

TOWARDS A SOCIOLOGY OF CARTOONS: A FRAMEWORK FOR
SOCIOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO
PLAYBOY SEX CARTOONS

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ABSTRACT

This thesis attempts to develop a framework for the sociological investigation of cartoons by drawing on theories and concepts developed within related areas of sociology. A literature review of past research into cartoons demonstrates that to date there exists little in the way of a sociology of cartoons; most of the previous research has been carried out by psychologists or historians. Sociological studies of cartoons have been partial, atheoretical, and generally not illuminating. This derives ultimately from failure to ground the analysis of cartoons in mainstream sociological debates. Thus the two sub-fields of the sociology of media and the sociology of art are investigated in order to extract those theories and concepts which are most relevant to a sociological understanding of cartoons. The theoretical framework developed is then applied to an empirical investigation of Playboy sex cartoons. Using standard content analysis procedure, the Playboy cartoons are analyzed in terms of the ways in which women and men and the relationships between them are portrayed. The findings of the content analysis are discussed in light of recent feminist theories regarding the nature and effects of pornographic imagery. The problems encountered in conducting a quantitative analysis of cartoons are highlighted and approaches which are more qualitative in nature are investigated and applied to the study of cartoons in general and Playboy sex cartoon in particular. In addition to examining the encoding side of the communication chain, this thesis investigates empirically the ways in which differently situated audiences decode Playboy sex cartoons.

Introduction

The aim of this thesis is twofold: to construct a sociological framework for the analysis of cartoons and to apply this framework to the analysis of Playboy sex cartoons. While cartoons have for some time been the focus of academic interest for psychologists, historians, humor specialists and political scientists, sociologists have generally overlooked this area of cultural production. On those occasions when sociologists have investigated cartoons, the resultant theory and research have been of limited value because they have not, on the whole, been set within the wider framework of mainstream sociological debates. In the absence of an already existing sociology of cartoons, this thesis focuses on the ways in which one can be developed, using as its starting point those theories and research methods developed within related areas of sociology. Because the cartoon is first and foremost a form of communication, which many scholars argue has its roots in artistic production (see especially Kris and Gombrich, 1962), the sociology of mass communications and the sociology of art are of particular relevance.

The case study, Playboy sex cartoons, was chosen because of my interest in and indeed concern with the images of women which abound in those magazines which have been variously termed pornography, men's entertainment magazines, skin magazines and erotica. The choice of term is not only an issue of definition but is also one of political and religious orientation (Donnerstein, Linz and Penrod, 1987: 1). Because this thesis is written from a feminist perspective I intend to follow the path set by feminists such as Dworkin (1981) and Steinem (1983) when they argue that terms such as "men's entertainment magazines" tend to obfuscate the gender power relations which are implicit in these magazines. Thus the term used throughout this thesis is pornography, defined as "the degrading and demeaning portrayal of the role and status of the human female...as a mere sexual object to be exploited and manipulated sexually" (Report of the

Commission on Obscenity and Pornography, 1979: 239, quoted in Longino, 1982: 28). The discussion in Chapter Seven of Playboy cartoons and the analysis of pornographic codes in Chapter Nine will show how and why such images can be said to be degrading and demeaning to women.

Rather than analyzing pornographic magazines as a genre, I selected Playboy as the focus of interest since it is the most established of pornographic magazines and, moreover, occupies a remarkable place in the publishing history of the English-speaking world (see Chapter Five for a fuller discussion of the history and success of the magazine). One of the most important features of Playboy magazine is that for a number of years it served as the blue-print for what a men's magazine needed to include in order to be successful, a blueprint used by magazines such as Penthouse, Players and Mayfair. The format which Playboy developed in its early years is one which has now become standard for most magazines whose staple product is the nude, displayed female body. Indeed Weyr (1978) suggests that Playboy is largely responsible for the now flourishing pornography industry, which is said to gross over ten billion dollars a year (Dworkin and Mackinnon, 1989).

Playboy cartoons first came to my attention as a topic for inquiry at the beginning of my academic career, when I worked as a researcher at the University of Haifa. I was employed by Dr. Judith Reisman who was writing a book on the nature and effects of Playboy cartoons. Much of my work involved developing a familiarity with these cultural products. My three year involvement in this project served to generate a list of research problems which were beyond the scope of Dr. Reisman's project but which I felt were worthy of further investigation. A doctoral thesis provided the ideal forum for developing and extending these problems into working hypotheses which required extensive qualitative and quantitative research. Research has shown Playboy cartoons to be the most popular part of the magazine, receiving higher interest ratings than even the centrefolds (Stauffer and

Frost, 1976) and this suggests their suitability as a topic for continued research.

By choosing to develop a sociology of cartoons with a case study on Playboy sex cartoons I was able to integrate my dual commitment to feminism and sociology. Ultimately this thesis is located within the discipline of sociology, but in a way that goes beyond the limits created by sexist assumptions that have long governed the field. The obvious question here is what does it mean to do feminist sociology as opposed to the more conventional type. Within the discipline of sociology, this debate has been on-going for some time (see for example Bernard, 1979; Smith, 1979; Roberts, 1981).

According to Cook and Fonow (1990), although at present there is no clearly articulated feminist methodology, it is possible to pinpoint five basic principles which are in evidence in varying degrees in sociological research conducted by feminists. It is not necessary here to discuss all of the five principles since only two are relevant for this thesis, namely, acknowledging the pervasive influence of gender and emphasis on the empowerment of women and the transformation of patriarchal social institutions through research. Indeed the authors stress that in general, feminist research is informed by at least two of these principles, with an occasional piece containing three or more.

For Cook and Fonow, acknowledging the pervasive influence of gender requires "attending to the significance of gender as a basic fact of social life..." (ibid: 73). For the feminist researcher this means among other things making women and their experiences, including their relations to men, the focus of inquiry (ibid). The discussion of Playboy cartoons attempts to elucidate how women's experiences and relationships to men are symbolically portrayed in a magazine which is produced largely by men for men. The focus of the study is the analysis of how gender is depicted, taking the images of femininity and masculinity and the relationship between the two as social constructs which serve to produce and reproduce gender inequality. Also the study on

readers' responses to Playboy cartoons (Chapter Nine) contrasts significantly with much of the past and present research into the effects of pornography because it includes women's responses. Most of the research into pornography has concentrated on male subjects and when using female subjects often the most noteworthy comment by the researchers was that the female respondents did not respond to pornography in the expected way, that is, the male way, defined in terms of genital arousal (for example see Donnerstein, 1983). Thus this study is especially interested in how women experience pornographic images of themselves on their own terms rather than in relation to the male response.

Feminist methodology, by emphasizing empowerment and transformation, implicitly stresses that the purpose of research and the subsequent knowledge is to change or transform patriarchy (Cook and Fonow, 1990: 79). The researcher not only provides an account of what is but also what needs to be changed. As Cook and Fonow suggest "description without an eye for transformation is inherently conservative..." (ibid). Feminism, as a movement committed to social change, requires the feminist researcher to reflect on this commitment by producing knowledge which can raise consciousness and thus empower women towards political action. The discussion of Playboy cartoons aims to make explicit the subtle ways in which gender inequality is legitimized and perpetuated in a magazine so respectable that famous men such as Jimmy Carter, Martin Luther King and Abbie Hoffman have had no qualms about being featured in the interview section. It is hoped that the knowledge gained from understanding the numerous ways in which women can be symbolically denigrated and dehumanized will be used by women to alter the conditions of their oppression and exploitation.

It is thus clear that within this thesis the present system of gender relations which serves to empower men at the expense of women is taken to be both problematic and in need of radical change. As an activist I can demonstrate, protest and fight for

the right of all women to live free from patriarchal oppression. As a sociologist however I need to change my tools, though not the aim, and thus in place of pickets and civil disobedience, I rely on scientific theories and methods to highlight the ways in which the present patriarchal structure seeks to reproduce itself in all cultural forms, most notably pornography, whose staple product is the caricatured image of the female body, both in the cartoons and the pictorial spreads.

In order to provide a thorough explanation of the ways in which Playboy cartoons perpetuate sexism, it is necessary to locate these texts within the wider genre of cartoons in general. There has however been no previous attempt to develop a comprehensive sociology of the cartoon and thus before an academic analysis of Playboy cartoons can be offered, it is necessary to first develop a framework within which such an analysis can be elaborated.

The obvious starting point is a review of research on cartoons since past studies are important in locating where future work may be most fruitful. The aim of the first chapter is therefore to develop a budget of the kinds of research problems that a sociology of cartoons could investigate. In order to provide answers to some of these problems, it is necessary to go beyond the sociological research on cartoons and instead look to related substantive areas. Towards this end, Chapter Two examines the sociology of media as it has developed in the United States and Europe while Chapter Three focuses on the sociology of art. It is argued that both of these areas have much to offer the sociologist interested in cartoons since they are concerned with developing a sociological analysis of cultural forms. One of the most widely used research methods for investigating cultural forms has been content analysis and as this method was used for the present study of Playboy sex cartoons, Chapter Four provides an appraisal of content analysis. In order to avoid decontextualizing the data discussed in Chapter Seven, Chapter Five aims to locate the cartoons within the wider framework of Playboy magazine. Chapter

Six discusses the aims of the content analysis and provides a thorough account of the category system developed for the purpose of this study. The findings of the study are discussed at length in Chapter Seven. Included also is a review of the aims of the study in light of the data yielded by the content analysis. Textual analysis furnishes information on the encoding side of the communication chain, it cannot tell us what sense readers make of the cartoons (the decoding end) and since the framework for a sociology of cartoons demands that attention be paid to audience decodings, Chapter Eight sets out a preliminary investigation into how sociologists can conceive of the effects of cartoons and the magazines in which they are found. Chapter Nine takes this one step further by looking at cultural studies and the academic work carried out on audiences. The concepts developed within cultural studies are applied to a preliminary study on readers' decodings of Playboy sex cartoons. The conclusion, Chapter Ten, sets forth a framework for the sociology of cartoons which takes into account the encoding and decoding moments in the communication chain.

Chapter One

A History of Research on Cartoons

When compared to other forms of mass communication, cartoons have received scant attention. Ashbee's (1928) claim that neither cartoons or cartoonists are considered worthy of academic investigation is echoed some fifty seven years later by Riffe et al. (1985) in their analysis of editorial cartoonists when they argue that "studies have generally ignored cartoonists" (ibid: 378). Furthermore, when cartoons have been investigated, the analysis often lacks theoretical sophistication. Researchers tend to concentrate on either providing a shopping list account of the various cartoons which have been popular in the past (see for example Hoff, 1976 and Hess & Kaplan, 1975) or tables of numbers which informs the reader only of the main themes of the cartoons investigated (see for example Smith, 1987).

This chapter provides a history and critique of research on cartoons¹, focusing on those areas most directly relevant to a sociological understanding of cartoons. While this study is concerned mainly with developing a sociology of cartoons, research from other disciplines, most notably psychology and history, are included since some of these findings have implications for sociology. As a way of making clear the kind of work that has been done in the field, I have selected examples chosen on the basis of their typicality and clarity at bringing forth issues relevant to my discussion. During the course of the chapter, I will outline areas where future research may prove fruitful in extending an understanding of Playboy cartoons. The final section

¹ Since the Playboy cartoons being investigated in the content analysis are those which are drawn in a single frame, most of the research discussed is similarly concerned with the single frame cartoon. In some instances however, where relevant, research which discusses the strip cartoon will be cited.

of this chapter, a proposal for developing a sociology of the cartoon, sets out a framework which incorporates and expands upon the suggestions contained in the following discussion.

Research on The History and Development of the Modern Cartoon

Although a number of researchers (for example, Hines, 1933; Johnson, 1937; Streicher, 1967; Harrison, 1981) have aimed to provide an account of the beginnings of caricature and cartoon, the most "celebrated essay" (Bann, 1975) on the history of caricature is "The Principles of Caricature" (1962) by Kris and Gombrich. Although their essay is concerned more with the caricature as an art form, it is important for this discussion since "cartooning as we know it today is an outgrowth of caricature" (Johnson, 1937: 21).

Kris and Gombrich note that while caricature is as old as the graphic arts themselves, portrait caricature as an artistic style is a much more recent development, originating in Italy at the turn of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The authors are especially interested in uncovering why portrait caricature, which they define as "the deliberate distortion of the features of a person for the purpose of mockery" (1962: 189), took so long to develop given that artists had for some time been well versed in many forms of comic art such as satirical illustrations and images of the grotesque. According to Kris and Gombrich, the development of caricature is closely tied to the complex change in the artist's role and position which occurred during the sixteenth century. Instead of being regarded as manual workers, artists came to be viewed as creators who, like poets, had the supreme right to form a reality of their own. Thus, rather than just imitating nature, the artist's task was now to "penetrate into the innermost essence of reality" (1962: 190). For the portrait painter the new mandate was to reveal the essence of the person in the heroic sense; for the caricaturist, this new vision of the artist had less benign

implications, namely the revelation of the ugliness of the person behind the mask of pretense. Many social commentators of the time noted that they were witnessing the creation of an important new art form. The seventeenth-century commentator, Baldinucci, captures the spirit of this new form:

Caricaturing among painters and sculptors signifies a method of making portraits, in which they aim at the greatest resemblance of the whole of the person portrayed, while yet for the purpose of fun, and sometimes of mockery, they disproportionately increase and emphasize the defects of the features they copy, so that the portrait as a whole appears to be the sitter himself while its component parts are cheaper. (Kris and Gombrich, 1962: 189-90)

The beginnings of the modern cartoon can be found in the merging of the caricature tradition with the vindictive pictorial symbolism that had also become popular in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Kris and Gombrich point out that it was in eighteenth century England that:

caricature portraits were first introduced into political prints, that the cartoon in one sense was born and caricature was given a new setting and a new function...Caricature had become a social weapon unmasking the pretensions of the powerful and killing by ridicule. (Kris and Gombrich, 1962: 194)

From the foregoing discussion it is easy to see why the term cartoon is often confused with caricature. The confusion is further exacerbated by the fact that "the earliest cartoonists revelled in personal caricature. Exaggerated drawings of an individual's deformities were hailed as the height of humor" (Johnson, 1937: 21). Cartoons and caricature are however distinct phenomena (Johnson, 1937; Harrison, 1981). In discussing the relationship between the two, David Low has argued that "a cartoon is an illustration of a political or social idea, served up sometimes in

caricatural draughtsmanship, sometimes not" (Low, 1935: 40, quoted in Seymour-Ure, 1975: 13). For the caricaturist however the aim is to "discover, analyze and select essentials of personality, and by the exercise of wit to reduce them to appropriate form" (ibid). Seymour-Ure sees the distinction between caricature and cartoon in terms of the cartoon dealing with ideas and the caricature with personalities.

In the classic political cartoon the object of ridicule was usually a powerful political personality. Johnson (1937) provides numerous examples of such cartoons from Holland, the United States and France. Probably one of the most famous cartoonists is Charles Philipon whom Johnson describes as "the father of comic journalism" (1937: 28). The major butt of his cartoons was King Louis Philippe who came to the throne in 1830. Philipon drew Louis Philippe with a pear for a head (pear in French is also a slang term for fathead) and Johnson argues that this image appeared on billboards and in lithographs and became a mocking symbol in countless cartoons. The power of the caricature is seen in the French government's attempt to stop the images by prosecuting Philipon for seditious libel (he was eventually fined), while one of his contemporaries, Daumier, was imprisoned for the same 'crime'.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, cartoons had moved farther and farther away from personal caricature and similar methods of distortion and ridicule came to be used against the anonymous members of recognizable social groups (Johnson, 1937). Indeed, as Kris and Gombrich have argued, caricatures can be aimed not only at an identifiable individual but also at a type which is portrayed by exaggeration of particular features. Thus there is the caricature of blacks with big lips and rolling eyes (which was common in American cartoons of the 1940s and 1950s) and of women with large breasts and excessively curvaceous hips which populate magazines such as Playboy and Penthouse. Although the actual individual portrayed in these caricatures is unknown, the exaggerated features have become stereotyped to

the point where they stand as symbols of that group.

Given this trend, I would argue that the distinction made by Seymour-Ure (1975) between the caricature and the cartoon - one dealing with personality, the other with ideas - serves to obfuscate the meanings of racist and sexist cartoons. To show a black person with rolling eyes and big lips is to use the anonymous cartoon character as the vehicle of a stereotype. Moreover, stereotypes serve the function of linking categories of persons with specific moral beliefs and behaviors.

The film Ethnic Notions (1987), which discusses the media image of blacks from slavery to present day, demonstrates that the real power of the black caricature was to fuse the category of persons called black with the idea of blacks as stupid to a degree which made the two synonymous. Such an argument has been developed by Hines (1933) who suggests that that cartoon that embodies current stereotypes becomes an instrument of social control by defining the 'essential nature' of particular types of persons. The reductionist method of caricature serves as a persuasive device for the reproduction of stereotypes. The content analysis study discussed in Chapter Seven shows that, in line with what might be expected from a magazine like Playboy, female characters are more likely to be depicted in a caricatural mode than male characters.

Cartoons and Newspapers

A number of researchers (for example Johnson, 1937; Seymour-Ure, 1975; Harrison, 1981; Riffe, 1985) have discussed the importance of examining the relationship between cartoons and newspapers because "since the days of the mid-nineteenth century in Europe, England and the Western hemisphere, the cartoonist typically works for a journal or newspaper..." (Streicher, 1967: 442). Moreover, as Seymour-Ure (1975) has argued, the cartoon played an important role in the development of mass-circulation

general-interest popular dailies at the beginning of the twentieth century. He states that many of these papers owed their success to the popularity of the cartoons. The Daily Mirror in 1904 went as far as to recruit a popular cartoonist in order to boost circulation. In spite of its importance, research has not addressed directly, or in depth, either the relationship between the cartoon and the modern newspaper/ magazine or the relationship between the cartoonist and the media organizations (this latter link is of special interest to this study since the Playboy cartoonists work within the Playboy corporation, and, moreover, as shall be discussed later, Hefner himself was in charge of selecting the cartoons).

Studies which have been carried out in this area have tended to be limited in focus and have thus yielded scant information. Riffe et al. (1985), for example, set out to examine the kinds of issue conflicts which may appear between cartoonists and their editors. Through questionnaire data they found that cartoonists described themselves as more liberal than they thought their editors saw the paper. On some issues this perception could be documented (economics and defense); on others (such as political and ecological) the editors did not portray the cartoonist as being quite as far out of step as the cartoonists said. The researchers suggest that these differences -real or imagined- between the editor and the cartoonist could lead to job dissatisfaction on the part of the cartoonist.

While this may indeed be a possibility, Riffe et al. base their conclusion on the unexamined assumption that editors expect the work of the cartoonists, that is, the cartoon, to be ideologically in step with the rest of the paper. It is equally possible however that the editor of a newspaper or magazine may welcome diverse opinion in the cartoons. Lord Beaverbrook for example disagreed regularly with the opinions which David Low expressed in his newspaper the Evening Standard, yet consistently defended him against the criticisms of politicians and always published his cartoons, no matter how much they differed

from the overall right-wing editorials of the paper (Seymour-Ure, 1975). Playboy on the other hand does insist that the cartoon reflect the ideological position of the magazine. Michelle Urry, the cartoon editor has stated that:

Arthur (that is Arthur Kretchmer, editor director of Playboy) and I absolutely insist that the cartoons speak in the same voice as the rest of the magazine, there is a Playboy package, which although I can't define it, I know exactly what it is. (Urry, 1990)

Urry continued by saying that Playboy is a magazine targeted to men and her office has to ensure that the cartoons appeal to male humor. The cartoons are meant to entertain so the subjects should be kept light, the cartoons are not there to educate. She said that themes such as domestic bliss are not considered likely candidates because that is not what men find humorous. Urry added that the cartoonists are informed that Playboy does not wish to get embroiled in controversy so potentially explosive themes such as child-adult sex, and violence against women are generally avoided in the cartoons (the degree to which the ideological content of the cartoons are consistent with the overall messages contained within Playboy will be empirically investigated).

The general trend amongst researchers who examine cartoons in newspapers is to present large numbers of cartoons accompanied by relatively minimal textual discussion. Hoff (1976) for example includes over 700 cartoons from newspapers across the world. Accompanying most of the cartoons is a small piece on the history of the cartoonist and his work. What is clearly lacking is a discussion of the socio-political context of the cartoon themes and messages, nor is information given on the ideological stance of the newspaper in which the cartoon appeared or the political situation of the time. A somewhat more detailed discussion of cartoons and newspapers is provided by Hess and Kaplan (1975) in their book on the history of American political cartoons. While the authors do not set out to investigate the relationship between the

cartoon and its host newspaper, they do give some important examples which serve to illustrate how important the political position of the editor is to the acceptance or non-acceptance of the cartoonists' work. Hess and Kaplan discuss the case of a group of socialist cartoonists living in the United States in the early 1900s who could not get any publication to buy their work. However when a strongly identified socialist editor took over the paper The Masses, the paper became a showcase for radical cartoonists throughout the country. On the other side of the political spectrum, Hess and Kaplan show how the anti-black attitudes of the editors of Vanity Fair (1859-63) were reflected in their choice of cartoons which echoed their racist views. Thus Hess and Kaplan provide two examples where the editors did expect the cartoon to be ideologically in step with the paper.

Seymour-Ure (1975) has provided a more thoughtful discussion which aims to explore the ways in which cartoons fit with newspapers. Although he sees some differences between a visual and verbal medium, on closer scrutiny, he argues that the cartoon appears to have much in common with the rest of the newspaper. The commonalities discussed by Seymour-Ure between the verbal and visual medium are important for this thesis. While it is recognized that the visual and verbal mediums do have important differences (see for example Berger, 1972), the focus of this thesis is rather on the ways in which cartoons (the visual) may 'fit' with Playboy editorials written mainly by Hefner (the verbal).

According to Seymour-Ure, cartoons "...far from contrasting with the news columns...complement them graphically" (1975: 15). He bases this claim on the argument that cartoons contribute to the overall construction of reality offered by the newspaper in two ways. First, "they help readers to 'locate' personalities and events - to focus and rank them among the constantly shifting priorities of everyday life" (ibid). Second, with important implications for this study, is that "the values implicit in newspapers generally coincide with those of the cartoon" (ibid: 19).

Seymour-Ure's conclusion that the ideology of the newspaper is generally consistent with the cartoon's requires further debate in light of newspaper editors such as Lord Beaverbrook. This ideological 'fit' between the cartoon and the newspaper/magazine cannot thus be assumed but rather needs to be an area of empirical investigation. The discussion of mass media research in Chapter Two shows how the ideological content of media has in the past been either overlooked or assumed to be reflective of the owners of the media institutions. More recent research in the U.S.A. and Britain has questioned the validity of this assumption and consequently the analysis of the text has now become an important research endeavor. Thus, when analyzing cartoons such as those found in Playboy, it appears to be important to: (1) locate them in the wider context of the magazine in which they appear and (2) analyze the cartoon itself. A thorough investigation is therefore required of the ideological nature of the host magazine and the ways in which the cartoons either share that position or contrast with it. It is important however to point out that even in the case where the two contrast, the messages contained within the magazine and the cartoon are not separate or fixed entities. As Berger argues, "the meaning of an image is changed according to what one sees immediately beside it or what comes immediately after it" (Berger, 1972: 29).

All the studies discussed below, irrespective of their particular focus of research, have treated the cartoon as if it is read in isolation. This limitation holds for even the more methodologically sophisticated studies such as Bradley et al, (1979) (see below), which provided an in-depth analysis of the image of the prostitute in Playboy and Esquire magazines while not mentioning how the host magazines may have impacted on the selection, drawing and/or reading of the cartoon. Thus the discussion of Playboy's "ideology" in Chapter Five is especially pertinent to the content analysis of cartoons found within the magazine.

The Cartoonist and the Media Organization

Riffe et al. (1985) have pointed out that while there have been numerous studies on the attitudes and beliefs of news people in the work setting and the relationship between these people and the editors and owners of the papers, by and large cartoonists have been ignored. Harrison (1981) sees this area of research as important since "the editor is a gatekeeper who stands between the cartoonist and the audience" (1981: 41). However, in his discussion of the role of the editor, he cannot point to one empirical study which throws some light on the nature of the editor/cartoonist relationship.

Seymour-Ure suggests this area of research is ignored because the cartoonist often has a large measure of autonomy in the news organization. As a consequence, generalizations are difficult to make. He sees the relationships and patterns of work as open to variation according to "personalities from extreme isolation, exemplified by Giles who sends his work up from the country, to the daily close involvement of Vicky with his journalistic and political friends and colleagues" (1975: 21). Given this range of potential relationships and work settings, the question now becomes an empirical one with each study requiring detailed observation of the cartoonists, editors, owners and the institutional setting. Unfortunately this area of research has been largely ignored which means that much of the discussion is based on speculation. Nonetheless Seymour-Ure is able to articulate some organizational features which serve to impact on the work situation of the cartoonist.

Unlike the news journalist the cartoonist is not involved in the teamwork which, according to Seymour-Ure, has become increasingly common in journalism. The cartoonist often works alone and is not subject to a firmly defined set of routine relationships that often limits the journalist's autonomy. The cartoonist's work is not generally heavily cut or re-worked by sub-editors as is the case with news stories since the cartoonist

has one major relationship of authority, which is with the editor. This relationship can range from a hands off policy where the cartoonist is relatively unconstrained through to a heavily regulated mode where the cartoonist may have to alter that cartoon or re-work the idea.

One example given by Seymour-Ure where the cartoonist had a large degree of autonomy is David Low and his relationship with Lord Beaverbrook of the Evening Standard. Beaverbrook spent three years wooing Low who in 1927 agreed to work for him but on the condition that the following clause would be included in the contract:

It is agreed that you are to have complete freedom in the selection and treatment of subject-matter for your cartoons and in the expression therein of the policies in which you believe. (Quoted in Seymour-Ure, 1975: 25)

The amount of autonomy which Low enjoyed was rare for most cartoonists and Seymour-Ure continues by discussing a number of cases where cartoonists did encounter constraints. One example is the cartoonist Vicky, who left the News Chronicle for the Mirror because the editor turned down some of his work. Harrison (1981) points out that in some cases the editors and the cartoonists may work together if the cartoon is not initially approved.

The policy of Playboy towards its cartoonists tends to fall more on the side of constraint. Urry (1990), has stated that virtually all cartoons are the product of negotiation between her office and the cartoonist. She receives a rough draft of the cartoon which, after making often substantial changes to the graphics (she said that generally the caption is not changed since Playboy is more concerned with the visual content of cartoons than the written), is returned to the cartoonist. The cartoonist is expected to re-work his idea and return the draft. Urry stated that failure to do this generally results in Playboy's refusal to buy the cartoon. According to Urry, a cartoon is passed from her office to the cartoonist an average of four to five times.

Although, as Seymour-Ure states, the cartoonist works only with one editor, the finished Playboy cartoon has to be passed by the director editor (Kretchmer) and this proves to be a problem in approximately 10% of cases. Kretchmer meets with Urry four times a year to discuss her choice of cartoons for the coming quarter. If there is disagreement, it is ultimately Kretchmer's decision which is followed. A further constraint on the cartoonist is the nature of the cartoon profession which is highly competitive and offers little financial stability. Harrison (1981) suggests that the shortage of good jobs for cartoonists results in the majority having to remain free-lance for most of their careers. It is thus important for sociologists to examine how the work situation of contract cartoonists differs from those who free-lance. Playboy does have different standards for their contract cartoonists who number 15-20 at any one time. Urry stated that she will choose contract work over free-lance since the organization feels that it has more responsibility to publish the former. Also, interestingly, she said that she will reject a free-lance cartoon quicker than a contract one since she is more willing to spend time on improving a contractor's work. Moreover, given that Playboy receive over twenty unsolicited cartoons a day, Urry said that she can afford to be very choosy.

Even those cartoonists who are under contract to Playboy are not ensured of financial security. Being under contract means only that Playboy will pay health and life insurance. Although there is a commitment to buy some cartoons, on average the cartoonist will earn only \$8,000 a year. The few who are well known and long standing contributors (Urry pointed to Gahan Wilson and John Dempsey in particular) can earn as much as \$50,000 a year. Free-lancers are paid \$600 for a full color page cartoon (it is rare however for a full color page cartoon to be the work of a free-lancer) and \$350 for a small black and white cartoon. The contract cartoonists have to sign an agreement with Playboy which states that they will give Playboy first option to buy, only after Playboy has rejected their work, can they sell the cartoon to

others. However, also written into the agreement is the clause that the cartoonist will not sell rejected work to Playboy competitors who are listed as: Penthouse, Esquire, Cavalier, Hustler and Look. Urry's secretary goes through these magazines each month to check that the cartoonists are keeping to the agreement. Failure to do so results in instant dismissal. According to Urry, the Playboy policy is a standard one adopted by all major magazines. Thus the cartoonist is heavily constrained by working within an organization, however, the alternative option of free-lancing provides little in the way of security.

The work situation of the Playboy cartoonist highlights the importance of locating the cartoonist in a formal organization. According to Coser (1965) being part of such an organization results in the loss of individual creativity because:

no worker, no matter how highly placed in the organizational structure, has individual control over a particular product. The product emerges from the coordinated efforts of the whole production team, and it is therefore difficult for a particular producer to specify clearly his particular contribution. (Coser, 1965: 325)

Since Coser's claim that the media organization robs the worker of autonomy, much has been written on the subject (for a discussion of the current thinking in this area see McQuail, 1987). However as Riffe et al. noted above, the cartoonist has been overlooked in these studies. One possible reason for this could be that media scholars have tended to see the cartoonist as more of an artist than a media professional, and, as is discussed in Chapter Three, past research has tended to view the artist as an isolated creator whose artistic production is not amenable to sociological investigation. However, in order to further our sociological understanding of cartoons, it is important to examine the situational constraints on the cartoonist while retaining the notion of the cartoonist as a creator. Some recent studies in the sociology of art, notably Becker's Art Worlds (1982), have

attempted to apply sociological analysis to the work situation of the artist and as Chapter Three will show, such studies have important implications for a sociology of cartoons.

From the foregoing it is clear that in spite of the important historical connection between cartoons and newspapers/magazines, few researchers have turned their attention to investigating the nature of the relationship between the two. As stated above, when cartoons have been investigated, they have been treated as isolated entities, divorced from their social context. This tendency to study media products in isolation pervades the study of mass communication in general. Researchers tend to isolate one program or film or advertisement from the rest of the media output and the media organizations from which they originate. This decontextualizing tendency in media research has come under attack from a number of different scholars. Murdock and Golding (1977), for example, argue that in order to understand the ideological role of media in a capitalist economy, it is necessary to examine ownership and control of the major communications industries. They suggest that close attention should be paid to the decision making processes in the media organizations and the ways in which these decisions effect the media product. Gerbner and Gross et al. (1986), addressing the issue from a more effects-orientated approach, call for a message systems analysis of television output which examines the symbolic world of television as a whole. They criticize much of traditional effects research for being too preoccupied with the isolated elements of television (such as news or commercials) and for subsequently failing to understand the ways in which the audience experience the media as a system of structured messages. In light of such criticisms, research into mass media has become more sophisticated over the years and has broadened its areas of investigation. Using these new areas as a theoretical springboard, the later discussion concerning the construction of a framework for the sociology of

cartoons will suggest ways in which researchers can conceive of the relationship between the cartoon and (1) the wider media environment and (2) the wider social environment.

The Cartoon and Humor

One aspect of the cartoon which has naturally attracted research attention is its humorous quality. Harrison (1981) traces the beginnings of the humorous cartoon back to Hogarth who in the first half of the eighteenth century fused political commentary with satire. However, it took till the 1860s for the humor cartoon to become established as a genre separate from the political cartoon.

Most of the research which focuses on the cartoon and humor has been concerned with understanding who finds what funny and why? (Cantor, 1976; Ingrado, 1980; Brodzinsky et al., 1981; Wilson and Molleston, 1981). When attempting to understand what people find humorous in a cartoon, researchers have tended to adopt the 'disposition' theory of humor, which holds that the respondents' affective disposition towards the protagonists is the critical determinant of the humor effect. Thus, before we discuss the research evidence, it would be useful to briefly examine the disposition theory since it incorporates two important constituents of humor, superiority and disparagement.

One of the oldest theories of humor, the superiority theory, holds that humor derives from comparing ourselves favorably to others who are weaker and less fortunate. For Hobbes, laughter at other people's imperfections was a self-glorifying triumphant gesture, allowing imperfect people to build up their confidence at the expense of those who are a bit more imperfect. Zillman and Cantor (1976) point out that although this theory was popular, it does not necessarily coincide with experience: we do not tend to see weaknesses or infirmities as amusing in people we love. Rather it is our rival's humiliation or injury which we find amusing.

Wolff, et al. (1934) are generally considered the first researchers to empirically test this hypothesis. Suggesting that it is the disparagement of people we do not like that is the basis of humor, they attempted to determine whether there were differences between the responses of Jews and Gentiles to jokes that disparage Jews. Their study indeed revealed that Jews found jokes disparaging Jews as less funny than non-Jews. Wolff et al. then changed the butt of the joke to Scottish gentiles and to their surprise they found that the Jews found the joke less funny than Scottish gentiles did. According to Fine (1983) the researchers were perplexed because they failed to understand that subjects could identify with groups of which they are not members. Rather Wolff et al. were using a simplistic notion of reference group to mean group membership which was either imposed or acquired.

Later researchers expanded their application of this concept of reference group to include "those groups to which the individual relates himself as a part or to which he aspires to relate himself psychologically" (Zillman and Cantor, 1976: 96). Working with this broader definition of reference groups, a number of researchers continued in the tradition set by Wolff et al. An early example often quoted in the literature is Middleton and Moland's (1959) study of subcultural variations in humor. They compared the appeal of racial jokes disparaging blacks and whites to matched groups of subjects of both races. While the assumption that blacks and whites would react more favorably to jokes which disparaged the other race was confirmed, it was also reported that the black subjects reported enjoying the anti-black humor no less than did the whites. The researchers attempted to explain this finding in terms of the middle class blacks in the sample making a marked distinction between themselves and the stereotyped lower class blacks depicted in the jokes. According to the researchers the middle class blacks did not see the disparaged group in the joke as their reference group.

Since the early sixties numerous researchers have examined

the disposition theory of humor (see for example LaFave et al., 1972; Fine, 1983). In general, findings tend to support the hypothesis that "humor appreciation varies inversely with the favorableness of the disposition toward the agent or entity disparaged and varies directly with the favorableness of the disposition toward the agent or entity disparaging it" (Zillman and Cantor, 1976: 101). Although there has been some amendments to disposition theory (for the more contemporary trends in humor research see the collection of papers in Powell and Paton, 1988) most researchers interested in cartoons have adopted the definition of reference groups offered by Zillman and Cantor (above) and have generally found it to be applicable to the study of this particular form of humor.

Sheppard (1981) applied the disposition theory of humor to a study on the response to cartoons which dealt with aging. The aim of the research was to elicit information on which types of jokes on aging are perceived as humorous and by whom. Sheppard argued that "disposition theory predicts greater humor appreciation among individuals who hold negative stereotypes and unfavorable attitudes toward aging when an older person is disparaged...." (1981: 122).

The study involved 163 participants of different ages who rated 53 cartoons drawn from a number of magazines such as the New Yorker, Playboy and Penthouse. The findings suggest that attitudes towards aging do not affect the humor response since no relationship was found. However what was interesting was the finding that the older the respondent, the less they liked the cartoons which disparaged the elderly, portrayed them as obsolete or depicted the indignities of old age. Thus it would appear that older subjects, by virtue of their impending entry into old age, may tend to see old people as a reference group.

One area researchers have regarded as being a potentially rich ground for testing the disposition theory is the often reported gender difference in the appreciation of sexual humor. Since one of its concerns of this thesis is the ways in which

women and men read Playboy sex cartoons (see Chapter Nine), it would be useful to discuss some of the studies which have focused on the importance of gender as a variable in determining humorous responses to cartoons.

Henkin and Fish (1986) have argued that in light of the findings which show the disposition theory to be valid "it appears reasonable that the same findings should hold for the sexes. Men should prefer jokes in which women are the butt, and women should find jokes in which men are the butt to be funnier" (1986: 160). Studies which have investigated the males response to cartoon sexual humor where the female is the butt of the joke have generally confirmed the disposition hypothesis (Groch, 1974; Terry and Ertel, 1974). Findings for women however tend to be more complicated.

While some studies have indeed found that women do prefer humor where men have been disparaged (Lafave, 1972; Priest and Wilhelm, 1974) others have found that women prefer jokes in which women are disparaged (Cantor, 1977; Losco and Epstein, 1975). Cantor looked at four popular magazines featuring cartoon humor, two aimed primarily at men (Playboy and Esquire) and two aimed at women (Cosmopolitan and Ladies Home Journal). In all cases those cartoons disparaging females were preferred by both the female and male respondents. Cantor concluded from her findings that:

a subject's affective disposition towards protagonists leads him or her to root for the protagonist towards who the strongest affiliative bonds are felt and/or to take sides against the one toward whom the most resentment is held. (1977: 306)

It is contended that women feel stronger affiliation towards men because of the socialization process in our society which promotes the idea of female inferiority.

Cantor's findings appear to have much in common with those reported above by Middleton (1959) where black respondents

identified more with the white middle class. Because one's membership group need not be the same as one's reference group, it is possible that women who identify with traditional masculine values will differ from more feminist identified women in their evaluation of sexist humor (a contention examined further in Chapter Nine). Studies which have examined this proposition (Boyer, 1981; Brodzinsky et al., 1981; Williams, 1980) have indeed found that feminist identified women prefer humor in which males are the butt and often fail to find anti-female sexist humor funny. Men, on the other hand, irrespective of their views on feminism, prefer humor in which a woman is disparaged (Gachenbach & Auerbach, 1975).

Past studies which have demonstrated a male preference for anti-female sexist humor have been challenged by more recent research. Henkin and Fish (1986) found that contrary to expectations, men failed to show preferences for anti-female cartoons. The authors point out that the only other study to report such findings is Boyer's (1981) which was also conducted in the 1980s. Henkin and Fish argue that these findings could be indicative of a far reaching trend towards less sexist attitudes on the part of men. They argue that the cumulative effects of the feminist movement together with women entering the professions in greater numbers has resulted in men being under increasing pressure to treat women as equals. They continue by suggesting that "with regard to humor, perhaps recent societal changes have decreased the acceptability of viewing women as fair game in put-down humor" (1986: 167). This later point indeed deserves more serious investigations because of the contradictory trend in recent studies which suggest that cartoon humor in pornographic magazines such as Penthouse and Hustler has become much more violent against women over the last few years (Becker, 1988).

While more recent research on cartoons has investigated disposition theory, many studies appear to take for granted an assumption that every reader will understand the cartoon and read it in a similar way. In Chapter Two it will be shown that this

assumption was also taken for granted in the early studies on the effects of mass media and that subsequent research has shown it to be problematic. It is an equally problematic assumption in the case of cartoons; one of the few studies of reader comprehension found that barely 15% of readers understand fully the message content of editorial cartoons (Carl, 1968). As well as the possibility of misunderstanding the cartoon, there is also the question of systematic variation in the interpretations of readers occupying differing positions in the social structure. In contrast to disposition theory, we are arguing not that the reader likes or dislikes the cartoon on the basis of their disposition towards the butt of the joke but rather that they actually interpret the cartoon differently. That this area of research has been ignored was the impetus for Linsk and Fine's (1981) study on readers' interpretations of political cartoons, where they point out that "little recognition has been given to the initial interpretation of humor, despite the central importance of interpretation on evaluation" (1981: 69). They argue that one of the central problems with past research has been its use of relatively unambiguous stimuli, often constructed by the researchers to ensure uniform interpretation (see for example Cantor, 1977). As Carl's study (1968) showed, such unambiguity is not characteristic of the real world. In an attempt to avoid past pitfalls, Linsk and Fine used ambiguous cartoons which had the potential of being interpreted in several ways. The butt of the joke could have been either of the two cartoon characters. As an example the authors discuss a cartoon which was generally seen as satirizing liberals but could also be interpreted as poking fun at conservatives. The cartoon:

pictured a bearded young man wearing a peace medallion talking to a bartender. Down the bar one middle-class man says to another: "With him its always 'The other country, right or wrong.' ". While the implication of this cartoon is that liberals are always finding fault with America, the cartoon was also interpreted as as indicating

that conservatives do not listen to reason, but assume that those who disagree with them are traitors. (1981: 71)

The researchers, using disposition theory of humor as a basis, hypothesized that "the closer a person feels to a given population segment, the less likely s/he will perceive humor attacking it" (1981: 72). This hypothesis was confirmed for liberals and conservatives with liberals perceiving relatively more cartoons as mocking conservatives and fewer attacking liberals than did conservatives. On the basis of their findings Linsk and Fine speculate that "if one considers oneself to be a member of a group, there may be perceptual denial of the presence of anti-group humor" (1981: 178).

Although Linsk and Fine's study indicates gaps in humor research, they too neglect the sociological dimension. Their reliance on psychological concepts such as 'perceptual bias' obscures the socio-economic factors of the audience (gender and race being two important examples) which media researchers such as Morley (see chapter nine for a fuller discussion) have demonstrated are important elements in understanding the ways in which viewers read media messages.

Moreover, Linsk and Fine, by stressing psychological predispositions, overlook the ways in which the social climate in general may impact on the readings of specific jokes. This is especially relevant in light of recent research on racist humor in Britain. Husband (1988), in his discussion of the audience reception of Till Death Do Us Part, shows how the racial climate in Britain during the mid 1960s (the time period when the show was first aired) affected the range of potential meaning which viewers could make. He argues that:

over the period in question there was an increasingly explicit demonstration of racism, which, to some extent, paralleled the growth of real inter-ethnic competition for scarce resources in housing, education and employment. (Husband, 1988: 157)

Against this backdrop of racial strife, Alf Garnett (the main character of the show) was depicted as a bigot who blamed Britain's economic difficulties on the 'coons'. Husband argues that rather than showing up the stupidity of racism (which is what the script writer, Johnny Speight claimed to be the aim of the show), Garnett in fact became somewhat of a folk hero for some viewers who read it as an endorsement for racism. For Husband the fact that this program could ever have been thought of as constituting an attack on bigotry was grotesque in itself given the racism of the time. Husband's arguments have important implications for the analysis of cartoons which employ caricature to establish the social identity of a particular group since the way the cartoon is read may depend on socio-economic conditions of that group at that time. Thus when examining Playboy cartoons it is important to locate the caricatured image of women in the wider context of a patriarchal society. As Husband has shown, images are not read as entities divorced from social reality but rather are understood in terms of the current social climate of the time. Although there is now a tendency in media research to locate readings in the wider socio-economic structure (see Chapter Nine on audience decodings) this area of research has been greatly neglected in the work on cartoons and is thus one area which needs to be included in future research.

