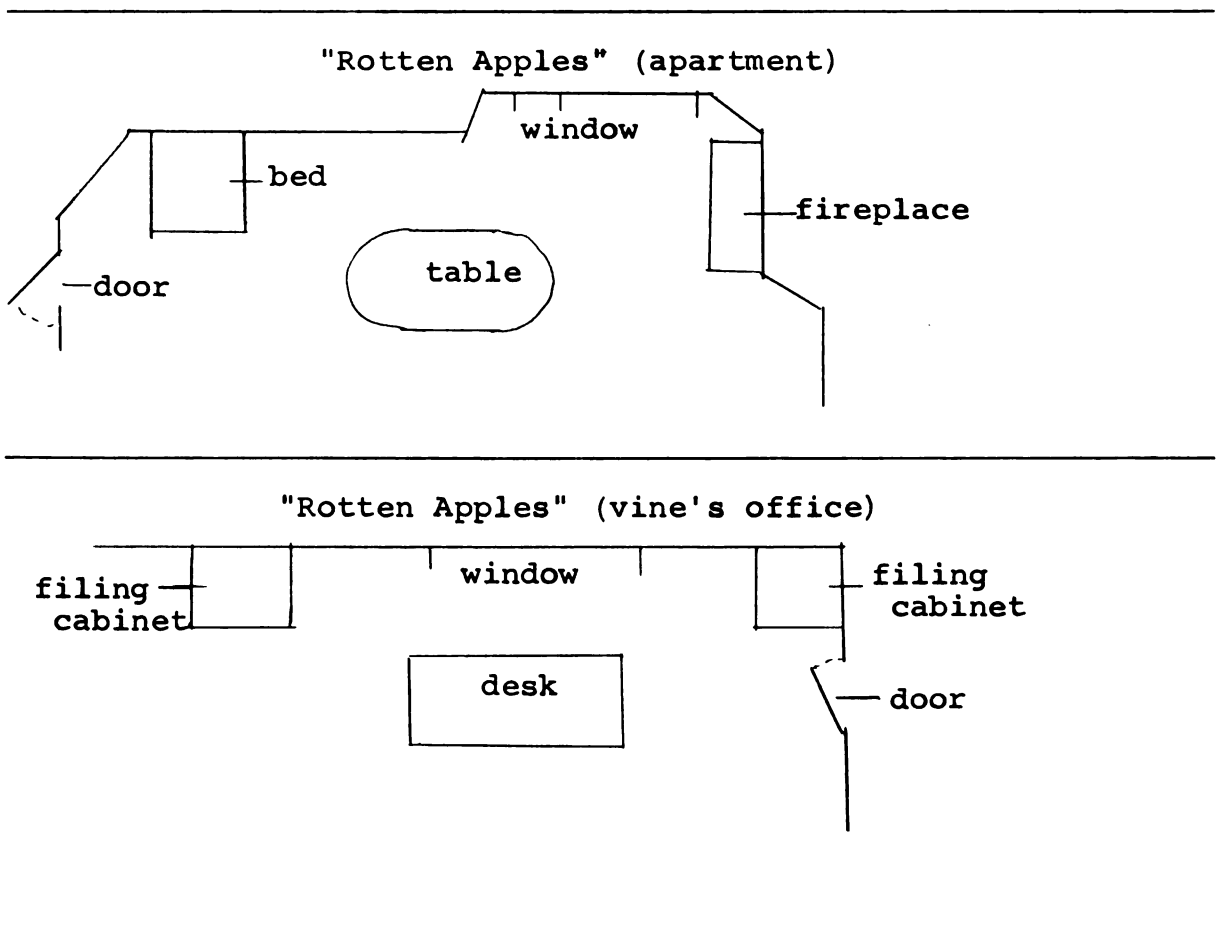
CRITIQUE OF "BIRD OF THE IRON FEATHER"

WHITE GRADUATE STUDENTS

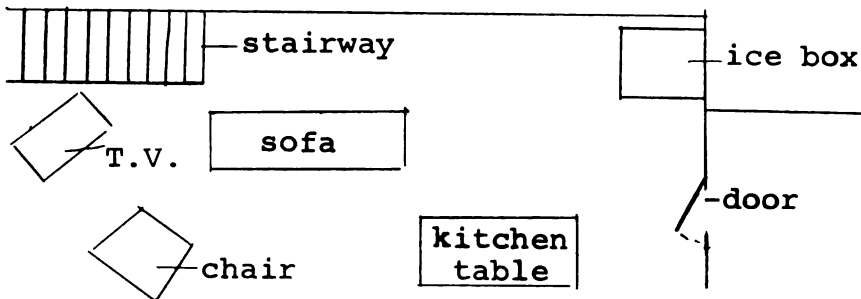
PRODUCTION ASPECTS

I would like each of you to give your impression regarding the technical aspects of the following productions. Please be as objective as possible regarding the production aspects of the following films.

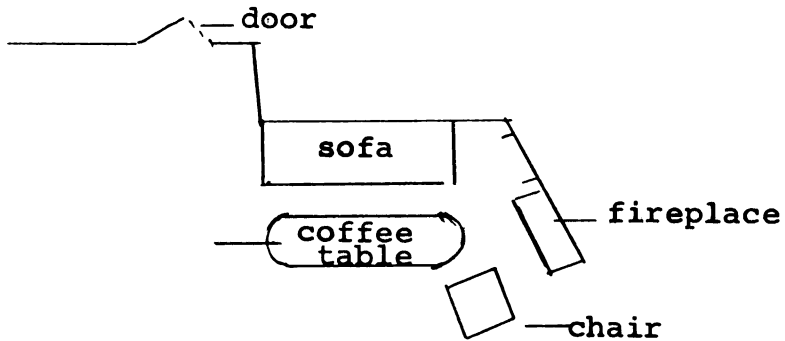
1. Found below are floor plans for all major scenes of the first production. Please draw in the positions you believe the cameras were in.



"Cry of the Silent" (uncles home)



"Cry of the Silent" (Jonah's apartment)



-
2. Did the above staging contribute to the effectiveness of the story? (This would include character as well as camera positioning.)

3. What staging changes would have increased effectiveness?

4. Direction: What were your reactions to the show's direction? (This would include such areas as camera shots, miking, timing and show continuity.)

5. Were the series open and close used effectively? Was the film editing well done?

6. Was the medium of television used to its best advantage in the examples you have just seen? Explain.

REALISM

2. Acting: Was the language used natural or injected into the setting? Was the speech similar to speech heard on the "street"?

3. Did the characters interact in a natural way? If you observed the situation in real life what would be your reactions?

4. Was the subject or theme of the program well portrayed?
Was the problem area well focused upon?

5. Could the situation which you have just seen actually occur?

6. What did you learn from the productions?

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