A further problem with Linsk and Fine's study is that no mention is made of the importance of contextualizing cartoons. Generally readers do not read cartoons as distinct entities, extracted from other media, but rather as a 'package' in a newspaper or magazine. As was discussed at the beginning of the section on cartoons and newspapers, the meaning of a cartoon is affected by what comes before it and what comes after it. Thus the host magazine or newspaper to the cartoon provides an important guide to the readers on how to read the cartoon. A conservative newspaper such as the Daily Express keys the reader into the general ideological nature of the cartoons contained within it while a magazine such as Playboy, by placing its

cartoons between sexualized images of women and by calling itself a men's entertainment magazine, alerts the reader to the role that images of women play in that magazine.

Women in Cartoons

Generally speaking, academic investigation into the image of women in the media began in earnest around the early 1970s. One important part of this research activity was an interest in the image of women in cartoons. Tuchman et al. (1978), have suggested that this flurry of research was a result of a substantial number of women (who had been nurtured in the feminist movement of the 1960s) entering the halls of academia. Prior to this, argues Tuchman et al., most media scholars were men and much of the research tended to reflect their own interests and concerns. The common feature of most of the articles by the women scholars was an explicit interest not so much in the cartoons themselves but in what the gender stereotypes in the cartoons said about the position of women in society in general. Rather than blaming sexist stereotypes on the prejudices of particular media producers, these researchers sought to examine the ways in which these images of women embodied ideas which had popular currency in the general society. Meyer et al. (1980), for example, stated that they chose to study cartoons because they "provided a medium which would reflect woman's place in American culture without specifically intending that theme" (Meyer et al., 1980: 21). Kramer (1974) had earlier argued that:

cartoons offer an excellent source of material about commonly accepted stereotypes. No matter what the element of freshness in the cartoon, the joke will be predicated on what we already know about the way the world runs. (Kramer, 1974: 624)

The studies differed in their methods and substantive focus: Kramer for example examines women's speech in cartoons while Meyer et al., looked at the depiction of women and men in July Fourth cartoons. In general they showed that in cartoons

females were less numerous than males, made fewer appearances, had fewer lines, played fewer 'lead roles', were less active, occupied many fewer positions of responsibility, were less noisy, and were more predominantly juvenile than males. (Streicher, 1974: 127)

Some of the longitudinal research (see Lisenby, 1985, and Bradley et al., 1979, for example) found a slight change occurring around the mid 1950s towards a more positive image of women (the beginnings of the feminist movement is often pointed to as the reason for this change).

Lisenby, in her analysis of several hundred cartoons in the period 1930-1960, argues that the following stereotypes of women were the most common: the incompetent driver, the reckless spender, the talkative gossipy woman, the unpredictable, indecisive hyper-emotional female, the woman of limited understanding of public affairs or of culture. Lisenby points out that while men were sometimes the butt of the joke:

the male of the species as a whole was not ridiculed so sharply, nor made to act so silly. It is not possible to scan the pages of Collier's, Saturday Evening Post, and other wide circulation magazines and acquire the impression that American men invariably could be counted on to make stupid statements and do stupid things. (Lisenby, 1985: 130)

Thus it would seem that women as a group were generally ridiculed in cartoons while men received more favorable treatment (this was also found to be the case in Playboy cartoons, see Chapter Seven)

Lisenby's observation that men are portrayed in a more

favorable light had also been noted in Kramer's (1974) investigation into stereotypes of women's speech in cartoons. Kramer examined cartoons from Playboy, Cosmopolitan, The New Yorker and Ladies Home Journal. The findings revealed that whereas men were rated as speaking effectively about a wide range of matters, women's speech was seen as:

ineffective and restricted. It can not deal forthrightly with a number of topics, such as finance and politics, which have great importance in our culture.... Women's speech is weaker than men's speech in emphasis; there are fewer uses of exclamations and curse words.
(Kramer, 1974: 626)

Kramer's study was conducted in the early 1970s which suggests that the noted improvement in the image of women which occurred in the 1950s (see Lisenby, above) was so slight as to leave unaltered the power imbalance between the genders.

Indeed it has been suggested (Meyer et al., 1980) that what at first appeared to be a major change in gender-power relations, was in fact, on further investigation, a move towards more subtle forms of male domination. Meyer et al., looked at the image of women in Fourth of July cartoons in U.S. newspapers from 1870-1976, in order to examine the ways in which female subordination was visually constructed. It was found that in the early cartoons most of the activities were being performed by men, whereas women were shown as passive and unobtrusive. By the 1960s and 1970s women were being depicted in a more equal way to men in such settings as crowds and major groupings, nonetheless the male figures were still constructed visually as more important than females. The authors argue that masculinity was constructed as dominant by making the male larger than the female, by attributing the caption to the male and by making him the focus of attention with all heads turned in his direction.

While this image of males as dominant is a common theme in cartoons, studies have found that this is the case only as long as

he remains unmarried. Saenger (1955) and Barcus (1963) both found that upon marriage the males become weaker; physically, intellectually and emotionally. Saenger found that after marriage, men tend to be depicted as 'hen-pecked' ineffective, lazy wastrels who stand in sharp contrast to their super-strong, dashing single brothers. The differences between these 'premarital' and 'postmarital' personalities, are often expressed in a symbolic form:

while 85 per cent of the single men in the adventure strips are taller than their female partners, only 50 per cent of the married men are bigger than their wives, and 42 per cent are shorter than their spouses...men lose strength as well as height after marriage. Most of the single men in the adventure strip are above average and sometimes of supernatural strength, while the proportion of strong men is much smaller among married men. (Saenger, 1955: 200)

Barcus' (1963) study of 632 cartoon characters found an even greater difference between married and single men, with men losing their ambition after marriage and simultaneously women becoming power hungry. He also found that whereas single men tend to be tall and handsome, married men are short, portly and bald. Married women are often taller, fatter and uglier than their single sisters.

While married partners in Playboy cartoons were also found to be less attractive than their single counterparts, an exception was the married woman who was cheating on her husband. Unlike her more monogamous married sisters, these wives were depicted in the stereotyped caricatured manner of the 'sexy' woman (see Chapter Seven for a fuller discussion). The overall message from these cartoons appears to be that marriage is emasculating for men and empowering for women. One reason for the popularity of this theme in cartoon humor could be the inversion of stereotyped behavior. Indeed one theory of humor (aptly termed the incongruity theory) holds that humor occurs as a result of an

ill-suited pairing of ideas or situations that diverge from customary behavior. The understanding and behavior being that men are dominant and women subservient. Indeed it is interesting to note here that the emasculated male has become a standard feature in cartoons.

It has been argued that most of these studies were fueled by an interest in analyzing gender depictions in cartoons as a gauge for assessing the position of women in the general society. The above cited researchers tended to conclude that these images of women suggest that sexual equality is still a long way from being realized. Unlike much of the early U.S. research into media effects, these scholars did not argue that media simply reflected reality but rather that the relationship was more complex. This relationship is summed up by Levinson (1975) when he concluded that "television's portrayal of the sexes in cartoons does not accurately mirror real world events but it does reflect real world values concerning traditional sex-role assumptions" (Levinson, 1975: 568). Thus the content analysis of Playboy sex cartoons does not attempt to argue that women indeed look or behave like the cartoon images (the average female does not possess a 38-22-38 type body which is clothed in transparent underwear) but rather seeks to investigate how these images reflect, symbolically, the underlying value system of a gender stratified system. Given that cartoons are a rich cultural source it is somewhat surprising that feminist scholars have not paid more attention to the image of women in cartoons for as Kramer argues "in few places are the stereotyped differences presented in so concentrated a form" (Kramer, 1974: 624). This rationale informs the present study which attempts to use cartoons in men's entertainment magazines as a cultural source for assessing the position of women in the general society.

Although the above studies all demonstrated that cartoons employ sexist stereotypes of women, they fail to ask what would appear to be the next question, namely; what effect might these images have on readers? It is not suggested here that these

scholars should conduct empirical studies on the effects of media, which would be beyond the scope of their data, but rather that the question (at least) needs to be asked in light of their findings. Greenberg and Kahn (1970) for example, after analyzing the appearance and image of blacks in Playboy cartoons, suggest that future research should "examine the impact of such content presentations on both black and white readers or viewers, child and adult alike" (Greenberg and Kahn, 1970: 560). The argument that media portrayals of women reflect real world values has long been recognized by feminist media scholars but as Betterton (1987) argues, this is only the first step in understanding female imagery in a patriarchal society. What must then be examined is how such imagery "...actually shape our perceptions of what reality is" (Betterton, 1987: 8). Thus the content analysis of Playboy cartoons, while being mainly concerned with examining the ways in which women are represented in Playboy cartoons, also seeks to ask how these images affect readers' perceptions of femininity and masculinity. In order to begin to answer this question, one major issue raised in the theoretical chapters is how have media scholars understood and investigated media effects in general?

Cartoons in Pornographic Magazines

Those studies which have attempted to analyze the sexual content of cartoons in pornographic magazines² have tended to focus on one specific issue. Palmer (1979) and Matacin & Burger (1987) for example were interested in the sexual themes in cartoons; Bradley et al. (1979) looked at the depiction of prostitutes over a forty year period. While such studies do add to

² Included under this heading are a wide variety of magazines which range from the cheaply produced 'eight pagers' which were popular during the 1930s and 1940s, through to the more sleek and modern publications such as Playboy and Penthouse.

our understanding of the nature of sex role stereotypes in the cartoons, they have generally failed to provide a description which can account for the "more subtle elements of the cartoons, the particularities of person, scene and relationship...the social setting, the social characteristics of the cartoon characters or the non-sexual aspects of their relationships" (Dines-Levy and Smith, 1988: 248). The following discussion will examine in detail some of these studies since their method and findings have important implications for the content analysis study discussed in Chapter Seven, specifically the development of the system of categories.

The main aim of Palmer's research was to "document, through content analysis, the nature of pornographic themes found in a collection of pornographic comics usually called 'eight pagers'" (1979: 285). Palmer coded 100 eight pagers according to the following categories first developed by Kronhausen and Kronhausen (1961) to analyze written pornography: defloration, flagellation, homosexuality, incest, nymphomaniac females, profanation, seduction, seductive parent, sexual vernacular, and supersexed males.

In addition to the above themes, Palmer developed the following ten categories: (1) age of participants, (2) heterosexual intercourse, (3) heterosexual fellatio, (4) heterosexual cunnilingus, (5) heterosexual anal intercourse, (6) females portrayed as prostitutes, (7) female bestiality, (8) flatulence or excrement, (9) animals engaged in masturbation or same species intercourse, and (10) male bestiality.

Palmer found that the major theme in the cartoons analyzed was sexual vernacular (all cartoons contained this theme) with heterosexual intercourse second in 93 cartoons. The content analysis of Playboy sex cartoons (see Chapter Seven) also found heterosexual intercourse to be the most depicted sex act. It is surprising that Palmer does not discuss why this traditional sex act should be so common given that this genre of cartoons is often thought to be sexually 'adventurous'. In the present study it is suggested that heterosexual intercourse is commonplace

because it is easy to depict and does not 'crowd' the single frame cartoon. Moreover, the eight pagers are strip cartoons whose narrative sequences allow for more complex forms of sexual activity to be depicted. Palmer's findings showed that alternative forms of sexual activity such as bondage or female bestiality appeared in less than 10% of cartoons. One reason for this could be that the eight pagers selected were produced between the years 1930-65, with the majority being from the 1930s and 1940s. The Attorney General's Commission on Pornography (1986, pages 277-298) noted that the pornographic magazine industry grew enormously in the 1970s and 1980s and with the proliferation in the number of magazines came a similar proliferation in the types of sexual activity depicted, specifically bondage and incest. Thus, in the earlier period of the eight pagers it seems that the adult magazine industry was still heavily reliant on the more traditional forms of sexual activity, seeing either the depiction of intercourse or the use of explicit language as adventurous enough in itself.

One major problem with Palmer's study is that his findings are based on small numbers (the sample consisted of 100 'eight pager's), for example in his category of prostitutes there were only 22 cases while homosexuality had only 13. Palmer's only comment about the image of the prostitute is that it reflects the general posture of the female in the comics as aggressive and anxious to engage in sexual behavior. From this study we do not gain any insight into the ways in which the image of the prostitute is constructed. We do not know for example what she looks like, how old she is, how she is attired. Such characteristics would furnish the reader with important background information. Indeed this kind of criticism can be generalized: Palmer's study provides no knowledge about the personal characteristics of the cartoon characters. Even when Palmer attempts to provide such information, his categories are too broad to offer significant insights. For example, the category of age (the only category aimed to elicit personal information) has just two subdivisions; adult or adolescent. Using these two categories, Palmer found that

the majority of cartoons (89 of the 100 coded) contained only adults. While this was also true with the Playboy sex cartoons, a more complex system of categories revealed that the majority of females were young adults while for males a much larger number were older adults. The importance of this age differential is discussed in Chapter Seven, however, it is important to point out here that broad, undifferentiated categories cannot apprehend the complex messages embodied in the visual communication of the cartoon.

A more recent study of the sexual themes found in cartoons is Matacin and Burger's (1987) content analysis of Playboy cartoons. The authors argue that they are "interested in determining the extent to which certain images of men and women are portrayed in the cartoons found in popular men's magazines" (1987: 180). Playboy was selected as the research site because it is a widely circulated magazine and thus has a greater potential audience than more 'hard-core' publications and also because Playboy employs more subtle images of women, in contrast to other magazines in this genre. The inclusion of interviews with famous people such as Jimmy Carter is said to give the magazine an aura of respectability. In this study the researchers chose only four themes to investigate; seduction, coerciveness, naivete and body image. Since Matacin and Berger's study is concerned specifically with Playboy, the definitions of the categories employed will be listed in full.

Theme

| | |
|-----------|--|
| Seduction | Scene in which sexual activities are initiated. One person should be identifiable as the persuading party. The scene should be coded only if the sexual encounter is at the initiation stage. Implicit suggestions or sexual innuendos toward the potential partners are also considered as seduction. |
|-----------|--|

| | |
|--------------|--|
| Coerciveness | Scene in which the man or woman exerts pressure or force against his or her partner to engage in any type of sexual activity against the partners will. A person taking advantage of a power/status difference in a relationship (such as boss and secretary) to pressure the other into sexual activity is to be coded as coercion. |
| Naivete | Scene in which an adult male or female is shown as being sexually naive or inexperienced. The naive person may come across as childlike and very young compared to the experienced partner. Because of this naivete, the person may be seen as vulnerable to sexual advances or being taken advantage of. |
| Body Shape | Scenes in which a man's or woman's body is drawn as being less sexually desirable (overweight, old, dirty) as compared to the person of the opposite sex in the scene. |

Sex cartoons from the 12 issues of the 1985 Playboy magazines were coded by two trained judges. The content analysis revealed that the most common of these themes was seduction (16.8% of cartoons), followed by body shape (10.6%), naivete (6.2%) and finally coerciveness (3.7%). As the authors predicted, males were more coercive while females were more seductive, naive and were drawn with a more 'attractive' body.

Although most of these findings concur with the content analysis study discussed in Chapter Seven, the actual depiction of these themes were more complex than Matacin and Burger report. A good example is the theme of seduction. The study reported in Chapter Seven found that on the whole men were the seducers (51.5% of male characters seduced as compared to 29.2% of females), not the females as Matacin and Burger found. The

discrepancy in the findings could be due to the fact that Matacin and Burger's study examined cartoons from only 1985 (and were drawing conclusions from only 27 cartoons) whereas the study reported in Chapter Seven looked at ten years (and some 1400 cartoons) from an earlier period. However at issue here is not so much the discrepancy in findings but the complexities and subtleties which Matacin and Burger missed due to their limited system of categories. Because Matacin and Burger did not include an age category, all female characters were lumped together. However, because the present study employed a number of different categories for age, on further analysis it was found that the rate of seduction for females drastically changed with age. For young to middle age cartoon females only 26.2% were seducers; for old females the figure leaped to 84.2%. This leap is explained in terms of the regularly featured old woman in Playboy cartoons (drawn by Buck Brown) who is depicted as a sex starved predator who unlike her younger sisters cannot readily draw men into sexual relations. This finding has important implications for how Playboy constructs the image of aging for women, especially in light of the finding that old men were not similarly reduced to the role of predator in the cartoons. This tendency was also recognized by Posner (1975) in her article on Buck Brown's 'granny' figure. According to Posner, this image of old women "...reflects the North American double standard by specifically denying the sexuality of old women... the granny cartoons in Playboy... make fun of old people interested in sex, old women in particular" (Posner, 1975: 473). It is this kind of analysis on the image of old women which adds breadth and dimension to our understanding of sex role stereotypes in cartoons and which is noticeably absent for previous studies carried out on this genre of cartoons.

In addition, Matacin and Burger's study also fails to examine critically the meaning of sex-role stereotypes in a wider gender-stratified society. In their discussion of 'body shape' for example, they conclude that "when there was an inequality in the

general attractiveness of the man's and woman's bodies, it more often was the case that the male would have the less desirable body" (1987: 186). What they fail to address here is the caricatured nature of the female body in Playboy cartoons. It is important to ask why and how a grossly distorted female body has come to be seen as 'desirable' for as Betterton has argued "images of femininity in advertising, fashion, fine art or pornography influence how we see the female body and what it means to us" (1987: 8). Moreover, what role do such images play in the production and reproduction of sexist ideology? Thus the question here is not which gender is depicted with the more 'desirable body' but rather in what ways does Playboy's representation of the female body socially construct the notion of femininity and moreover how does this representation "organize the ways in which we understand gender relations" (Betterton, *ibid*)? These questions will be addressed in Chapter Seven.

One possible explanation as to why such issues were overlooked by Matacin and Burger is that the researchers are working within the positivist/behaviorist/empiricist paradigm. One of their main concerns is examining the causal links between pornographic images and rape. By focusing on the stimulus-response model of communication research, the researchers overlook the potentially more far-reaching and long-term consequences of such imagery as well as its detailed characteristics. If the terms of the debate are changed and in place of effects a term such as 'enculturation' is used, then we can begin to ask how images of women in Playboy might contribute to readers' perceptions of social reality rather than asking if Playboy readers will rape women after seeing female cartoon characters. The tension between the traditional effects paradigm and more contemporary approaches to media which stress the ideological role of symbolic messages is one which recurs in a number of chapters in this study and this tension needs to be addressed with respect to cartoons.

Although Palmer's study focused on the eight pagers and utilized a different set of categories to Matacin and Burger's

research, the two studies do have some important common elements. Both studies used as their research method a system of categories which were developed by past researchers. Palmer relied mainly upon the categories devised by the Kronhausens (1961) for the analysis of written pornography while Matacin and Burger based their category system on the ideas of Brownmiller (1975) and Lederer (1982), both of whom were concerned with providing a feminist analysis of pornography. It is generally recognized by media researchers that constructing the categories is the most important stage in content analysis. As Berelson (1952) has argued: "particular studies have been productive to the extent that the categories were clearly formulated and well-adapted to the problem and the content" (Berelson, 1952, quoted in Wimmer, 1983: 147). One way to ensure this clarity is for the researchers to familiarize themselves with the content and then devise categories which are content specific. As Krippendorff (1980) argues, it is very difficult to apply categories developed for one study to another. Indeed, many studies have failed because they have used categories which may have seemed applicable but on coding turned out to be limited in use. This would especially seem to be the case with Matacin and Burger's study as they say that when interpreting their findings "it should be kept in mind that the vast majority of the cartoons in Playboy did not contain any of the four themes examined here" (1987: 184). This suggests that their categories prematurely limited their study and thus yielded a truncated analysis.

Palmer's study did contain more categories which were applicable to the content; however the findings only provided data on the appearance or non-appearance of sexual themes. Counting the appearance or non-appearance of specific themes has indeed been the object of a number of studies. Cantor (1977) for example analyzed cartoons from Playboy, Cosmopolitan, Esquire and Ladies Home Journal. She found that while Playboy had the highest frequency of cartoons with a sexual theme, the frequency of cartoons with violence or hostility was generally lower in Playboy

than in the other magazines. The appearance or non-appearance of violence in cartoons was the focus of investigation in Malamuth and Spinner's (1980) study of Playboy and Penthouse cartoons. They found that while 10% of cartoons between the years 1973-1977 contained violence, most of these cartoons were from Penthouse. While these studies have added to our understanding of cartoon content, what is missing from all of them is a discussion of the visual content of the sex cartoon as a whole. The narrow focus on documenting the specific themes has resulted in the cartoon being reduced to separate and distinct elements with a consequent loss of the totality of the meaning.

Content analysis as a method necessarily results in this fragmentation of the message; however it is argued here that content analysis can provide a more detailed account of the cartoon if a sophisticated category system is developed. Even with an improved system of categories however, content analysis has been rejected by many researchers for failing to examine the text as a structured whole (Burgelin, 1972). While this point will be dealt with more fully in Chapter Four on content analysis, it needs to be stressed here that our understanding of cartoons would be greatly enhanced by advocating a research strategy which incorporates a number of different methods, including detailed content analysis. In general however the vast majority of studies on cartoons that have employed content analysis have given no attention to the possible problems involved in doing this kind of research. Thus while the Playboy cartoons in the present study were subject to a content analysis, the problems inherent in this method are highlighted and other possible methods for analyzing the cartoon are discussed.

One good example of a content analysis study which avoided many of the problems associated with the studies previewed above is Bradley et al's study (1979) of the image of the prostitute over a forty year period in Playboy and Esquire. The authors, rather than just coding the appearance or nonappearance of prostitutes, developed a category system which distinguished type of

prostitute (call girl, house girl, street walker etc.), location of the action, age, race, economic level, and appearance (that is, dress, make up etc.). The authors add that the customers were coded along many of the same dimensions and the nature of the interaction between the various characters was noted. The forty year period was divided into an early period, running from 1934 to 1954, and a later period running from 1955 to 1974. Because the categories allowed for the coding of different visual aspects of the cartoon, the researchers were able to develop a profile of the depicted prostitutes. They found that in the early period (1934-1954) the prostitute tended to look like a high class prostitute (a mistress or call girl). She was often located in fashionable settings such as expensive apartments and exclusive restaurants and gave the impression of being from a high socio-economic class. In terms of appearance, the prostitute of the early period was attractive with a perfectly proportioned body. The prostitute of the later period (1955-74) contrasted sharply with her earlier sister. She tended to be of lower class origin and was more likely to be on the lower rungs of the prostitute hierarchy and was usually shown walking the streets or in a shabby hotel room. Also in the later period her breasts and buttocks grew dramatically, whilst most recently she has become oddly shaped with legs resembling pencils, no waist and drooping breasts.

The prostitute's customer underwent a similar transformation in status and appearance. Whereas in the early period he tended to be depicted as a successful businessman or professional, in the later period he was more likely to be a blue or white collar worker. As with the prostitute, this change in socio-economic status was accompanied by a deterioration in physical attractiveness, sometimes to the point of grotesqueness. The relationship between the prostitute and client also changed, with the early period cartoon suggesting a relationship of some duration and romance while the later cartoons stressed the economic relationship in its most crude form with the prostitute and the

client often haggling over the price.

Bradley et al's (1979) study, by using a category system which aimed to elicit information on the characters and the relationship between them, provides details so often lacking in content analysis studies. It also paves the way for future research because it demonstrates how content analysis can be fruitfully applied to the analysis of visual media in a manner that goes beyond categorization in the most broad and general terms. The content analysis study discussed in Chapter Seven attempts, like Bradley et al's study, to provide a complex and nuanced analysis of sex cartoons.

The discussion so far has focused on the different ways in which researchers have looked at the cartoon. Most of this work has been empirical in nature and has largely failed to investigate, on a theoretical level, the importance of the cartoon as a specific form of communication. The rest of this chapter will examine firstly, how sociologists in the past have conceived of the cartoon and secondly, how future research might fruitfully continue along the paths already opened up by past studies.

Cartoons and Sociology

Generally speaking sociologists have paid scant attention to the cartoon and thus one can not really speak of a sociology of cartoons. What we find rather are articles scattered around sociology journals which purport to offer an analysis of sociological features of cartoons and cartooning.

One of the earliest of these articles is Hines' (1933) "Cartoons as a Means of Social Control". Hines argues that because cartoons can be seen as 'picture editorials', they are influential in defining the situation for their readers, shaping their prejudices and stereotypes. Thus she sees the function of cartoons as one of social control. As an example Hines discusses Nast's cartoons of Boss Tweed which ran in Harper's weekly in the 1870s. Boss

Tweed was routinely drawn as a corrupt politician who was robbing the poor. It is reported that Tweed said of these cartoons "I don't care so much what the papers write about me, my constituents can't read, but they can see the pictures" (Hines, 1933: 459). After these cartoons appeared Tweed was never again elected to office and many of his friends were indicted for fraud. That humor in general functions as a form of social control has gained some currency in the sociology of humor (see for example, Stephenson, 1951). It is suggested that the humor functions as a form of control by urging group members to accept group norms and reject deviance, often by means of ridicule. In this way cartoons can be seen to enhance social solidarity by re-affirming group norms.

The second major function of cartoons and humor pointed to by sociologists is social conflict, which is displayed through such forms as irony, satire, sarcasm, caricature and parody (Fine, 1983, Zijderveld, 1968). These forms separate an out-group from an in-group and may even provoke hostility from the out-group. Wiggins (1988), in his analysis of blacks in cartoons argues that the effect of the 'Sambo' cartoonists was to perpetuate American racism by caricaturing the physical appearance of blacks. Boskin (1986) describes the cartoons in the following way:

operating within a system which clearly rewarded Jim Crow policies, cartoonists sought a form that could express black buffoonery. Various styles emerged in the decades before the turn of the century. Continuing the African connection, the majority of artists extended the form: lips were widened and reddened a rosy red; teeth sparkled with glistening whiteness; his hair was nappy, short and frazzled; faces were glossy, atop bodies that were either shortened and rounded, or lengthened to approximate the monkey or ape. (Boskin, 1986; quoted in Wiggins, 1988: 242)

Most of the sociological work carried out on the conflict/control functions of humor have however focused on verbal jokes and not the cartoon (see for example Zidjerveld, 1968).

A further sociological theory of humor which offers interesting possibilities for the study of cartoons is Emerson's (1969) argument that matters can be broached in a humorous frame that cannot be readily handled in a serious frame. Emerson has spoken of 'the serious import of humor' to describe the introduction of serious topics of conversation in a humorous guise. She argues that "for the very reason that humor officially does not 'count' ...persons are induced to express messages that might be unacceptable if stated seriously" (1969: 169-70). Emerson emphasizes how jokes can thus be used as a *sub rosa* form of communication that provides a let-out clause should the serious topic turn out to be unfavorably received, allowing the joker the defense that only a joke was intended, nothing serious.

Underpinning this form of communication, Emerson argues, is a process of negotiation which "may be regarded as bargaining to make unofficial arrangements about taboo topics" (Emerson: 1969: 170). The protagonists are seen as involved in negotiating how much license may be taken under the guise of humor. Emerson suggests that this process of negotiation is facilitated if the person using the joking medium for covert communication indicates that humor is intended. Clearly in the case of the cartoon, the competent reader is aware that the intention is often one of humor, even if a political comment is also intended. Thus the cartoon can be seen as providing less of an ambiguous joking medium than the verbal joke. However Emerson continues by arguing that in some instances the negotiation is hindered by lack of face-to-face interaction between the involved parties which can lead to the joker overstepping the mark, as where the cartoonist has offended the butt of the cartoon.

Emerson's claims about humor are directly applicable to the sociological study of cartoons in a number of ways. By examining the messages as covert forms of communication, sociologists could use cartoons to unearth the more oblique ideological beliefs of the magazine or newspaper in which they are found. This type of analysis would be especially interesting for investigating those

beliefs which are often seen as unacceptable yet still widely held. One such example may be racism, which many Black media scholars see as still rampant in the U.S.A. Pat Turner (1987) has argued that the explicit media racism of the 1920s and 1930s has given way to a more sophisticated type in the last twenty years. She points specifically to popular children's cartoons such as Bugs Bunny, which often employ the 'mammy' or 'black uncle' figure as black character types. Turner points out that while such figures are now seen as unacceptable in the general media, they are shrouded in the cloak of humor in the cartoons and are therefore accepted by the audiences. She, together with other researchers (see Joseph and Lewis, 1981), take this as evidence of racism in the white society.

A similar argument is applied to Playboy cartoons in Chapter Seven, as Playboy has maintained in the editorials that they believe in equality for working women. As evidence they point to their repeated funding, during the 1970s, of feminist organizations such as Ms. magazine and the National Organization of Women (for a more detailed list of feminist organizations funded by Playboy see Mackinnon, 1987). The content analysis of the cartoons undertaken in Chapter Seven of this thesis during that period revealed however that Playboy portrayed the working woman's role as one of providing sexual favors and decoration to the male office workers. Thus editorials appeared to endorse the feminist fight for equal pay, while simultaneously the cartoons which undermined the issue could be dismissed as just a joke. As well as looking at covert sexism and racism, sociologists could turn their attention to a wide range of topics addressed in cartoons in order to examine the more oblique ideological position of media institutions.

The argument that cartoons may express an underlying value system was recognized some forty or so years ago by Emory Bogardus in an article aptly titled "Sociology of the Cartoon" (1945). Here the author called for a sociology of the cartoon as a method for studying "the deeper meanings of social institutions,

social injustices, or social trends extending over a long period of time" (1945: 147). In spite of Bogardus' claim that the cartoon is a rich documentary source for sociologists, a sociology of the cartoon has still to be developed.

Emerson (1969) opens up a further area of study when she talks of the joker overstepping the mark. This is especially likely to occur in cartoons since the involved parties cannot negotiate face-to-face. Cartoonists cannot know whether they have gone too far until after the fact. What Emerson omits to mention is that going to far has differing implications depending on who the butt of the cartoon is. If the butt has power (social, economic or legal) then the cartoonist may be imprisoned (as in France, see above), prevented from continuing (as in Philadelphia in 1902 when Governor Pennypacker passed a law which served to constrain the work of cartoonists) or even killed (as in Nazi Germany where the anti-government cartoonist were rounded up and gassed) (see Wilson, 1979). In less dramatic cases the cartoonist could just simply be warned (as in England when Parliament scolded David Low for his Colonel Blimp cartoons) (Seymour-Ure, 1975). On the other hand when the butt of the cartoon does not possess such power, as with those cartoons which ridicule minority groups such as blacks and women, going too far does not necessarily carry any significant sanctions. In this way an examination of the responses to cartoons which malign specific individuals or groups could yield information regarding the distribution of power in certain specific time periods in a social formation.

While a number of articles have set out to analyze specific cartoons from a sociological perspective (Streicher, 1967; Hess and Mariner, 1975) there is little which distinguishes them as sociological. Streicher's article, while providing a fascinating account of David Low's skirmishes with the British Government over his Colonel Blimp cartoon, does not use any of the theories or arguments which are normally associated with sociology. Rather Streicher documents the debates about Low's cartoons which took place in the House of Commons and how these cartoons might have

affected the views which the British had about their army. Similarly Hess and Mariner's discussion of the sociology of crime cartoons does not analyze the cartoons in a sociological manner but rather looks at the topic of the cartoons, i.e. criminally deviant behavior, from a sociological perspective.

The goal of the research described in this thesis is to investigate sociologically a large number of Playboy sex cartoons, it might clarify matters if a budget of the kinds of research problems that a sociology of cartoons could investigate were developed. Some of these problems are suggested by the work of previous researchers. As documented in the foregoing, however, past research has generated far more questions than it has explicitly set forth.

The issue under consideration here is more problematic than might first appear since the multi-paradigmatic nature of sociology means that we do not have one potential sociology of cartoons but rather a number, with each generating its own set of problems. A Marxist for example would ask very different questions from a phenomenologist since both are working from a different set of assumptions regarding the nature of the social world. The aim of this thesis however is not simply to develop a theoretical Checklist of what a multi-paradigmatic sociology of cartoons might include but also to investigate, sociologically, a large number of Playboy sex cartoons, guided by specific questions relevant to the topic. Given this research aim it is necessary to create a Checklist which is directly applicable to the data under investigation.

The Checklist presented below grew out an examination of the literature on cartoons, considered in the light of what might be directly applicable to and fruitful for an examination of the Playboy cartoons under investigation. The list also attempts to clarify the research problems which any sociological investigation of cartoons might find useful to address. Past research provided both valuable suggestions regarding what type of problems may be investigated and lacunae which need to be filled in. If one is to explore the ways in which sociologists may address some of the

points in the Checklist, it becomes necessary to move beyond work which has been specifically concerned with cartoons and instead shift the focus of attention to other substantive areas. In this regard, the sociology of mass media and the sociology of art have proved especially useful. These substantive areas were chosen because a number of scholars working in these fields have been involved in theory and research which are particularly relevant to understanding Playboy cartoons from a sociological perspective.

Towards a Sociology of Cartoons

Much is yet to be written on the sociology of cartoons. While much of the research discussed in this chapter was limited in terms of scope and content, past studies are important in locating where future work may be most fruitful. One important aspect of the analysis of previous research was to identify those areas where sociologists may most fruitfully concentrate their efforts. The following list aims to lay out what research problems a sociology of cartoons might reasonably and logically investigate, not the sociology of cartoons, since it is recognized here that different sociologists coming from specific theoretical backgrounds could very possibly point to other places where sociological work could be undertaken.

Checklist for a Sociology of Cartoons

1. Methods of Analysis

Has textual analysis been a major area of study in communications research? What methods have been proposed for

analyzing a large body of media content? Have these methods proved fruitful in apprehending the meaning of the text(s) under consideration?

2. The Cartoon and its Host Publication's Ideology

How does the message in the cartoon "fit" with the articulated values of the host magazine or newspaper's editorial/ideology? Does the cartoon express the values of the editors and/or media owners or does it conflict with them? Do the media serve merely as ideological mouth pieces for the dominant social groups or are cultural texts ideologically autonomous?

3. Cartoons and Contexts

How important is the surrounding context of the host magazine to the meaning of the cartoon? Does the content of the host magazine (e.g. editorials, articles, pictorials) impact on the range of potential meanings embodied in the cartoons?

4. The Cartoon as an Individual and Collective Product

Is the cartoon a result of one person's work (that is, the cartoonist) or a number of people? If they are a result of collaborative processes, then who are the involved parties and how do they serve to shape the finished product?

5. The Cartoon's Effect on Audiences

Does the cartoon have an effect on audiences? How have scholars examined media effects? What are the different paradigms used to conceptualize effects? What do the researchers mean by effect?

6. Reading the Cartoon

How do audiences read cartoons? Are cartoons read in different ways by audience members? Are there any socio-economic characteristics that determine these different meanings or are they based on other characteristics such as personal differences?

7. The Cartoon as an Instrument of Covert Communication

Is the cartoon used as a covert form of communication for ideas which would be seen as unacceptable in a non-humorous form? Can the cartoon be used as a vehicle for expressing ideas at variance with a publications editorial stance?

These research problems are considered in the chapters that follow. Some are dealt with in the empirical chapter (problems 3 and 7), others in the theoretical chapters (problems 4 & 5) whilst still others (problems 1, 2 and 6) are addressed empirically and theoretically. Given that any research endeavor that attempts both breadth and scope will in its course both answer and generate problems, some problems will of necessity be left for future empirical investigation.

Chapter Two

Sociological Approaches to the Mass Media

In the following chapters different fields within sociology will be examined. All of these fields are related to the sociology of cartoons in that they deal with various forms of communication. The aim here is to extract those theories and research techniques which can be applied to the sociology of the cartoon. The logical starting point is the sociology of mass media since this is at present a well developed field within the area of mass communications. The discussion will begin with the North American tradition for this is where the academic study of mass communications began. It would of course be impossible to examine all the major strands within the sociology of media since it is an enormous field with a number of competing paradigms. The following discussion will therefore concentrate on those paradigms which have tended to dominate both theory and research.

It should be recognized that one disadvantage of presenting ideal types of research models is that ultimately they cannot reflect the diversity within the field. Indeed Lang (1979) has argued that media scholars, in their attempt to provide a concise history of media research in the U.S. have tended to obscure the actual theoretical and empirical diversity of North American media scholarship. In order to avoid this pitfall, the latter part of this discussion will focus on some of those theorists (notably the critical school) who did not subscribe to the dominant ways of thinking within the academy. In addition, the more current debates taking place in the U.S. will be highlighted and examined in light of Lang's (1979: 83) claim that the history of communication research is one beset by distortions and myths. Having examined the trends within North American media scholarship, attention will then be focused on the varied strands of critical theory which have dominated the European approach to mass media. The aim of the discussion is to integrate the diverse

critical approaches and thus provide a conceptual framework which will do justice to the different aspects of mass communication.

When attempting to bring some order to the sociology of mass media, one is struck by the sheer volume of studies, approaches and theories which can be found in the area. As Klapper has argued, "the literature has reached that stage of profusion and disarray, characteristic of all proliferating disciplines" (1960: 1). This wealth of material led Silberman to similarly conclude that the claim that mass media "...is still a young branch of science has long ceased to be valid" (1980: 223). Indeed few areas of research enjoy attention from such varied disciplines as philosophy, linguistics, sociology, psychology, anthropology and history.

It is hardly surprising that Klapper wrote in 1960 that the number of mass media studies "...have given rise to a widespread pessimism about the possibility of ever bringing any order to the field" (ibid.). Despite this pessimism many scholars have attempted to 'order the field'. What follows is not a synthesis of the work of those scholars but rather it is a synthesis of those ideas most relevant to a sociology of cartoons. Since (as previously discussed in Chapter One) the sociology of cartoons must include an analysis of the potential effects of cartoons, and since a concern with effects is, as shall be demonstrated, a major concern of the North American school, the investigation will focus initially on the diverse ways in which leading media scholars have conceived of effects.

The Sociology of Cartoons and Media "Effects"

The history of American research into mass media is really the history of research into media effects. More than any other area of interest, effects have dominated the research and the theoretical developments within mass media scholarship. McQuail (1977) argues that one of the main reasons for this concentration

was "...the needs of the media industry and, especially a concern with the effectiveness of advertising" (ibid: 72). Similarly Blumler (1981) has pointed out the links - mainly financial - between the early mass media specialists and the media industry. The contention is that that the commercially dominated media required sophisticated research into the audience's patterns of media consumption. Thus many of the major researchers such as Lazarsfeld and Lasswell were employed by both the universities and the major radio stations and television networks. The effect that this had on research techniques is discussed extensively by a number of researchers, most notably Rowland (1983). Rowland argues that the major focus of research was to develop statistical techniques which could measure audience use so that the media industry could justify its rates to advertising clients (for a fuller discussion of the financial ties between the media and academic researchers see Rowland, 1983)

While it is not being argued that all American media research was conducted merely to serve the interests of the industry, such a perspective clearly provides a deeper understanding into the effects-orientated approach which has dominated the field. In addition, since the media industry required 'hard data' on viewing habits, the research undertaken tended to concentrate on studies which would yield data on short-term effects. Rowland argues that the radio and television networks needed statistical data often at very short notice since as a rapidly expanding media industry it had to continually adjust advertising rates. Gitlin (1978) similarly proposes that the needs of the media industry resulted in a preoccupation with short-term effects since "...these effects are measurable, in a strict, replicable behavioral sense" (Gitlin, ibid: 74). The net result, as discussed below, is that the sociology of mass media in the United States tended to adopt a behaviorist, positivist and empiricist approach to the study of media effects. Within this broad framework there exists a number of different theories, each of which have their own basic tenets regarding the nature of media persuasion.

For McQuail, the most useful way of ordering the various theories is historical. He argues that the fifty years or more of interest in media effects can be characterized in terms of three main stages. The first stage identified spans the period from the turn of the century to the late 1930s. The second stage is from approximately 1940 to 1960 and the final stage is still continuing today¹. Each of these stages may be distinguished by the amount of influencing power that the researchers attributed to mass media.

In stage one, researchers characterized the media as having considerable power to shape the audience's attitudes and beliefs. It was believed that the media could change habits of life and even impose political systems in the face of public resistance. These claims about the power of the media were based not on detailed scientific investigation (since techniques for measuring audience effects were only in the early stages of development) but rather on the collection of audience statistics which demonstrated that the press, cinema and radio were attracting a large audience. On the basis of such audience data, advertisers, newspaper owners and government propagandists in the First World War acted as if these claims about the power of the media to change beliefs and habits were indeed true (McQuail, 1977: 72).

The main impetus behind stage two was the growth of mass communication research in the United States and the development of empirical methods for measuring the effects of media on audiences. A number of studies proved influential (see Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudot, 1944; and Katz and Lazarsfeld, 1954, below) in changing the traditional thinking. Instead of viewing media as an omnipotent force it was now argued that "...mass communication does not ordinarily serve as a necessary and sufficient cause of audience effects, but rather functions through a nexus of mediating factors" (Klapper, 1960, quoted in McQuail, *ibid*: 73).

¹ This discussion will focus on the first two stages since these have dominated much of the research into mass media. The third stage is best exemplified by the work of Gerbner and Gross and will be discussed more fully in Chapter Eight.

Thus while media was shown to have an effect it was perceived as limited due to these newly discovered mediating factors such as individual differences between audience members.

Stage three came about as a result of this 'limited effects' conclusion being subject to re-examination. The reason for this is two fold (McQuail, *ibid*). Firstly, researchers began to have more modest expectations concerning the power of the media and argued that where small effects are expected, methods have to be more precise. Secondly, and more importantly, whereas previous research concentrated on short-term effects, the newer research began to take a longer time span and considered 'effects' as a more diffuse phenomenon. The audience was firmly located in a social context and greater emphasis was placed upon the construction of knowledge and reality as opposed to short-term attitude change. This stage continues today and represents a break with the short-term, positivist approach which has dominated mass media research in the United States. Its major proponents are Gerbner and Gross (see Chapter Eight for a fuller discussion) whose cultural indicators project is seen as a step toward developing a more sophisticated paradigm in the field of mass communications (Lowery and DeFleur, 1988).

While McQuail's broad categories serve as a useful introduction they only provide the reader with hints as to the general development of thought. Moreover McQuail is talking only in terms of potency of media and does not discuss in detail the nature of the processes involved in media effects. DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach (1982) on the other hand present an extremely comprehensive over view of the nature of these processes and illustrate the shortcomings of the different theories of media 'effects'. As previously discussed, most research carried out on media effects tended to focus only on short-term effects which were conceptualized as changing attitudes on specific issues such as voting or choice of consumer product. Moreover McQuail (1987) argues that much of the research was carried out on the level of the individual which made it difficult to draw conclusions about

effects at the collective level. This is now beginning to change with the work of Gerbner and Gross, however the theories discussed below all share a concern for examining effects on the short-term, individual level. In addition, much of the research discussed below tended to talk in terms of the mass media in general rather than identifying differences in effects for specific media forms. One major reason for this is, as McQuail (1987) argues, "...research has failed clearly to establish the relative value of different modes (e.g. audio, visual, etc.) in any consistent way" (ibid: 261). The major exception here is Gerbner and Gross (1976) who state explicitly that their research is applicable only to television. The following discussion can be seen as presenting an 'ideal type' of research since it discusses the main elements and characteristics of the theories which constitute the sociology of mass media as it developed in the United States.

Magic Bullet Theory

De Fleur and Ball-Rokeach's (1982) first category which fits in with McQuail's first developmental stage is termed the 'magic bullet theory' or the 'hypodermic theory'. Using similar language to McQuail, De Fleur and Ball-Rokeach argue that in the aftermath of World War One, the media was thought to be endowed with great power "the media were thought to be able to shape public opinion and to sway the masses toward almost any point of view desired by the communicators (1982: 160). It was thought that every member of the audience received the message in the same way and that stimuli triggers immediate and direct responses. This theory held a number of implicit assumptions regarding both the social organization of society and the psychological makeup of its members. It is important for this analysis to make explicit these assumptions since "...it has been through their systematic replacement or modification that the more modern theories of the mass communication process have been developed" (ibid: 161).

Now, in order to fully grasp the persuasiveness of this theory, it has to be situated within the context of the dominant social theories of the time. Chief among these was the mass society theory which Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955) argue "...was the model of society and the processes of communication which mass media research seem to have had in mind when it first began" (ibid: 17). De Fleur and Ball Rokeach argue that this theory was an offshoot of nineteenth century social thought whose main theme was:

The emergence and operation of the large scale society, the 'great society'. ...In their perception of the movement from 'status' to 'contract', from 'Gemeinschaft' to 'Gesellschaft', from 'mechanical solidarity' to 'organic solidarity', sociologists saw modern society as impersonal...and highly individualistic. (Shils, 1951, quoted in Brown, 1970: 46)

Nisbet has similarly argued that "the rediscovery of community is unquestioningly the most distinctive development in 19th century social thought" (1966: 47). It needs to be stressed that these theorists were concerned with the more general problem of how to conceptualize the great changes in society brought about by the transformation of a non-industrial base to an industrial one. However the mass society theory which was developed by the influential twentieth century scholars (such as Lazarsfeld and Kendall, 1949) took as its starting point the writings of the classical sociologists, most notably, Auguste Comte.

A brief look at Comte's ideas on the nature of society illustrates the ways in which his writings formed the building blocks for future theories. Comte saw great potential for harmony and stability arising from the division of labor and specialization. Even though individuals undertook economic activity for their own individual needs, as the division of labor increases, individual participation in economic activity leads to greater cooperation, awareness in interdependence and the emergence of new social bonds. As Comte wrote:

The main cause of the superiority of the social to the individual organism is, according to an established law, the more marked speciality of the various functions fulfilled by organs more and more distinct, but interconnected, so that the unity of aim is more and more combined with diversity of means. (Comte, 1915: 289)

Comte however also saw danger in too much specialization in that it would lead to "...disorganization and decline by disrupting the basis for effective communication between individual parts of the organism" (ibid). For Comte such a state of affairs would result in society decomposing into a multitude of unconnected, alienated individuals. This would threaten the effective linkage between the parts of the system which would consequently threaten the equilibrium and harmony of society.

DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach continue by tracing these main themes through the work of Spencer, Tonnies and Durkheim and conclude the discussion by arguing that:

As the nineteenth century came to a close this was the general image of society that had emerged...the Western world was experiencing an increase in heterogeneity and individuality...an increasing alienation of the individual's strong identification with the community as a whole...and great increases in the psychological isolation of the human being. (1982: 156)

To discuss in any detail how the work of Spencer, Tonnies and Durkheim translated into the mass society theory popular in American social thought of the early twentieth century would itself take a thesis. As Bennett argues "the range and diversity of the theorists who are normally regarded as having contributed to the development of mass society theory is forbidding" (1982: 32) For the sake of clarity, it is necessary to point out that while there are many strands of mass society theory, the key underlying theme of most of its variants is drawn from the work of the classical sociologists, that is the potential impact of the dissolution of traditional forms of social relationships on the maintenance of

social cohesion.

Blumler had considerable impact on the development of the theory of mass society (Bramson, 1961). Blumler (1935) saw the mass as an homogenous aggregate of individuals who are essentially alike and individually indistinguishable. Furthermore these individuals are anonymous in that they come from local different groups and there is practically no communication between them. In this way the mass can be seen as lacking a culture "...meaning by this that it has no traditions, no established rules or forms of conduct, no body of etiquette adjusting the relations of individuals, and no system of expectations or demands" (Blumler, 1935: 119). With this image of the mass, Blumler argues, the individual is perceived as alone and isolated from primary groups and thus the media directly acts on him/her and not within the context of any group interaction.

The major characteristics of American mass society can be summarized as follows (Lowery and DeFleur, 1983: 10):

1. Social differentiation in society increases because of the growing division of labor, the bureaucratization of human groups, the mixing of unlike populations, and differential patterns of consumption.
2. The effectiveness of informal social controls decreases as the influence of traditional norms and values declines, leading to increases in the incidence of deviant behavior.
3. The use of formal social controls (the contract, restitutive law, and criminal justice systems) rises as a new impersonal society develops.
4. Conflicts increase because of social differences between people with opposing values and life-styles.
5. Open and easy communication as a basis of social solidarity between people becomes more difficult because of social differentiation, impersonality and distrust arising from the psychological alienation, breakdown of meaningful social ties, and increasing anomie among members of society.

The important part of this theory for media scholars was that the few strong ties meant there was little to disrupt the influence of the media messages. Because the individual was psychologically isolated from strong social ties and informal social control, the members of the mass could easily be influenced. The mass media was seen as sending forth messages which were received and understood more or less uniformly because the members of the mass were individually indistinguishable. This belief that the media were endowed with great political power owes its popularity to a number of events. Chief among these is the role that propaganda was believed to play in the First World War. It was suggested that the newspapers at this time had deliberately set out to convince the American public that the enemy were monsters and had committed numerous acts of atrocity. Following the war many of those who had engineered these deceptions felt troubled by what they had done and wrote exposes on the subject. Their books helped fuel the argument that the media did indeed have enormous power.

That this concept of mass society influenced thinking in mass media is the central theme in Katz and Lazarsfeld's (1955) criticisms of the early mass media theories. They argue that mass media theory, by inheriting this concept of mass, painted a picture of "...the omnipotent media on the one hand, sending forth the message, and the atomized masses, on the other, waiting to receive it, and nothing in between" (ibid: 20).

Raymond Williams (1974) similarly argues that "the mass metaphor overtook us in its weakest meaning of the large ultimate audience...." (ibid: 22). Williams suggests that this resulted in a deformation of the study of communication for three reasons. Firstly, it unquestioningly inherits the notion concerning large scale homogenous groupings from the mass society theorists. Secondly, the concept of mass necessarily assumes that the masses are inherently stupid and finally it limits communication studies to a few specialized areas such as broadcasting and the cinema.

Robert Escarpit (1977) developed a similar argument to

Williams in postulating that the term mass involves an implicit idea of an undifferentiated, inert aggregate and thus drastically ignores the varied and specific forms of social interaction among society's members.

It was the juxtaposition of the theoretical criticisms such as the above and the empirical findings of such researchers as Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955) that led to the breakdown of the old paradigm and "...in its place emerged a conception of the media audience as a set of individuals who encounter the media as social beings connected to their social environment" (Katz and Lazarsfeld, 1955: 34). The common feature of the emerging theories was that they each worked on the assumption that there were intervening variables between the message and the receiver. These intervening variables were seen as exposure, medium, content, individual predispositions and interpersonal relations. The latter two intervening variables received by far the most attention and are thus discussed in the following section.

Uses and Gratifications Theory

This theory offers personality differences as the intervening variable. Psychological studies into learning motivation and learning differences had produced results which suggested that there are differences in personality traits. Instead of viewing the audience members as an atomized mass, it was now argued that human beings varied greatly in their personal and psychological makeup. Such differences were seen as arising from differential socialization patterns. The norms, values and attitudes that the individual gained from the social environment were seen as crucial indicators of differences in the individual's perceptions.

From these studies the principle of selective attention and perception emerged. This theory proposes that the values, beliefs,

norms and attitudes held by the individual play an influential role in selecting and interpreting mass communication. As De Fleur and Ball-Rokeach (1982) argue:

From a multiplicity of available content, individual members of the audience selectively attended to messages particularly if they were related to their interests, consistent with their attitudes, congruent with their beliefs and supportive of their values. (Ibid: 187)

These ideas crystallized in the uses and gratifications theory which views the audience as actively selecting its media in order to maximize its gratifications. This theory stands in sharp contrast to the hypodermic one in that it argues that the audience play an active rather than passive role in the media experience. Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch (1974) suggest that the uses and gratifications theory focuses on: "(1) the social and psychological origins of (2) needs, which generate (3) expectations of (4) the mass media or other sources, which lead to (5) differential patterns of media exposure (or engagement in other activities), resulting in (6) need gratifications and (7) other consequences, perhaps mostly unintended ones" (1974: 20). Accordingly, three main research objectives of the theory are: to explain how the mass media are used by individuals to gratify their needs; to understand the motives for media behavior and to identify the functions or consequences that follow from needs, motives, and communication behavior.

A classic example of this approach is the study by Herta Herzog (1941) of listeners of the radio daytime serials. Herzog proposed that the women who constituted the bulk of the audience were drawn from the middle and lower middle class and could be characterized as having uneventful lives. By contrast the radio serials contained a great variety of incidents. From interviews with fans, Herzog argued that the listeners used these serials to: (1) help solve their own problems (2) offer emotional release and (3) allow for a wishful remodelling of the listener's drudgery.

Herzog did not in any way condone these serials but rather saw them as offering short-term psychological solutions to what were long-term structural problems. For Herzog the drudgery of these women's lives could not be solved by listening to the radio. In this way Herzog attempted to integrate the audience's gratifications with more macro social structural issues. According to Elliot (1979), future studies using this theory failed to look beyond the psychological states of the audience and were thus blinded to structural components. Elliot cites a study by Fearing (1947) on the influence of motion pictures as an example of the psychological bias within the uses and gratifications approach. Here Fearing argues that an individual's quest to structure his/her personal world is the basic motivation for cinema going:

He finds affirmation for his doubts, alternative solutions to his problems, and the opportunity to experience vicariously ways of behaving beyond the horizons of his personal world. (Fearing, 1947: 77, quoted in Elliot, 1979: 8)

Elliot applies his main criticism of Fearing's study to the uses and gratifications theory as a whole; it is basically mentalistic in that it relies on intervening mental states and processes to explain variations in media effects. The theory can be seen as individualistic since it focuses on intra-individual processes rather than group memberships. Elliot argues that while this theory can be generalized to aggregates of individuals, it cannot be converted in any meaningful way into social structure and social processes. For Elliot, this stress on the uses and gratifications of an individual fails to examine the larger issue of who controls the media and who defines the ways in which such needs are experienced and learned; questions which are central to a sociological analysis of the role of the media in society.

According to Elliot (1979), the main shortcoming of this approach is that it did not do what it actually set out to, that is, set media effects within a wider social context. Rather the uses

and gratification theory treated the mass communication process in isolation from other social factors such as social class affiliation. Indeed Carey (1977) argues that this criticism can be levelled against the American tradition as a whole and only recently has the European tradition attempted to overcome this isolation and place the study of communication within a general social framework which examines the relationship between expressive forms such as art and the maintenance of social order. This point is actually crucial to an understanding of mass media effects and will be taken up more fully in the subsequent discussion of the critical approach to mass communications.

Personal Influence Theory

While the uses and gratifications theory has been a major theory in the communications field, the late 1940s and 50s saw the emergence of the personal influence theory. Elliot (1979) argues that this theory was really discovered by accident since the researchers set out to investigate something quite different. Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet (1944) intended to conduct research on the ways in which membership of specific social categories impacted on the selection of material related to the coming presidential election. Whereas the uses and gratifications theory saw individual psychological states as the reason for attending to particular messages, this social categories perspective saw age, sex, residence, economic status, educational and religious affiliation as the intervening variables between the message and the receiver.

Lazarsfeld et al. conducted interviews aimed to elicit information regarding media exposure but received unanticipated answers in that "whenever the respondents were asked to report on their recent exposures to campaign communications of all kinds, political discussions were mentioned more frequently than exposure to radio or print" (Lazarsfeld et al., *ibid*: 150). The researchers

followed this line of questioning and found that many people had little first hand experience of the media but had in fact received their information from other people (termed opinion leaders) who had received it first hand. Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955) termed this the two-step flow theory in that the information moved from the media to the opinion leaders who then relayed it through interpersonal channels to those who had less direct exposure to media.

The importance of this finding for the sociology of mass media can only be understood if it is set within the context of the dominant theoretical trends of the time. The view of the media as the omnipotent force was being challenged most notably by the uses and gratifications approach which, as previously argued, postulated individual differences as the key intervening variable. While the work of Lazarsfeld et al. (1944) was similarly finding that the media had a more limited effect than the magic bullet theory would suggest, it was not so much individual differences which were intervening in the communication process but rather "that the traditional image of the mass persuasion process must make room for 'people' as intervening factors between the stimuli of the media and the resultant opinions, decisions and actions" (Katz and Lazarsfeld, 1955: 33). This finding called into question the basic assumption of the mass society theory that industrialization had resulted in a society made up of atomized individuals devoid of social attachments. According to Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955), the findings of Lazarsfeld et al. forced media scholars to recognize and in fact 'rediscover' the importance of informal, interpersonal relations in the communication process. Indeed it could be suggested that the personal influence theory was the final nail in the coffin of the magic bullet theory.

The North American Tradition: Administrative and Critical Approaches

The two-step flow theory, used primarily to investigate voting behavior, generated much research work. The major criticisms which can be levelled against the two-step flow theory have indeed been applied to the North American tradition as a whole, namely that they are all "...grounded in a transmission or transportation view of communication" (Carey, 1977: 412). By this Carey means that "the archetypal case of communication ...is persuasion, attitude change, behavior modification, socialization through the transmission of information, influence or conditioning" (ibid). Indeed, the proceeding overview would suggest that Carey is correct when he argues that North American researchers have been fixated with discovering the conditions under which persuasion occurs, attempting to find the precise psychological and social conditions under which attitudes can be either changed or reinforced. That mass media research has only been concerned with short term effects is the core of Gitlin's criticism for he argues that mass media research has:

.....enshrined short term "effects" as measures of "importance" largely because these "effects" are measurable in a strict replicable behavioral sense, thereby deflecting attention from larger social meanings of mass production. (Gitlin, 1978: 74)

An alternative view of North American media studies is provided by Lang (1979), who characterizes the criticism's put forward by Carey and Gitlin as distortions of the truth. For Lang the portrayal of media researchers in the U.S. as positivistic and empirical, in contrast to their European counterparts, who have always been critical (that is, according to Lang, concerned with how general trends in society affect the way mass media function and consequently, affect certain basic values) is basically a myth. Rather, Lang argues, there has always been in the U.S. a critical

strand of research which he associates with the work of major media scholars such as Lazarsfeld and more generally the group of theorists (most notably, Thodor Adorno, Herbert Marcuse and Max Horkheimer) known as the Frankfurt School. These scholars were originally associated with the Institute for Social Research founded in Frankfurt in 1923. Because many of the members of the institute tended to align themselves with Marxism and were also Jewish, they were forced in 1933 to move the Institute to America where it was affiliated with the sociology department at Columbia University until 1942. At issue here is not so much the work of the Frankfurt school or critical theory in general but the degree to which it impacted on North American scholarship and particularly the work of leading scholars in the field such as Lazarsfeld.

In contrast to Lang's view that the critical approach of the Frankfurt school had a considerable influence on the the theory and research being developed in post-World War II North America, other theorists (Rowland, 1983; Slack and Allor, 1983; Smyth and Dinh, 1983; Melody and Mansell, 1983) suggest that the differences between the critical theorists and the more positivist, empirically orientated researchers (often called the administrative school) could not be bridged.

Critical theory in the U.S. has been peripheral to mainstream sociology. Indeed Adorno who worked with Lazarsfeld at the Princeton Radio Project wrote that the differences between his approach and Lazarsfeld's meant in reality that the two could not work together (see Adorno, 1969). The main area of contention was that Adorno, consistent with his critical stance, was concerned with examining the role of media in a capitalist society and how the institutions of popular culture control the popular imagination. In addition, Adorno was interested in how the present capitalist social order could be overthrown and replaced by a more egalitarian social order. However, according to Rowland (1983), Lazarsfeld was largely unsympathetic to Adorno's position and instead wanted to concentrate on developing more sophisticated

empirical techniques for measuring audience response to media messages. As evidence for this assertion, Rowland quotes the following letter Lazarsfeld wrote. In this letter he is explaining why he established a research center at the short-lived University of Newark

I invented the Newark Research Centre for two reasons. I wanted to direct a great variety of studies, so that I was sure from year to year my methodological experience would increase -- and that is, as you know, my main interest in research. And I tried to build up a group of younger students to be educated just in this kind of research procedures... (Lazarsfeld, 1969, quoted in Rowland, 1983: 62).

In addition, Lazarsfeld was particularly concerned with what he saw as the impossibility of translating Adorno's approach into empirical terms (Rowland, *ibid*). It is clear from the above that Lazarsfeld in particular and those associated with the administrative school in general are much more concerned than critical theorists with developing empirical methods for measuring media effects. However it would be a mistake to conclude that the major differences between the two approaches rest on the issue of empirical techniques. Rather according to Melody and Mansell (1983) and Smyth and Dinh (1983) the differences are far more fundamental and far reaching. For Smyth and Dinh the differences between administrative research and critical research are: (1) the type of problem selected, (2) the research methods employed and (3) the ideological perspective as identified by the researchers' treatment of the results of the analysis.

When discussing the type of problem selected, Smyth and Dinh suggest that administrative researchable problems are those concerned with how to make an organization's actions more efficient. This would include issues such as how best to advertise a certain product or how to efficiently introduce such media hardware as computers into a corporate setting. With respect to critical analysis, the problems selected deal much more with

reshaping or changing institutions to meet the needs of the people which may include such issues as investigating the democratic potential of community cable stations. With respect to the second issue, research methods employed, the administrative approach utilizes neo-positivist, behavioral methods designed to measure effects on individuals. The critical theorists on the other hand are more concerned with the historical, materialist analysis of contradictions in the social formation. The ideological perspective of the administrative researcher is more concerned with interpreting results which supports or at least does not threaten the present distribution of power. The critical theorist, on the other hand, is committed to interpretations which favor radical social change.

A similar analysis is offered by Melody and Mansall (1983) when they argue that the major distinctions between administrative and critical research lie in:

the pragmatic selection of relevant real world problems and the subsequent use of research techniques to conduct analysis. The real basis for the dichotomy between critical and administrative traditions lies in the allegiance of researchers to the status quo versus changes in existing political and economic institutionalized power relations (ibid: 109).

Thus there exist important theoretical and philosophical differences between the two schools which cannot be resolved through a discussion of empirical techniques. For the critical researchers the central concern is "the effectivity of communication in the exercise of social power" (Slack and Allor, 1983: 215) while in administrative research "issues relating to the structure of economic and political institutions...the centralization of power the characteristics of dominant-dependant relations and the incentives of vested interests, are excluded from analysis" (Melody and Mansell, 1983: 104). Moreover, many critical researchers stress a personal commitment to social change, with the aim of critical research being "to free people for self-determination" (Mosco,

1983: 247). While such a view clearly contrasts with a positivist ideal of value-free science, it is consistent with the aims of feminist researchers. For feminist sociologists, the current power structure is taken to be problematic (to say the least) and the aim of much research (see, for example, Roberts, 1981) is to uncover the power imbalance which is built into patriarchy with the ultimate intention of replacing female oppression with a more egalitarian social structure. In this way any feminist analysis of the mass media has to be by definition critical since the overriding concern is social, political and economic change.

Although Lang (1979) makes the important point that there have always been some pockets of critical research in the U.S., he overstates the impact that this researchers had on mainstream administrative research. According to Slack and Allor (1983) one of the main reasons for this type of misconception is a misunderstanding on the part of theorists regarding what constitutes critical research. Indeed Lang's claim that "there is no inherent incompatibility between the 'positivism' of administrative communication research and the critical approach associated with the Frankfurt school" (1979: 83) has, in light of current debates, been shown to be incorrect. In the summer of 1983, the Journal of Communication dedicated its entire issue to the debate between the administrative point of view versus the critical perspective and one of the major recurring themes was the incompatibility of the two approaches (see articles by Melody and Mansall, Slack and Allor, White, Carey, Garnham, Jansen, Gerbner). Moreover, the interesting feature of this issue was that most of the contributors (who are from the U.S) defined themselves as critical researchers. It would therefore seem that critical research in the United States is becoming more popular among researchers and thus the divisions between American and European scholarship (the former being characterized as mainly administrative, the latter, critical) are beginning to break down, with the cultural studies approach being the most commonly articulated perspective (White, 1983).

So far the discussion of the critical perspective has only

provided pointers as to the main issues which concern its proponents. Lang's claim (above), that critical theory is concerned with how general trends in society affect the way mass media function and consequently, affect certain basic values, fails to make explicit that the central tenant of all critical perspectives is "the effectivity of communication in the exercise of social power" (Slack and Allor, 1983: 215). Now, it needs to be stressed here that, contrary to what Lang suggests, the Frankfurt School is only one amongst many strands within the critical perspective for as Slack and Allor argue, "there are...considerable theoretical differences among critical positions that draw on such diverse sources as political economy, the Frankfurt school, Marxist sociology, dependency theory, cultural studies, and continental philosophy" (ibid: 213). Because of this diversity it is necessary to provide a more thorough discussion of some of the main areas within and debates between the various critical positions. Since this is indeed a vast area only those issues which relate directly to the development of a sociology of cartoons will be addressed.

Summary: The Sociology of Cartoons and North American Media Studies

The previous section sought to investigate the ways in which North American researchers might conceive of the potential effects of cartoons (problem five on the Checklist). Since there has been virtually no research conducted in the mass media field on cartoons, it was necessary to examine the literature on media effects in general. It was argued that three main paradigms (hypodermic, uses and gratifications and personal influence) have tended to dominate the North American academic field of mass media. As well as the obvious problems with these approaches discussed above, there remain further shortcomings which seriously question the validity of the bulk of past research. It is important to highlight these problems since the aim of the

following discussion of critical theory is to go beyond the shortcomings of the administrative approach and to provide a more theoretical and empirically sound framework on which to build a sociology of cartoons.

The first problem is that there is little discussion of how the text should be analyzed (problem one of the Checklist). This issue is especially pertinent for this thesis since the empirical section involves the visual analysis of Playboy cartoons. We find that when textual analysis is discussed it is usually in terms of content analysis. Content analysis will be discussed more fully in Chapter Four, however, it is important to point out here that when this method of analysis is adopted, it tends to be done so uncritically with little thought given to the complex ways in which media messages are encoded.

It appears that in their quest for perfecting research into effects, the American media scholars have in the main glossed over the issue of visual analysis. A number of examples will serve to illustrate the point. The book Mass Communication edited by Wilbur Schramm (1975), is widely considered to be a sound general introductory reader on the subject. Out of eight chapters there is one, entitled "The Content of Mass Communications" which deals explicitly with content. It discusses newspaper content, motion pictures, daytime serials, mass periodical fiction, radio and propaganda. While content analysis is the method used in all the studies not one of the them discusses, from a critical perspective, the problems encountered in doing content analysis. Rather what we find is that each of the authors present their findings as 'objective' measurements of content.

Similarly in De Fleur and Ball-Rokeach's Theories of Mass Communication (1982), we find a through account of the developments in media effects research but nothing on the techniques of visual analysis used in the research. The issue here of course is that research into effects needs to investigate the content of the media that is meant to produce the effect; if this aspect of the investigation is unsatisfactory, then so too will be

the resultant findings on the effects.

The second major problem with the North American research is that it treats reader reception as unproblematic (problem six on the Checklist). The argument that media messages affect all viewers the same was ostensibly thrown out with the introduction of the intervening variables paradigm. The uses and gratifications theory, while attempting to understand how readers perceive the messages, locked itself into a psychological framework and therefore failed to adequately address sociological issues. Nowhere in any of these approaches do we find serious attention given to how media messages are decoded. It is impossible to talk in terms of effects if we do not know what the reader/viewer/listener is getting from the media. To assume that the researchers' own decoding of the media is the same as the viewers is clearly unacceptable. This raises problems for the investigation of Playboy cartoons since we cannot talk in terms of effects until there is some method for investigating the ways in which the readers decode the cartoons.

Thus, at this stage, the specific research problems which need to be investigated are first, what research methods can sociologists use to analyze the content of a large body of cartoons?, second, how can sociologists conceive of media effects in a manner which goes beyond the short-term behavioristic approach?, and linked to this, how do audiences read cartoons? Since the North American tradition has little to offer, it is now necessary to look elsewhere for guidelines or solutions to these problems. Moreover, the Checklist for a sociology of cartoons contains a further five problems and thus it is hoped that the ensuing discussion will also throw some light on how they should be tackled. The following sections therefore examine specific areas within the critical school which are relevant to the aims of this thesis.

Mass Media And Critical Theory: Relevant Themes

Given, as Slack and Allor argue above, that the term critical theory encompasses a wide range of theoretical positions, and that since "the category of critical studies does not describe a coherent and self-consciously unified body of work..." (Sholle, 1988: 18) there is then the problem of deciding which positions to include in an analysis of the area. Since the choice of areas is dependent upon the research problems posed I thus intend to concentrate attention on those theories and research which will relate to the ways in which critical theorists conceive of textual analysis, media effects and the role of the audience in constructing meaning. Now while it has been argued that critical theory need not be explicitly or consciously Marxist in nature (Smyth and Dinh, 1983: 123), it is often assumed that the two go together. Indeed the two terms are often used interchangeably (see for example, Sholle, 1988; Grossberg, 1984) with no discussion of how the two may differ.

Since a debate on the question of terminology will divert attention from the topic in hand, I intend to follow the useful view provided by Curran et al. (1982), that most of what passes as critical theory is set within a Marxist perspective. According to these writers "many of the important questions about the mass media and about culture more generally are now posed within Marxism rather than between Marxism and other accounts" (Curran et al., 1982: 23)².

The following discussion focuses on theoretical differences within the Marxist school only when they have important

² Although the Frankfurt School is often held up to be a major contributor to critical theory, in reality the impact on more current thinking was slight. Curran et al., actually argues that "the work of the Frankfurt School was relatively marginal in developing and generating research in mass communications" (1982: 23). Thus the following discussion focuses on more current and influential strands.

implications for this study of cartoons³. One such key area of dispute has been the question of what constitutes the proper object of analysis for the sociologist of mass media. Is it the economic forces shaping cultural production or the actual cultural product itself or rather the ways in which the audience reads the text? The political economists (Murdock and Golding, 1977 & 1979; Murdock, 1982,) have argued that the starting point for a Marxist analysis has to be the economic forces and processes at work in media production and the ways in which they determine the nature of media output. Adoption of this approach would mean that the sociologist of cartoons must concentrate not so much on the cartoon itself, since work on the actual text is seen as at best a secondary issue, but must rather focus upon the detailed analysis of economic control of that area of media. In direct opposition, structural analysts, drawing upon many diverse strands including Linguistics, Semiotics and Anthropology, focus on the systems and processes of signification and representation in all areas of media. Within this approach the starting point for a sociologist of cartoons is the actual cartoon, not the economic forces which determine its production. A third set of theorists, loosely associated with the culturalist school (particularly Fiske, 1987 & 1989) argue that the major area of research should be a sustained analysis of how audiences read texts.

Now, while a complete research project conducted within critical theory might be expected to integrate all three approaches, the sociology of media as it has developed within the critical tradition has tended to adhere to what some researchers have called a tripartite division (Glasgow University Media Group, 1980: 409). This division has recently begun to change with a number of sociologists (see especially Thompson, 1988) calling for a more combined approach to the study of mass communications. Indeed Murdock has recently called for a more rigorous approach to audience activity (1989) and as well has advocated textual

³ It needs to be stressed here that this discussion focuses only on a specific set of debates within the Marxist school. For further elaboration on other issues and disagreements see Grossberg, 1984.

analysis (1985). Before we can examine these trends and propose a method of overcoming, both theoretically and empirically, this "tripartite division", it is necessary to review what Marx himself said about culture for his claims serve as a starting point of all three schools.

Marx and Culture

One of the main reasons for such disagreement within the Marxist school is that Marx and Engels never developed a systematic theory regarding the nature of culture. Murdock and Golding (1977), while recognizing this point, nonetheless argue that a detailed reading of Marx does reveal an outline of how such an analysis should be tackled. What we find however is that while different statements can be pieced together, Marx tends to make contradictory remarks about the relationship between economic forces and culture. Thus we are left with a number of propositions which can be interpreted in different ways depending on the ideological stance of the particular researcher or school, each one claiming to represent the Marxist analysis of culture.

Because the study of culture is complex, there is the problem of knowing where to begin such an analysis. Williams suggestion is that that "any modern approach to a Marxist theory of culture must begin by considering the propositions of a determining base and a determined superstructure" (Williams, 1977: 75). Marx has often been accused of being an economic determinist, a criticism which at first sight seems justified by the following, well known passage in Marx's Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy.

In the social production of their existence, men inevitably enter into definite relationships, which are independent of their will, namely relations of production....The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which arises

a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life. (Marx, 1975: 425)

This passage is often taken as the starting point for cultural analysis, ascribing a secondary, dependent role to culture. If the economic structure of society conditions cultural life, then the logical starting point for any Marxist analysis has to be the base with cultural analysis playing a minor role. This assertion seems borne out by the second part of the foregoing quote when Marx argues that:

At a certain stage of their development, the material productive forces of society come into conflict with the existing relations of production....Then begins an epoch of social revolution. With the change of the economic foundation the entire immense superstructure is more or less rapidly transformed. In considering such transformations a distinction should always be made between the material transformations of the economic conditions of production...and the legal, political, religious, aesthetic or philosophical - in short ideological - forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out. (ibid)

For Marx, the dominant forces for change are transformations in the material productive forces. Culture plays a reflective role by changing as a response to such transformations. If this statement is to be taken at face value we have to conclude that culture can play practically no role in social change, a proposition which many Marxists find unacceptable. As Wolff (1981) points out, many notable scholars such as Marcuse (1969) and Craig (1975) have discussed the potentially revolutionary nature of art. Even Engels (who is often considered a simplifier of Marx's ideas) in 1890 suggested such an historical possibility.

The economic structure is the basis, but the various elements of the superstructure...also exercise their influence upon the course of the historical struggles and in many cases predominate in determining their form.
(Letter to Joseph Bloch, 1890. quoted in Eagleton, 1976: 9)

This appears at first sight to present a major contradiction for how on the one hand can culture be part of the superstructure with the dependency that accompanies it and yet on the other be influential in social change?

This contradiction is somewhat resolved if one reconsiders what Marx might have meant by the base defining the superstructure metaphor. Indeed, Murdock and Golding (1977), the champions of political economy, argue that labelling Marx an economic determinist displays misunderstanding, for he was not arguing that people's ideas and actions were totally controlled by economic forces. Rather Marx was arguing for a more complex view of human behavior which could account for both determination and intellectual autonomy and innovation.

In order to understand how Marx could arrive at this more complex theory, Williams (1973) argues that we must take a closer look at the concept of determination since Marx, "uses the notion of determination and conditioning not in this narrow sense but in a much looser sense of setting limits, exerting pressure and closing off options" (Williams, 1973: 4).

Williams arrives at this refinement of the concept of determinism by examining the great linguistic and theoretical complexity of the term. Here he points to the different possible meanings and implications that the word 'determines' has in most European languages. The meaning derived from theology is the one most often applied to Marx, that is determination which "...totally predicts or prefigures, indeed totally controls a subsequent activity." (Williams, 1973: 4). For Williams, however, Marx attempted to get away from this external conception and rather see determinism in terms of social practice whereby it exerts a strong influence but one which did not preclude the possibility of human

ideas and actions which are not totally conditioned by economic forces.

If we are to consider human behavior as less determined we have to reassess the idea of a determining base and determined superstructure for this dichotomous theorizing lends itself to a view of human behavior devoid of autonomy. Usually, when attempting such a task, writers have turned their attentions to the superstructure, arguing that it is the domain of thought and action. While such an argument is valid, if we are to take seriously the idea of non-determined human action which still retains the key concept of Marxist analysis, then we have to conceptualize an image of the base which allows for such action, an impossibility if we continue with the static and uniform image of the base which has been popular in Marxist analysis. A static and uniform base means a static and uniform superstructure which means static and uniform thought and action. If however we begin to see the base as dynamic, always in the process of development and therefore change, we can see how the superstructure is not something which is necessarily fixed. As Williams stresses, Marx argued that there are deep contradictions in the relationships of production and in the consequent social relationships. Taking this one step further, "there is therefore the continual possibility of the dynamic variations of these forces" (Williams, 1973: 5).

Indeed, one of the major criticisms of early Marxist analysis of culture (and indeed main reason for the popularity of textual readings such as semiotics), is that it was simplistic and unidirectional, seeing for example, literature as merely reflective of the ideology of the owners of the means of production. The implications of this position for research into media and specifically cartoons is that the sociologist need not examine the cultural product (in this case the cartoon), a position which structuralists have shown to be unacceptable. Moreover the following empirical study on Playboy cartoons illustrates the manner in which analysis of text yields important information

which could not have been elicited from simply examining the class position of Playboy editors and cartoonists. Justification for the reflective argument comes from the following passage

The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas: i.e. the class which is the ruling material force in society is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it. (Marx and Engels, 1970: 64)

All that early Marxist scholars had to do was spell out the ruling ideology and show how it was reflected in literature, painting, music, etc. A more recent version of the reflective argument can be found in Miliband's discussion of the role of the media in a capitalist society; "...the fact remains that the 'class which has the means of material production at its disposal' does have 'control at the same times of the means of mental production'; and that it does seek to use them for the weakening of opposition to the established order" (Miliband, 1977: 50).

There are three main problems with such an approach. First, it assumes that there is an ideology out there which can be termed the ruling ideology. Secondly, it takes ideology to be unproblematically reflected in the cultural product. Thirdly, audiences are portrayed as sponge-like receivers of the dominant ideology. The implications of this reflective argument for the sociology of cartoons are: (1) there is no need to examine the cultural product (cartoons) since they act as mirrors of the dominant ideology, (2) the role of the media is one of disseminating the dominant ideology to the proletariat who (3) all receive it in the same way. Eagleton has argued that this reflective argument is inadequate since "it suggests a passive , mechanistic relationship...as though the work, like a mirror or photographic plate merely inertly registered what was happening

'out there' (Eagleton: 1976: 49). Clearly the cultural product is more complex than this argument would suggest and this recognition has resulted in an attempt to reconceptualize the relationship between the cultural product and society.

Reconceptualizing the Relationship Between the Base and Superstructure

Probably the most important advance has been the recognition that Marx in his base/superstructure argument was making a general methodological statement, not presenting an a priori model of social analysis. If indeed Marx's analysis was dynamic then it has to be subject to empirical investigation which he himself argued:

In order to study the connection between intellectual and material production it is above all an essential to conceive the latter in its determined historical form and not as a general category.... Unless material production itself is understood in its specific historical form, it is impossible to grasp the characteristics of the intellectual production which corresponds to it or the reciprocal action between the two. (Theorien Uber den Mehrwert, quoted in Williams, 1977: 81)

It would appear from the above, as Wolff (1981) argues, that where Marx suggested that culture is determined by the economic structure of society he was in effect conceiving of an historical fact and a generalization based on historical observation of the social formation rather than an absolute model. This is especially so when he uses the word reciprocal for this questions the taken for granted Marxist assumption of the base always determining the superstructure. Thus the task of the Marxist sociologist of culture is one of investigation and not abstract theorizing for it is not enough to assume the existence of a simple unidirectional model. Williams' argument that Marx used the word "determining" in the

sense of setting limits, exerting pressures and closing of options therefore has to be developed into an empirical proposition whereby these limits and options are themselves dynamic and subject to empirical investigation.

Working from this interpretation, Wolff develops the Althusserian concept of 'relative autonomy' whereby at certain points in time the elements of the superstructure may not always be entirely determined by the base but may be historically effective themselves. Althusser arrives at this position through a reformulation of the classic Marxist base/superstructure model which replaces the concept of a determining base with a concept of a social formation composed of three levels, the economic, the political and the ideological. Now while for Althusser the economy is determinant 'in the last instance,' the superstructure has its own relative autonomy and specific effectivity. Moreover, because each level is determined partially by its own history and its own internal logic, each must be understood in its own terms.

The problem with Althusser's formulation, however, is the idea of the "last instance", for he argues later on in the same essay that the last instance never comes (1969: 254) . Indeed, this criticism can be applied to many theorists who employ Althusser's reformulation as a starting point for textual analysis. This is most clearly illustrated in the journal Screen which has often been criticized for treating the ideological level as autonomous (Robins, 1979: 359). Such a tendency can be seen as a logical conclusion of adopting an Althusserian standpoint since "...if one assumes the existence of three separate social levels, defined *a priori* as external to each other, it is an easy next step to confine oneself to theorizing a single level and to suspend any consideration of its relation to the other levels...(ibid). One can ask of this aspect of Althusser's work, what is left of the materialist theory of history?

To bring such a formulation back into Marxist analysis, Wolff develops the notion of the economic determining when and how the different superstructural levels have their own 'effectivity', that

is when the superstructure is not playing a merely reflective role. Thus culture at certain times may be relatively autonomous and actually instrumental in social change but these certain times are themselves a function of economic forces. As Wolff argues, relative autonomy is a question for historical investigation, where the scholar has to discover "the extent to which, and the occasions on which, in general political and other superstructural features are determined by economic ones, or have a reciprocal effect on them" (Wolff, 1981: 83). Wolff is clearly calling for a Marxist sociology of culture which goes beyond the vulgar early work of reflection.

Eagleton, a notable Marxist, goes one step further by taking a concrete example. Starting from the premise that each element of a society's superstructure, such as art, law and politics, has its own tempo of development which cannot be reduced to a mere expression of the economic, Eagleton examines T.S. Eliot's The Waste Land. The Vulgar Marxist approach would argue that the poem is:

directly determined by ideological and economic factors -
by the spiritual emptiness and exhaustion of bourgeois
ideology which springs from that crisis of imperialist
capitalism known as the First World War. (Eagleton, 1976:
14)

This analysis reduces the meaning of the poem to a mere reflection of economic conditions and represents for Eagleton a failure to take into account the complex nature of the cultural product. Eagleton (1976: 14-16) lists what he sees as important explanatory factors which the simple reflection argument ignores:

1. The social situation of the author. Here Eagleton is not arguing for a return to the romantic notion of the artist as genius whose work is an individual creation but rather that it is necessary to understand the social position of an artist with respect to the class structure.
2. Ideological forms and their relation to literary forms. This

dimension is concerned with how ideology takes on a literary form for it is not a simple case of transporting ideology into print.

This point of course, also holds true for visual media.

3. Techniques of literary production. This aspect argues for an understanding of techniques as an historically specific issue and of why certain techniques at certain times were the chosen ones.

4. Aesthetic theory. Again, an historically specific question which is concerned with the nature of aesthetic theory and how it shapes a particular cultural product.

Now, although Eagleton is arguing against the simple correspondence between the economic and the ideological, he retains the Marxist theory of history by arguing that all these above are relevant to the base/superstructure model. They can be explained in terms of economic conditions while having their own relative independence. The central term here is relative which again is an implicit call for empirical investigation. As Wolff points out, such investigation may uncover certain historical times when artistic production is highly ritualized and then the potential effectivity of art is restricted while at other times the opposite may be true. Whatever the case, conjecture based on the base/superstructure model is inadequate, empirical investigation is required.

It is mainly because of such advancement in Marxist cultural thought that we now have a developing body of research which attempts to go beyond the dichotomous theorizing which plagued the late 1970s (for examples of such new research see, Murdock 1985; Marcus and Fisher, 1986). With the recognition that media texts are not simply empty vessels which convey the dominant ideology to the duped masses came a renewed interest in the ways in which audiences receive texts (an interest mainly due to the work of Stuart Hall and the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, see below). However, as stated previously, this approach is rather recent with much of the past research tending to concentrate on only one level of analysis. In order to fully

understand these more recent developments it is important to provide a sense of past debates since it was here that the shortcomings of a partial analysis were revealed.

The Political Economists

The discussion here will focus mainly on articles written in the 1970s by two major proponents of this school, Murdock and Golding. As their starting point they took the following quotation from Marx:

The class which has the means of material production at its disposal has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it...In so far, therefore, as they rule as a class and determine the extent and compass of an epoch, it is self-evident that they ... among other things... regulate the production and distribution of the ideas of their age: thus their ideas are the ruling ideas of the epoch. (Marx and Engels, quoted in Murdock and Golding, 1979: 15)

From this passage three important propositions were extracted:

1. Control over 'the production and distribution of ideas' is concentrated in the hands of the capitalist owners of the means of production.
2. As a result of this control their views and accounts of the world receive instant publicity and come to dominate the thinking of subordinate groups.
3. This ideological domination plays a key role in maintaining class inequalities.

Much of Murdock and Golding's analysis was based on the above three propositions, especially when they stated:

sociologists interested in contemporary mass communications need to pay careful and detailed attention to the ways in which the economic organization and dynamics of mass media production determine the range and nature of the resulting output. (Murdock and Golding, 1979: 198)

Implicit in this statement was a criticism of those sociologists who take the text as their central focus of analysis and were "...thereby jettisoning the very elements that give Marxist sociology its distinctive and explanatory power" (Murdock and Golding, 1977: 17). Thus the area of analysis for Murdock and Golding was to be the base and its determining impact on the cultural product. In their article "Capitalism, Communication and Class Relations" (1977) the authors provide a thorough and detailed account of the economic realities of media production⁴.

The authors furnish us with a wealth of information regarding who controls what area of media output, demonstrating how this control is in the hands of a few select families and/or individuals. Murdock and Golding (1977) discuss what they saw as the two major shifts in corporate capitalism which were having a profound impact on the shape of the communications industry in the western world. The first shift is the trend towards concentration, which rose significantly in Britain between the years 1958-1968. They showed how by the beginning of the 1970s "the top five firms in the respective sectors accounted for 71% of daily newspaper circulation, 74% of the homes with commercial television, 78% of the admissions to cinemas..." (ibid: 25).

The second shift Murdock and Golding investigated was the increasing trend in diversification, which involved conglomerates

⁴ The actual statistics are not at issue since the focus here is not on the British media industry which is the subject of Murdock and Golding's article. What is important for the purpose of this thesis is what the authors see as the direction which research should take.

buying into a number of diverse sectors in the communication and leisure industry. Here they pointed to ATC as an example which "in addition to controlling the Midlands commercial television station, ATV network, the corporation also has extensive interests in feature film production; in records, cassettes and music publishing; in theatres; in telephone answering equipment, and in merchandising, insurance and property" (ibid: 26)

Taken together, these two shifts result in the newly formed conglomerates increasing their "...potential control over 'the production and distribution of the ideas of their age'" (ibid: 28). The authors do show convincingly that Marx's statement that "the class which has the means of material production at its disposal has control at the same time over the means of mental production" is still valid today and provides a basis for empirical investigation. They also illustrate how the base is indeed dynamic and should therefore be an on-going area of investigation. From this position however, they made the enormous jump to the conclusion that it is the ruling class' ideology that is simply and unproblematically reflected in media content. Although they did not explicitly argue against textual analysis, they made no provision for it and therefore substituted empirical investigation of the ownership of the media industry for a detailed textual analysis.

Murdock and Golding's failure to include textual analysis can be seen not an oversight but as a critical statement on what they saw as the low priority status of such work. Their position is particularly evident in their criticism of Stuart Hall whose work they see as mainly concerned with the text. The Centre's main aims have been described as "developing theories of cultural ideological formations within the broad framework of a Marxist problematic, without resorting to either economism or idealism" (Chambers et al., 1977: 109). For Murdock and Golding much of the work at the Centre and in particular by Hall represents a failure

to meet the demands of the stated aims for it has "...persistently failed to explore the question of economic determinations with any degree of thoroughness" (Murdock and Golding, 1979: 200).

An example of the theorizing to which Murdock and Golding object is a paper by Hall (1972) on broadcasting, wherein he argues that "...the role of broadcasting in reproducing the power relations and ideological structure of society appears far more central an issue than its incidental financial kickbacks" (Hall, 1972: 8, quoted in Murdock and Golding, 1977: 19). Now, while Murdock and Golding agreed with much of Hall's argument regarding the manner in which the political content of television reinforces and legitimizes the ruling ideology, they were critical of his failure to place ideological reproduction within the broader economic context of the distribution of resources. The same criticism is levelled against Hall's suggestion that the economic forces affecting media output are not a serious area of investigation and rather "...have to be left to one side by the exclusive attention given here to media's ideological apparatus" (Hall, 1977: 340, quoted in Murdock and Golding, 1979: 204). For Murdock and Golding such an analysis could only provide a partial and truncated view of the media as it fails to locate the media industry within the larger capitalist economy.

Hall's lack of a sustained economic analysis is attributed to his theoretical reliance on Althusser who is himself seen as merely paying lip service to Marxist analysis by ascribing a relatively autonomous role to the ideological sphere. By arguing that the domain of ideology has its own specific dynamics and unique effectiveness, they claim that Althusser is providing the theoretical basis for textual analysis devoid of economic considerations. For Murdock and Golding such analysis is clearly unacceptable for it in effect robs Marxism of its major elements and replaces it with a kind of pluralist analysis where ideology is placed alongside economy, neither being given priority.

Such a tendency is most evident in semiotics which, as Murdock and Golding claim, amounts to taking the very reasonable

assumption that every text in some sense internalizes the social relations of production and turns it into what they see as the unreasonable assumption that "...these relations can be retrieved and explicated through a reading of the text" (Murdock and Golding, 1979: 205). They argued that such work amounts to little more than content analysis with all its associated problems of inference. Moreover, they suggested that although the first assumption is valid (that is, every text in some sense internalizes the social relations of production) it does not follow that "...an analysis of form can deliver an adequate and satisfactory account of these sets of relations and of the determinations they exert on production" (Murdock and Golding, *ibid*: 207). Thus Murdock and Golding in the 1970s saw Hall and semiotics in general as working backwards, that is, starting with the text instead of the economic forces and consequently ascribing it an over-privileged place in communication research.

Murdock and Golding's method of analysis was therefore to firstly, "...spell out the nature of the ruling ideology, and to specify the propositions and assumptions of which it is composed" (Murdock and Golding, 1977: 35) and secondly, clearly demonstrate "...the appearance and entrenchment of such proposition and assumptions in media output" (*ibid*). Clearly the second proposition must involve detailed analysis of the text, but it must also include empirical studies of cultural production which shows "...in detail how economic relations structure both the overall strategies of the cultural entrepreneurs and the concrete activities of the people who actually make the products the 'culture industry' sells- the writers, journalists, actors and musicians" (*Ibid*: 19)

Here Murdock and Golding were working with a pair of assumptions that need to be clarified. Firstly, that there exists out there a clear ruling ideology which is open to empirical analysis, and secondly, that it is somehow unproblematically reflected in the texts under consideration. These assumptions are

however by no means unquestionable and in effect open up the field for a whole series of theoretical and methodological debates. Of central concern in these debates is the topic of ideology.

Criticisms of Political Economy: The Problem of Ideology

The first question is of course what is ideology? Having defined the term, is it possible to conceive of such a thing as a ruling ideology of a social formation? Sumner (1979) lists ten definitions of ideology, all of which cite Marx for authority. Williams (1977), giving a more manageable definition, cites 3 common uses:

- (1) A system of beliefs characteristic of a particular class or group;
- (2) A system of illusory beliefs - false ideas or false consciousness -which can be contrasted with true or scientific knowledge;
- (3) The general process of the production of meanings and ideas.

To discuss what Marx actually meant by ideology would itself take a thesis. Indeed whole books have been written on the subject since the concept has a rich and complex history. Larrain (1979) has attempted to trace the origins and meanings of the concept of ideology and has argued that it is "...perhaps one of the most equivocal and elusive concepts one can find in the social sciences..." (ibid: 13). The important point for the present discussion is that, as Williams argues, the concept of ideology has generally been used by Marxists to mean something that is superstructural, handed down from above. Indeed, Murdock and Golding's formulation suggests that ideology is passed down from the ruling classes, via media, to the proletariat, who simply accept

it as the legitimate definition of the world (this of course means that reader reception is not seen as problematic).

For Williams such a view does not account for lived experience for if ideology was merely an imposed set of notions, then society would be much more amenable to change. Thus it is argued that we have to replace this partial analysis with a notion of totality similar to the one discussed by Gramsci in his concept of hegemony which:

supposes the existence of something which is truly total...which is lived at such a depth, which saturates the society to such an extent and which...even constitutes the substance and limit of common sense for most people under its sway... (Williams, 1973: 8).

The important advance in William's conception of ideology is that while he retains the central Marxist proposition of a ruling ideology in that "...in any particular period, there is a central system of practices, meanings and values which we can properly call dominant and effective" (ibid: 9), it cannot be seen as a static system given its relationship to lived experience. Rather there exists the dynamic process whereby certain meanings and practices are being incorporated into the dominant ideology of the time while others are being neglected or excluded. If we accept therefore that we are talking about a dynamic system then we have to deal with the possibility of alternative and even oppositional practices, experiences, meanings and values which by definition have not been incorporated into the dominant culture.

Williams is not stating a general model; rather he is providing a methodological probability whereby "the existence of the possibility of opposition, and of its articulation, its degree of openness, and so on...depends on very precise social and political forces" (ibid: 10). For Williams therefore, to simply state that there is one ruling ideology which is the ideology articulated in cultural products is to ignore the richness of human experience and the resultant possibility of alternative or oppositional

ideologies which could at certain historical moments be in evidence in media output in a particular social formation. Such a claim would have to be sustained by a detailed empirical analysis of the type lacking in Murdock and Golding's work.

The postulation of alternative ideologies is especially important for a sociology of the cartoon and in particular for this thesis. Those scholars which have studied the cartoon from the discipline of political science (see Seymour-Ure, 1975, for example) argue that historically speaking the cartoon has been the one place where alternative ideologies have flourished. The reasons put forward are twofold, firstly, the cartoon does not demand literacy and thus it was accessible to the 'masses,' which made it an ideal vehicle for spreading anti-establishment views. The second reason for cartoons being seen as expressing alternative ideologies is that the creator could hide behind the ambiguity of humor which allows for more leverage when promoting alternative views. While this issue will be dealt with more fully in Chapter Seven, it is important to point out here that the sociologist of cartoons has to be aware that if the ideological content of cartoons cannot be assumed as reflecting the ruling ideology, then a sociology of cartoons must include textual analysis.

Murdock and Golding's first task of spelling out the nature of the ruling ideology is problematic, as is their second proposition, where they suggest that the ruling ideology's entrenchment in media output is not only available for investigation but by implication is what constitutes the meaning of the text. Given that Murdock and Golding attacked semiotics without proposing a clear method for textual analysis in its place, we are left with the conclusion that analysis of the base is sufficient in itself to account for the ideological content of media.

The view that culture is just a reflection of economic and social structures is countered by Wolff (1981: 71) who sees culture as mediated in the following ways:

1. By the complexity and contradictory nature of the social groups in which culture originates.
2. By the particular socio-economic situations of its actual producers.
3. By the nature of operation of aesthetic codes and conventions through which ideology is transformed and in which it is expressed.

The concept of mediation which Wolff discusses is especially important here as its usage is meant to redress the imbalance implied in the concept of reflection. Williams (1977) argues that the term 'mediate' is meant to emphasize an indirect connection or agency between separate kinds of acts. Thus the relationship between society and art is reconceptualized when using the term mediate since "...we should not expect to find...directly 'reflected' social realities in art, since these (often or always) pass through a process of 'mediation' in which the original content is changed" (Williams, 1977: 98). Substituting the concept of mediation for reflection has important ramifications for the analysis of the cultural product. Because mediation calls into question the argument that the text can be reduced to a mere expression of the ideology of the dominant class and instead suggests a more complex relationship, actual empirical analysis of the cultural product is required. By replacing the passive concept of reflection with the active process of mediation, we must abandon a reliance on an analysis of the base to reveal the ideological underpinnings of the cultural product. Rather we have to turn to the actual product itself.

In addition to the concept of mediation, the work of Murdock

and Golding was heavily criticized in the late 1970s by those scholars working within semiotics. It is important here to give a brief account of these criticisms since they forced media sociologists in general to reassess the place of textual analysis within critical scholarship.

Semiotics as a Critique of Political Economy

While Wolff can be seen as providing a criticism of political economists in general, Hill (1979) is very specific in his attack on Murdock and Golding, whom he accuses of reducing "...the media to transcriptions of socio-political ideologies originated elsewhere" (Hill, 1979: 114). For Hill this is an incorrect assumption for ideologies, rather than originating elsewhere, are also the actual products of the text itself. Subscribing to the main principles of semiotic analysis, Hill sees media as "...not only the end product of an economic process, but the product of a work of signification as well as its own internal dynamics and operations" (ibid). By presenting such an argument Hill is calling for detailed textual analysis whereby texts are analyzed not as mere reflections of the ruling ideology but as the actual site at which meanings are produced.

This view leads to a number of criticisms of Murdock and Golding's analysis of media. Firstly, while Hill agrees with the argument that textual analysis cannot provide an adequate account of the relations of production, the same has to be said for the converse in that textual processes cannot be read forward from these same relations of production. Secondly, following on from this, while exclusive concentration of the text is bound to provide a partial analysis, the same exclusive concentration on economic forms results in an equally partial analysis coming from the other side.

Such criticisms did have an impact on political economists who now do see textual analysis as having a place in media research.

Murdock together with Hansen (1985) has advocated using semiotic analysis along with content analysis in order to "produce a more detailed and sensitive account of the way that discourses are transformed and worked on as they pass through the news making process" (ibid: 255). Nonetheless, they still disagree with the claim by semioticians that an analysis of the text is sufficient for understanding the ideological role of cultural production.

Cultural Studies as a Critique of Political Economy and Semiotics

While the debate between political economists and semioticians was instrumental in highlighting the problems inherent in any approach which claims to have all the answers, it tended to obscure the need for research on the actual audience who receive the text. In their haste to defend their own respective positions, neither the political economists or the semioticians took seriously the call by those theorists working within cultural studies for detailed work on the audience.

Now, it is neither possible nor necessary to give here a full account of the cultural studies approach since it covers a wide range of theories and interests, (for a comprehensive discussion of its history and present concerns see Grossberg, 1984; Fiske, 1987), and has generated an extensive corpus of books and articles. What is relevant here is that cultural studies rejects the economic reductionism of earlier Marxist thought and thus:

"stands opposed to the residual and merely reflective role assigned to the 'cultural'...it is opposed to the base superstructure way of formulating the relationship between ideal and material forces, especially where the base is defined by the determination by the 'economic' in any simple sense" (Hall, 1980c: 63)

Given this claim it is not surprising that culturalists argue for a research framework which incorporates textual analysis, specifically semiotics. However unlike other proponents of semiotics (for example Burgelin, 1972) culturalists stress that such an analysis has to be combined with an investigation into how media messages are interpreted by its readers. Indeed, it could be argued that cultural studies in general, and the work of the media group at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham in particular, has been largely responsible for bringing research on audience reception back into critical media sociology. Chapter Nine will discuss more fully the issues raised by this approach and how such an approach can be applied to an analysis of Playboy cartoons; here it is sufficient to sketch briefly the ways in which the media group at the centre redefined the issue of media 'effects'.

The approach of the media group can be seen as challenging the dominant paradigms and concerns of traditional media effects research in a number of ways (Hall, 1980a). The stimulus-response model, with its emphasis on the measurement of short-term effects, was replaced by an interest in the ideological role of the media. Media was defined as "a major cultural and ideological force, standing in a dominant position with respect to the way in which social relations and political problems were defined and the production and transformation of popular ideologies in the audiences addressed" (ibid: 117).

Media is still taken to be a major tool for maintaining ideological control, but Gramsci's concept of hegemony is also adopted and plays an important role in the media groups' conception of popular culture as a site of ideological struggle. For Gramsci (1971), in capitalist society, ideological control should be seen not in terms of force but of persuasion. Hegemony is thus a continuous struggle to dominate through consent rather than coercion. It is never secured once and for all, but rather has continually to be re-established in a constant struggle between contesting groups.

Very importantly, within hegemonic theory, ideology is constantly up against forces of resistance. It is this latter point which has served as a stimulus for much of the centre's work on audiences and texts and which resulted in seeing audiences as active agents who construct meaning from the text. Whereas the traditional "effects" research and indeed the more vulgar Marxist approach saw the audience as passively accepting the messages contained within the text, cultural theorists have seriously questioned this assumption, arguing that texts may be polysemic and thus capable of being read in different ways by different people. By using and developing the theory of hegemony, researchers opened up the possibility that audience members may not just simply accept the media's version of events but rather they may make readings which are at odds with the preferred meaning contained within the text (the concept of preferred reading will be discussed more fully later in Chapter Nine).

In this sketch of some of the ways in which media effects has been redefined by the culturalists, it is clear that past formulations of media effects which were based on a model of a passive audience who respond to a media stimulus in similar ways fails to deal with the complex nature of a socially differentiated audience. Moreover, the more traditional Marxist analysis which sees the media as a central tool in legitimizing and reproducing class inequalities, ignores the issue of gender inequality. As Hall has argued "a theory of culture which cannot account for patriarchal structures of dominance and oppression, is in the wake of feminism, a non-starter" (1980b: 39). Thus Chapter Nine not only deals with the ways in which cultural studies has redefined the concept of effects and the audience but also examines how such an approach can be applied to a feminist analysis of the role pornography plays in legitimizing and perpetuating a system of male domination.

Towards an Integrated Critical Approach to the Study of Mass
Media

The primary issue now, clearly, is how can critical theorists develop a method of analysis which will take into account the economic forces and processes at work in media production, textual analysis and audience reception? While there have been some attempts by sociologists to formulate such a method (see for example the Glasgow University Media Group, 1980: 398-418), the most comprehensive outline is that offered by Thompson (1988).

Recognizing that past methods of studying media research have much to offer contemporary critical sociologists, Thompson nonetheless stresses that an approach needs to be developed which will do justice to the different aspects of mass communication. Thompson's main concern is to "analyze mass communication as a cultural phenomenon, that is, to study mass communications in terms of the historically specific and socially structured forms and processes within which, and by means of which, symbolic forms are produced, transmitted and received" (ibid: 373).

Towards this end, Thompson suggests that the sociologist distinguish among three aspects of mass communication, which although interconnected, should be viewed as three separate areas of research. The first is the process of production and diffusion, which is concerned with the actual production process of the material of mass communication and the eventual transmission or distribution of the cultural product. Thompson points out here that the production and transmission/distribution are located within specific socio-historical circumstances and within particular institutional arrangements (as shall be discussed below, Thompson has in mind here research of the type Murdock and Golding advocated). The second aspect he distinguishes is the construction of the media message which, he suggests, is a "complex, symbolic construction which displays an articulated structure" (ibid: 374). Here Thompson is calling for textual analysis. The third aspect he

identifies, the reception and appropriation of media messages, involves conceiving of audience members as located within a specific socio-historical context who are actively involved in constructing meaning from the text. Thompson is specifically drawing on theories developed within cultural studies.

As is clear from the foregoing, Thompson is calling for an integration of the three aspects of communication which were previously referred to as forming a tripartite division. For Thompson, such a division in media research will only serve to provide the researcher with a partial analysis and thus he advocates a more comprehensive approach which "requires the capacity to relate the results of these different analyses to one another, showing how the various aspects feed into and shed light on one another" (ibid, 1988: 374). Before we discuss the possible ways in which these three approaches can be drawn together, it will be useful to highlight the specific research strategies which Thompson outlines - he focuses specifically on the medium of television - and to suggest how these can be applied to the study of Playboy cartoons.

Production and Diffusion of Television Programs

Thompson calls for analysis of the socio-historical and institutional context of program production and transmission. He lists the following characteristics which need to be investigated

the institutional organization of producers and of transmission networks; patterns of ownership and control within broadcasting institutions; the relations between broadcasting institutions and state organizations responsible for monitoring output; the techniques and technologies employed in production and transmission; the routine and practical procedures followed by television personnel; the aims of producers and programmers and their expectation of audience response; and so on. (ibid: 374)

Since most cartoons appear in either newspapers or magazines, the sociologist could study the institutional arrangements of the host organization. This could be done through either documentary literature (e.g. past studies on the organization) and/or participant observation. The latter method would be especially useful for an investigation into the decision making process for cartoon production and selection and the roles of the owners, editors and cartoonists in that process. As Thompson argues, such research would shed light on the "rules, procedures and assumptions implicit in the production process, including assumptions about the audience and its needs, interests and abilities" (ibid: 375).

For the sociologist interested in Playboy cartoons such research would necessitate both a review of the past documentary literature on the Playboy corporation (see Chapter Five) and detailed participant observation in the actual organization. This latter method would however be somewhat problematic since Playboy no longer allows researchers into the building to conduct ongoing studies⁵. It is still possible to interview Playboy staff as long as clearance is given by the editor in charge, but interviewing would not furnish the researcher with information regarding the day to day running of the institution. It could give some background knowledge on who makes the decisions and on what basis. Of special interest would be an investigation into the assumptions Playboy editors make about its readers and how these inform the selection of cartoons.

⁵ I was informed of Playboy's position in a telephone conversation, December 1st 1989, with the cartoon Editor, Michelle Urry. She said that because of a recent report (Reisman, 1987, "Images of Children, Crime and Violence in Playboy, Penthouse and Hustler Magazine", United States Department of Justice, Project No. 84-JN-AX-K007) Playboy had decided not to allow researchers entry into the areas where actual work is taking place.

Construction of the Media Message

Thompson is concerned with how researchers can undertake textual analysis. He suggests that for the television text, structural features such as syntax, style and tone of the language employed, the juxtaposition of word and image, the angles, colors and sequences of the imagery used and the structure of the narrative and argument could be analyzed. Now, the interesting point here is that Thompson argues that a variety of techniques should be used, not only semiotic analysis. Indeed, while the debate between the political economists and the semioticians brought to light the need for textual analysis, it also tended to obscure the fact that a semiotic analysis was not the only method available for analyzing content. This point is recognized by Thompson when he suggests that researchers could also use content analysis as a research method. Now, while there are problems associated with the use of this method (see Chapter Four), it does lend itself to a large scale investigation of media content and since the aim of this research into Playboy was to analyze a large body of cartoons, content analysis was the method employed.

I would agree with Thompson that a variety of techniques should be used. A future study into Playboy cartoons using semiotic analysis would indeed prove useful. A point however that needs to be stressed here is that irrespective of the method of textual analysis used, the analysis of content is limited because it "...abstracts from the reception and appropriation of media messages...it does not take account of the sense which these messages have for the individuals who watch them, hear them, read them, nor of the ways in which these individuals interpret media messages, accept them, reject them and incorporate them into their lives" (ibid: 375). Thus for this reason we need to include research into the following aspect.

Reception and Appropriation of Media Messages

Thompson, like other critical sociologists, faults past "effects" orientated research for failing to pay sufficient attention to the ways in which audience members make sense of the media messages and integrate them into their lives. Analysis of reception and appropriation of media messages involves an examination of how differently socially situated individuals and groups (using variables such as class, gender, age and ethnic background) receive media messages. Thompson suggests using interviews to explore how audiences construct meaning from the text. In addition, a further line of investigation is advocated, that is, to examine the specific circumstances under which audiences receive the message. These may include issues such as in what contexts and with whom is the program watched, what level of attention is paid to the message, do audiences watch the same program or different types and how often?

These questions are particularly pertinent to the issue of reading Playboy cartoons. Since no study has ever been conducted on how readers read these texts, it is necessary to initially to look at the literature on pornography in general. The vast majority of studies use one of two groups of respondents, either predominantly white, middle-class, male college students (see for example Malamuth and Check, 1980; Tieger, 1981) or male prisoners, especially rapists (Goldstein, 1973, Malamuth, 1981). Where a diverse population has been studied, it is mainly to examine how women and men differ in the level of sexual arousal to pornographic films (Sapolsky and Zillman, 1981; Malamuth, Heim and Feshbach, 1981). The problem with this latter approach is that it overlooks the possibility that women and men respond to these images on a number of levels which cannot be measured through genital arousal. A further problem with all these studies is that they are conducted within the classic "effects" paradigm wherein researchers were interested in measuring the short-term effects (measured often in terms of the level of electric shock the male

respondent will administer to a female) and not the more far reaching issue of how readers construct meaning from these images and integrate them into their lives.

Since the empirical section of this thesis is especially concerned with the cartoons which appear in Playboy, a study needs to be devised which investigates the meaning that these texts have for the readers. To this end, Chapter Nine lays down some of the theoretical and empirical issues involved in such a study and then continues by discussing the findings of one such preliminary study conducted at a large Boston College.

Having laid down what he sees as the three distinct but connected object domains of mass communication analysis, Thompson continues by arguing that it is only by integrating all three that critical theorists "can thus open up the way for a dynamic, critical approach to the analysis of ideology in the mass media" (ibid: 379). He argues that the integrative approach to the study of mass media does not only concern itself with the production, diffusion and construction of media messages but rather also "seeks to relate these features to the ways in which messages are understood by, and the sense which the reception of these messages has for, individuals situated in specific social contexts" (ibid: 379). For Thompson, this approach is primarily concerned with the study of ideology since it sets out to understand the ways in which the meaning which audiences construct from texts serves to sustain, subvert, reinforce or undermine relations of domination (ibid: 380).

The kind of analysis proposed by Thompson is central to a feminist concern with pornography since at issue is the role which pornographic imagery plays in sustaining a gender stratified society. In this way a feminist concern with pornography has much in common with the critical approach to media in general; both are concerned with "the effectivity (or social role) of communication (as both institutional structures and symbolic constructions) in maintaining, enhancing, or disrupting the social

formation..." (Slack and Allor, 1983: 214). Discussion of the three different but interconnected areas of mass media which the researcher needs to investigate makes clear that comprehensive research into Playboy cartoons must include but also go beyond a content analysis study. We need to include an analysis of the production/diffusion of Playboy cartoons and an investigation into the modes of reception of these cartoons. Chapter Five represents an attempt to examine the institutional context within which the cartoons are produced by looking at the pattern of ownership and control of Playboy magazine, the structure of the Playboy corporation and the decision making process within the magazine's hierarchy. Chapter Seven analyzes the texts themselves by discussing the findings of the content analysis and seeks to highlight the ways in which the male centered, hedonistic ideology put forward by Hefner in the Playboy philosophy is articulated in the cartoons. Following this, Chapter Nine will focus on the ways in which actual readers with differing social positions make sense of these messages.

Summary of Chapter

This chapter on the sociology of mass media began with an investigation into how sociologists have understood media effects. North American research into mass media was discussed first since this is where most of the effects orientated research has taken place. The discussion raised three major questions which were not dealt with adequately by the past researchers: what research methods can sociologists use to analyze the content of a large body of cartoons? (problem one on the Checklist) , how can sociologists conceive of media effects in a manner which goes beyond the short-term behaviorist approach? (problem five), and how do audiences read cartoons? (problem six). It was suggested

that since the North American research had little to offer, it was necessary to look to the critical school for guidelines as to how a sociology of cartoons might tackle such research problems.

Analyzing a Large Body of Cartoons

Although textual analysis has been a major area of discussion within the critical school, most of the debate has centered on the usefulness of semiotic analysis with little thought being given to alternative approaches. Recently however, critical theorists (see especially Murdock, 1985 and Winston 1983) have begun to discuss the importance of using content analysis since it provides researchers with an objective, systematic and quantitative description of media content. Thus, although critical theorists still tend to employ a semiotic analysis of content (Williamson, 1979, Fiske, 1989), content analysis, by providing a map of content, has an important role to play in the critical endeavor of demonstrating the underlying ideology which governs media production (Winston, 1983: 185).

A sociology of cartoons would thus best be served by adopting a number of different methods for textual analysis. For those sociologists interested in an in-depth investigation of a limited number of cartoons, semiotic analysis would be a useful method. If the aim however was to construct a map of a large body of content, then clearly content analysis is more suitable. However, more important than the particular method chosen, is a commitment to undertake textual analysis since it is impossible to talk in terms of media effects without first analyzing the content which is meant to have an effect.

Media Effects

Although critical theorists do not tend to address media effects in the explicit manner of North American researchers, much of the earlier, vulgar Marxist thinking took for granted the positivist, empiricist argument that media has the power to affect audience members in similar ways. For the North American school this idea was most clearly expressed in the magic bullet theory; the media message acting as a stimulus to which all audience members responded in a somewhat uniform manner. For the Marxists, media effects could best be understood in terms of the dominant groups using the media as a mouthpiece for disseminating a legitimizing ideology which the masses passively and uncritically accepted. Both theories have been shown to be too simplistic in their conception of effects and work within the North American tradition, particularly the cultural indicators approach (see Chapter Eight), and the critical school, specifically cultural studies (see Chapter Nine) have developed a more sophisticated approach to understanding the ways in which media messages contribute to the audiences' social construction of reality. In this way a preoccupation with short-term attitude change has given way to an interest in the role the media plays in either sustaining or undermining the the present system of inequality. It has previously been argued that this issue is of major concern for an analysis of Playboy cartoons for one of the core feminist criticisms of pornography is that it perpetuates a system of male domination by legitimizing and eroticizing gender inequality (Dworkin and Mackinnon, 1989).

It is clear from the recent developments in media studies that a sociology of cartoons which attempts to understand the effects of these cultural products needs to investigate the role which cartoons play in either perpetuating or undermining the present relations of domination in the social formation. This issue is especially pertinent given that cartoons have often been the place where alternative ideologies are most clearly articulated (Harrison

1981). There has been some attempt to document this trend by Streicher (1967), but he did not explicitly draw upon the theories developed in critical media studies and he failed to consider how audiences might decode the images differently from the researcher.

Audience reception

While there are many theoretical and empirical differences between the political economists and the semioticians, both tended to ignore the role of the reader in constructing meaning from the text. This tendency has recently begun to change for the political economists, with sociologists such as Murdock calling for more sustained research into audience activity. The semioticians however still overlook the role of the reader/viewer since semiotics "often analyses ideology in terms of the structural features of the message itself, without examining the ways in which messages are interpreted by the individuals upon whom this ideology is supposed to take hold" (Thompson, 1988: 376). The work of the culturalists (particularly Morley, 1980) has shown that such an oversight brings into question the validity of any research which stops short of an inquiry into audience activity. Thus a sociology of cartoons must develop a framework for understanding how specifically located individuals read the cartoon(s).

The discussion of the critical school did indeed provide some important guidelines for how a sociologist could tackle problems one, five and six on the Checklist. While each of these problems will be dealt with more fully in the following chapters, it is important to point out here that the discussion also provided pointers regarding the ways in which some of the other Checklist problems could be investigated.

The Cartoon and its Host Publication's Ideology (problem two on the Checklist)

One of the major arguments of Murdock and Golding is that media content should be seen as reflecting the ideological views of the owners of the media industry, who, very often, either own or have controlling shares in other types of industries. The semioticians and the culturalists however have shown that this reflection argument is too simplistic when trying to apprehend the meaning of the text. They argue that the text itself is the site of ideological production and that the concept of reflection should be replaced with the concept of mediation. It will be recalled that Williams suggested that "we should not expect to find...directly 'reflected' social realities in art, since these often or always pass through a process of 'mediation' in which the original content is changed" (Williams, 1977: 98). Thus a simple one to one corresponded between the ideology of the producers and the media content cannot be assumed. However it would also be a mistake to assume that owners/editors do not play some type of gatekeeper role whose job it is to produce a newspaper or magazine where the different articles, editorials and cartoons exhibit some degree of ideological consistency.

The degree to which this consistency occurs is an empirical question and thus requires detailed research. Bagdikian (1989) and Chomsky (1989) for example have shown that papers such as the New York Times and the Baltimore Sun have a strict editorial policy which severely limits the range of ideological variation found in the constituent elements of those papers. Other researchers however (see, for example, Gallagher, 1982) have stressed that there are newspapers and television programs where journalists have a considerable degree of autonomy. These arguments are also applicable to cartoonists since as Riffe (1985) found, some cartoonists stressed that they felt constrained by editors while other said that they were given artistic freedom. It would appear therefore that the sociologist needs to undertake

investigation of the type discussed by Thompson (see above) as it is difficult to make generalizations based on theoretical assumptions.

For the purpose of this empirical study, it is necessary to examine the role that Playboy publisher, Hugh Hefner, played in the decision making process in the years 1970-80. This is especially pertinent here since Hefner has stated that he originally intended to be a cartoonist and maintained a keen interest in selecting the cartoons which were to be published in his magazine (see Chapter Five for further discussion). Even though Hefner eventually relinquished some editorial control in the late 1960s, cartoons were the one area where he showed the greatest sustained interest (see Dines-Levy and Smith, 1988: 236).

The Cartoon as an Individual and Collective Product (problem four
on the Checklist)

Thompson (1988), in his discussion of the production and diffusion of television programs, argues that sociologists should study the institutional context within which programs are produced. He makes the important suggestion that sociologists must study the many different stages of production that any media product must pass through before transmission. For television programs, these stages include script-writing, casting, filming, editing and scheduling. What Thompson does not make explicit in his discussion is that in light of these stages and the number of different people who work on the program, the eventual product is thus a result of collective actions. This argument holds true for all cultural products irrespective of their form. Moreover, even if artists are relatively unconstrained by the editors/owners, they must still work as part of a team and thus no product is simply the result of one person's artistic creativity.

Much of the sociology of media has omitted a particularly important dimension for analysis: the issue of cultural production

as an activity which requires collaborative work. This concept has however been of interest to those sociologists working within the sociology of art and thus the next chapter examines how cultural production can be understood within a sociological framework. This is important for the sociology of cartoons since most studies on this art form (see for example Smith, 1987; Barcus, 1963; Saenger, 1955) tend to examine the content of the cartoons without providing an analysis of how these products came into being in the first place.

The following chapter on the sociology of art represents an attempt to delve further into the collaborative processes involved in cultural production. Moreover the discussion will also examine the main debates within this sub-field since many of the issues raised are directly relevant to the development of a sociology of cartoons. Of special interest will be the theories developed under the heading reception aesthetics since it is here that the problem of reader-response was first broached and conceptualized in a manner which conceived of the audience as active participants in the construction of textual meaning.

Chapter Three

The Sociology Of Art

The previous chapter has demonstrated that, historically, the leading tendencies in the sociology of media have diverted attention away from the collaborative nature of cultural production. The aim of the present chapter is therefore to extract from the sociology of art those concepts and theoretical ideas which may prove useful for an investigation of the ways in which the sociologist of cartoons might understand the collective processes involved in cultural production (problem four on the Checklist). This discussion will be set within the wider framework of a general survey on the theories developed in the sociology of art in North America for this is where academic sociologists¹ attempted to apply mainstream sociological concepts to the study of art.

Main Currents Within the Sociology of Art

In 1935 Sewter published an article entitled "The Possibilities of a Sociology of Art". The author laid down what he saw to be the most fruitful direction that this new area of investigation could take. Forty-two years later Best (1977) wrote an article called "Sketch for a Sociology of Art" and again the possibilities of this new subject were discussed. Although many articles and books on the sociology of art had been written between 1935 and 1977, the need for a defined area of study such as was articulated

¹ The term "academic sociologists" is used here to distinguish those sociologists who analyzed art within the positivist paradigm popular in American sociology in the 1950s and 60s, from those sociologists in Europe and America (although mainly in Europe) who adopted the critical theory approach to the study of art.

by Best and Sewter is still very real. As Bird argues, "...the debate about what constitutes a sociology of art has never fully been discussed" (Bird, 1979: 27). Although a number of reasons can be pointed to for this lack of coherence (see Bird, *ibid*), I would argue that the main cause for such a state of affairs is the difficult task facing the sociologist of art in aiming to conform to the positivist notion of sociology as an objective science. As we shall see later, this aim resulted in the virtual exclusion of any discussion of the cultural product itself.

The major attempts made to define a sociology of art are to be found scattered throughout the sociology literature of the 1950s and 1960s. It is necessary to draw on work such as Albrecht (1970), Barnett (1959 & 1970), Barbu (1970), Huaco (1970), Silbermann (1968) and Sewter (1935), in order to extract the main themes developed within this area of investigation. These main themes can be defined as follows: (1) Investigating the relationship between particular art forms and society, (2) The avoidance of aesthetic judgment by the sociologist, (3) Analyzing the ways in which the art object is received by the public and (4) Examination of the social, economic and psychological influences on the artist. While this list is by no means exhaustive, it does delineate the major issues discussed by the various sociologists. The following account will expand on these major themes and will also offer an alternative model for future work in the sociology of art.

The Relationship Between Art Forms and Society

Sewter (1935), in calling for a sociology of art, argued that:

The task which the sociologist of art sets himself is to attempt to discover the principles or laws which underlie the relations of types and variations in the arts with other social manifestations, at a more advanced stage than

we have reached at present, to attempt to measure correlations between the arts and other social variables. (1935: 444)

I do not intend here to enter into a discussion of the specific social variables which Sewter points to but rather to comment on his more general statement regarding the nature of the task facing the sociologist of art. Sewter's call for the formulation of general laws regarding the production of art is typical of many North American sociological writings, particularly those up to the mid-1970s. These sociologists were interested in discovering what types of social conditions and circumstances (the latter applying mainly to the circumstances of the artist) produced specific forms of cultural products. This theme is clearly reflected in Huaco's work (1970), which develops a macroscopic model alongside a middle range model. The macroscopic model is designed to analyze the major political, economic and social changes in the larger society while the middle range model would be to analyze the historically specific matrix of the picture, film or novel in question. Huaco's main thesis, although stated somewhat differently, is conceptually similar to Sewter's argument in that the aim is to examine the relationship between society and the art product. He states that "the formal link between the two models is the assumption that major political, social and economic changes in the larger society tend to affect art, literature and film" (1970: 549).

An assumed relationship between society and art is also the starting point for Barbu (1970). He argues that previous sociological writings on art have taken for granted the assumption that art reveals important basic features about the society in which it was produced. Barbu maintains that this may indeed be the case but the task of the sociologist is to identify some basic processes that regulate the relationship between art and society. Barbu continues by arguing that the sociologist should attempt to formulate the main conceptual tools by which this relationship between society and art can be interpreted. For Barbu the main

agent that regulates this relationship, and thus the central focus of investigation, is the artist. The social class and psychological state of the artist is therefore a central focus of investigation.

Although there are many other sociologists who could be cited, the three above represent the main thrust of much of the work carried out within much of the sociology of art. While these authors offer differing accounts of exactly how the sociologist should go about discovering the relationship between art and society, the similarities among the academic sociologists are the main focus of this chapter. Their major similarities are described by Bird (1979), where she argues that this positivist quest for the formulation of general laws regarding the production of art is one of the basic premises on which the sociology of art rests. Bird continues, "it seems extraordinary that such an ambitious scheme should ever have been proposed, or that sociology could be deemed capable of showing what conditions and circumstances would result in the production of certain types of art..." (ibid: 30).

For Bird, the aim to discover general laws proved too ambitious since it has yet to be realized. Indeed Wollheim (1970) also argues that although intensive study of the arts has actually been going on for the last seventy or eighty years, no study has actually produced any correlation between social conditions and art forms, except on the most general and trivial level. One particularly useful example is Sorokin's (1937-1941) Social and Cultural Dynamics. He attempts to investigate the ways in which art provides clues as to the general processes of cultural integration and change within a society. One of his leading findings (it is impossible here to give a full account of this work since it is an extremely large and complex study whose subject area goes beyond this discussion) is that the long-run alterations in the content and style of the arts cannot be accounted for by linear or cyclical curves of development within a civilization. Sorokin's conclusion appears to be characteristic of other studies (see for example Elliott and Merrill, 1950) which have attempted to

elucidate general laws. Albrecht (1956), after reviewing a number of such studies, argues that it is questionable whether literature and the arts are reliable indexes of societal patterns.

The sociology of art as it was developed in the 1950s and 1960s clearly adopted the positivist model and appears to have consequently inherited all the problems associated with this paradigm in general sociology. The positivist quest for general laws which dominated early sociology was itself misplaced and moreover ultimately turned out to be beyond grasp. I would agree with Giddens when he states:

Beside the seeming certainties, the system of precise laws attained in classical mechanics, that model for all aspiring sciences after Newton, which in the nineteenth century was unquestioningly assumed to be the goal to be emulated, the achievements of the social sciences do not look impressive. (Giddens, 1976: 13)

Thus I would argue that as long as the sociology of art holds on to the positivist aim of formulating general laws then it will continue to produce studies noting trivial correlations.

The Avoidance of Aesthetic Judgement by the Sociologist

A positivistic sociology of art appears to have little to offer the development of the sociology of cartoons. The attempt to develop general laws regarding the production of cartoons does not appear to be a fertile possibility. Furthermore, one of the major issues previously discussed, namely how the sociologist analyses the art object, is hardly dealt with in the positivist approach to the sociology of art. This omission for Bird (1979) is not a mere oversight but rather constitutes what she sees as another major premise of the sociology of art, namely the necessity of what she calls aesthetic neutrality. This premise, which suggests that it is not the role of the sociologist to make

value judgements on the artistic superiority of one art object over another, appears to make sound sociological sense. Clearly making such judgements is beyond the scope of the sociologist and moreover it would prematurely limit the range of objects to be analyzed. However Bird argues that the premise of aesthetic neutrality has severely restricted the scope of inquiry as it was taken to mean that "...the sociologist should not attempt to evaluate the art that he or she is studying ... [and] by extension ... the sociologist should not study art at all ..." (1979: 32). This resulted in the virtual exclusion of the cultural product from the field of sociological investigation and was instead considered to be the task of the art historian or art critic. The following examples will serve to illustrate the point:

Whoever wishes to study the sociology of art must start from objective, impartial premises, and study the facts impartially. The facts constitute the raw material of art but are not in themselves its substance. The raw material must be processed, analyzed according to sociological method and reduced to abstractions; only then can laws be formulated and tested. (Gurvitch 1956, quoted in Bird, *ibid*)

Silberman argues similarly that "the art sociologist is therefore not interested in analyzing the painting, music or literature as such, for he recognizes that it would be attempting the impossible to try to apprehend the so-called irrational content of painting, music or literature as it were a definite object, or a palpable fact" (1968: 586). Thus aesthetic neutrality was in actuality a refusal by the sociologists to examine the art product in any way. Clearly there are a number of ways in which a sociologist may examine an art product without making a judgement on the aesthetic value of that product. One example is the method of content analysis which is adopted in this thesis; nowhere is a value judgement made on the aesthetic nature of Playboy cartoons. Another example is the method adopted by Becker which is discussed below.

Aesthetic neutrality is an extension of the principle of ethical neutrality (Bird, 1979). I would suggest that aesthetic neutrality has roots that extend beyond ethical neutrality. For example, Silberman (1968) suggests that the art object is the intimate concern of the poet, painter or musician, which has consequently little reality value for the art sociologist. For Silberman, the cultural product is a creation of personal genius on the part of the producer and is therefore not amenable to sociological investigation. Indeed Wolff (1981) argues that this view was one of the main stumbling blocks to the development of the sociology of art and is a descendant of the nineteenth century romantic notion of the artist. The idea that artistic creation is the result of genius is a "...mistaken notion based on certain historical developments, and wrongly generalized and taken to be essential to the nature of art" (Wolff, 1981: 17). In Wolff's view, a sociology of art must involve an understanding "...of the works of literature in their own right and on their own terms..." (ibid: 19). In common with Wolff, I would argue that the sociologist needs to investigate the art object itself. This does not contradict the premise of aesthetic neutrality in that this analysis need not be concerned with judging the superiority of one work over another. Rather the aim here is to elucidate the ideological nature of the work since any discussion of the sociology of art which does not deal concretely with the art product itself is bound to result in the type of truncated analysis associated with the 'media effects' research previously discussed in Chapter Two.

In spite of this call for textual analysis what we find in much of the sociology of art is an overall absence of any discussion of methods for analyzing the cultural product. The result of this is an uncritical acceptance of content analysis as the only viable method of textual analysis. A full discussion of the problems connected with content analysis can be found in Chapter Four. One example will serve to illustrate the shortcomings. Albrecht (1956) in his study "Does literature reflect common values?" sought to compare the cultural common values on the family with

those expressed in magazine fiction. Albrecht's first task was to identify ten approved values about the family, together with ten alternative values. The second part of the study involved analyzing the content of a sample of short stories drawn from large-circulation magazines. Those statements which indicated one or more of the of the approved or alternative values were coded. Albrecht's conclusion that literature does reflect common values has been criticized by Bird (1979) for failing to distinguish between values found in authors' statements, description of characters' thoughts and behavior, and plot resolution, which ignores the the common literary devices of irony, fantasy and allegory.

If the cultural product has not been seen as the main area of study within the sociology of art, the question remains: what should the sociologist of art study? According to Barnett (1959) the sociologist of art should view art as a process since:

from this standpoint...art can be considered as a continuous process which involves interaction between the artist and his socio-cultural environment and may result in the creation of a work of art - a novel, a musical composition, or a painting - that is in turn received and reacted to by an art public. (Ibid: 223)

Silbermann (1968) offers a very similar analysis of the art process. He argues that we should work from the assumption that music, literature, painting, etc., and the way in which each is experienced together, form a continuous social process involving interaction between the artist, his social position and his relationships, and results in the creation of a work of some kind or other which is in turn received by the art public.

The work of Silbermann and Barnett serves to illustrate the general approach taken by the sociology of art as it has developed in the U.S.A. Here, there tends to be two main

discernible foci of interest: the art public and the artist. The cultural product recedes; the art public becomes a source for studying reception, and the artist becomes a topic of analysis.

The Art Public

The importance of the art public for a sociological understanding of art is exemplified by Wolff's statement that "the reader, viewer, or audience is actively involved in the construction of the work of art, and without the act of reception/consumption, the cultural product is incomplete" (1981: 95). However, in spite of the obvious centrality of the audience in the consumption of art, a review of the different paradigms operating within the sociology of art suggests that this area of investigation has virtually been ignored.

Starting with the mainstream sociology of art work carried out in the United States during the 1950s and 1960s, what we find is that although frequent mention is made of the art public, little detail is actually given to how the sociologist of art might develop this concept into a working hypothesis. Sewter (1935), for example, argues that analysis of the audience is important in that it reveals the social influences which affect the conditions necessary for the acceptance or rejection of an art object. Sewter continues by suggesting that acceptance or rejection might be examined in terms of records of prices, sales and the details of patronage. He proposes that:

a careful analysis of these sources shows, not only the nature of the public reached by any particular art-object, not only the extent of its appeal, but also in many cases the nature of its appeal and its cause. (Sewter, 1935: 445)

Sewter ignores the inevitable problem with this type of analysis; he makes no mention of the point that the sociologist would be forced to take as art only those products which the mainstream art worlds have defined as art. Becker (1982) shows how this type of analysis ignores a whole range of art objects, which due to a number of reasons (see later discussion of Becker for a thorough discussion of these reasons), do not get distributed through the formal channels (such as art galleries) of the art world. Rather, Sewter continues by stating that "this kind of material has the advantage of absolute objectivity..." (1935: 446). Similarly, Silbermann, when he proposes that studies of various groups among the public "...who receive, consume and react to works of arts provide the art sociologist with important information on the ways in which the social environment conditions the process of artistic creation" (1968: 587), fails to mention how an art object becomes defined and distributed.

Given the positivist assumptions which pervades mainstream sociology of art it can be argued that such sociologists:

...operate with an inadequate conception of the audience/reader, failing to analyze the ideological construction of the latter, and often ignoring the broader social and historical determinants of the audience as a particular group. (Wolff,1981: 96)

What is really needed when studying audiences are not general and vague terms such as "observers" or "viewers" but rather an analysis which takes into account both the wider socio-historical context of the viewer and more importantly, an analysis that can also account for the fact that all members of an audience do not receive the message in the same way by virtue of their affiliations with differing social groups. What must be recognized and accounted for is the diversity of group affiliations that exists in a structurally complex industrial society. This diversity can lead to differing interpretations of the text.

This argument that the text may be interpreted in a number

of ways is especially pertinent when discussing how the Marxist paradigm has treated audiences. According to Jauss, orthodox Marxist aesthetics (see for example Harap, 1949) has either ignored the reader altogether or simply "...inquires about his social position or describes his place within the structure of society" (Jauss, 1974: 11). The problems inherent in this type of analysis have led to the birth of what is known as 'Reception Aesthetics', which seeks specifically to examine the reader's role in literature. Eagleton (1983) argues that this is a novel development since literary theory which purports to be concerned with the author, the text and the reader has historically made the reader "...the most underprivileged of this trio..." (Eagleton, 1983: 74). Because reception aesthetics grew out of hermeneutics, the present discussion will begin with an analysis of one of the major debates within hermeneutics which centers on whether or not there can be a correct interpretation of the text.

Hermeneutics and Textual Interpretation

This discussion will focus only on those aspects of hermeneutic theory which are relevant to the question of whether there can be a correct interpretation of a text. To illustrate the main themes found within this debate, the arguments of E.D. Hirsch (1967 & 1976) regarding the validity of the search for correct textual interpretation will be contrasted with the theories of H.G. Gadamer (1975).

Hirsch's starting point is an attack on what he sees as the widely accepted doctrine within current literary scholarship which holds that the meaning of a text changes with every reading. This in turn necessitates the evacuation of determinacy or priority of authorial meaning from textual analysis. For Hirsch:

once the author had been ruthlessly banished as the determiner of his text's meaning, it very gradually appeared that no adequate principle existed for judging

the validity of an interpretation. By an inner necessity, the study of what a text says becomes the study of what it says to an individual critic. (Hirsch, 1976: 3)

This theory implies ultimately that we have not simply a changing meaning but quite possibly as many meanings as readers. Hirsch's aim is to make the author's meaning the central focus of interpretation since the only correct meaning of a text is that which the author had in mind at the time of writing. Hirsch is however well aware of the potential problems in this kind of formulation. He admits that we can never know another person's intended meaning with certainty because we cannot get inside another's head. On a more practical level, Hirsch also recognizes that there will be other problems of interpretation arising from the fact that readers are unfamiliar with the genre or with the author's repertoire of language or with the period from which the text dates. Hirsch however is quick to point out that because the author's meaning is inaccessible, it is a mistake to conclude that it is therefore a useless object of interpretation; rather, "since genuine certainty in interpretation is impossible, the aim of the discipline must be to reach a consensus, on the basis of what is known, that correct understanding has probably been reached" (Hirsch, 1976: 17).

When attempting to explain what he means by correct interpretation, Hirsch makes the important distinction between meaning and significance. Hirsch fully accepts the argument that a literary work may mean different things to different readers at different times but he is quick to point out that this has to be distinguished from discovering the author's intended and original meaning. Hirsch justifies this claim by arguing that meaning is the domain of the author and significances are the domain of the reader. According to Hirsch:

meaning is what is represented by a text; it is what the author meant by his use of a particular sign sequence; it is what the sign represents. Significance on the other

hand, names a relationship between that meaning and a person, or a conception, or a situation, or indeed anything imaginable. (1976: 8)

Thus meanings must necessarily remain constant while significances vary throughout history.

It can be argued that Hirsch's distinction between meaning and significance is a valid one in that readers do draw new and unintended significances from a past text which the authors themselves did not intend. However this distinction only holds if we accept the definition of meaning since without it, the two concepts of meaning and significance become the one concept of interpretation by the reader. It is this definition of meaning which is the focal point of Eagleton's attack on Hirsch. Eagleton (1983) makes the important point that "there is no more reason in principle why the author's meaning should be preferred than there is for preferring the reading offered by the critic with the shortest hair or the longest feet" (Eagleton, 1983: 69). Eagleton continues by arguing that Hirsch himself admits that there is nothing in the text itself which constrains a reader to construe it in accordance with authorial meaning, and more important, what is authorial meaning and how does one uncover it? When examining these issues, Eagleton makes the point that the author's intention is itself a complex text which can be debated, translated and variously interpreted just like any other.

My main point here is that when examining reader reception the issue of authorial intention plays, at best, a limited role and, at worst, no role in interpretation since the average reader does not read a text with authorial intention in mind and clearly does not research the history of the author in order to make sense of the text. Hirsch is concerned with literary criticism as an academic discipline and not with reader interpretation. The implications of Hirsch's work for the sociology of art is that the study of readers is a secondary matter, with the search for the author's intended meaning taking first place. Thus, according to Hirsch, a sociological investigation of readers would focus on how far the

readers have understood or misunderstood the author's intentions.

I do not want to conclude that Hirsch's work is irrelevant to the present discussion since much of what he says sets the parameters for the major debates within reception aesthetics. Moreover Hirsch's greatest fear (that is, if we banish the author's meaning from interpretation then we risk opening the floodgates to critical anarchy) has in fact been realized in much of reception aesthetics. Before we discuss this, however, it is necessary to examine the moderate relativism of Gadamer since the arguments which arise from this comparison are the ones which laid the theoretical foundations of the relatively new discipline of reception aesthetics.

Gadamer's (1975) main argument is that understanding is always from the point of view of the person understanding and moreover this understanding is located within and constrained by the social formation in which it takes place. For Gadamer these meanings which readers draw from the text by virtue of their own cultural and historical context are not to be ignored in favor of a search for the author's original meaning but rather are a constituent part of the act of interpretation itself. By elevating the reader to a central position in the construction of textual meaning, Gadamer is clearly doing exactly what Hirsch fears, that is, negating the author's role as determiner of the meaning of his/her text. The author is not however 'banished' as Hirsch would suggest but rather for Gadamer interpretation of a past work should be seen as consisting of a dialogue between past and present. Or, as Wolff (1981) points out, between the author and reader.

For Gadamer this dialogue between past and present is what he calls "a fusion of horizons" in that, "the event of understanding comes about when our 'horizon' of historical meanings and assumptions 'fuses' with the 'horizon' within which the work itself is placed" (Eagleton, 1983: 72). In contrast to Hirsch, Gadamer sees interpretation as an interactive process in that understanding cannot be wholly attributed either to the

reader's perspective ('critical anarchy' in Hirsch's terms) or to the original perspective of the author (objective meaning in Hirsch's terms), but rather is the product of fusion between the two.

Gadamer's ideas are complex and the review given here is merely intended to illustrate the debate within literary criticism concerning the role of the reader in constructing textual meaning. Gadamer's arguments are important in so far as they provide a theoretical spring board for the most recent development of hermeneutics in Germany, namely reception aesthetics. This new discipline places the reader at the center of the interpretative process.

Reception Aesthetics

Much of the debate so far has been concerned with the ways in which the literary critic or historian interprets texts. Hirsch's main area of interest lies in developing literary criticism as a discipline and, while Gadamer does address the reader in a more concrete manner, neither theorist has been wholly concerned with interpretation by the ordinary reader. This is an important point in the discussion of reader reception since:

there is an enormous difference between the naive reader and the analyst, looking for a correct interpretation. What is clear is that the ordinary reader is not trying to recreate the author's original meaning. (Wolff, 1981: 107)

Thus, by focusing on the ordinary reader, reception aesthetics has finally brought to the center of the debate the neglected player of the author, text, reader trio and has consequently added a new dimension to the sociology of art. Since the issue of how audiences read texts is an important one for this thesis (problem six on the Checklist), it would be useful to provide a review of

the main lines of argument within reception aesthetics.

One of the key theorists in reception aesthetics is Wolfgang Iser (1974) who adopts a phenomenological approach. Iser makes perfectly clear just how important the reader is in the reading process when he states that "the phenomenological theory of art lays full stress on the idea that, in considering a literary work, one must take into account not only the actual text but also, and in equal measure, the actions involved in responding to that text" (Iser, 1974: 125). Iser distinguishes between the text, the author and the reader and proposes that a literary work has two poles: the artistic and the aesthetic. He suggests that the artistic is the author's text and the aesthetic is the realization accomplished by the reader. Iser goes on to argue that "in view of this polarity, it is clear that the work itself cannot be identified with the text or with the concretization, but must be situated somewhere between the two" (1976: 21). Clearly Iser's work represents a break from Hirsch's position in that he argues that the meaning of a text is not to be found in the author's original intentions nor does he argue that the reader is the sole constructor of meaning since the literary work "...is not to be identified either with the reality of the text or with the individual disposition of the reader" (1974: 125). Thus, according to Iser, in order to understand the reading process we need to understand both the nature of texts and the nature of the reading process.

Using Ingarden's (1972) argument that a literary work itself exists merely as a set of 'schemata' or general directions, which the reader must actualize, Iser argues that the text offers polysemantic possibilities by leaving gaps which the reader fills in. For Iser, the effectiveness of a piece of work lies in its ability to engage the reader's imagination in the task of working things out for herself "...for reading is only a pleasure when it is active and creative" (1974: 126). It is the filling in of these gaps which provides the text with polysemantic possibilities in that "...one text is potentially capable of several different realizations, and no reading can ever exhaust the full potential..." (1974: 131). The

reason for this textual indeterminacy is that there is not a perfect fit between the codes which govern literary work and the codes we apply to interpret them since the sentences and statements which go to make up a text do not correlate exactly with the real world (for a more detailed discussion of this point see Eagleton, 1983).

At this point Iser's argument would seem to be verging on Hirsch's fear of critical anarchy. However Iser does point out that the text is never completely open to subjective interpretation since the structure of the text guides the reader. Iser integrates individual reading with textual determinacy by arguing that the individual reading of a text will vary "...only within the limits imposed by the written text" (1974: 133). The problem with Iser's formulation is that he vacillates between two poles: (1) the text imposes limits on its reading and (2) the reader is imbued with the ultimate authority in constructing the meaning of the text. Elsewhere he argues that "the manner in which the reader experiences the text will reflect his own disposition" (1974: 132) and that "...each individual reader will fill in the gaps in his own way..." (1974:131). I would argue that the fault lies not in Iser's conception of the text as setting limits (see later discussion of Morley) but rather with his treatment of the reader for he posits the reader as a universal category. The result is that Iser fails to take into account the socio-historical context of the reader and by extension, the reading.

Without this situating of the reader, literary criticism leaves itself wide open to a Hirsch's worry that there can be as many readings as there are readers. To talk of individual readings is to deny that the readers' dispositions and modes of reading are part of a general historical situation (Wolff, 1981) and in effect sets the debate on interpretation in terms more suitable to a psychology of art than a sociology of art. While there has been some attempt within reception aesthetics to examine the historical conditions of reading (Jauss, 1974), generally the reader is not located within a socio-historical context.

The importance of reception aesthetics for the sociology of art is that it establishes the reader as a central focus of research. However the major problem is that the concept of the reader remains underdeveloped: "the different accounts of the reading experience that have been put forth overlook the issue of race, class and sex, and give no hint of the conflicts, sufferings, and passions that attend these realities" (Schweickart, 1986: 35). Clearly these issues are crucial for understanding the ways in which a diverse audience reads the text and indeed much of the more contemporary work in cultural studies attempts to go beyond the image of the homogeneously constituted audience by theorizing the subject in terms of race, class and gender. Thus Chapter Nine will discuss some of these developments and present a framework for understanding how gender may impact on the subject's reading of pornographic texts such as Playboy cartoons.

Social, Economic, and Psychological Influences on the Artist

The previous sections have examined aspects of the reader's interpretation of cultural products. We now turn to consider aspects of the situation of the artist. According to Silberman, research into the artist should involve:

The description and analysis of artist's social position and relationships - facts such as social origin of certain groups of artists - information concerning their ethnic, economical and educational background, data on their style of living, their leisure activities, their working habits, their social contacts and also their potential and actual attitudes. (Silberman, 1968: 586)

In a similar vein, Sewter (1935) argues that we should study not only the society in which the artist lives or lived but also his/her socio-economic position and norms, values and attitudes. Barnett in his discussion of potential research areas in the sociology of art

suggests that the sociologist should examine the socialization of the artist and the manner in which this socialization affects personality and in particular the artist's "...attitude towards and entrance into the art world via formal training, apprenticeship and his individual effort" (Barnett, 1970: 630). Taking this argument one step further towards psychology, Barbu suggests that the focus of investigation should be on the relationship between the the art object and the personality structure of the artist for:

the personality structure of the artist is...relevant to the extent to which he reflects patterns of mental organization dominant in his society or...the extent to which his art expresses these patterns of mental organization. (1976:21)

While there appears to be a high level of agreement amongst the sociologists regarding the centrality of the artist, there is little discussion of how the sociological investigation of the artist's situation is to be accomplished. Clearly many artists have long since died and research into their biography and situation may well be beyond the scope of sociology and instead fall to history. Sewter (1935) suggests using biographies but they do not always exist and where they do there is the issue of accuracy since facts contained in the biographies may be difficult to verify. Again, investigation into the biographies would entail historical as well as sociological methods. However, even if the artist were alive and accessible to sociological investigation, there exists a more fundamental criticism of the notion of the artist as central to the sociological understanding of the art object which is that the art object is collectively produced.

One of the most notable critics of the centrality of the artist has been Roland Barthes who calls for the "desacrilization of the image of the author" (Barthes, 1977: 144) and the re-birth of the reader as the central area of research. Barthes argues that one of the main stumbling blocks to the development of a social theory of art has been the preoccupation with the author as sole producer

of the art object which has resulted in analysis being mainly centered on biographies, diaries and interviews. As previously mentioned, this conception of the artist is a descendant of the nineteenth century romantic view of the artist as genius. This view has been the target for criticism by two major sociologists, Janet Wolff (1981) and Howard Becker (1982).

The central theme of Wolff's argument in the Social Production of Art is that "the dominance of author/artist is first questioned when we recognize that all art is collectively produced" (Wolff, 1981: 118). By this Wolff means that much of cultural production necessarily requires collaborative work. Such collaboration is obvious in the case of cinema and television. However Wolff argues that even those cultural products which seem more individual in nature such as painting or writing a novel ultimately involve collective work which:

consists in the indirect involvement of numerous other people, both preceding the identified 'act' of production (teachers, innovators in the style, patrons, and so on), and mediating between production and reception (critics, dealers, publishers). (Wolff, 1981: 119)

Wolff's arguments, while providing important theoretical insights, fail to make explicit the actual collective processes involved. Indeed this complaint can be levelled against Wolff's book in general in that while she gives detailed theoretical arguments on numerous issues relating to the sociology of art, she fails to provide any practical discussion of how the sociologist might go about conducting empirical work.

With almost perfect timing Becker's Art Worlds (1982) appeared one year after The Social Production Of Art. In common with Wolff, Becker's starting point is that works of art should not be seen as the sole creation of the artist but rather be regarded as the "joint products of all people who cooperate via an art world's characteristic conventions" (1982: 35). Thus while both Becker and Wolff remove the artist as creator from the center of

analysis and replace the artist with an emphasis on the social production of art through networks of cooperation, it is Becker who shows us how to go about doing a sociology of art seen as a collective endeavor. Becker's book remedies Wolff's deficiency by showing how the empirical investigation of art worlds can be carried out.

Consideration of Becker's book as a whole is beyond the scope of the data analyzed in this thesis and the central issues of textual analysis and reader reception. It does however lay down one method of looking at cultural products and specifically cartoons. While not providing a framework for analyzing the content of Playboy sex cartoons, Becker's work can be seen as important for the more general aim of this thesis, that is, to construct a sociological framework for the analysis of cartoons by drawing on concepts developed within related areas of sociology.

Art Worlds

The most important contribution Becker makes to the sociology of art is the debunking of the idea of the artist as the sole creator of art. Becker argues that the approach adopted in Art Worlds can be seen as an attempt to challenge the dominant tradition of seeing the artist as the central focus of sociological investigation. At the beginning of his book Becker lays down his central theme:

I have treated art as the work some people do and have been more concerned with patterns of cooperation among the people who make the works than with the works themselves or with those conventionally defined as their creators". (1982: 1X)

For Becker this central concept of cooperation results in treating art much the same as any other kind of work and consequently

involves viewing the artist as not so very different from other kinds of workers. By focusing on cooperation, Becker discusses art as collective action whereby a specific work can be looked at in terms of the people who cooperate to produce that work. In much the same way, Becker argues that "we can focus on any event....and look for the network of people, however large or extended, whose collective activity made it possible for the event to occur" (1982: 370). Indeed this is the theme taken in Becker's earlier works, most notably Outsiders (1963) where he articulates his view of deviance as interactive and cooperative: "deviance is not a quality that lies in behavior itself, but in the interaction between the person who commits an act and those who respond to it" (Becker, 1963: 14). For Becker, "collective actions and the events they produce are the basic unit of sociological investigation (idem, 1982: 370).

Given Becker's sociological orientation it is not surprising that he uses the central concept of art world to:

denote the network of people whose cooperative activity, organized via their joint knowledge of conventional means of doing things, produces the kind of art work that art world is noted for. (1982: X)

Becker's starting point is similar to Wolff's with art being viewed as a cultural production which requires collaborative work. Both authors argue that artistic work can and must be analyzed like all human activity since both involve the joint activity of a number of people. Becker's break with Wolff however comes very early in his book since his main aim is to describe the nature of these complex networks and, very importantly, to examine the ways in which the produced work always shows signs of that cooperation.

By examining all the activities involved in producing a work of art, Becker succeeds in demystifying art without really needing to address the concept of artist as genius. By simply providing a shopping list account of the numerous activities that have to be carried out for any work of art to appear as it finally does,

Becker highlights the simplicity and naivete inherent in the romantic image of the artist. As an example Becker discusses what it takes for a symphony orchestra to give a concert: instruments must have been invented, manufactured and maintained, a notation must have been devised and music composed using that notation, people must have learned to play the notated notes on the instruments, times and places for the rehearsals must have been provided, advertisements for the concert must have been arranged and tickets sold, and an audience capable of listening to and in some way understanding and responding to the music must have been recruited. Now although the list varies from one art form to another, the point here is that the production of art involves a series of steps, each of which serves in some way to constrain the finished product. Indeed the constraints that an art world places on the production of art is the underlying theme of Becker's work.

For Becker, the sociological area of analysis is those patterns of cooperation which fill the space between the idea of what kind of work is to be made and the finished product. Here Becker presents two ideal types of patterns. The first one describes a situation in which the solitary person did everything, made everything, invented everything, had all the ideas, performed or executed the work, experienced and appreciated it, all without the assistance or help of anyone else. The other ideal type presented is the situation in which each activity is done by a separate person, a specialist who does nothing but that one operation, much like the division of tasks on an industrial assembly line. In reality, Becker argues that much of the production of art actually lies somewhere in between the two and that the sociological analyses of an art world should involve looking "...for its characteristic kind of workers and the bundle of tasks each one does" (1982: 9).

Becker observes that while all art forms rest on the extensive division of labor, this is often easier to appreciate in the performing arts where clearly one person cannot do everything, in

contrast to the more solitary types of artistic work such as painting. This point deserves serious consideration for cartoons are often thought to be the work of a solitary artist sitting at the drawing board waiting for inspiration. Indeed, cartoons only have one name on the work and do not come with a list of credits as does a television production or film. Becker addresses this issue by pointing out that the division of labor in the production of art does not require everyone being under the same roof. Using the example of painting, Becker shows how even this solitary type of activity is dependent upon the cooperation of a large number of people. Painters, he argues, depend on manufacturers for canvas, stretchers and paints, on dealers, collectors and museum curators for exhibition space and financial support, on critics and aestheticians for the rationale for what they do and on audiences to respond. Thus according to Becker "all art works, then, except for the totally individualistic and the unintelligible works of an autistic person, involve some division of labor among a large number of people" (1982: 14).

At this point we could give a preliminary sketch of those people involved in the Playboy cartoonist's art world: the manufacturers of paper and drawing tools, the Playboy editors, the Playboy cartoon editor, the distributors of Playboy, the printers of Playboy and the readers. The role that the Playboy editors play in selecting cartoons was described in Chapter One, however the people involved in the production of the cartoon extend beyond the editorial director and the cartoon editor.

From the first edition of the magazine in October 1953, through to the end of 1983, the key decision maker for the cartoons was the founder and editor-in chief of Playboy, Hugh Hefner. Urry² (1990) stated that Hefner gave the cartoon department unlimited funds; the only department to have such a budget. Although Hefner had a cartoon staff which would range from three to five people at any one time, he was the one who

² The following data on Playboy and the remarks made by Michelle Urry were collected in an interview conducted by the author, 23 April, 1990, New York.

made the final selection of the cartoons. After 1983, Michelle Urry took over the position as the key decision maker; Hefner's involvement in the magazine dwindled to the point where editorial staff could no longer even reach him by phone.

Urry claims that although she ran the cartoon department after 1983, the financial controllers of Playboy filled the void left by Hefner. By 1983 the magazine was in deep financial crisis and Urry's budget was slashed (Urry would not disclose actual figures) and each issue is now allotted an amount which allows for only 15-20 cartoons (in the 1970s it was not unusual to find 35 cartoons in one issue). In the case of Playboy, financial controllers are now key players in the cartoon art world; their decisions determine the quantity of cartoons published. Those cartoons which fail to appear in the magazine are hence outside of the designated products defined as art.

A further link in the production chain of Playboy cartoons is a group of individuals who sell ideas to the magazine. They are not cartoonists in the sense that they draw a cartoon but they write cartoon scenarios and they are all employed on a free-lance basis. At present Playboy works with four people whose ideas form the basis of approximately 20% of Playboy cartoons. Urry distributes these ideas among the contract cartoonists who are given two months to visually depict the idea. If the cartoon's graphics do not meet with Urry's expectation, then the cartoonist is paid a consolation fee of a few hundred dollars.

Urry's personal assistant also plays a key role as gatekeeper. Her first task of the day is to go through the 15-20 unsolicited cartoons which Playboy receives each day. She picks out on average 2-3 cartoons a week for Urry to look at. When asked what criteria she uses she said that there is a Playboy style which she can spot immediately (see below for further elaboration on the nature of this style). The most important component of this style is the actual artistic techniques employed; Playboy demands that its cartoonists be trained artists who have completed a degree in art. The content of the cartoon has to be "male-female orientated"

with an emphasis on sex. Those that fit these criteria are viewed by Urry who generally only buys two a year. Most of the free-lance cartoons bought are solicited by Urry who meets with the cartoonists four times a year. At this meeting Urry discusses the types of cartoons which Playboy is looking for with the emphasis on seasonal cartoons. In January they are looking to buy cartoons with a summer theme, in March, back to school cartoons, in June, Christmas jokes and in September, Valentine themes.

The readers are also part of the art world of Playboy cartoonists. Every letter written to the magazine about the cartoons is read by Urry. Those letters which are critical of cartoons are always answered personally by Urry. Every month Playboy usually receives about 40-45 readers letters, the majority of which are favorable. Urry stated that Playboy takes very seriously the letters from irate readers and that the magazine keeps careful records on which cartoons and themes received the most negative responses. She said that Playboy tries to avoid controversy so themes which are known to cause dissent (specifically mentioned were those cartoons which ridicule the church, depict violence against women or suggest child-adult sex) are kept to a minimum. Playboy is also interested in monitoring which cartoons and cartoonist receive a particularly favorable response; Gahan Wilson apparently receives the most fan mail, followed by John Dempsey. Urry also pointed to Buck Brown's granny cartoons as a reader favorite. She said that they try to run the most popular cartoonists every month and the letters received are considered an important indicator of popularity.

In the 1970s Playboy conducted audience focus groups in order to facilitate cartoon selection. The magazine would generally only run those cartoons which received favorable ratings from the group. However by the 1980s Urry said that she felt more confident in being able to predict the audience reactions to the cartoons and thus they terminated their contract with the testing

company³.

Interestingly, Urry pointed to what she called "zealots" as playing a role in the selection of cartoons. The particular groups mentioned were church organizations, women's groups and AIDS activists. She said that such groups become very "aggressive" about cartoons they feel ridiculed them and that in some cases, it simply is not worth running controversial cartoons. According to Urry, Playboy has been wanting to run an AIDS cartoon for some time but they feared the response from AIDS activists groups. She said that Playboy decided to meet with the AIDS Action Committee in order to put their case. The committee expressed disapproval at the suggestion of making aids a subject for humor; Urry however tried to convince them that they were promoting safe sex in the cartoon. According to Urry the committee was not convinced but nonetheless Playboy ran its first AIDS cartoon in the 1990 April edition. At the time of the interview Urry was awaiting what she called the "political fallout".

Urry also pointed to Black civil rights groups as a reason for not running many cartoons depicting people of color; she said that Playboy did not think it correct to use white artists to depict black people and she could not find any black cartoonists who met the Playboy artistic criteria. She also said that Playboy is sensitive to the other side of the race issue; hate mail from white racists. She showed me the July issue (for 1990) which is the first to have a black woman as a centerfold. Urry informed me that when she saw this for the first time, all she could think about was the hate mail from racists which was bound to flood in after the issue hit the streets. She said that the cartoon department is mindful of the anti-black feeling which exists in the USA and thus the easiest route to take is to avoid black cartoon characters; in this way, claims Urry, they will maintain their black readership while not upsetting their racist readers.

As previously discussed, one of Becker's key concepts is

³ Urry refused to discuss how Playboy presently conducts its research on reader-responses to cartoons.

cooperation since "producing art works requires elaborate cooperation among specialized personnel" (1982: 28). One question that arises is: how do the participants of an art world arrive at the terms on which they cooperate? One potential method is to decide everything afresh on each occasion however, as Becker argues, this is clearly not the case as it would be too costly in terms of time and money. According to Becker, the participants "instead ...rely on earlier agreements now become customary, agreements that have become part of the conventional way of doing things in the arts" (Becker, 1982: 29). These conventions are a vital facilitator in the production of all art forms and "make possible some of the most basic and important forms of cooperation characteristic of an art world..." (1982: 46).

To understand the all encompassing nature of artistic conventions, Becker lists the ways in which conventions affect the forms of artistic production. He argues that conventions dictate (1) the materials to be used, (2) the abstractions to be used to convey particular ideas or experiences, (3) the form in which materials and abstractions will be combined, (4) the appropriate dimensions of a work and (5) the relations between artists and audiences, specifying the rights and obligations of both. Now while Becker argues that conventions allow decisions to be made quickly and provide, through standardization, a kind of shorthand means of solving problems, they also serve to constrain the artist.

According to Urry, Playboy insists on specific conventions for its cartoons. First and foremost, the cartoons have to depict "a kind of literate people, we do not want, for example, funny looking, odd people with tiny heads and big bodies....On the whole we like our females to be luscious and beautiful". In terms of style, Urry stated that:

Playboy cartoonists have to have extraordinary artistic ability, our guys are painters who are also funny. They have to have highly developed line sense which shows itself in every cartoon. We want a distinctive style so that you can tell who drew the cartoon without looking at the name.

Urry continued by saying that the Playboy conventions are well known among the cartoonist community and generally few cartoonists meet the requirements. The reason she gave for this is that cartoonists often have to work in advertising or commercial graphic art companies in order to make a living. According to Urry, the training these artists receive in these companies stifles their artistic creativity to the point that they all produce similar, uninteresting graphics. She said that she can easily spot a cartoonist who has spent his time at one of the big companies such as Hallmark. Playboy refuses to buy such work because according to Urry, it lacks originality and creativity.

When asked what she specifically looks for in the cartoon, Urry listed the following items: good color combinations, expressive body language and facial expression and an ambience of good taste. Again she stressed that the characters have to look life-like. As an example Urry picked up a Dempsy cartoon which she intends to run in the beginning of next year. The cartoon shows a couple in bed after sex with the male saying "can we now talk computers". She said that in this cartoon she paid particular attention to the bed clothes and the room since the cartoon was meant to depict yuppies who had a high standard of living. She was also interested in the facial expression of the women; she was meant to be bathed in an "after-glow of high powered sex". She had sent a previous draft of the cartoon back to Dempsy because the woman "was not luscious enough". The current female character indeed now possessed the huge breasts and curvaceous hips which have become the hallmark of Playboy cartoons. Thus for Playboy, the cartoon conventions are clearly established and well known throughout the art world.

Now of course Becker recognizes that artists do not have to conform to the conventions however he makes the point that the artist has to pay a price for non-conformity. Firstly, the production of non-conventional work requires more effort on the part of the artist since the conventional materials and those personnel trained in the conventional manner are more easily

available to the artist. The second price the non-conventional artist may have to pay is decreased circulation of his/her work for as Becker argues the art world's distribution network is set up to handle those works which follow the conventions and "...for the most part work that doesn't fit doesn't get distributed" (1982: 95). Now although artist can distribute the work themselves, Becker argues that it is usually specialized intermediaries who do this work and,

since most artists want the advantage of distribution, they work with an eye to what the system characteristic of the work can handle. What kinds of work will it distribute? What will it ignore? What returns will it give for what kind of work? (1982: 94)

A current example of the ways in which art worlds determine what kind of work will be distributed or ignored is Judy Chicago's exhibition "The Dinner Party". The leaflet accompanying the show states that ".....the goal of The Dinner Party is to ensure that women's achievements become a permanent part of our culture". Chicago's aim and the resultant work is clearly of an unusual nature.

The central conception is a triangular dining table, along the sides of which are placed symbolic representations of thirty nine women: pre-Christian goddesses; historical figures such as Sappho and Boadicea; women like the suffragist Susan B. Anthony and the artist Georgia O'Keefe....Each of the figures at the table has a place setting of a runner, cutlery, goblet and plate, whose different designs evoke her particular character. From these thirty nine women the names of 999 less resoundingly famous but still reasonably well known, women radiate in inscriptions on the heritage floor. (Barrett, 1982: 43)

Chicago's rationale for this work (echoing the arguments of other feminist scholars of art) is that women's art is systematically excluded from the the artistic establishment. This assertion is

borne out by the fact that after an immensely popular American tour the show went into storage rather than on to Europe. Now clearly to hold that this particular exhibition was ignored by the European art world because it was not characteristic of what the system could handle requires empirical work on questions of acceptance amongst the key decision makers within the relevant art worlds. However given some of the more recent feminist work on women artists and the ways in which their work has been ignored (see Parker, 1987), it would appear that the male dominated art worlds are not yet ready to distribute feminist art.

Now although the above discussion does not in anyway exhaust the ways in which art worlds serve to shape the nature of the works which eventually become labelled as art, it does provide us with the background necessary to understand why Becker argues that art does not refer to a class of objects that have in common some intrinsic property which ensures their membership of a realm designated art. Thus according to Becker the sociologist, rather than getting involved in the question of what art is, should instead observe how art worlds make the distinction because "...by observing how an art world makes those distinction rather than trying to make them ourselves, we can understand much of what goes on in that world" (1982: 36). And, as previously argued, the focus of analysis is the art world itself. Moreover by taking Becker's focus of analysis the sociologist does not restrict his/her work to what a society currently labels as art for this would leave out too much of what is interesting and more importantly " ...would allow the process of definition by members of the society, which ought properly to be the subject of our study, to set its terms" (1982: 37). The above discussion of Playboy also suggests that the process whereby certain cartoons are rejected for publication is itself a rich area of study.

It is important that Becker's argument should not be confused with the previously discussed concept of aesthetic neutrality where it was argued that the sociologist of arts should not be concerned with the art object itself. This latter stance grew out

of the belief that since art was an individual creation of genius, it was not accessible to sociological investigation. As Bird (1979) has argued this stance resulted in the sociologists accepting the currently held societal definitions of what constituted art. Now for Becker it is these very definitions that are the source of investigation since:

one important facet of sociological analysis ...is to see when, where, and how participants draw the lines that distinguish what they want to be taken as characteristic from what is not to be so taken. (Becker, 1982: 36)

Becker's framework for a sociology of art clearly avoids many of the pitfalls of the more traditional model outlined in the beginning of the chapter. Becker argues that similar to traditional analysis, his framework maintains that art is social, but rather than trying to demonstrate congruence between forms of social organization and artistic styles, he stresses that "...art is social in being created by networks of people acting together" (1982: 369). By shifting the focus of sociological investigation to art worlds and the patterns of cooperation among the people who make the art works, Becker is clearly grounding his analysis in mainstream sociology since "collective actions and the events they produce are the basic unit of sociological investigation" (1982: 370).

As noted previously, although Wolff stressed the social production of art, she did not provide a discussion of how to carry out empirical investigations into the sociology of art. Becker, on the other hand provides both a general theoretical framework and a clear methodology. For Becker the sociologist of art must "...look for groups of people who cooperate to produce things that they, at least, call art; having found them, we look for other people who are also necessary to that production, gradually building up as complete a picture as we can of the entire cooperating network that radiates out from the work in question" (1982: 35).

Having located these groups Becker then lays down the guidelines for the types of studies which should be conducted within a sociology of art by stating that:

we need studies which tell us how, in specific art worlds, assessments of styles, genres, innovations, artists, and particular works are circulated. Who tries things first? Who listens to and acts on their opinions? Why are their opinions respected? Concretely, how does the word spread from those who see something new that it is worth noticing? Why does anyone believe them? (Becker, 1982: 56)

Clearly what we have here is the beginnings of a more fruitful way of looking at art from a sociological perspective. By debunking the romantic concept of art and by situating art in the world of social action, Becker has opened up areas of investigation which were previously seen as off limits to sociologists.

Cartoons and the Sociology of Art

What follows is a discussion of the ways in which the sociologist of cartoons can utilize the concepts developed within the sociology of art. It needs to be pointed out here that many of the suggestions are applicable only to the first aim of this study, namely the construction of a sociological framework for the analysis of cartoons. The fact that many of these suggestions are not applicable to the second aim of developing a framework for the analysis of Playboy sex cartoons is due mainly to the nature of the data under consideration. Since the intention of this study is to present an analysis of content of Playboy sex cartoons, many of the suggestions offered below go beyond the available data and thus require a different type of study. It is recognized here that the path taken in the study presented in Chapter Seven is only one amongst a number of potential paths and it is hoped that

future studies will take advantage of the suggestions offered below.

One of the aims of this chapter is to suggest how a sociology of art might conceive of the cartoon. As was argued at the outset, the sociology of art as it developed in the U.S.A. during the 1950s and 60s, offered few suggestions applicable to research into cartoons. By imbuing the artist with some magical quality, sociologists of art clearly set premature limits on what the sociologist should and should not investigate. This state of affairs together with the lack of any meaningful research demonstrating an identifiable relationship between social conditions and specific forms of cultural products, suggests that the traditional sociology of art can contribute little to the development of a sociology of cartoons.

In spite of the criticisms levelled against reception aesthetics, it should be remembered that this approach has opened up new area of investigation. In the discussion of previous research into cartoons, it became clear that little thought had been given to the readers' role in constructing meaning. Treating reception as unproblematic is a tendency which can be found not only in research into cartoons but, as discussed above, also in the sociology of art. Reception aesthetics represents a serious attempt to deal with the reader as an active constructor of meaning in the reading process and thus represents a major land-mark in our understanding of audience response. Having established the reader as a crucial component of the reading process, reception aesthetics has shown the need for a more all encompassing theoretical and empirical framework which will move away from the reader as a universal category and towards a more sophisticated analysis grounded in a socio-historical context. This point will be taken up further in Chapter Nine in the discussion of Morley's study of the Nationwide audience (1980)

Having examined some of the main debates within literary criticism regarding the role of the reader, we can set out some preliminary guidelines on how a sociology of cartoons might

conceive of the audience (problem six on the Checklist). Firstly, a correct reading of the text (cartoon) does not lie in the author's original intention. The problems inherent in this type of analysis were discussed with respect to Hirsch. Even if these problems did not exist, the quest for a correct reading is futile when examining the ordinary reader since for such readers "the author's meaning is...quite irrelevant" (Wolff, 1981: 115). However to argue that there is not one correct meaning is not to slip into what Wolff calls the voluntarist form of reading. This leads us to the argument that within each text there is a preferred reading (this will be discussed more fully in the section on Morley) and "...the way in which the reader engages with the text and constructs meaning is a function of his or her place in ideology and in society" (Wolff, 1981: 115). It would appear that reception aesthetics has failed to address this latter point in any meaningful manner since mention of the historical conditions of reading cannot stand in for a theoretical and empirical framework which attempts to investigate the ways in which different social groups interpret texts. As previously argued with respect to Marxist aesthetics, to locate readers within either the bourgeoisie or the proletariat does not in itself tell us much about how the text is being interpreted. Rather what is needed is a more sophisticated model which can account for the diversity of group affiliation - a model that can serve the sociology of art in general and the sociology of cartoons in particular.

However it is important here to recognize that the drawing up of a list of potential groups is in itself a highly problematic task. Obviously the main issue here is the process by which one decides which group affiliations are to be taken as important indicators of how the reader constructs meaning. A Marxist might argue that one's position in relation to the means of production is important while feminist scholars would maintain that one's gender is a crucial element in the construction of meaning. Given that we are still in the early stages of understanding textual interpretation, I would argue that the list of groups should

represent the diversity that exists in an industrialized society. Thus instead of just examining socio-economic or gender group affiliations, I would argue that there is room to include group affiliations based on religion, ethnic background, education, political activism and age. Obviously the groups chosen will differ depending on the nature of the text under investigation however the point here is that the groups should not be prematurely limited. Chapter Nine on Morley will continue this discussion and will set out a preliminary framework for conducting such studies.

Becker, in Art Worlds, has opened up a whole range of possibilities for the sociologist of cartoons and suggests ways in which the researcher might see the production of the cartoon as an outcome of collective processes (problem four on the Checklist). First, and most importantly, Becker frees the sociologist from having to defend cartoons as an art form and moreover from becoming embroiled in the debate regarding which cartoons constitute art and which do not. Rather, for the sociologist it is this very debate and the ways in which some cartoons come to be regarded as art while others are rejected, which constitutes the stuff of sociological investigation. Questions such as who decides which cartoons to accept and on what basis is that decision made? are no longer taken for granted by virtue of investigating only those cartoons which appear in print. Focusing as it does only on those cartoons already in print, the study described in this thesis of necessity leaves unexamined a whole range of others which never made it to the magazine. Future studies could fruitfully examine the decision making process and thereby illuminate some of the taken for granted assumptions with which the Playboy editors operate. Moreover this type of sociological study could be applied to any type of cartoon.

By examining the cartoon in terms of the networks of groups which cooperate to produce the finished product we can understand the ways in which art is a social production and moreover the ways in which cartoons are constrained by the very networks which are the medium of their production. In Becker's

terms the creator of cartoons becomes the subject of sociological investigation but only as one player in this art world, not as THE player. By examining what actually goes on in the production of art in general and cartoons in particular, the sociologist will be able to uncover the various assumptions which operate within the art worlds. For example, being present at meetings where decisions are made regarding which cartoons will run in the newspaper/magazine/journal and which will not, may go some way toward understanding the ideologies which operate within media institutions. Murdock and Golding (1979) allude to these ideologies as the ideology of the dominant class yet they fail to provide an empirical framework for testing this assumption. Becker's book provides us with such a framework while at the same time it opens the way for new formulations since the production of art as outlined by Becker is more in keeping with Thompson's (1988) suggested research strategy which attempts to uncover the rules procedures and assumptions implicit in the production process. This is a far more complex model than that suggested by Murdock and Golding since they fail to document the collaborative nature of cultural production.

Thus for the sociology of cartoons Becker's model opens up many new possibilities for research which have hitherto been ignored by researchers interested in cartoons. However given that this thesis is concerned with analyzing the actual content of the cartoons found in Playboy, it is at present impossible to apply Becker's model to the data discussed in the chapter on content analysis. I say at present because future studies into Playboy cartoons could use Becker's model and thus concentrate on the network of groups who cooperate in the production of Playboy cartoons.

Conclusion

This chapter has investigated further those issues which were first brought to light in the sociology of media chapter. In that chapter it was argued that mainstream sociology of media had not yet developed a method of analysis of media products that takes into account the collective actions necessary for cultural production.

The analysis of the sociology of art literature turned out to be fruitful in a number of ways. The concept of the artist as sole creator of the artistic product was criticized by Becker and Wolff and replaced with an analysis which examines the production of art as a collective process whereby a specific work can be looked at in terms of the people who cooperate to produce that work. The possibilities of this approach for the sociology of cartoons was discussed and suggestions were made for further research. It was pointed out however that this approach cannot directly contribute to the immediate question regarding how one goes about analyzing a large collection of Playboy sex cartoons. Given the lack of any alternative method of data analysis, the method used to analyze the data in this thesis is content analysis. The next chapter discusses the reasons for this choice.

Chapter Four

Content Analysis

Empirical analysis of the content of communication has a rich and diverse history with the first use of the method dating back to the 1600s when the Church was concerned with the non-religious content of the newspapers (for details of this history, see Krippendorff, 1980). Content analysis as a social scientific tool became popular during World War II where it proved its utility in propaganda research. The growth of the media industry after the war further stimulated its use and the development of sophisticated computer techniques permitted statistically complex applications of the method. Krippendorff notes that the post-war era saw the spread of content analysis to numerous disciplines including psychology, political science, anthropology and history, and to different types of documentary sources such as newspapers, books and pictures. However, content analysis as a method, has generally been applied to the analysis of written rather than aural or visual records such as organizational files (Wheeler, 1969), newspapers (Williams, 1976), periodical and ephemeral literature and the like. Since, however, this present study is concerned with the application of content analysis to mass media content, the following discussion confines itself to that sphere.

Definition of Content Analysis

Although numerous definitions of content analysis have been suggested over the years, researchers tend to have a shared agreement on what the method entails, namely the application of

scientific methods to documentary evidence. Three definitions will suffice as examples since they all contain the basic elements of content analysis which have not substantially changed over the years. Thus content analysis is:

1. "A research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication" (Berelson, 1952: 18)
2. "A method of studying and analyzing communication in a systematic, objective, and quantitative manner for the purpose of measuring variables" (Kerlinger, 1973; quoted in Wimmer, 1983: 138)
3. "A research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from data to their context" (Krippendorff, 1980: 21).

The first two definitions are examples of the traditional view of content analysis which requires three basic components: that the method be objective, systematic and quantitative. The requirement of objectivity stipulates that the researcher devises precise and clearly defined categories which can be applied to the material under investigation with explicitly formulated rules of procedure. The implicit aim here is to minimize the influence of the individual researcher's dispositions and preconceptions. The requirement that content analysis be systematic means that the inclusion and exclusion of content or categories should be carried out according to consistently applied rules. This ensures that the researcher will not select only those materials which support the hypothesis. The quantitative requirement refers to measuring the frequency with which certain categories or themes appear in the material investigated.

While there appears to be agreement on the first two requirements of content analysis, that is it be objective and systematic, the third requirement, quantitative, is a major area of contention. Krippendorff (1980) argues that content analysis need

not be quantitative since this sets unnecessary limits. He demonstrates that qualitative methods have proved useful in studies on propaganda and psychotherapy. Unlike the quantitative analyst who is dependent on pre-established categories, Kracauer (1952) argues that the "qualitative analyst explores the whole of the content in quest of important categories" (ibid: 638). Kracauer continues by suggesting that because the researcher is not preoccupied with quantification, he/she is more likely to apprehend the subtle and latent meanings embedded in the text; meanings which are not necessarily amenable to quantification. While it is apparent that quantification can obscure the complexities of communication (see Chapter Seven for a discussion of the problems encountered in the study on Playboy sex cartoons) it must be emphasized that in practice, quantitative content analysis involves non-numerical procedures at various stages in the research. This is particularly the case when formulating the categories since this requires that the researcher become familiar with the relevant symbols or themes. This involves, as Kracauer stated, exploring the whole of the content. Thus more modern theorists such as Holsti (1969) have argued that "the content analyst should use qualitative and quantitative methods to supplement each other. It is by moving back and forth between these approaches that the investigator is most likely to gain insight into the meaning of his data" (Holsti, 1969: 11). In light of the connection between these two methods of research, it would be a mistake to argue for an either/or approach to the study of content.

This point is also well illustrated with respect to the coding stage of any study employing content analysis. Beardsworth (1980) points out that the role of the researcher's 'common-sense' knowledge in coding is often either overlooked or minimized in major texts on content analysis. When it is mentioned (see for example Pool, 1959), it is often done so in terms of being remedied by making the coding rules as precise as possible or by specifying more clearly the boundaries of the coding categories in

use. Beardsworth, on the other hand, suggests that rather than treating common sense knowledge as a nuisance it should instead be seen as an integral feature of the coding since the coder has to employ such knowledge in order to understand what the coding instructions are actually describing. Beardsworth bases his arguments on Garfinkel's discussion of a study where graduate students coded the content of psychiatric clinic folders. Garfinkel argued that:

to no one's surprise, preliminary work showed that in order to accomplish the coding, coders were assuming knowledge of the very organized ways of the clinic that their coding procedures were intended to produce descriptions of. More interestingly, such presupposed knowledge seemed necessary and was most deliberately consulted whenever for whatever reasons, the coders needed to be satisfied they had coded 'what really happened'...We soon found the essential relevance to the coders...of such considerations as 'et cetera', 'unless', 'let it pass' and 'factum valet' (i.e. an action that is otherwise prohibited by rule is counted correct once it is done). (Garfinkel, 1967, quoted in Beardsworth, 1980: 387)

Thus Garfinkel is suggesting that the common sense knowledge of the coders formed the very foundation of the coding process and as such cannot be eliminated by more rigorous research techniques. This discussion illustrates again how content analysis necessitates both qualitative and quantitative techniques.

One of the major areas of disagreement regarding the method and aims of content analysis has been focussed on Berelson's employment of the word "manifest". It is not surprising that definitions 2. and 3. above do not contain the word manifest. Many analysts (e.g. Glassner and Corzine, 1982) argue that by only analyzing manifest content, the deeper layers of meaning embedded in the text are lost. By splitting up the content into isolated, quantifiable elements, the content analysis serves to decontextualize the message. This is indeed a valid criticism and one which has led many researchers to conclude that structuralism

is a more suitable method for apprehending communication content in its totality (see Burgelin, 1972, for a fuller discussion of this method). While many researchers such as Krippendorff have dropped the word manifest from their definition, they have failed to convincingly show how content analysis with its emphasis on being objective and systematic (in the strict positivist senses) can overcome the problems associated with fragmenting the text into quantifiable units.

Another level at which the focus on manifest content can be discussed concerns the interpretation of results. Holsti argues that use of this term in earlier definitions "tended to limit content analysis to questions of semantics, the relationship of signs to referents, and to questions of syntactics, the relationship of signs to signs" (Holsti, 1969: 12). This meant that the researcher could not investigate wider issues such as the effects of the communication analyzed or the communicator's intent. Holsti points out that more recent definitions, by omitting the word manifest, tend to include an examination of these broader issues. This point will be dealt with more fully below, however suffice it to say here that this trend is equally problematic since data drawn from content analysis cannot stand in for rigorous empirical analysis of media effects.

Another important way in which Krippendorff's definition differs from earlier conceptions is his inclusion of the word "inference". One of his major criticisms of past researchers (e.g. Berelson, 1952) is that many of them tend to treat content analysis as a method for "extracting content from the data as if it were objectively contained in them" (Krippendorff: 22). Krippendorff argues that such treatment is misleading for two reasons. Firstly, messages do not have a single meaning which needs to be "unwrapped". Indeed this has been one of the central criticisms levelled against content analysis (see Sumner, 1979: 71, for a fuller discussion), that it has often failed to take into account the possibility that a text may contain a number of different meanings. Secondly, meanings need not be shared. Krippendorff argues that

often researchers do not recognize that a reading of a text is historically and socially located.

The advantage of Krippendorff's view of content analysis is that it makes explicit the use of inferences, for he argues that no matter how descriptive the content analysis "any description entails inferences" (ibid.: 25). Thus rather than stating that content analysis can reveal THE message contained within a text, Krippendorff is suggesting that all receivers of symbolic communication, including the researcher "make specific inferences from sensory data to portions of his empirical environment" (ibid.: 23). This empirical environment Krippendorff calls "the context of the data" arguing that in order to be empirically meaningful, any content analysis has to be related to what it purports to be measuring in the social world. In this regard he gives the example of Janis (1965) who claimed that one way of validating the results of content analysis of mass communications is by relating them to audience perceptions. Indeed this is what Morley (1980) attempted some twenty years later and by so doing moved away from the usual premise of content analysis, namely that the researcher's reading of the text is necessarily the same as the audience's reading (see Chapter Nine).

A more sophisticated version of content analysis must therefore go beyond mere counting and instead requiring the researcher to locate media content within a wider social theory. This point is especially important in light of current criticisms levelled against content analysis (e.g. Sumner 1979) as a method which is superficial, limited in value and dubiously founded. Sumner's main criticism of content analysis is that the criterion of significance is frequency with which instances of the categories appear in the content to be analyzed. He argues that content analysis:

merely assumes the significant existence (or existence -as- significance) of what it counts. It may be counting illusions or a fragmentary part of a real significance, but without a theory of significance it would not know: its

concept of the significance of repetition gives it no knowledge of the significance of what is being repeated. (Ibid.: 69)

Having said this, however, Sumner states that he is not opposed to the technique of counting itself and indeed sees it as having an important role to play when used in conjunction with an explicit theory of significance:

If a social theory of significance is used which presents a rational and convincing explanation of why certain signifiers should exist within a discourse, there is no reason why it should not count the appearances of those signifiers in order to illustrate its point. (Sumner, *ibid*: 73)

Thus, according to Sumner, if the researcher first develops a theory of significance then the repetition of these signifiers would serve to test the theory. The argument is relevant to the content analysis carried out on Playboy cartoons since the aim was not merely to count, e.g. the number of times the female cartoon character appeared in scanty underwear or was shown as possessing a voluptuous body. Rather these findings were used to test the theory that the depiction of female cartoon characters in Playboy reflect symbolically the position of women in a gender stratified society. The important point here is that the counting followed the development of a theory and thus rendered meaningful the repetition of certain signifiers.

Uses of Content Analysis

Different researchers tend to offer varying uses of content analysis. Berelson (1952: 29-108) for example discusses seventeen potential uses:

- To describe trends in communication content
- To trace the development of scholarship
- To disclose international differences in communication content
- To compare media or "levels" of communication
- To audit communication content against objectives
- To construct and apply communication standards
- To aid in technical research operations
- To expose propaganda techniques
- To measure the "readability" of communication materials
- To discover stylistic features
- To identify the intentions of other characteristics of the communicators
- To determine the psychological state of persons or groups
- To detect the existence of propaganda
- To secure political and military intelligence
- To reflect attitudes, interests, and values of population groups
- To reveal the focus of attention
- To describe attitudinal and behavioral responses to communication

In spite of the above extensive list, Wimmer (1983: 141-143) argues that on the whole studies into the content of mass media generally employ the method for one of five purposes; (1) Describing communication content, (2) Testing hypotheses of message characteristics, (3) Comparing media content to the 'real world', (4) Assessing the image of particular groups in society, (5) Establishing a starting point for studies of media effects. Each of the above aims will be discussed more fully in Chapter Five in relation to the content analysis on Playboy cartoons.

Steps in Content Analysis

Although different researchers suggest a varying number of steps there does appear to be some agreement on which steps are the most critical for developing a scientific study. Wimmer (1983)

has offered a somewhat typical list. In what follows, the steps he offers are discussed and exemplified by the study of Playboy cartoons.

1. Formulating the Research Question or Hypothesis

Wimmer argues that in order to avoid the problem of the 'counting for the sake of counting' syndrome, the research aim must be clearly articulated. He continues by stressing that the content analysis should be guided by well formulated research questions. One of the first steps as in all forms of research is a review of the literature. As stated in Chapter One, most of the studies conducted on cartoons have concentrated their attention on a limited number of themes. Palmer (1979) provides a good example; his study looked only at the sexual activities depicted within the cartoon. Palmer developed a system of categories which aimed to quantify the presence or absence of the following sexual themes: seduction, defloration, incest, permissive/seductive parent figure, profanation of the sacred, sexual vernacular, supersexed males, nymphomaniac females, homosexuality and bondage/flagellation. The literature review thus revealed that the existing research into cartoons had been somewhat limited in scope and what is needed is a more complex system of categories which would capture more information about the nature of cartoons. In the present study of Playboy cartoons, before the categories could be constructed it was necessary to formulate a hypothesis to explicate what exactly the categories are to reveal. Based on extensive reading in the field of feminist theory and pornography the following hypothesis was constructed: the image of females and males in Playboy cartoons will be consistent with the male centered, hedonistic ideology put forward by Hefner in the Playboy philosophy (see Chapter Five for further elaboration of this philosophy).

2. Defining the Universe

Wimmer states that to define the universe is to "...specify the boundaries of the body of content to be considered, which requires an appropriate operational definition of the relevant population" (ibid: 143). The universe here was those cartoons found in Playboy between the years 1970 -79 which had a sexual theme. This included those cartoons which had either depicted sexual activity or a sexual theme in the caption.

3. Selecting a Sample

Having defined the population the next step is to select a sample. The original intention was to use all the Playboy magazines published between the years 1970-79. However this proved impossible as some of the editions could not be found. Out of a possible 120 magazines 100 were eventually located¹ which meant that sampling techniques did not have to be employed.

4. Selecting and Defining a Unit of Analysis

This refers to the object which is actually being counted. The unit of analysis in this study was the cartoon character. For each cartoon a male and female (if both were depicted) was coded. Employing the character as the recording unit is, according to Holsti (1969: 117), common for researchers who are interested in studying drama, movies and other forms of fictional materials.

¹ For a list of those Playboy issues used, see Appendix B

5. Constructing Categories for Analysis

Researchers generally agree that this stage is at the heart of any content analysis. Berelson for example has argued that: "particular studies have been productive to the extent that the categories were clearly formulated and well-adapted to the problem and the content" (Berelson, 1952, quoted in Wimmer: 144). Although the categories will clearly differ depending on the topic under study, there are certain guidelines to be followed. Firstly, categories should be mutually exclusive; a unit of analysis can be placed in only one category. Secondly the categories should be exhaustive; every item to be analyzed must be able to be placed into an existing category. Wimmer argues that constructing an exhaustive category system in mass media content analysis is not usually difficult since an "other" category can be added for those which do not fit. Obviously the surest method of ensuring that a category system is exhaustive is to pretest it on a sample of content. The category system devised for this study was pretested which involved testing the categories against a sample² of cartoons. This was necessary since the category system was complex and therefore needed a number of refinements (see the discussion of the categories in Chapter Five).

The final requirement is that the categories are reliable; the coders can reach agreement regarding the proper category for each unit of analysis. Seldom can this requirement be met fully but it can be approached. Generally in a large scale content analysis there are three ways of increasing reliability:

1. The categories must be defined as clearly as possible. Here it is useful to provide coders with examples and brief explanations for each category (see Chapter Five for brief explanations and appendix A for examples).

² The sample consisted of thirty cartoons taken from Playboy.

2. Coders must be trained in using the coding instrument and the system of categories. Where coders are being used, training them before the data are collected helps to eliminate methodological problems. Since I was the only coder in this study, training was not necessary; I was extremely familiar with the categories and the visual data under discussion. However because I was also the person who had devised the categories and subsequently coded them, it was important to check that the system of categories were precise and clear enough to be used by other researchers. Thus a training session was organized with four students who were taking a sociology of media class which I was teaching. The students coded sample material and then discussed the results and any problems³ they encountered when trying to code. The session was taped and the categories were further refined in light of the comments⁴.

3. A pilot study may be conducted on a sub-sample of the content universe under consideration. Numerous pilot studies were

³ The major problems which arose centered on the image of the up to adolescent female. The students were confused as to how to code the female if she had a young face yet a well developed body. Thus the visual clues were developed for the up to adolescent female (these included pigtails and socks). If these clues were included then the female was coded as up to adolescent irrespective of her body. In addition, the original category system had two subdivisions for age discrepant relationship, these were young woman/man is involved in age discrepant relationship with older man/woman relative or non-relative. The students expressed difficulty in deciding whether or not the cartoon other was a relative. The eventual solution was to eliminate the relative subdivision and instead just have one age discrepant subdivision. A third problem was distinguishing between the emotions of shock and fear since it was felt that the two looked very similar. The final category system collapsed shock and fear into one subdivision.

⁴ An index of inter-coder reliability was not constructed for this content analysis since such an index is usually constructed for studies where more than three coders record the data. The index is used to measure reliability of the actual content analysis rather than the pre-coding stages. Since this study was coded by only one person, constructing an index of inter-coder reliability would have been impossible (Krippendorff, 1980: 129-139).

conducted before the actual coding began since it was important to discover problems before the final coding of the units of analysis.

One major question that arises when constructing the categories is deciding how many to include. There is always the danger of having too many or too few. The former results in a partial analysis which yields scanty information and the latter produces a category system which involves so few cases that only limited conclusions can be drawn. As was previously stated, much of the past work carried out on Playboy cartoons tended to utilize only a small number of categories. Greenberg and Kahn's (1970) study on the appearance or non-appearance of blacks in Playboy cartoons for example provides only a small amount of data on the way in which the black character was portrayed. Since there are very few studies of the image of women and men in Playboy cartoons, this content analysis was directed towards devising a system of categories which would construct a profile of female and male Playboy cartoon characters that would highlight personal characteristics, sexual activity and the nature of the relationship with the other character(s). To this end fifteen categories were developed, each with varying numbers of sub-divisions (see Chapter Five).

6. Establishing a Quantification System

In content analysis it is usual to employ nominal, interval or ratio levels of data measurement. The nominal level, which was the one adopted in this study, involves the researcher simply counting the frequency of occurrence of the units in each category. When using the interval level, researchers develop scales for coders to use to rate certain attributes of characteristics or situations. Wimmer gives the example of a

content analysis which investigates the image of women in advertisements. He suggests that each character may be rated by coders on several scales such as:

independent-----dependent

dominant-----submissive

Although Wimmer argues that such scales may add depth and texture to a content analysis, it may also reduce reliability since it involves more subjective decisions than nominal levels of measurements. The third level used is the ratio measurement which involves measuring the column space given to editorials, advertisements, and stories in newspapers and magazines, or for television and radio, the number of commercial minutes and the type of programs may be measured. Clearly the different levels of measurements do not appear to be in competition with each other since they all yield different information on media content. The choice of measurement therefore depends on the nature of the study and the type of information needed.

7.Coding the Content

The placing of a unit of analysis into a content category is the most time consuming portion of the study. Typically the number of coders ranges from three to six. By the time the study has reached this stage the coders should be familiar with the data and the categories should be clearly defined. It is thus important to have completed a pilot study before coding the data. Even at this point in the study problems of ambiguity in coding can still arise. One common method employed by researchers for checking the reliability of coding is called "check coding" Here a "check coder" independently records a certain percentage of the content which has previously been coded by one coder and the results

are compared. If there is a significant amount of disagreement then further work on the categories and/or continued training of coders is required.

8. Analyzing the Data

If hypothesis tests are planned, common inferential statistics are acceptable. When two nominal variables are cross-classified, the most common test is the chi-square. The chi square has been defined as a "general test designed to evaluate whether the difference between observed frequencies and expected frequencies under the null hypothesis can be attributed to sampling fluctuations or to non-chance factors" (Nachmias and Nachmias (1976: 288). In other words a result significant at the .05 level means that it has a 5% or less probability of occurring by chance. Each of the cross tabulations in Chapter Seven include a chi-square test.

9. Interpreting the Results

The difficulty of this task varies according to the nature of the content analysis. Wimmer states that the most problems arise when the content analysis is descriptive in nature since it is difficult to assess the meaning or importance of the results. If however the study is concerned with testing specific hypotheses concerning the relationship between variables, the interpretation will be, according to Wimmer, fairly evident. It is necessary to point out however that where the straightforward testing of relationships is only one part of the investigation, as in this study, there is not just one interpretation since different researchers, depending on their theoretical interests, could draw varying conclusions. This relates back to the oft-expressed view that texts do not contain one meaning which is waiting to be

apprehended by the researcher but rather that texts are polysemic in that they are open to a number of readings. That Playboy cartoons can be read in a number of ways is the basis for Chapter Nine which seeks to examine how differently situated groups may make different readings of the same cartoon.

Limitations of Content Analysis

Although content analysis is the primary method used by media scholars it has been heavily criticized by researchers, most notably the structuralists. Structuralist criticism (Burgelin, 1972) is very similar to Sumner's (1979) doubt that reliance on the repetition of a unit of analysis can convey anything meaningful about the text. Burgelin argues that "...there is no reason to assume that the item which recurs most frequently is the most important or the most significant.... (ibid: 319). Burgelin sees texts as structured wholes and thus rather than counting the elements of a text, the researcher should be more interested in examining the place occupied by the different elements. To illustrate his argument Burgelin gives the following example;

Let us imagine a film in which the gangster hero is seen performing a long succession of actions which show his character in an extremely vicious light, but he is also seen performing one single action which reveals to a striking degree that he has inner feelings. So the gangsters actions are to be evaluated in terms of two sets of opposites: bad/good and frequent/exceptional. The polarity frequent/exceptional is perceptible at first sight and needs no quantification. Moreover, we clearly cannot draw any valid inferences from a simple enumeration of his vicious acts (it makes no difference whether there are ten or twenty of them) for the crux of the matter obviously is: what meaning is conferred on his vicious acts by the fact of their juxtaposition with the single good action? And only by taking into account the structural relationship of this one good action with the

totality of the gangster's vicious behavior in the film can we make any inferences concerning the film as a whole. (Burgelin, *ibid.*)

Thus in light of the above argument, which stresses understanding the text as a whole whose components are articulated to form a complex message, it is clear why fragmenting the text into quantifiable units which is accomplished by content analysis is seen by structuralists as a misguided endeavor. Now, while this argument does have some validity (see Chapter Seven for a discussion of the problems of content analysis), the important point here is that it is not an either/or situation. The type of information required ultimately dictates the type of method employed; if the researcher is interested in analyzing a large body of data in order to provide a systematic map of the content, then content analysis is preferable to a structuralist analysis since for the latter, analysis of a large body of data is almost impossible. This point has been recognized by structuralists such as Burgelin, who tend to limit their research to a single play or novel. While such an analysis is important and adds to our understanding of a text, there is also room for an investigation of large scale data sets which, while not supplying the wealth of information on a single text, do furnish us with information about general characteristics and longer-term tendencies within a large collection of texts.

One major limitation of content analysis is the generalizability of its findings. As Wimmer (1983) argues, the findings of a particular content analysis are limited to the framework of the categories and definitions used in that analysis. Clearly different researchers will offer varying definitions and category systems and thus studies which may purport to be measuring the same thing may in fact be looking at very different units of analysis. One good example is the controversy surrounding the effects of television violence. Gerbner and Gross have defined the category of violence as "the overt expression of physical force against self or other, compelling action against one's will on pain of being

hurt or killed, or actually hurting or killing" (1976: 184). Critics have argued that this definition is too broad since it also includes cartoon characters and slap stick humor, both of which serve to exaggerate the incidence of violence on television. Other studies have taken a narrower definition of violence (for a fuller discussion of the controversy see Newcomb, 1978). Given the differing definition of the same category there can be little agreement amongst researchers on the level of violence on television. As Wimmer argues, great care must be taken in comparing the results of different content analysis studies.

The last limitation of content analysis, namely that it alone can not serve as a basis for making statements about audience effects, is of key importance since it has often lead researchers to question the validity of content analysis as a method for studying media content. It appears here that content analysis is being criticized for not studying something which is beyond its scope. Certainly researchers have attempted to make claims about audience effects from content analysis data (see Arnheim, 1960), however such generalizations beyond the data is more the fault of the use of content analysis by individual researchers than a limitation of the method of content analysis. Analyzing media content is an important first step in understanding the effects of the media since we must begin the investigation with a firm understanding of the content of the text(s). A similar argument has been made by the Glasgow University Media group when they argue that "...before proper work on audience comprehension can be undertaken there has to be systematic documentation and mapping of the dominant modes of presentation and framing" (1980: 410). The next step, audience decoding, requires different methods of research, it is this latter step that contemporary media research is only just beginning to fully explore. The discussion in Chapter Two illustrated the ways in which researchers failed to investigate the possibility that audiences' reading of texts differed from their own. However as Morley (1980) and Gerbner and Gross

(1976) demonstrate, such omission is beginning to be remedied and research into textual decodings is becoming more sophisticated (see Chapter Nine).

Advantages of Content Analysis

The overriding advantage of content analysis is that it can deal with large volumes of data. Krippendorff (1980) points to a number of studies where a large volume of data was investigated. Examples include Gerbner et al., (1979) who analyzed 15,000 characters in 1000 hours of television fiction and Pool (1952) who examined 19,553 editorials. Content analysis was chosen for the Playboy study because the aim was to analyze ten years of Playboy cartoons in order to provide an empirically substantiated characterization of gender imagery. This resulted in coding 2,412 cartoon characters, clearly an impossible task for a structuralist approach. Moreover since little is known about the nature of Playboy cartoons it was felt necessary to start with a large scale study as this could provide pointers for direction in future studies.

As previously argued, many of the criticisms levelled against content analysis have tended to focus on the practice of counting for counting's sake. Sumner and Burgelin suggest that there is no reason to assume that repetition is in itself significant. However if the researcher has developed a hypothesis and a theory of signification then the actual counting can serve to either support or refute the theory. All the categories in this content analysis were constructed with the aim of furnishing information about the validity of the hypothesis that the image of women and men will be consistent with the male centered, hedonistic ideology put forward by Hefner in the Playboy philosophy. Since a text contains multiple meanings and encodes messages in a variety of ways, it was felt necessary to examine the depicted differential between male and females from a number of different angles. Thus

categories were constructed which investigated variables such as age, occupation, clothing, activity or passivity. In this way a more complex picture could emerge of the structure of Playboy cartoon stereotypes and the ways in which the relationships between cartoon characters are played out on a number of different levels.

Thus the argument that the atheoretical use of content analysis has generated poor studies (see Sumner 1979) is valid if the object is merely to count the occurrences of a unit of analysis. However, as Sumner himself recognizes, it is incorrect to view the methods itself as flawed since more contemporary studies, specifically the ongoing research of Gerbner and Gross et. al. (see Chapter Eight for a more detailed discussion of this project), have developed a more sophisticated theoretically grounded technique. It is also important to mention here the work of the Glasgow Media University Group since their studies represent one of the few attempts by critical researchers to employ content analysis as a research method. Their first study (1976) began with the observation that

Contrary to the claims, conventions and culture of television journalism, the news is not a neutral product. For television news is a cultural artifact; it is a sequence of socially manufactured messages, which carry many of the culturally dominant assumptions of our society. From the accents of the newscasters to the vocabulary of the camera angles; from who gets on and what questions they are asked, via selection of stories to presentation of bulletins, the news is a highly mediated product. (Ibid: 1)

Given this claim it is not surprising that the researchers set themselves the primary task of unpacking the coding of television news. To this end a complex system of categories was devised which aimed to "reveal the structures of the cultural framework which underpins the production of apparently neutral news" (ibid). When discussing their use of content analysis, the authors argued that a detailed examination of media news can be used to

demonstrate the ideology and practices of television journalism.

While a thorough analysis of the actual system of categories is clearly beyond the scope of this discussion, it is relevant to point out that the study demonstrated that the ways in which stories on industrial disputes were handled by the journalists did in fact favor management over the workers. One such example discussed by the researchers is the different ways in which management and union representatives were interviewed. Whereas management tended to be interviewed in their offices, union representatives were more likely interviewed outdoors at a mass meeting or on a picket line. Whereas the former affords a certain amount of authority and responsibility, the latter tended to present an image of disorder which the researchers argued served to undermine the credibility of the representatives. Moreover, it was often difficult to hear the interviews because of the chanting in the background. The Glasgow group also found that the amount of time given to an interviewed was dependent upon status with the Prime Minister and other politicians being given more air time than the workers. Moreover, the workers were less likely to be given "lower third" captions with their names, a trend which served to further undermine the credibility of the workers.

Now although the Glasgow research project has been criticized on a number of points (for example that the group failed to include regional broadcasts in their sample) overall the study was seen by many researchers as an important step towards empirically establishing bias in the media, a bias which favors the interests of the dominant classes. In this way the researchers demonstrated that content analysis as a method is not necessarily superficial but rather can provide important data regarding the ideological nature of media.

The use of content analysis in this study of Playboy cartoons did yield systematic and quantitative data which indicated ways in which the imagery of Playboy cartoons reproduce and recreate the power imbalance between the genders. Although this power imbalance was first hypothesized and indeed expected, the ways in

which it was constructed needed to be illuminated. It is not enough to simply assert the existence of specific ideologies (one of the main criticisms levelled against Murdock and Golding by Hill, 1979). Rather it is possible to shed light on the ways in which media depictions encode specific messages regarding the nature of the social world. It is argued here that the data furnished by the content analysis proved useful for testing the hypothesis of this study and added to our understanding of how the media constructs imagery.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the method of content analysis and has discussed its limitations and advantages. Although it was acknowledged that the method does have some very real limitations (for example the fragmentation of the text into quantifiable units), it was also argued that it is a useful tool for analyzing a large body of data. Indeed Winston (1983) goes as far as to suggest that content analysis is still the only available tool for establishing maps of media output. Given that this study aimed to analyze the content of some 1400 cartoons, a structural analysis was clearly out of the question. While content analysis has usually been employed to analyze linguistic data, it should be stressed that it was found to be amenable also to visual data. Moreover, the charge that content analysis necessarily yields superficial information was not substantiated since the results obtained provided important insights into how Playboy cartoons construct images of femininity and masculinity and the ways in which the differential power relationship between women and men is played out on a number of different levels.

That content analysis should provide an account of media output is crucial to the overall endeavor of critical communication studies which is to "raise consciousness as to the nature of the output, as well as to demonstrate the underlying ideology

governing its production" (Wilson, 1983: 185). In order to demonstrate the underlying ideology governing Playboy cartoons, it is necessary to now turn to a discussion of Playboy magazine and its philosophy which was particularly concerned with how men should relate to women. The aim is to uncover to what degree this philosophy was articulated in the sex cartoons found within the magazine.

Chapter Five

The Playboy Context

Problem two on the Checklist requires that the sociologist of cartoons examines the editorials/ideology of the host magazine in order to investigate the degree of 'fit' between the message in the cartoon and the rest of the magazine's content. Thus a thorough analysis of Playboy sex cartoons demands that we take into account the context in which they appear in Playboy magazine. It is important therefore to emphasize that a sociological analysis of the cartoons must take account not only of the details of character and action within the cartoon frame but also the nature of the surrounding magazine content. Other commentators have proposed a broad consonance between the values implicit in political cartoons and the editorial policies of newspapers (Seymour-Ure, 1975). It is suggested here that the same consonance is evident between the values embedded in Playboy cartoons and the magazine's more explicitly articulated values. The following discussion thus aims to describe the context of the cartoons analyzed in the empirical study. Although this study is concerned only with those sex cartoons found in Playboy between the years 1970-1979, it is necessary to examine the history of the magazine since this provides a background for understanding its development over the years.

The Beginning of Playboy

Although at its height in the late 1960s and early 1970s the Playboy company was an enormous business concern with sales of over \$200 million and employing more than 5,000 people, much of its early success can be said to be due to one man, Hugh Hefner.

According to Weyr (1978), understanding the success of Playboy means understanding "...Hefner himself: his determination, his personality...his dream of the good life" (1978: 12). Thus any discussion of Playboy has to start with a consideration at Hefner's early career in the magazine business since it was the experience gained here which was eventually to lay the foundation for Playboy's entry into the American publishing world.

Hefner, born in Chicago on April 9, 1926, was always interested in the magazine business and from an early age he was a keen cartoonist. While serving in the army from 1944-46 he decided that he wanted to be a professional cartoonist and he contributed cartoons to a number of Army newspapers on a regular basis. After the war he studied sociology at the University of Illinois and started a campus humor publication where he was the staff artist and cartoonist. Brady (1974) claims that it was during his college years that Hefner became a magazine 'nut', always studying newsstands and magazine racks for new periodicals and buying as many as he could afford. In order to make some money Hefner tried free lance cartooning but he had little success. It was during these years that Hefner decided that he wanted to start his own magazine. His original idea was to publish a magazine about Chicago but he could not raise the money. Hefner then went searching for a job in publishing but the only position he could find was in the personnel department of a cartoon printing and manufacturing company in Chicago.

In January 1950 Hefner enrolled as a masters student in sociology at the North Western University but left after a semester. In June 1950 he took a job as a copy writer in a large department store while carrying on his cartooning in his spare time. During this time he published a book of cartoons which sold 5,000 copies. In January 1951 he became a copy writer for an advertising agency but was fired after five weeks for not having the dedication required by his employer. He then went to work for Esquire as a promotional copy writer but left when the magazine

moved to New York. According to Brady it was at this time that "...the idea of starting some sort of magazine of his own had almost become an obsession for Hefner" (ibid: 46).

Hefner's first idea was a trade magazine for cartoonists but since he had no money he took a job at a company which published trade publications and nude magazines. His position was in sales promotion which meant that he gained knowledge on how to sell magazines and he became personally acquainted with newsstand dealers and the publishing world, knowledge which was to prove invaluable for his future career as publisher of Playboy. At this job Hefner found that the most successful publishing titles were the nude magazines which he later said sold so well because of the nudes and not the editorials.

By December 1952 Hefner had another job, this time he was promotions director of a children's activities magazine and his job was to develop a direct-mail campaign to enlist new subscribers. At this time Hefner was beginning to experiment with the possibility of publishing what are known as 'eight-pagers' that is, small pornographic books showing cartoon characters in various forms of sexual activity. However Hefner soon abandoned this venture because he thought it was too frivolous.

It was during this time that the idea of publishing a men's magazine began to emerge and Hefner recalls that by 1953 he was certain that "I was never going to be happy until I was doing a magazine of my own" (Brady, 1974: 51). To this end Hefner spent time examining old issues of Life, Look and Esquire and realized that they had become successful because of their sensationalism. Look had run full frontal shots of Hedy Lomarr and Life had increased its circulation by running frontal photographs of a then rising star called Joan Crawford. Hefner decided that the first issue of his future magazine must have some sort of sensational feature which would give it instant identity. He spent much of his spare time planning the future magazine and wrote in his diary "I'd like to produce an entertainment magazine for the city-bred guy, breezy and sophisticated. The girlie (sic) features would

guarantee the initial sale, but the magazine would have quality too" (quoted in Weyr, 1978: 52). From its very inception Hefner intended to create a magazine which would reflect his own interests and in a later interview said "I'm an indoor guy and an incurable romantic, so I decided to put together a men's magazine devoted to the subjects I was more interested in, the contemporary equivalent of wine, women and song, though not necessarily in that order" (ibid).

By April 1953 Hefner had the rough drafts of his magazine with notes, sketches, drafts, and layouts. He managed to borrow \$600 from a number of banks with which he formed a corporation using his initials as its name; H.M.H Publishing Company. The major impetus for putting the plan into practice was a news story which Hefner spotted in a Chicago-based magazine called Advertising Age about the famous Marilyn Monroe calendar where she posed nude. The story mentioned that the John Baumgarth company had printed the calendar. Due mainly to fear of arrest, no magazine had printed the nude pictures of Monroe who was by now a rising star, and Hefner secured (for \$500) permission to use the nude shots which had not been in the calendar. These pictures led Hefner to send a letter to 25 of the largest newsstand wholesalers throughout the U.S.A inquiring about potential interest in the magazine which was originally to be called Stag Party. The letter read:

Dear Friend,

We haven't even printed our letter head yet, but I wanted you to be the very first to hear the news. I've been a very busy guy since I left National Periodical Distributors the first of the year - busy cooking up a deal that should make some money for both of us.

STAG PARTY - a brand new magazine for men - will be out this fall - and it will be one of the best sellers you

have ever handled.

It's being put together by a group of people from Esquire ...so you can imagine how good it's going to be. And it will include male-pleasing figure studies, making it a sure hit from the start.

But here's the really BIG news! The first issue of STAG PARTY will include the famous calendar picture of Marilyn Monroe - in full color! In fact every issue of STAG PARTY will have a beautiful full page, male pleasing nude study - in full natural color. Now you know what I mean when I say that this is going to be one of the best sellers you have ever handled...fill out the postage paid Air Mail reply card enclosed and get it back to me as quickly as possible....

Cordially,

Hugh H. Hefner

General Manager.

At first orders started to trickle in then came in full force. By May 1953 Hefner had received 50,129 orders and he had calculated that he needed only 20,000 orders to break even and 30,000 to make a profit. In order to reduce cost Hefner searched for suitable articles in old books and tried to do his own art work, however he realized that he lacked the necessary sophistication so he employed Art Paul (a commercial artist) on a free lance basis since Paul was skeptical about the chance of the new magazine making a profit. One of Hefner's major problems was in acquiring copyright permission for articles and short stories since many magazine publishers were unconvinced that the magazine would ever reach publication.

According to Brady, Hefner put together the first magazine for a mere \$2,000 since he used virtually no original photographs. Most of the illustrations were secured by bargaining with photo agencies and he used short stories which were in the public

domain. The cartoons used in the first issue were those drawn by Hefner. The one remaining problem was the name of the magazine as the already existing Stag magazine hired lawyers to protest the similar name. Hefner changed the name to Playboy.

The first issue of Playboy was printed in October 1953. It included stories by Ambrose Bierce and Arthur Conan Doyle, party jokes, an article on the high cost of alimony, a food piece about rice and chicken, a music feature on the Dorsey brothers, a publicity hand-out about desk design for the modern office, a picture layout of women and a men's shopping column. This type of format with a diverse nature was one which Playboy went on to develop since the aim of the magazine was to present a life-style for the reader. The first copy did not include a date because Hefner was not sure that the magazine would have a future.

By the beginning of November Playboy had a national distribution and after two weeks of publication Playboy was selling strongly. The distributor recommended a second edition. At this point Playboy still had practically no advertising since many of the main advertisers felt that it was too 'raunchy' a magazine which would serve to discredit any product which was advertised in it. This meant that Playboy had to survive on newsstand sales alone; the first issue sold 53,991 copies. Miller (1984) says that this made Playboy an unprecedented instant success and gave Hefner the confidence to date the second issue January 1954.

By the time the second issue was in print, Hefner had employed a small staff which included Art Paul who was now the art director, Eldon Sellers, who acted as general manager and Ray Russell who was the articles director. Using the first magazine as a proto type the editors worked together to develop an all round magazine which aimed for artistic and literary sophistication. At this point Hefner was still very much in control of all editorials and payed special attention to the cartoons, some of which were

his own¹. Clearly the format paid off for Playboy had a circulation of 175,000 copies by its first anniversary issue. The circulation continued to grow and by 1959 it had reached 1,000,000.

Developing the Magazine

Hefner's major concern was that the magazine would be of high quality and to this end he employed editors who would work towards making Playboy a literary 'land mark'. John Mastro, the product manager, told Weyr that "we were determined not to turn out a cheap book. Quality takes some of the shock off nudity" (Weyr, 1978: 33). Towards the end of 1956 Hefner started looking around for a 'smooth professional' who could run the magazine. His final choice was Auguste Comte Spectorisky who had been an editor for the New Yorker and was an aspiring author. On taking the job, Spectorisky claimed that he would devote his efforts to the literary side of the magazine. Weyr argues that by the time Playboy was five years old, Spectorisky had put his stamp firmly on the magazine. Although the original formula had not been changed, Playboy was now a magazine which attracted the most respected of American writers (Miller, 1984). Miller points out however that all was not harmonious in the editorial offices for Hefner and Spectorisky often clashed on the central issue of content. Hefner felt that the selling point of the magazine was the nude pictures and wanted to increase the number whereas Spectorisky was more interested in the literary side and felt that

¹ Towards the end of the 1960s, when Hefner relinquished some of his absolute editorial control, he nevertheless continued to select the "playmate", choose the cartoons and edit the party jokes page (Miller, 1984: 148). The overall character of Playboy continued to be the product of Hefner's vision and it is clear that the cartoons were an integral part of the philosophy and the world view he wished to advance.

the magazine was being pulled down by its emphasis on sex. This on-going battle split the editors into two camps with Hefner's side arguing that:

We could have all the Nabokovs in the world and the best articles on correct attire without attracting readers. They bought the magazine for the girls. We couldn't take the sex out. The magazine would die like a dog.... (Quoted in Weyr, 1978: 35)

A compromise was worked out where the sex would stay but the art and literary side would be developed also. Thus in the January 1957 issue the Playboy editors promised that "we here highly resolve to give our readers even better fiction, cartoons, articles, photo features, humor, coverage of fashion, food and drink and better everything in 1957" (Weyr, 1978: 45).

True to its claim Playboy began delving into the more serious aspects of life in the U.S.A and by the end of the fifties Miller argues that Playboy was no longer just an entertainment magazine for men (ibid: 50), but rather was becoming a literary force in the publishing world. Following on from this Weyr states that in 1960 Playboy began to be a different magazine "...more somber, intellectually curious, striving for excellence" (Weyr, 1978: 98). Weyr argues that much of this change can be attributed to Walter Goodman who was hired as non-fiction editor by Spector. By the 1970s Playboy had carried numerous articles on politics, the military, religion, ecology and civil rights. The magazine adopted a liberal stance and its articles and interviews reflected this. The Playboy interview which began in 1962 became a well respected forum for liberal leaders including Martin Luther King, Jane Fonda, and Allen Ginsberg as well as notable actors and authors. By 1972 Playboy was selling 7,012,000 copies a month.

As well as the non-fiction area, Playboy continued to develop its format and the Playboy advisor which started in 1960 became a major section. The advisor dealt with readers' enquiries which ranged from dress codes to sexual practices and by the late 1960s

it was receiving over 1,000 letters a month. Another main section to be developed was the Playboy Philosophy which was a response to the growing criticism levelled against Playboy (discussed below). The first installment of the philosophy appeared in the December 1962 issue and here Hefner described its aims:

Playboy's aims and outlooks have been given considerable comment in the press, particularly in the journals of social, philosophical and religious opinion....While we've become conscious of the virtues of seeing ourselves as others see us, we've also felt the image is occasionally distorted; having listened patiently for so long...to what others have decided Playboy represents...we've decided to state our own editorial credo...and offer a few personal observations on our present day society and Playboy's role in it.

The philosophy appeared in twenty five installments and much of it is devoted to an attack on organized religion and censorship. Hefner spent time on discussing the virtues of free enterprise and minimal government intervention and what he saw as the damaging puritan ethic which was strangling America. Rather than spend time on discussing the philosophy I will integrate it into the discussion of Playboy ideology.

As well as the magazine, Playboy bought into clubs, hotels resorts, films, records, movie theatres, real estate and a modeling agency. By the 1970s the Playboy company was a giant corporation with 5,000 employees, magazine sales of almost \$200 million, net earnings that exceeded \$10,000,000 annually and publishing in several countries (Weyr, 1978: 70). Playboy clearly was an astronomical success. Weyr, Miller and Brady argue that much of this success was due to the Playboy ideology which tapped into the American culture of the 1950s.

The Playboy Ideology

As the above discussion illustrates, Playboy was not just a magazine to facilitate masturbation but rather a type of life-style. The features covered all areas of life and was in effect what Weyr calls a service magazine in that:

It told readers what to wear, eat drink, read and drive, how to furnish their homes and listen to music, which nightclubs, restaurants, plays and films to attend, what equipment to own and - endlessly - about bringing nubile women to bed. (Weyr: 55)

At the center of this life-style was the message that life is a celebration and should be enjoyed to the full. Indeed having fun, enjoying oneself and sampling the good things in life were accorded a primacy never before seen in a magazine. Chief among the good things in life is sex. Hefner could sometimes speak with evangelical fervor on the subject:

Sex is more than simply a good and positive part of life. It is a key and touchstone of life. Sex, not religion, is the major civilizing force on this planet. Clearly and obviously, it is the best part of us. It is the part that brings us together, the beginning of the family, the tribe, of cities, of civilization. (Weyr, 1978: 222)

As Weyr has argued, Hefner sees sex as good in itself so that abstinence was paramount to a moral wrong. However Hefner is only referring to heterosexual sex for although homosexuality was treated sympathetically and the rights of gays supported, as a sexual practice it was seen, in the end as an aberration.

The robust endorsement of heterosexuality is evident throughout Playboy. Hefner again:

Playboy is a combination of sex...and status...the sex actually includes not only the Playmate and the cartoons and the jokes which describe boy-girl situations, but

goes right down in all the service features... there's no confusion with Playboy. It is devoted to the boy-girl relationship, to heterosexual activity in modern society. (Brady, *ibid*: 95)

Central to the Playboy ideology is hedonism of all kinds. Hefner often wrote that puritanism and all that accompanied it was stifling the human (male) spirit, in its place he advocated playing, be it with cars, stereos or women. According to Arthur Kretchmer, Playboy's editorial director:

Hef (sic) helped the world discover toys. I mean, that's one of the most critical things about him - that he said 'play, it's okay to play'....Part of our package is to saythat there is a world of objects and toys out there. (Weyr: 56)

Included in the list of objects and toys is women for Playboy clearly advocated 'playing' with women rather than forming relationships; having multiple partners was often the advice dished out in the Playboy Advisor (Miller, 1984) and moreover Hefner once likened 'togetherness' to a slow death (Brady, 1974: 89). According to Hefner women supply the "tits and ass" of the magazine without which "Playboy would die" (Weyr: 35). Hefner carried this view over to his personal life in that he was insistent that the Playboy parties would be filled with young, large breasted women (Brady, *ibid*) and he stated that the magazine "searched for models who had a younger, fresher, more innocent, child woman look....most of the girls were teenagers. Very few were older than twenty-one" (Brady: 95). It is not surprising that the only role assigned to women in Playboy is one of sex object to be consumed by men.

From the very first issue it was made perfectly clear that Playboy was strictly a men's magazine, not to be read by women. Hefner wrote in the first issue:

If you are a man between 18 and 80, Playboy is meant for you...We want to make it clear from the start, we aren't a 'family magazine'. If you are somebody's sister, wife or mother-in-law and picked us up by mistake, please pass us along to the man in your life and get back to the Ladies Home Companion.

Within the pages of Playboy you will find articles, fiction, pictures, stories, cartoons, humor and special featuresto form a pleasure-primer styled to the masculine taste. (Miller: 44)

Hefner was equally clear in stating which type of man the magazine was for. He wrote the following in the April 1956 issue, which provides a thumb nail sketch of what he saw as the 'ideal reader':

What is a playboy? Is he simply a wastrel, a ne'er-do-well, a fashionable bum? Far from it. He can be a sharp minded young business executive, a worker in the arts, a university professor, an architect or an engineer. He can be many things, provided he possesses a certain kind of view. He must see life not as a vale of tears, but as a happy time, he must take joy in his work, without regarding it as the end of all living; he must be an alert man, a man of taste, a man sensitive to pleasure, a man who - without acquiring the stigma of voluptuary or dilettant - can live life to the hilt. This is the sort of man we mean when we use the word playboy. (Miller, 1984: 64-65)

Thus Playboy was clearly a male domain which was geared to male interests with women being included in a long list of other consumables. While the discussion here has focused on the implicit assumptions of Playboy regarding women, the later section, on Playboy and feminism, deals more with the explicit opinions that Playboy has towards women.

The Success of Playboy

To understand Playboy's phenomenal success it is necessary to examine not only Playboy itself but also the magazine market of the early 1950s. Hefner himself said in an interview with Playboy in the twentieth anniversary issue ".the field was wide open for the sort of magazine I had in mind". During this time the most popular men's magazines were, according to Ray Robinson, "full of blood, guts and fighting. They didn't pay much attention to women" (Weyr, 1978: 4). According to Weyr, the sex books which did exist were the sleazy, under the counter type. Before the Second World War Esquire had published some nude pictures of women but by the early fifties was trying to make its name as a respectable magazine and had thus dropped the more risqué side. Moreover Esquire had paved the way for Playboy in that it won a significant test case against the post office in 1946 which meant that the obscenity laws had become more relaxed. Thus when Playboy reached the stands in October 1953 there was no competition and the battles with the obscenity laws had already been fought.

Weyr, Brady and Miller all see this lack of competition as one important factor in Playboy's success but they add that above this, it was the mood of the 50s which propelled Playboy to its position. Weyr argues that the 1950s needed "a guidebook to the good things, to the toys of life. Affluence was spreading, the economy expanding in twenty years of uninterrupted growth" (1978: 56). It is of course beyond the scope of this discussion to assess the mood of the 1950s, however, evidently Playboy was enormously popular with American men. Weyr says that from the beginning the readers loved Playboy "and told the magazine so in an astonishing outpouring of mail. Rapport was immediate, kinetic, attesting to the deepest kind of involvement" (1978: 26). The circulation figures of Playboy were also testimony to its popularity.

Playboy and its Critics

For all its success Playboy was not without its critics who came from many disciplines and walks of life. The two most ardent groups were however the religious and the feminists. It is important to stress however that the basic criticisms informing these two approaches differed greatly with the religious focusing on the potential effects of Playboy on the moral state of the U.S.A and feminists being more concerned with the image of women in the magazine and the possible effects that such imagery might have on violence against women in society.

Religious Arguments Against Playboy

Many of the criticisms levelled against Playboy by the religious community focused on what they saw as the inevitable destruction (by Playboy) of the moral fabric of American society. It was argued that Playboy reduces sexuality to a consumable product to be bought over the counter (Cox, 1961). The problems associated with this are not linked to the objectification of women but rather that it offers an image of man which stands in sharp contrast to that offered by the bible. One of Playboy's strongest critics was Reverend Harvey Cox who saw Playboy as offering young, upwardly mobile males a new 'religion', only in place of worshiping God, this religion placed material commodities at the center. In words amazingly similar to Hefner, Cox accused Playboy of being not so much a sex magazine as a 'guidebook to identity' that offers men advice on how to live their lives. Moreover this advice is seen as all consuming in that:

...it tells him not only who to be; it tells him how to be it, and even provides consolation outlets for those who secretly feel that they have not quite made it....Playboy

speaks to those who who desperately want to know what it means to be a man, and more specifically a male, in today's world. (Cox, quoted in Weyr, 1978: 96)

This view of Playboy as the new bible putting forth an alternative religion appears to have been the major criticism of much of the clergy. The clergy who engaged in the debate all expressed great concern regarding the threat that the magazine held for the future of American society. Nowhere is this threat more clearly stated than in an article written by Professor Benjamin De Mott which appeared in the August 1962 issue of Commentary. De Mott lays down what he see as the ultimate effect of the Playboy success:

The Playboy world is first and last an achievement in abstraction: history, politics, art, ordinary social relations, religion, families, nature, vanity, love, a thousand other items that presumably complicate both the inward and outward lives of human beings - all have been emptied from it. In place of the citizen with a vote to cast or a job to do or a book to study or a god to worship, the editors offer a vision of a whole man reduced to his private parts. Out of the center of this being spring the only substantial realities- sexual need and sexual deprivation.

These magazines are without qualification post-cataclysm, utterly sure that no existing moral language is adequate to modern experience. Their single unironicized clarity...stands simultaneously as a motto for an emergent mass cult school of Kitsch existentialism, and as the ground theme for a whole new age - an age of multiple inexpressibles, a time in which epater les bourgeois will have become the standard folk gesture. (Quoted in Weyr, 1978: 100)

I do not intend here to enter into a discussion of the validity of the De Mott's arguments since this thesis is not concerned with the effects of Playboy upon the moral and religious fabric of American society. Rather what is relevant to our discussion is the focus of the clergy's attack. They were clearly concerned with what effect Playboy would have on its male readers' spiritual life.

Little thought is given over to the image of women contained within the magazine and the way in which such an image could be seen as objectifying women as a group. Occasionally mention is made of Playboy's reduction of women to 'playthings' (Cox, 1961) but this is only in the context of denying men the ability to reach their full human potential (Cox, *ibid*). In some instances the terms used to describe the women in the magazine embody the objectified version of Playboy images, as when De Mott argues that "girlie books (sic) ...swim, all sleazy voluptuousness, with fewer hake in the wake" (De Mott, quoted in Weyr, *ibid*: 99). Use of the word 'sleazy' together with the overall concern on male spirituality suggests that little attempt has been made by the clergy to examine the image of the women in a context which goes beyond the patriarchal assumptions embedded in Playboy. For such an analysis it is necessary to turn to the feminist criticisms of Playboy since it is here that the patriarchal assumptions informing Playboy's imagery are made explicit and hence criticized.

Feminist Arguments Against Playboy

From the very beginning Playboy was seen by feminists as thoroughly sexist. In the late 1960s the Playboy building in Chicago was the sight of numerous demonstrations (Weyr) and Hefner was singled out by feminists in numerous American talk shows. However little has been written on Playboy by feminists, mainly because pornographic magazines only really became a feminist issue in the late 1970s and by that time Playboy was beginning to lose its prime position to more explicit and violence-orientated magazines (see Dworkin, 1981). Much of the recent writing has therefore concentrated on the possible impact that this violence against women may have.

When Playboy has been discussed (See Reisman, 1982, Steinem, 1983, and Mackinnon, 1987) it is criticized for reducing women to the role of sex object. It is argued that any image which depicts

women in terms of their body parts is in fact violence against the dignity of all women and reduces all women to vaginas and breasts. Brownmiller (1975) argues that such images show women's bodies as "being stripped, exposed and contorted for the purpose of ridicule to bolster that masculine esteem which gets its kicks and sense of power from viewing females as anonymous, panting playthings, adult toys to be used...and disregarded (Brownmiller, 1975: 443). Playboy does indeed include women in its list of adult toys and each month a new one is displayed and then disregarded.

Those writers who have discussed the image of women in Playboy (Steinem, 1983; Greer, 1970) have focused on what they see as Playboy's obsession with female youth and perfection. The argument here is that no woman can live upto the standard set by Playboy since the centrefolds have imperfections air brushed out and moreover even the most perfect of females age. This means that all women will eventually fall short of the ideal. Continuing on from this, these writers point out that women are oppressed by this standard of beauty and that their worth is measured only in terms of their physical attributes. Men on the other hand do not have to spend enormous amounts of time and money on trying to conform to an impossible physical standard but rather can work on gaining a skill which will lead to employment. Steinem (1983) recognizes that Playboy cannot be held responsible for developing this image but is guilty of reproducing and amplifying it.

Another feminist criticism of Playboy is that its image of women, irrespective of their age and body proportions, is a lie which perpetrates myths about female sexuality. Mackinnon (1987) has argued that the only sexuality being displayed in Playboy is that of the male since the female is posed, contorted and stretched to please him not herself. She argues that the image of the woman enjoying having her legs spread for all is a lie and tells men that women's basic nature is that of whore. In this way Playboy is constructing an image of women's sexuality which has nothing to do with women and much to do with male masturbation.

As Mackinnon argues "Playboy... takes a woman and makes her sexuality into something any man who wants to can buy and hold in his hand for three dollars and fifty cents" (1987: 138).

Playboy itself has argued that it supports women's rights. In April 1970, a Playboy editorial stated:

Our position on women's rights...is as consistently liberal as our position on all human rights. We've been crusading for...universal availability of contraceptives and birth control information [and] for the repeal of .. abortion laws; we believe a woman's right to control her own body is an essential step toward greater freedom...We reject the Victorian double standard, which applauds sexual experience in men and condemns it in women.

We are opposed to the traditional stereotype that relegates women to domestic drudgery. We believe that any woman who wants to should shun the home-maker's role for a career, or who wants to combine both, should have the opportunity to implement that decision-recognizing, without inflexibility, that some occupations are better suited to most members of one sex than the other.

Playboy's position is an example of what Morgan (1970) calls the liberal stance where women's position in patriarchy is made more tolerable but not radically changed. Indeed Playboy appears to endorse the current gender divisions in the occupational sphere. In an attempt to demonstrate its support for women's rights, Playboy has given grants to many women's organizations. Included in the list are: Center for Women's Policy study, NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund, National Institute for Working Women, ERA Strike Force and A.C.L.U Women's Rights Projects. This funding was not however without its controversy and numerous women's organizations including Ms. magazine have returned the money. Mackinnon (1987) sees these donations as an attempt by Playboy to make itself more respectable.

Weyr says that Playboy was ambivalent towards the second wave of feminism which hit the U.S.A. in the late 1960s and in the beginning tended to ignore the movement even though as Weyr argues, other major magazines such as the New Yorker and Time

were writing articles on the subject. However by 1969 it was clear that Playboy could no longer bury its head in the sand. According to Weyr, Nat Lehrman, one of the senior editors of Playboy, decided in the summer of 1969 that Playboy should commission an article on feminism. Susan Braudy was chosen to write the article after many notable feminists such as Gloria Steinam and Nora Ephron refused. Weyr argues that the article submitted was met with hostility by the editors as they felt that it was too radical. In a memo dated December 16, 1969 Lehrman wrote:

This piece is in fact only about the radical fringe, and doesn't touch at all on the really important issues of the movement...[it is] reportage on a tiny and noisy segment of women with no following among the great majority of females. (Quoted in Weyr: 228)

According to Weyr there was much disagreement among the Playboy staff with the women generally liking the article and the men hating it. Hefner heard about the article and wrote a blistering memo which was photocopied by a secretary (who was later fired) and distributed to Chicago newspapers. The memo read:

From a brief conversation with Jack Kessie a couple of days ago, it sounds as if we are way off in our upcoming feminism piece....Jack indicates that what we have is a well balanced "objective" article but what I want is a devastating piece that takes militants apart. Jack seems to think that the more moderate members of the feminist movement are currently coming to the fore...I couldn't disagree more...What I am interested in is the highly irrational, emotional, kookie trend that feminism has taken...These chicks are our natural enemy...It is time to do battle with them and I think that we can do it in a devastating way. That's the kind of piece I want.....The militant feminists....are rejecting the the overall roles that men and women play in our society - the notion that there should be any differences in the sexes..other than the physiological ones. Now this is somethingto which we are unalterably opposed and I think we should say so in an entertaining, but highly convincing way.

...The only subject related to feminism that is worth doing is on this new militant phenomena and the only proper Playboy approach to it is one that devastates it...if you analyze all of the most basic premises of the extreme form of new feminism, you will find them unalterably opposed to the romantic boy-girl society that Playboy promotes....It's now up to you to do a really expert demolition job on the subject. (Quoted in Weyr: 231)

Needless to say Braudy's article never appeared in print and instead Playboy commissioned Morton Hunt to write the 'demolition job'. The above memo suggests that Hefner ensured that the official voice of Playboy was directly opposed to any movement which has as its aim the eradication of gender roles. Beyond this it seems that Playboy was not interested in carrying an *informative article on feminism - radical or other wise-* but rather wanted one that would serve to discredit the movement. Rather than being interested in impartial reporting Hefner was seeking out controversy. The interesting point is that in the time under *discussion, that is, the late 60s, the feminist movement in the U.S.A* was made up of a number of fractions, the so-called militant trend probably being the least numerous.

Hefner sees Playboy as established in the current division of labor with men being the aggressive sex and women being the corresponding passive sex. Indeed this is where Hefner and the radical feminists agree since one of Dworkin's (1981) main arguments is that it is this present system of gender stratification which gives birth to pornography. Whatever there professed views on women's rights it seems that Playboy has a stake in the current patriarchal system since any substantial change would indeed leave the magazine out on a limb.

The content analysis will attempt to look more closely at the ways in which Playboy constructs femininity and masculinity in order to assess the validity of Hefner's statement that "I am a feminist" (Hefner quoted in Newsweek, Aug 4 1986)

As previously stated, much of the contemporary feminist work organized against pornography tends to ignore Playboy and

instead focuses attention on Hustler, Screw and the underground magazines which specialize in the rape and torture of women. Playboy and Penthouse can be seen as standing apart from these other magazines in that they both project a lush, well heeled life style and contain articles which do not touch on any sexual theme. Also the present day feminist movement² is unclear regarding its stand on such publications with some factions (most notably the Feminists Against Censorship Task Force) arguing that anti-pornography work is a misguided cause (for a fuller discussion of the issues involved see Burstyn, 1985).

The (Relative) Decline of Playboy

No discussion of Playboy would be complete without a note on the troubled 1970s which saw the magazine decline and indeed the whole Playboy empire crumble. On July 31st. 1988 the last Playboy club in America closed. Once there was twenty two such clubs throughout the country (Newsweek July 25th 1988: 35). The magazine similarly has lost money as the circulation has declined from an all time high in 1972 of 7,012,000 copies to just over 4,000,000 in the early years of the 1980s. According to Miller (1984) one of the main reasons for this decline was bad

² It is important to point out here that the radical feminist movement has always opposed pornography and indeed Dworkin (1981) has argued that anti-pornography work should be at the core of any feminist activism. It is those feminists who call themselves liberal (see for example Snitow, 1985) who have expressed mixed-feelings about feminists attacking pornography, arguing that issues such as women's economic dependency and affordable day-care should be the main items on the feminist agenda. While these issues are indeed important to women's lives, I would agree with Radford (1987) when she argues that without freedom from male violence "other freedoms such as equal pay, equal opportunities and child-care facilities loose their impact..." (1987: 33). If, as the studies suggest (see Donnerstein 1984, for a full discussion on the research findings) pornography is linked to real-world violence against women, then the radical feminist attack on pornography is not as misguided as the liberal feminists would suggest.

management as Hefner refused to accept in the early 70s that the Playboy organization was not holding against competitors; the clubs were becoming shabby, the magazine was dated and the expense accounts of the senior executives were way beyond the capacity of the organization. Miller says that Hefner just carried on spending and only when the Inland Revenue Service started to investigate the management of funds did Hefner realize that there was a problem. By this time, Miller says, it was too late to pull the cooperation back and Playboy had to start selling off some of its holdings³.

Clearly one of the main reasons for the decline in Playboy circulation was the enormous competition it faced from the more sexually aggressive pornographic publications. When Playboy started there were a handful of pornographic magazines, most of which were difficult to purchase since the obscenity laws were so tight. Today there are approximately 2,325 magazine titles, most of which are easily accessible (Attorney General's Commission on Pornography, Final Report, 1986). Moreover the content of the magazines has changed over the years with a trend towards greater levels of violence (Smith, 1976). Donnerstein (1980) has found that it is these violent magazines which both attracts and maintains the greatest number of readers which means that Playboy, with its non-violent depictions, cannot keep up with the market. The ways in which Playboy's decreasing circulation impacted on the content of the cartoons will be discussed in the content analysis.

Conclusion

The previous discussion of Playboy serves as an introduction to the findings of the content analysis. As we can see Playboy was never just a sex magazine. It aimed to serve as a guide book

³ For a fuller discussion on the financial down fall of the Playboy organization see Miller (1984: 228-347)

to the good life and in many ways it was an education manual with Hefner preaching sermons on virtually every aspect of life. According to its circulation figures the package worked for a number of years and Playboy was considered to be a major 'taste setter'.

By understanding the ideology of the magazine and its aims, it is now possible to explore the content of the cartoons. Clearly from such a male orientated magazine, one does not expect cartoons which have as their theme the eradication of gender stratification or the promotion of gender equality, especially in light of the role Hefner played in selecting these cartoons. Given the editorial position and the pictorial layouts, it should be of no surprise to find that the cartoons are sexist in nature. However as Hill (1979) argues in his critique of Murdock and Golding, it is not enough to infer content from the ideological stance of the media producers. Rather he makes the point that media content is highly complex and works at a number of different levels. The implication of this argument is that researchers have to analyze media content rather than just delving into the world view of the producer. Thus the following content analysis is not geared merely to discovering that the Playboy cartoons are sexist but rather at discovering the ways in which the subtle (and the not so subtle) levels of meaning operate within the Playboy sex cartoons and moreover to investigate the ways in which the messages in the cartoons 'fit' with the Playboy ideology as articulated by Hefner in the magazine (problem two on the Checklist).

Chapter Six

Content Analysis and Cartoons: Playboy Cartoons as a Case Study

Chapter four dealt with the ways in which researchers have attempted to analyze visual content in general. This chapter on the other hand seeks to provide a more detailed explanation of how the study of Playboy cartoons was conceived and developed. Thus what follows is a discussion of the kinds of data this study aimed to generate and the ways in which the categories were developed to meet these aims.

In the review of research on cartoons in Chapter One, it was found that most studies have concentrated their attention on only one or two aspects of this art form and have thus been somewhat limited in scope and focussed on a narrow range of concerns. The central aim of this study was to go beyond this type of analysis and instead develop a system of categories which would provide the basis of a more detailed analysis of the structure of Playboy stereotypes. Categories were devised which would illustrate the ways in which females and males were depicted, the relationship between them and the setting in which the interaction took place. Taken together, this information provides the foundations on which to build a multi-dimensional picture of the world which Playboy cartoon characters inhabit. The time variable built into this study should enable us to see what changes took place between the years 1970-79, years which proved to be critical for Playboy.

Analyzing Playboy Cartoons: Aims of the Study

In the chapter on methodology, five aims of content analysis were listed. Here I will examine the ways in which those aims can be applied to this study.

1. Describing Communication Content

It has been argued that few researchers have seen Playboy as worthy of scholarly investigation and even fewer have examined the cartoons (see Greenberg and Kahn, 1970; Miller, 1984; Posner, 1975; Weyr, 1978; Matacin and Burger, 1897). Thus there exists little information regarding the content of the cartoons and the nature of the characters who populate them. This study is therefore the first of its kind which aims to describe the content of Playboy sex cartoons.

2. Testing Hypotheses of Message Characteristics

The hypotheses of this content analysis is that the image of women and men will be consistent with the male centered, hedonistic ideology put forward by Hefner in the Playboy philosophy. The expectations stated simply are that females will be depicted as sex objects to be consumed by the male cartoon characters and that the relationship between the females and males will be imbued with a power imbalance favoring the males. Thus I do not intend here to fall into the trap of what Sharrock and Anderson call 'contrived surprise' where:

the theorist assigns to the member of the society...the conviction that the media are neutral, and then proceeds to prove that far from being neutral, the media are cultural phenomena which are 'biased' by the assumptions, prejudices etc., of the culture in which they are imbedded. (Sharrock and Anderson, 1979: 368)

This argument is especially applicable to Playboy since neither the public nor the editors would argue that they are neutral. Indeed Hefner has, from the very first issue, ensured that his readers are well acquainted with his particular ideology and moreover that

the magazine is reflective of this ideology (see Chapter Five on the Playboy philosophy). Thus the structure of the stereotypes will primarily be explained in terms of the Playboy philosophy and not as images which aim for realistic representation. However in certain instances the Playboy world will be compared to data about the real world to provide the 'reality check' discussed in aim three below.

3. Comparing Media Content to the "Real World"

In this study the findings of the content analysis will be "...assessed against a standard taken from actuality" (Wimmer, 1983: 137) Although, as argued above, it is not expected that the images contained in the Playboy cartoons will correspond with the "real world"; such a comparison provides what Wimmer calls a reality check. However, any discussion of a correspondence or lack of it between Playboy stereotypes and the "real world" is in fact more problematic than first appears. Usage of the term media stereotype often implies that the images are false and are a product of the personal biases of the media producers (see Tuchman et al. 1978, for example). But, as Jaddou and Williams (1981) suggest, "...stereotypes are problematic ideological constructs which draw their effectiveness from the fact that they are never completely wrong" (ibid: 106). Rather, the authors go on to argue that media stereotypes do conform to a certain degree to the actual position of women in any patriarchal, capitalist society. Thus the image of women in Playboy cartoons, as exaggerated and caricatured as they may be, do have a social basis and are not merely the result of some editor's sexist bias. In this way Playboy can not be seen as some cultural aberration but rather as representing the underlying values of society. Fiske and Hartley (1978) make a similar point with respect to television when they argue that:

the world of television is clearly different from our real social world, but just as clearly related to it in some way....Television does not represent the manifest actuality of our society, but rather reflects, symbolically, the structure of values and relationships beneath the surface. (1978: 24).

Thus when trying to explain certain findings, Playboy can not be treated as a self contained whole but instead must be viewed in the context of a gender stratified society which disempowers women.

4. Assessing the Image of Particular Groups in Society

Although research into the effects of the mass media has a long and varied history, research on the image of women in the media only gained strength in the late 1960s and early 1970s when the women's movement was re-born. Tuchman et al. (1978), argue that this state of affairs is due to the fact that the academic institutions were mainly governed by men and thus gave little thought the effect of the mass media on the production and reproduction of sexist ideology. In an attempt to rectify this omission, feminist scholars have turned their attention to the image of women across a broad range of media content. In spite of this, studies concerned with how women are depicted in sex magazines are limited and tend to be focused on one issue (see Chapter One for a fuller discussion). Thus, while the literature is filled with statistics on the image of women in advertisements, daytime serials, drama and comedy shows (for a detailed account of the numerous studies carried out in this field see Fishburn, 1982), there is very little empirical work to be found on the image of women in Playboy and even less on Playboy cartoons. One key aim of this study is to add information to the broader academic field concerned with understanding the image of women in all areas of media.

5. Establishing a Starting Point for Studies of Media Effects

It needs to be stressed here again that this study only makes claims regarding the image of male and female Playboy cartoon characters and the relationship between them. This information can certainly be used as a starting point for further research into the potential effects of these images but "by itself, content analysis cannot be used to make claims about media effects" (Wimmer, 1983: 141). The final section of the thesis will suggest a number of directions which future research into effects may take. This content analysis can be compared to Gerbner and Gross' Message System Analysis which involves the "periodic analysis of large and representative aggregates of television output...as the system of messages to which total communities are exposed" (Gerbner and Gross, 1976: 181). The researchers argue that rather than guessing the nature of the television world it is necessary to conduct a long-term content analyses of this symbolic world. This message system analysis is conducted on annual samples of prime time and weekend daytime network dramatic programming by trained analysts who observe and code various aspects of television content. From these studies it is possible to build up a picture of the composition and structure of the relevant media content. The findings from the content analysis are then used as a basis for investigating the role that television plays in people's images and assumptions about violence, sex roles, health, aging and other issues (see Chapter Eight for a fuller discussion of the work of Gerbner and Gross). Thus, while the findings of the content analysis cannot be used as evidence regarding the effects of Playboy cartoons, they can be seen as providing an important empirical basis for further research into effects.

Constructing the Categories

Constructing the categories is the most important part of the content analysis for as Wimmer argues "at the heart of any content analysis is the category system used to classify media content" (1983: 147). Before such a category system can be developed, the researcher must become fully acquainted with the media under investigation. Many hours were spent inspecting issues of Playboy in order to develop categories which would capture the essence of the cartoons. In order to meet the requirements listed in the section on "Constructing Categories for Analysis" (see Chapter Four on content analysis) it was necessary to constantly refine the categories. Before the actual content analysis was undertaken, a small scale pilot study was conducted¹.

Because the content analysis attempted to go beyond the usual one dimensional nature of previous studies (see the discussion of Palmer, 1979, and Cantor, 1977, Chapter One), it was necessary to employ a large number of categories. Moreover each category was further broken down into a number of subdivisions which served to yield a more sensitive analysis of the cartoons than hitherto obtained. Each of the fifteen categories will be discussed and the subdivisions will be defined. The fifteen categories are: gender of cartoon character, major defining role of cartoon character, age of cartoon character, clothing of cartoon character, pictorial representation of body of cartoon character, sex act depicted or alluded to, heterosexual or homosexual sex act, role of cartoon character, consummation or non-consummation of sex act, type of sex act portrayed, location of sexual activity, facial expression of cartoon character, cartoon character's activity or passivity in relationship, the cartoon character is involved in an age discrepant relationship, cartoon character is involved in an adulterous affair. For each of the definitions,

¹ This small scale study was conducted with four students in a Sociology of Media class at Haifa University, Israel.

examples will be given, however since many of the cartoons in Appendix A are applicable for each definition, the maximum of three examples will be listed.

1. Gender of Cartoon Character

Given the aim of this content analysis, this category is clearly the most important. This category was also the easiest to code since Playboy so exaggerates the physical differences between women and men (see later discussion of Gender by Body) that a mistake in coding is unlikely.

2. Major Defining Role (MDR) of Cartoon Character

This category was created in order to establish the role enacted by the cartoon characters. The subdivisions within this category present the reader with information about the social status of the cartoon character and his/her relationship to the cartoon other. The original content analysis had fourteen MDR subdivisions. For the female cartoon characters these were: wedding-night wife, wife, mother, pregnant, daughter, employee/patient, employer/professional, sex partner, Women's Libber, prostitute, girlfriend, party goer/bar drinker, unacquainted, student. For the male cartoon characters the subdivisions were: wedding-night husband, husband, father, male associated with pregnant woman, son, employee, employer, sex partner, Santa Claus, prostitute's client, boyfriend, party goer/bar drinker, unacquainted, student.

The above subdivisions were selected after intensive analysis of the major roles depicted in the Playboy cartoons over a ten year period. However, after coding it was found that the number

of subdivisions was too extensive for the chi-square test to be valid² and thus a number of subdivisions were either collapsed or deleted

Collapsed Subdivisions

The wedding night wife/husband was collapsed with the wife/husband subdivision. Because the sample contained only fifteen wedding night wives and fourteen wedding night husbands, statistically significant statements were difficult to make. The important link between the previously distinct subdivisions was the marital bond and the married status of the two main cartoon characters.

Party goer/bar drinker and unacquainted were joined as there were only twenty six party goers for women and twenty one for men. The point of similarity between these two MDRs was the anonymous relationship between the cartoon characters. The depicted relationships provided no sense of history, commitment, or prior knowledge of each other.

Deleted Subdivisions

At this point in the discussion I will only list the deleted categories rather than discuss some of the conclusions which can be drawn from their small numbers. Each of the deleted subdivisions will be discussed in the sections which directly deal with the category within which the subdivision falls.

| <u>Subdivision</u> | <u>Number of cases</u> |
|--------------------|------------------------|
| Mother/father | 17 |
| Pregnancy | 3 |

² The chi-square test is not valid when 20% of the cells have expected counts of less than 5.

| | |
|-----------------|----|
| Daughter/son | 23 |
| Female employer | 17 |
| Male employee | 13 |
| Woman's libber | 3 |
| Santa Claus | 29 |
| Boy/girl friend | 43 |
| Student | 7 |

Defining and Coding the Subdivisions

After collapsing and deleting the subdivisions, five remained. These were spouse, employee/employer, sex partner, prostitute/client and unacquainted. Each of these subdivisions will be discussed in terms of their visual clues.

A. Spouse

Wedding night spouse: wedding gown, veil, morning suit, top hat, just married sign, allusion to wedding in text. Spouse: cartoon character depicted as entering home (often with own set of keys) being greeted by member of other sex. Cartoon character situated in the home involved in home centered activities such as watching television, reading the newspaper, cooking, bathing, eating with member of the other sex. The caption would often make clear that the couple were married and not just together on a date (for examples, see Appendix A, cartoons 1, 9, 17,)

B. Employer/Employee

Cartoon character is situated in an office often sitting behind a desk. Pen in hand, telephone to the ear, business charts on wall, filing cabinets against the wall, standing behind a service

desk, standing behind a shop counter. Cartoon character is dressed in uniform which denotes service employment (for examples, see Appendix A, cartoons 6, 10, 30)

C. Sex Partner

Cartoon character is involved in a sexual relationship with cartoon other (either seen or referred to) where no other relationship is discernible. Couple in bed together, rumpled bed in the background, partially dressed, clothes on the floor (for examples, see Appendix A, cartoons 8, 12, 15).

D. Prostitute/Client

Cartoon characters are exchanging sex for money. Heavily made up woman standing on street corner, a number of scantily clad women in very ornate surroundings, woman sitting behind a glass shop window. The caption often would include the proposition of sex for money (for examples, see Appendix A, cartoons 19, 31)

E. Unacquainted

Cartoon character is unacquainted with the cartoon other; there is no discernible relationship. The caption was the only source of information in coding this subdivision (for examples, see Appendix A, cartoons 3, 7, 27)

3. Age of Cartoon Character

Age was considered an important variable in the analysis since a range of expectations about behavior and attitudes, and especially sexual behavior are associated with age. The initial investigation into the age of the cartoon characters revealed specific patterns of depiction where the characters tended to fall into one of four life cycle stages. These stages were designated as: up to adolescence, young to middle age, middle to old age and old age. Although these stages were the same for women and men, the visual clues differed markedly.

Defining and Coding the Subdivisions

A. Up to Adolescence

Females: pigtails, freckles, socks, school uniform, over sized head, plump body, bows, frilly dress, children's toys (for examples, see Appendix A, cartoons 4 & 14). Males: small in size, freckles, socks, short trousers, body not developed, children's toys. (For example, see Appendix A, cartoon 22)

B. Young to Middle Age

Female: long legs, long hair, clearly drawn face, large eyes, red cheeks (for examples, see Appendix A, cartoons 8, 15, 18). Male: tall, long legs, smooth skin, full head of hair (for examples, see Appendix A, cartoons 12, 16, 18).

C. Middle to Old Age

Female: dark hair slightly grey, glasses, set hair, thick body, double chin, face drawn with only a few cartoon lines (for examples, see Appendix A, cartoons 1, 2, 21). Male: balding, rougher skin, pot belly, middle age tire, glasses (for examples see Appendix A, cartoons 1, 9, 17).

D. Old Age

Female: wrinkles, glasses, no teeth, grey hair, slumped posture (for examples, see Appendix A, cartoons 13, 20). Male: wrinkles, glasses, no teeth, bald, facial hair stubble, slumped posture (for examples, see Appendix A, cartoons 15, 20, 30).

4. Clothing of Cartoon Character

The inclusion of this category served to further our knowledge regarding the identity of the cartoon character since clothing provides visual clues relating to the financial and occupational status of the cartoon character. Moreover the clothing of the female character is a vital indicator of whether or not she is cast in the role of sex object. The five subdivisions were: conservative, conventional, seductive, partial undress and naked. The visual clues for these subdivisions however differed greatly for females and males.

Deleted Subdivisions

The original content analysis had six subdivisions however it proved necessary to delete costume for men and women. Although we had 164 cases of costume for men there were only 13 for women. For statistical reasons it was impossible to delete this category for females while leaving it in for men since the tables would not have included the same number of cells for both males and females. This would have invalidated the chi square test and distorted comparisons.

Defining and Coding the Subdivisions

A. Conservative Clothing

Female: shapeless dress, flat shoes, pearls, tweed suit (for example, see Appendix A, cartoon 2). Male: business suit, tie, starched shirt (for examples, see Appendix A, cartoons 2, 6, 19)

B. Conventional Clothing

Female: comfortable fitting and casual skirts, pants, sweaters, blouses, dresses (for examples, see Appendix, A, cartoons 1, 22, 27). Male: casual pants, shirts, sweaters, sports jacket (for examples, see Appendix A, cartoons 1, 8, 30)

C. Seductive Clothing

Female: low cut dresses and blouses, short and tight skirts, slit skirt, high heels, sexy lingerie, see-through clothing, skimpy

underwear (for examples, see Appendix A, cartoons 21, 31, 32).
Male: shirt undone to navel, tight pants, skimpy underwear,
bathrobe partially fastened (for examples, see Appendix, A,
cartoons 25 & 29)

D. Partial Undress

Female: either breasts, buttocks or vagina are visible with
some clothing on or body partially concealed from viewer (for
examples, see Appendix A, cartoons 4, 6, 25). Male: either Buttocks
or penis are visible with some clothing on or body partially
concealed from viewer (for examples, see Appendix A, cartoons 7,
12, 17,)

E. Naked

All of the body is exposed (either front or behind) and visible
to the viewer (for female examples, see Appendix A, cartoons 3, 7,
15, and for males see cartoon 15).

5. Pictorial Representation of Body of Cartoon Character

Like the clothing category, pictorial representation of the
body is particularly instructive about the role taken by the female
cartoon character. In addition, since one of the aims of this
content analysis is to compare the female and male stereotypes
depicted in Playboy, this category was an especially useful tool.
Three subdivisions were devised: realistic, idealistic and freak.

Defining and Coding the Subdivisions

A. Realistic

Cartoon character has normal body proportions (for female examples, see Appendix A, cartoons 1, 2, 27 and for males see cartoons 2, 8, 10)

B. Idealistic

Female: large breasts, small waist, round hips, long legs (for examples, see Appendix A, cartoons 4, 15, 18,). Male: muscular body, tanned, hairy chest, evidence of large penis (for examples, see Appendix A, cartoons 7, 28).

C. Freak

Female: huge breasts, very large bottom, sagging flesh, very fat, very thin (for examples see Appendix A, cartoons 3, 13, 20). Male: very fat, very thin, sagging flesh (for examples, see Appendix A, cartoon 20).

6. Sex Act Depicted or Alluded to in Cartoon

This category aimed to furnish information regarding the frequency of depicted sex in the cartoons. The two subdivisions were depicted sex and alluded to sex.

Defining and Coding the Subdivisions

A. Sex Act is Depicted in Cartoon

Couple seen involved in sexual activity either clearly or under blankets (for examples, see Appendix A, cartoons, 16, 18, 27)

B. Sex Act is Alluded to in Cartoon

Rumpled bed in the background, clothes on the floor, reference in caption to a sex act which had previously taken place or was going to take place (for examples, see Appendix A, cartoons 1, 4, 5)

7. Sex Act is Heterosexual or Homosexual

Defining and Coding the Subdivisions

A. Sex Act is Heterosexual in Nature

Cartoon character is involved in a sexual relationship with a member of the other sex (for examples, see Appendix A, cartoons 6, 7, 8)

B. Sex Act is Homosexual in Nature

Cartoon character is involved in a sexual relationship with a member of the same sex (for example, see Appendix A, cartoon 21)

8. Role of Cartoon Character

This category provides insight into the nature of the roles assigned male and female cartoon characters and the degree of passivity or activity that the two genders display. The two subdivisions were participating in the sex act and observing the sex act.

Defining and Coding the Subdivisions

A. Cartoon Character is Participating in the Sex Act

Cartoon character is depicted as actively engaged in sex, about to engage in sex or has engaged in sex. Reference is made in caption to the character's active role in a sexual relationship (for examples, see Appendix A, cartoons 4, 15, 16).

B. Cartoon Character is Observing the Sex Act

Cartoon character is observing the sex act which is taking place, has taken place or will take place. Reference is made in caption to the sex act which the cartoon character did not participate in (for examples, see Appendix A, cartoons 1, 9, 27)

9. Consummation or Non-consummation of Sex Act

The consummation category was subdivided in order to ascertain the extent of successful cartoon sex and the reasons for

its failure. Since the investigation was centered only on those cartoons which had a sexual theme, the categories dealing with sex were designed to cover all aspects of the sex act with consummation or non-consummation being an important source of information. The first subdivisions of non-consummation due to male's inability to sustain an erection or due to inadequate size of penis or due to premature ejaculation lumps together all potential forms of male sexual dysfunction. The other subdivisions are non-consummation due to female avoidance, non-consummation due to male avoidance, consummation and don't know.

Defining and Coding the Subdivisions

A. Non-consummation due to Male's Inability to Sustain an Erection or due to Inadequate Size of Penis or due to Premature Ejaculation

Because Playboy does not generally depict the penis or the ejaculate, reference to any of the above sexual dysfunctions was found in the caption (for examples, see Appendix A, cartoons 8, 12, 15)

B. Non-consummation due to Female Avoidance of Sex

Female seen as struggling against male, as running away or as being chased by the male cartoon character. Evidence of struggle includes torn clothing, broken or knocked over objects on the floor. Reference in the text to the female not wanting sex (for examples, see Appendix A, cartoons 23 & 26).

C. Non-consummation due to Male Avoidance of Sex

Same as above only male avoidance (for examples, see Appendix A, cartoons 13 & 22).

D. Consummation

Cartoon couple seen relaxing in bed smoking a cigarette, cartoon couple seen relaxing in bed both bathed in sweat, cartoon characters seen relaxing with sexually animated features (see below for description). Reference made in caption to the consummation of the sex act (for examples, see Appendix A, cartoons 1, 9, 25)

E. Don't Know

It was important to include a don't know subdivision since many of the cartoons depicted the sex in progress and hence it was impossible to judge whether or not the sex would end in consummation. In addition, some of the cartoons simply did not provide the necessary information (for examples, see Appendix A, cartoons 4, 6, 14)

10. Type of Sex Act Portrayed

This category was devised in order to investigate the variety of sexual activity depicted in the cartoons. The original category had eleven subdivisions. However, after coding it was found that this number was too extensive for the chi-square test to be valid.

It was thus necessary to collapse some subdivisions and to delete others. This resulted in the number of subdivisions being reduced to seven.

Collapsed Subdivisions

Fellatio and cunnilingus were joined as oral sex as there was only thirty eight cases of fellatio and forty nine cases of cunnilingus. Sadism receiver and sadism giver were joined as we had only twenty cases of sadism receiver and eleven cases of sadism giver for females and for males the numbers were eleven for sadism receiver and eighteen for sadism giver.

Deleted Subdivisions

Anal sex was deleted as we had only twenty cases and masturbation was similarly deleted since there was only seven cases. The significance of these small numbers will be addressed in the body of the discussion.

Defining and Coding the Subdivisions

A. Sexual Intercourse

Couple involved in standard heterosexual intercourse. Reference in the caption that this was the sex act which the cartoon characters had either done or were going to do (for examples, see Appendix A, cartoons 9, 16, 18)

B. Group Sex

More than two cartoon characters involved in some form of sexual activity. Reference in the caption that this was the sex act which the cartoon characters had either done or were going to do (for example see Appendix A, cartoon 7)

C. Oral Sex

Cartoon characters are involved in oral-genital contact. Reference in the caption that this was the sex act which the cartoon characters had either done or were going to do (for example, see Appendix A, cartoon 6)

D. Sadism

Cartoon characters are involved in sexual activity which includes the administering of pain to one of the participants. The depiction of chains, whips, leather clothing, studded clothing, spiked clothing. Reference in the caption that this was the sex act which the cartoon characters had either done or were going to do (for examples, see Appendix A, cartoons 3, 5, 17)

E. Bestiality

Cartoon character is involved in a sexual relationship with an animal or animal like creature which has the body of a human but also has horns and or a tail. Cartoon character relaxing in bed with a dog laying next to him/her. Reference in the caption that

this was the sex act which the cartoon characters had either done or were going to do (for examples, see Appendix A, cartoons, 1 & 11).

F. Exhibitionism

Here the cartoon characters are depicted as exhibiting some part of their body (see below for description) which social convention dictates be covered when not in the privacy of ones home or when socializing with people who are not close family members and/or lovers and/or friends (for examples, see Appendix A, cartoons 13, 24, 27)

G. Propositioning

Cartoon character is shown propositioning cartoon other (for examples, see Appendix A, cartoons 19, 21, 22).

11. Location of Sexual Activity

This category provides information on the place of sexual activity and the people who witness the act. The type of information serves to illustrate the ways in which sex is depicted in Playboy and is also one important determinant of the humorous potential of the sex cartoon.

Defining and Coding the Subdivisions

A. The Sex Act takes place in Public

Evidence of public places such as parks, streets, cinemas, restaurants (for examples, see Appendix A, cartoons 13, 22, 27).

B. The Sex Act takes place in Semi-private

Evidence of semi-public places such as office parties, the work place, the operating room, private parties (for examples, see Appendix A, cartoons 6, 14, 18)

C. The Sex Act takes place in Private

Evidence of a private place such as the home or motel room (for examples, see Appendix A, cartoons 8, 9, 29)

12. Facial Expression of Cartoon Character

This category provides information regarding the cartoon character's emotional response to the depicted events. This category provides the facial response while category 13 provides supplementary data with an analysis of the bodily response. The original category had ten subdivisions. However, after coding it was found that this number was too extensive for the chi-square

to be valid. It was thus necessary to collapse some categories and delete others. This resulted in the number of subdivisions being reduced to six.

Collapsed Subdivisions

Boredom was joined with despondency/despair as we had only thirty three cases for female and sixty one for male. Although boredom does differ from despondency/despair in that they express different emotional states, they both represent negative expressions and a general sense of dissatisfaction with the situation and thus can meaningfully be joined. Shock and fear were joined as not only do they tend to result in similar facial expressions but also they tended to be interchangeable in the cartoons as it was not always clear which facial expression was being displayed. The thirty one female fear cases were joined to the one hundred and seventy seven shock cases and the ten male cases were joined to the one hundred and sixty three shock cases.

Deleted Subdivisions

The disgusted expression was deleted as there were only twelve cases and embarrassed was deleted due to the low number of thirty one cases.

Defining and Coding the Subdivisions

A. Cartoon Character Expresses Anger

Red face, flared nostrils, mouth closed and teeth clenched, strongly marked frown, protruding eyes (see Darwin, 1872). (For examples, see Appendix A, cartoons 6, 8, 13)

B. Cartoon Character Expresses Sexual Animation

Drooling mouth, protruding eyes are half closed, flushed face, bright red lips, half open mouth (for examples, see Appendix A, cartoons 9, 18, 25)

C. Cartoon Character Expresses Happiness

Large smiling eyes, wide smiling mouth, open arms (for example, see Appendix A, cartoons 4, 7, 13)

D. Cartoon Character Expresses Boredom/Resignation or Despondency/Despair

Eyes rolled upwards, set mouth, bland face, eyelids drooping, lips, cheek, lower jaw all sink downwards from their own weight (Darwin, 1872). (For examples, see Appendix A, cartoons 10 & 12)

E. Cartoon Character Expresses Shock and/or Fear

Eyebrows raised, mouth open, eyes open wide, wings of nostrils dilated, hair standing up on end, retreat and pulling back of features and limbs (Darwin, 1872). (For examples, see Appendix A, cartoons 16, 22, 23).

E. Cartoon Character Expresses Innocence

Wide vacant eyes, non-sexual wide mouth, raised eyebrows (for examples, see Appendix A, cartoons 4 & 14)

13. Cartoon Character's Activity or Passivity in Relationship

One important factor often omitted in content analysis studies of cartoons is data concerning the mood and motives of cartoon characters. In the cartoons under investigation these features can be conceptualized on a continuum between 'seducing' through 'willing' and 'resigned' to 'preventing' the sex act. The two extremes represent an active attitude to the relationship while the two intermediary subdivisions are evidence of passivity.

Defining and Coding the Subdivisions

A. Cartoon Character is Active in Seducing the Partner(s)

Cartoon character is removing clothes of cartoon other, is chasing cartoon other, is exposing part of body to other. Reference in text to seduction (for examples, see Appendix A, cartoons 13, 14, 16).

B. Cartoon Character is a Willing and Equal Participant

Cartoon character exhibits expression of happiness and/or sexual animation. Reference in text to willingness (for examples, see Appendix A, cartoons 7, 18, 25).

C. Cartoon Character is Resigned to Participating in Sex Act

Cartoon character exhibits expression of boredom/resignation or innocence (see above). Body is lifeless, lifeless expression on face (for examples, see Appendix A, cartoons 10 & 14)

D. Cartoon Character is Active in Attempting to Prevent Sex Act

Expression of fear and/or shock. Cartoon character is running away. Evidence of struggle such as torn clothing and broken objects on floor. Reference in text to cartoon character's unwillingness to participate in the sex act (for examples, see Appendix A, cartoons 13, 22, 23)

14. Cartoon Character is Involved in an Age Discrepant Relationship

This category together with the age of cartoon characters furnishes the reader with information regarding the age stereotype employed in Playboy cartoons. It also provides a useful tool for the comparison of male and female stereotypes. The original content analysis schema had four subdivisions. However, after coding it was found that this number was too extensive for

the chi-square test to be valid since there were only a small number of cases which fell into this category. This resulted in the number of subdivisions being reduced to two.

Collapsed Subdivisions

The young woman/man involved in relationship with older man/woman relative was joined with the young woman/man involved in relationship with older man/woman as there were only nineteen cases of sex between relatives.

Defining and Coding the Subdivisions

A. Cartoon Character is Involved in Relationship with Older Partner

See age subdivisions for coding clues (for examples, see Appendix A, cartoons 4, 6, 22)

B. Cartoon Character is Involved in Relationship with Younger Partner (see same examples as above).

See age subdivisions for coding clues

15. Cartoon Character is Involved in an Adulterous Relationship

This category serves to illustrate the ways in which marriage and the marital bond is depicted in the Playboy cartoons. The discovery of an adulterous relationship by a spouse also contains many humorous possibilities.

Defining and Coding the Subdivisions

A. Cartoon Character is Betraying Spouse

Cartoon character is discovered in bed with a partner by fully clothed spouse. Cartoon character is seen in a sexual relationship with a partner while making reference to a spouse (seen or unseen). (For examples, see Appendix A, cartoons 1, 9, 30).

B. Cartoon Character is Betrayed by Spouse

Cartoon character is entering room where the adulterous sex is taking place. Cartoon character exhibits shock and/or anger. Reference in text to the adultery (see same examples as above)

16. Changes Over Time

In addition to examining the structure of the Playboy cartoon stereotypes, this study aimed to investigate changes which might have taken place over the ten year period. The original aim was to compare the image of male and female stereotypes across the individual years. However, due to the sparse groupings within

cells, it was necessary to group individual years together. The resultant groups are as follows: Group 1. 1970-71, Group 2. 1972-73, Group 3. 1974-75, Group 4. 1976-77, and Group 5. 1978-79. These changes turned out to be useful since five subdivisions proved more manageable and made for a more succinct presentation and analysis.

Conceptualizing the Categories

As mentioned above, the aim of the category system was to build up a multi-dimensional picture of the fantasy world of Playboy cartoons. To this end, the individual categories can be seen as each contributing some piece of information which illustrates a particular segment of the Playboy world. The segments can be classified in the following way.

1. Personal Characteristics of the Cartoon Characters

Here categories 1,2,3,4,and 5 join to build up a picture of the cartoon character. Gender, social status, age, clothing and body shape of a person are key indicators of the social position of a person. From this knowledge we build up a whole array of expectations which serve to guide our interactions. As we will see later, much of the humor in Playboy cartoons is concerned with inverting these expectations.

2. Nature and Satisfaction Level of Sex Act

Since this content analysis was concerned only with Playboy sex cartoons a number of categories were developed which aimed

to elicit information regarding different aspects of the depicted sex. Categories 6,7,8,9,10 and 11 provide data on the type of sex shown, the satisfaction level of the sex, the location of the sex and the role of the cartoon character in that sex. By examining different dimensions of the sex act we construct a more thorough picture than that presented in other studies which have investigated the content of cartoons in pornographic magazines (for example see Palmer, 1979; Matacin, 1987).

3. Expressive Behavior of the Cartoon Character.

In order to capture the cartoon character's behavior in the depicted sex, two different categories were devised. Categories 12 and 13 furnish information regarding the facial expression and body expression which taken together, give clues as to the cartoon character's moods and motives.

4. Perceived Relationship Between the Cartoon Characters.

Categories 14 and 15 serve to extend our knowledge of the depicted Playboy world by providing information on the respective ages of the cartoon characters and the way in which marriage is depicted in the cartoon world.

The Sample

The sample consisted of some 1,400 cartoons containing 2,412 cartoon characters. The cartoons were drawn from 100 issues of

Playboy out of a possible 120 issues for the years 1970-79³ (see appendix B for months). The main protagonist of each sex only was coded. Only those cartoons which had a sexual theme (approximately 65%) were used.

The following chapter discusses the findings of the study and seeks to analyze the advantages and disadvantages of content analysis as a method for investigating the visual depictions of femininity and masculinity found in Playboy sex cartoons.

³ The decision to focus on the years 1970-1979 was based mainly on Miller's (1984) claim that by the early 1970s, the format for Playboy magazine was well established.

Chapter Seven

Discussion of Findings

This chapter provides a systematic description and analysis of the results of the content analysis. For the sake of clarity each independent variable will be dealt with separately and a discussion of the cross-tabulations will follow. The independent variables are: gender, major defining role, age and adultery. Of special interest here is the ways in which the findings relate to problems two, three and seven on the Checklist developed in Chapter One. For each of the independent variables, the analysis is specifically concerned with the differences between female and male cartoon characters for as Kuhn (1985) argues, the primary feature of pornography is to highlight the differences between women and men by focussing on what it sees as the signifiers of sexual difference: genitals, breasts, buttocks. While Kuhn addresses these differences only in terms of photographic techniques employed (such as using close-up shots of female genitalia), this content analysis goes one step further and seeks to uncover the vast array of graphic and situational methods used by Playboy cartoonists to disseminate the message that women as a group occupy a very different social, economic and sexual position to men. While it is clear that this position is one of subordination and exploitation what is less apparent is the ways in which this message is reinforced again and again and thus the overriding aim of this project is to articulate the sexist ideology enmeshed within Playboy cartoons.

Gender of Cartoon Character

Of the 2,412 cartoon characters coded, 1,249 (51.8%) were female and 1,163 (48.2%) were male. The fairly equal distribution of males and females in Playboy sex cartoons is a sign that much of the humor deals with the interaction between the sexes. This is to be expected given that a common feature of the cartoons was some form of heterosexual activity. Indeed, Urry (1990), has stated that in the main she looks for cartoons which have an emphasis on heterosexual sex. Where only one sex was depicted, the humor was often contained in the captions with the cartoon protagonist relating the events of the sex act to the cartoon others(s) of the same sex. Thus, while not being depicted, the essence of the humor still focused on the sexual activity between women and men.

Gender and the Major Defining Role (MDR) of the Cartoon Character

Table 1

Gender by MDR (percentages)

| | spouse | employee | employer | sex partner | prostit. /client | unaqntd. | |
|--------|--------|----------|----------|-------------|------------------|----------|--------|
| Female | 17.6 | 9.8 | deleted | 51.2 | 5.9 | 15.5 | n=1181 |
| Male | 18.1 | deleted | 11.2 | 49.3 | 4.9 | 16.5 | n=1077 |

$\chi^2 = 240.2$ DF=5 $p < .05$

As previously argued in the discussion of the categories, the original MDR subdivisions of female employer and male employee had to be deleted due to the small number of cases. One explanation for these numbers is that Playboy's depictions are merely reflective of the present position of women in society. However, as will be argued throughout the body of the discussion, Playboy is not so much in the business of reflecting reality but rather presents its own caricature brand of widely current sexist stereotypes. One such stereotype is that women are sexually subordinate to men and that they exist merely for the sexual desire of men. Thus women are often depicted as sexual toys for males. In the workplace, they are portrayed not as workers but as sexual playthings, providing not productive services but light relief from work. This argument is reinforced by further analysis of the female employee subdivision which shows that 52% were seductively dressed, 30% partially undressed and 5% naked. Thus some 87% of female employees were dressed (or undressed) in a manner quite inappropriate for work, but appropriate for sexual *play*.

The number of cases for female employee (n=116) and male employer (n=121) were also quite low which suggests that occupational roles are fairly insignificant in the Playboy world of cartoons. The finding that MDRs are overwhelmingly shown outside the occupational sphere is in keeping with the hedonistic, leisure orientated Playboy ideology previously discussed.

A further insight into the cartoon world of Playboy is the nature of the three deleted subdivisions of mother/father, female pregnant/male with female who is pregnant and daughter/son. The small numbers found in each of these subdivisions suggest that Playboy cartoons do not tend to portray long-standing, intimate relationships which have emotional ties. This is indeed borne out by the finding that that the single largest subdivision was sex partner which was defined as involving a sexual relationship where no other relationship is discernible. It appears therefore that we are dealing with transient, temporary relationships with

no sense of history, commitment or obligation. Although the second single largest subdivision was spouse, which suggests some long-term relationship, further analysis found that 71% of all married cartoon characters were either betraying or being betrayed by their spouse (see later discussion of adultery).

Changes Over Time (p<.05)

The biggest change over time was found in the unacquainted subdivision which declined from 23% of all subdivisions in years 1970-71 to 9% in years 1972-73. There then followed fluctuations but the highest level reached by this subdivision was 15% in the years 1978-79. There was also a slight decline in prostitution from 7.5% of all subdivisions in the years 1970-71 to (with fluctuations) 2.5% in the years 1978-79. Of all the subdivisions in this category, unacquainted and prostitute are the most depersonalized in that there is no enduring relationship between the cartoon characters. We could say therefore that Playboy, from the years 1970-71, began to depict slightly more personalized sex in that the characters did know each other and tended to have regular contact. This is borne out by increases in the somewhat more personalized subdivisions of wives and employees¹. Wives increased from 14% in the years 1970-71 to 20% in the years 1972-3 and remained steady through the years. Employees jumped from 7% in the years 1970-71 to 13% in the following years. Similar trends were found for males.

It would appear therefore that the major change years were between 1970-1 and 1972-3. As we shall see in subsequent discussions of the data, these years were also main change years for the category sex in progress or sex alluded to where the former increased over the years. Findings also revealed an

¹ The employee/employer subdivision is considered more personalized since the fact that they work together suggests some form of on-going relationship.

increase in the percentage of characters participating in sex as opposed to observing as well as an increase in consummation, partial nudity and nudity. To sum up the changes in the years between 1970-73, it can be argued that sex was brought more into the home and the office and thus imbued with a somewhat more personalized quality. Also actual scenes of sex were depicted more often and less female clothing was in evidence and thus there was more full frontal nudity.

When looking for possible explanations for these changes it is obviously impossible to point to a single social factor as the change agent in Playboy's depictions. I would argue however that that given the reliance on advertising, circulation is a major consideration in editorial policy. As discussed previously, Hefner personally supervised the choice of cartoons and it is my contention that Hefner's choice changed between the years 1970-73 due to one significant factor, that is, serious competition from Penthouse.

In the summer of 1969, the New York Times, the Chicago Tribune and the Los Angeles Times all carried full page advertisements showing the Playboy bunny in the cross hair sights of a rifle. Underneath was the caption "We're going rabbit hunting" (Miller, 1984: 182). This was an advertisement for Penthouse magazine which would be on the newsstands in the U.S.A. from September of that year. According to Miller, at first the news was greeted with some amusement on the part of the Playboy staff. Playboy in 1969 had a circulation of 4,500,000 monthly, a figure totally unmatched by competitors. Sicilian born Robert Guccione, the editor-publisher of Penthouse magazine, aimed to topple Playboy from the number one slot by making his magazine more daring and explicit.

Penthouse started with a circulation of 350,000. By February 1970 this figure had grown to 500,000. Miller argues that one major reason for such an increase was Penthouse's picture displays of women which included pubic hair. Playboy meanwhile continued to resist showing pubic hair and instead focused on

what they called the "girl next door look".

By the end of 1970, Penthouse's circulation had reached 1,500,000. Hefner decided that he could no longer ignore Guccione and there "...began a contest between Hefner and Guccione to see who could produce the raunchier magazine" (Miller, 1984: 194). When Penthouse came out with the first full frontal centerfold in August 1971, Playboy followed suit in January 1972. This change in policy must be seen as having some success for by September 1972, Playboy broke all previous circulation records by selling 7,012,000 copies. By 1973 however, Playboy's circulation began to decline while Penthouse's was increasing. Miller argues that what followed could only be defined as an all out circulation war fought over who could produce the most daring pictures. However Miller argues that by the end of 1974 the war had come to an end and "Hefner conceded the contest... and sent a memo round saying that Playboy would get back to what it knew best, and thereafter forbear to compete for readers primarily interested in looking at gynaecologically detailed pictures of girls" (Miller, 1984: 204).

It appears that the editorial policy to make Playboy keep up with its competitor, Penthouse, was applied also to the cartoon section for, as previously suggested, cartoon editorial policy is usually closely tied in with general editorial policy. Although the war came to an end in 1974, findings suggest that Playboy maintained rather than increased its explicit depictions. As the other variables are examined, it will become clear that the years 1970-1 and 1972-3 were indeed major change years since in these years Playboy became decidedly more 'raunchy'.

Gender and the Age of the Cartoon Character

Table 2

Gender by Age (percentages)

| | up to adol. | young/ middle | middle/ old | old | |
|--------|----------------|------------------|----------------|-----|--------|
| Female | 3.5 | 81.4 | 11.9 | 3.2 | n=1248 |
| Male | 2.2 | 43.2 | 45.4 | 9.2 | n=1163 |

$$X^2 = 420.3 \quad DF = 3 \quad P < .05$$

Female cartoon characters were concentrated in the young to middle age subdivision whereas male characters were more evenly distributed between the young/middle and middle/old subdivisions. Because the cartoons which were coded had a sexual theme, it could be suggested that Playboy in the main views younger women as more sexually desirable than older women. This observation is further borne out by the finding that 61.5% of middle to old women were depicted as having a realistic body whereas only 15.4% of young to middle age women were so depicted (Table 26). Thus it appears that once women age they become, according to Playboy, asexual. Women undergo yet another change with the onset of old age for they then turn into freaks (77.5% of old women were freaks) (Table 26) and sexually frustrated and rampant (84.2% were seducing) (Table 30). When coding, it became clear that Playboy had one major caricature of old females which appeared at regular intervals (drawn always by the same cartoonist, Buck Brown) usually as the last cartoon towards the end of the issue (see also Posner, 1975). The same can not be said

for old men since Playboy depicted a number of different caricatures for men.

The large number of females who fall into the young /middle category is a sign of Playboy's rigid stereotyping of women. The vast majority of women fell into this category because women are depicted in the cartoons as sex toys for men and for Playboy this dictates that they be youthful. Hefner himself has argued that youthful females are more desirable since "...a shapely firm young face and body are more attractive sexually and aesthetically than bulges, sags and wrinkles" (interview with Hugh Hefner in Playboy, January 1974: 68)

Playboy male characters, in comparison, are not rigidly stereotyped according to age but rather are evenly distributed throughout the age ranges with no particular stereotype linked to a specific age range. A male's importance and sexual attractiveness is not defined in terms of his youth and thus males are not relegated to obscurity with the onset of bulges, sags and wrinkles. On a more general level, males in Playboy do not have one function, that is, sexual desirability but rather have a number of roles such as doctor, boss, and husband and within these roles they play out their sexual role. A good example here is the role of employer were 75% of males were dressed either conservatively or conventionally, modes of dress which are acceptable for the workplace. If we contrast this with females however, we find that 87% were either dressed seductively, partially or undressed, modes of dress which clearly suggest that work is not the main activity for females in the work place. The comparison highlights the argument that there is a diversity of roles available to male cartoon characters, whereas female cartoon characters are predominantly cast in the role of sex object. This argument is indeed applicable to the image of women in pornography in general for as Kuhn has suggested "the pornographic image constructs the woman's sex as...object of a masculine gaze" (1985: 40).

These differences in age distribution for males and females

also impact upon the power relationship between the cartoon characters. Males by being older carry the dual power of being older and being male while females carry the dual subordination of being female and younger.

Changes Over Time (p>0.5)

Neither the female or male tables were statistically significant. The data did however reveal a consistent direction of change over time which is worth noting. In the years 1970-71, 49% of all males fell into the middle/old subdivision with a slow decline to 38% in the years 1978-79. This change is mainly accounted for by a slow increase in the old subdivision. In the years 1970-71, 6% of all males were old and by 1978-79 this had reached 16%. This suggests a slight trend over time to portray older and older males as potential sex partners for younger women. The lack of fluctuations over time for females is seen as evidence to support the claim that Playboy editorial policy on the stereotype of females is stable and precise. Playboy cartoons paint a fantasy world where men of any age have a readily available supply of females in the youthful phases of the life-cycle.

Gender and the Clothing of the Cartoon Character

Table 3

Gender by Clothes (percentages)

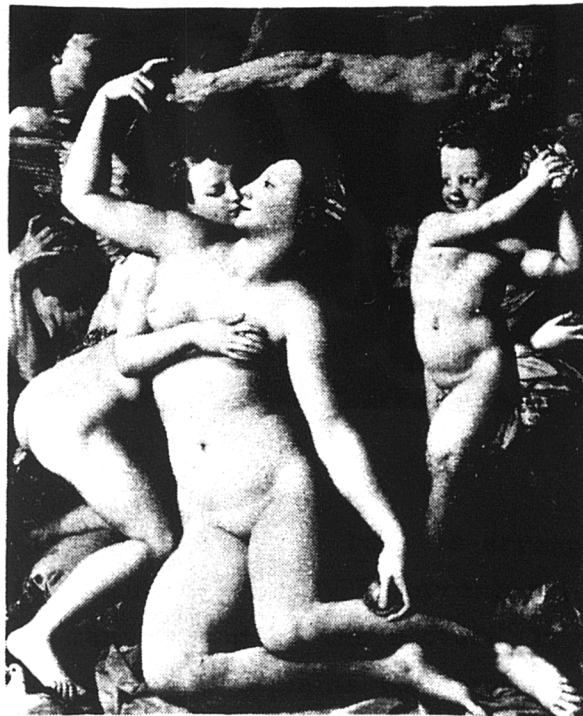
| | conserv. | convent. | seductive | partial undress | naked | |
|--------|----------|----------|-----------|-----------------|-------|--------|
| Female | 3.3 | 9.9 | 38.6 | 40.9 | 7.3 | n=1236 |
| Male | 28.1 | 32.5 | 6.6 | 32.1 | 0.7 | n=1161 |

$$X^2 = 675 \quad DF = 4 \quad P < .05$$

The majority of females (86.8%) fell into those subdivisions (seductive, partial undress, naked) which were most suitable for sexual play. Thus once again the female roles were essentially reduced to one i.e. the sexual. 86.8% of female cartoon characters were garbed in a manner which circumscribed their activity, for being portrayed in a sexual manner precludes being taken seriously any other role they may perform. When coding it became apparent that a recurring mode of dress for female in the seductive and partial undress categories was 'sexy' underwear. By being clothed in such a manner the females displays her intentions to the male cartoon character and moreover as Kuhn has argued "frilly underwear..in...pornography functions as a cultural marker of femininty-as-sexuality" (1985:32). The males were not similarly limited in dress for over 60% were portrayed in those subdivisions (conservative or conventional) which allows them to fulfill any number of roles. What we will find as the discussion continues is that males tended to be suitably dressed

or undressed depending upon the context. Thus while in the office, males were conservatively dressed, when in the bar conventionally dressed and when in bed, partially naked.

For females the determining factor for clothing was not so much the context of the cartoon scene but rather her gender. This point is illustrated by John Berger's arguments in Ways of Seeing (1972). Berger discusses the painting "Allegory of Time and Love" by Bronzino. The picture below (figure 1) shows Cupid kissing Venus.



Source: Berger (1972: 54)

Berger argues that the way Venus' body is arranged has nothing to do with their kissing. Her body is arranged in the way it is to display it to the man looking at the picture. It is my claim that such a description of Venus explains the depiction of female cartoon characters. While at first sight the depiction of a naked woman may seem context irrelevant since the context of the cartoon does not require the female cartoon character to be unclothed, if we apply Berger's argument, then the depiction seems less out of context for the female is displayed for the male

Playboy reader.

Moreover this explains why male depictions tend to be context relevant. We are not dealing with male displays which means that when a male is partially undressed or naked, he is so because the cartoon context requires it. This point can also go some way to explaining why 7.3% of females were naked as compared to only 0.7% of males.

Changes Over Time ($p < .05$)

For females there was no change over time in the conservative and conventional subdivisions but in the seductive subdivision there was a change from 47% to of all females being seductively dressed in the years 1970-71 to 38% in the years 1972-73 and a drop to 33% in the years 1978-79. With this change came a change in partial undress from 35% in the years 1970-71 to 46% in the years 1972-73 and then slight fluctuations. For nudity there was also an overall increase from 4% in the years 1970-71 to 13% in the years 1978-79. It would seem that as the years progressed there was a trend in Playboy to move away from the suggested toward the more obvious.

For males there was a similar trend with partial nudity increasing from 23% in the years 1970-71 to an all time high in the years 1976-77 of 33%. This change was mainly accounted for by a decrease in conservative dress from 27% in the years 1970-71 to 17% in the years 1976-77. It would appear that changes in male dress tended to mirror those in female dress.

Gender and the Pictorial Representation of the Cartoon Character's
Body

Table 4

Gender by Body (percentages)

| | realistic | idealistic | freak | |
|--------|-----------|------------|-------|--------|
| Female | 21.9 | 73.6 | 4.5 | n=1249 |
| Male | 95.6 | 1.5 | 2.9 | n=1161 |

$$X^2 = 1380.2 \quad DF = 2 \quad P < .05$$

Nearly three-quarters (73.6%) of the cartoon depictions of women conforms to the caricature stereotype of the idealistic female while a very large majority of men (95.6%) were depicted realistically. This is probably the single most striking piece of evidence in support of the objectification of female cartoon characters in purely sexual terms. The pictorial representation of the female is so caricatured that we instantly read large breasts, curvaceous hips and protruding bottoms as symbols of sexual intent and/or availability. These symbols convey to the reader that the role of the female in the cartoon is a sexual one; she is there to provide sexual services. The cartoon editor of Playboy, Michelle Urry (1990), has stated that Playboy prefers the female cartoon characters to have "luscious bodies" and that she will often send the cartoon back to the cartoonists if he fails to depict the female in this way. It is important to note here that the emphasizing of female breasts and buttocks is a convention adopted in pornographic pictorials in general to the point that Kuhn (1985) has argued this is now a defining feature of

pornography. Thus the drawings in cartoons have much in common with the rest of the photographed imagery in Playboy and should therefore be seen as fitting in with the overall construction of femininity in the magazine. So far we have the image of the Playboy female cartoon character as young, sexily-clothed and idealistically depicted whereas the male is more likely to be young to old, fully-clothed and realistically drawn. The majority of female freaks can be accounted for by the old woman caricature previously discussed. She was portrayed in a ridiculed manner with large drooping breasts, knock-knees and a scrawny body. Further analysis shows that whereas 77.5% of old females were depicted as freaks, only 10.3% of old males were so depicted (Tables 26 & 27).

Changes Over Time ($p > .05$)

No significant changes over time were found for males and females, thus suggesting a stable editorial policy with respect to pictorial representations.

Gender and the Depicted or Alluded to Sex Act in the Cartoon

Table 5

Gender by Sex Act Depicted or Alluded To (percentages)

| | depicted | alluded | |
|--------|----------|---------|--------|
| Female | 64.7 | 35.3 | n=1249 |
| Male | 66.7 | 33.3 | n=1163 |

$$\chi^2 = 1.1 \quad DF = 1 \quad P > .05$$

The data revealed no significant differences between male and female characters which is to be expected given that in most cases the same cartoon was coded. The overall high percentage of cartoons which depicted sex could be due to the lack of depicted sex elsewhere in the magazine. The cartoon, with its caricatural graphics and emphasis on humor, allows for more overt depictions of sex than those found in the pictorials. This relates to problem seven on the Checklist in that the cartoon is being used as a covert form of communication. Under the guise of humor the cartoons can depict scenes of sexual activity which if shown in the pictorials would result in the magazine being classed with the hard-core publications. Moreover, the actual depiction of sex has more humorous possibilities than merely alluded to sex.

Changes Over Time (p<.05)

The results for females and males were similar and therefore for the sake of clarity I will focus on the female data. The major change was between the years 1970-71 and 1972-73. The depicted sex increased from 49% of all cases to 82% of all cases. After these years there were fluctuation but the average percent of depicted sex was considerably higher than 1970-71 at 68%. The years 1970-73 were the major battle years with Penthouse and the data illustrates the argument that Hefner decided to make the magazine more 'raunchy' during this period. In 1974 when the war came to an end the incidence of depicted sex in the cartoons decreased to 62%. This is not surprising since Hefner was not "...a crusader....He carefully towed the line of acceptability....Text was edited to be sexually less explicit" (Weyr, 1978: 35). It appears that depicted sex in cartoons fell under the heading of explicit and thus Hefner used his editorial powers to bring the cartoons into line with a more toned down version of Playboy magazine following the end of the 'pubic wars'.

Gender and the Homosexual or Heterosexual Nature of the Sex Act

Table 6

Gender by Homosexual or Heterosexual Sex (percentages)

| | hetero. | homo. | |
|--------|---------|-------|--------|
| Female | 98.6 | 1.4 | n=1248 |
| Male | 98.5 | 1.5 | n=1162 |

$$X^2 = .04 \quad DF= 1 \quad P>.05$$

The overwhelming majority of cases were heterosexual. This at first sight may seem strange as homosexuality is a common theme of many jokes. Despite the liberal stance that Playboy editorials take towards homosexuality, cartoon humor on the subject is markedly restricted. Also Playboy is an aggressively heterosexual magazine and one would expect the editorials, pictures, jokes and cartoons to reflect this. Homosexuality is thus not a general topic of interest in the magazine. This finding underlies the earlier argument concerning the consonance between editorial values and the values expressed through cartoons (problem two on the Checklist). Given the energetically heterosexual character of Playboy combined with its determinedly liberal stance, it is not surprising that homosexuality figures so little in the cartoons. If there is one thing that Playboy knows for sure about their regular readers, it is that they are not gay. In addition, Playboy is concerned about upsetting the Gay Rights Lobby and feels that cartoons depicting homosexual activity may cause controversy also with its heterosexual readers (Urry, 1990).

Changes Over Time (p>.05)

No significant changes between 1970-79 were found thus suggesting a stable editorial policy.

Gender and the Cartoon Character's Participation in or Observing
of the Sex Act

Table 7

Gender by Participating in or Observing the Sex Act (percentages)

| | Particip | Observ. | |
|--------|----------|---------|--------|
| Female | 88.4 | 11.6 | n=1246 |
| Male | 83.8 | 16.2 | n=1160 |

$$X^2 = 10.9 \quad DF = 1 \quad P < .05$$

The vast majority of both male and females were participating in the sex act. The slightly higher participating rates of females could be partially explained in terms of the higher number of wives betraying their husbands (see discussion of adultery). The overall high percentage rate can be explained in similar terms to the high rate of depicted sex, that is, there is more room for humor in depicted sex.

Changes Over Time (p>.05)

No significant changes between 1970-79 were found thus suggesting a stable editorial policy.

Gender and the Consummation or Non-consummation of Sex Act

Table 8

Gender by Consummation or Non-consummation of Sex Act
(percentages)

| | non-consm due to inability to sust. erect./ inadeq. penis or prem. ejac. | non-consm due to female avoid. of sex | non-consm due to male avoid. of sex | consum. | cartoon did not give enough info. | |
|--------|--|---|---|---------|--|--------|
| Female | 2.7 | 6.2 | 4.8 | 41.3 | 45.0 | n=1248 |
| Male | 2.9 | 6.4 | 5.3 | 37.9 | 47.5 | n=1162 |

$$\chi^2 = 10.9 \quad DF=4 \quad P<.05$$

A large number of cases could not be coded because the cartoon did not give enough information concerning consummation. This was usually due to the depicted sex being in progress. Consummation was the next largest subdivision with the remaining subdivisions which deal with sexual dysfunction and the Wish to avoid sex containing quite small numbers. What this shows is that sexual dysfunction is a subject more appropriate to the serious sections of the magazine, whilst avoidance of sex is clearly a minority pattern, the very opposite of the heterosexuality that Playboy conceives as the norm.

Changes Over Time (p<.05)

The results for the females and males were similar and therefore for the sake of clarity I will focus on the female data. The only interesting change was the jump in consummation from 34.5% in the years 1970-71 to 44% in the years 1972-73. It then stayed fairly stable till it reached the years 1978-79 and jumped to 50.6%. Some of this change can be accounted for by the increase in the percentage of sex acts in progress between the years 1970-73. If the sex act is actually in progress it is more likely that one will be able to judge consummation and therefore have less 'don't knows'. This actually did occur as 'don't knows' fell from 51.5% in the years 1970-1 to 41.4% in 1972-73 and then remained fairly stable.

Gender and the Type of Sex Act

Table 9

Gender by Type of Sex Act (percentages)

| | sexual inter- course | group sex | oral sex | sadism | bestial. | exhib. | prop. | |
|--------|----------------------------|--------------|----------|--------|----------|--------|-------|--------|
| female | 58.3 | 12.2 | 3.7 | 2.5 | 4.4 | 8.6 | 10.3 | n=1231 |
| male | 60.5 | 11.7 | 3.7 | 2.5 | 2.2 | 8.4 | 11.0 | n=1138 |

$$\chi^2 = 9.3 \quad DF = 6 \quad P < .05$$

As mentioned previously, the subdivisions of anal sex and masturbation had to be removed due to the small number of cases. At first sight, the small number of cases may seem strange given its occurrence in the general population. Kinsey (1948 & 1953) found that 92% of males and 58% of females had masturbated at least once in their life. Over twenty years later, Hunt (1974)² had

² The Playboy survey "Sexual Behavior in the 1970s" was discussed by Morton Hunt in the October 1973 issue. The Playboy Foundation retained the Research Guild Inc., an independent marketing survey and research organization, to conduct the fieldwork with a representative sample of urban and suburban adults throughout the U.S.A. The research guild developed questionnaires of more than 1,000 items with which it examined the background, sex education, attitudes towards sexual practices and complete sex histories of respondents. They argue that the sample collected in 24 cities closely parallels the composite of the adult American population. The sample included 982 men and 1044 women.

similar findings with 94% of males and 63% of female masturbating at least once. Moreover the frequency per year was found to be for males 52 and for females 37. However this discrepancy is best understood not in terms of the cartoons distorting reality but rather as illustrating the limits imposed by the cartoon frame. Masturbation is mainly a solitary activity and therefore does not require a social relationship for its enactment. The humorous possibilities are thus limited since most of the humor in Playboy cartoons are based on the simple and direct form of humor arising from the interaction of two or more people.

This latter point also goes some way toward explaining why sexual intercourse was the leading form of depicted sexual activity. Cartoons have to get their 'message' over to the reader using limited resources. This is especially true of the single frame cartoons coded here since they do not allow for a sequence of events. Sexual intercourse is not a sex act that needs much explanation or artistic skill as would, for example, anal sex. Because it is easily readable, sexual intercourse allows other elements of the cartoon scene or characters, such as adultery, age discrepant relationships or office sex to form the core of the humor. It is possible that depictions of less orthodox sexual activities tend to restrict the joke to the activity (e.g. bestiality) itself, crowding out other humorous possibilities. Intercourse presents a more open scenario.

Another possible reason for the small number of less orthodox sex acts is that Playboy, similar to all profit making magazines, relies on advertising revenue for its very existence. Weyr (1978) points to the problems Playboy encountered in its first years of publication as many of the large advertisers were reluctant to advertise with a magazine felt to be on the sidelines of respectability. Clearly Playboy had to establish itself as a mainstream magazine and once having attracted the large-scale advertisers, it needed to maintain their orders. It could be argued

therefore that reliance on advertising revenue serves to restrict in some sense, the content of Playboy cartoons, providing a pressure towards the exclusion of more alternative sexual practices.

A further explanation can be found in Playboy's desire to be seen as a serious, respectable magazine which could attract the educated reader (Weyr, 1978). Indeed one of the major aims of Augustus Comte Spectorisky (the Senior Editor Of Playboy during the 60s and 70s) was to put Playboy on the intellectual map. Weyr argues that the 1960s was a period of change for Playboy in the direction of becoming "...more sober, intellectually curious and striving for excellence" (Weyr, 1978: 88). It was at this time that Spectorisky was given overall power to improve the non-fiction section and as Weyr argues, "Spectorisky made his tastes and interests felt" (ibid). It is suggested that this general shift in the Playboy articles was bound to impact on other areas of the magazine for the magazine was put together as a package, each section being compatible with the other (Weyr, ibid). It is evident therefore that cartoons showing less conventional sex acts would be out of place in a magazine that included high-level discussions of politics, music and the civil rights movement. Thus while Playboy cartoons endorse sexual diversity, limits are set by editorial policy and this prevents the exploration of the 'outer limits' of sexual activity by the cartoons.

Changes Over Time (p<.05)

The only clear pattern of change was found to be propositioning which declined for females from 16.5% in the years 1970-71 to 6.8% in the years 1978-9. For males the decline was from 18.8% in the years 1970-71 to 6.1% in the years 1978-79. This change can be seen as linked to the changes discussed previously regarding the the increase in the more personalized subdivisions of wives and employees and the decrease in the least personalized

of all subdivisions, that is unacquainted. This is due to the strong connection found between the subdivision of unacquainted and propositioning, for 36% of unacquainted were involved in propositioning (see discussion of Major Defining Role by Sex Act.)

Gender and the Location of the Sex Activity

Table 10

Gender by Location of Sexual Activity (percentages)

| | public | semi-private | private | |
|--------|--------|--------------|---------|--------|
| Female | 16.3 | 36.8 | 46.9 | n=1222 |
| Male | 15.8 | 36.6 | 47.6 | n=1143 |

$$X^2 = .13 \quad DF = 2 \quad P > .05$$

The figures were very similar for female and male cases which is not surprising since the same cartoon was being coded for both. The discrepancies that do exist in the male and female numbers within each subdivision is due to (1) in some cases only one cartoon character was depicted talking to a cartoon other who was out of sight and (2) the cartoon other was an animal. Although the largest single category was private location, the finding that over half of all sex acts took place in either semi-private or public locations suggest that the radical nature of Playboy cartoons lies not so much in the type of sex act depicted but rather in the actual setting in which the sex occurs. The semi-private location usually fell into two categories, the office or

the party, both of which contain a number of humorous possibilities for the cartoon characters could be disturbed at any time. Once again the humor can be found in inverting customary expectations for the reader does not expect to find sexual activity occurring in the office. In the Playboy world of cartoons, all interpersonal relationships are sexualized, for example, the secretary/boss relationship, the minister/church goer relationship, the doctor/client relationship. Of course to make sense to the reader, the cartoon activity has to be recognizable as possible and thus Playboy does not invent these scenarios but rather typifies them. Another reason for the high incidence of non-private sex can be found in Table 1 which shows that the majority of sex acts are between characters which have no enduring relationship and are therefore not likely to share a home which could be the location of the sex.

It should be pointed out that the subdivisions devised for the coding are relevant only to western cultures since in some non-industrialized cultures such as the Mehinaku of the upper Xingu basin in Brazil (Gregor, 1974), it is customary for marital and extramarital sex to occur in secluded parts of the forest surrounding the village. One reason for this is that communal sleeping quarters makes it difficult for even marital sex to be discreetly carried out. This is also a problem in many peasant societies of the third world and indeed for many economically disadvantaged families of the western world where the living area often consists of one room. However Playboy cartoon characters do not fit into any of the above but are rather depicted as staunchly middle class. Thus the subdivisions are not only specific to the western world but also to a particular class within the western world. What I have defined as semi-private or even public could be defined in other cultures as private but this is not the case for the western middle-class characters who dominate Playboy cartoons.

Changes Over Time (p>.05)

There were slight fluctuations with no discernible patterns.

Gender and the Facial Expression of the Cartoon Character

Table 11

Gender by Facial Expression (percentages)

| | anger | sexually animated | happy | bored/ despond. | shock/ fear | innoc. | |
|--------|-------|----------------------|-------|--------------------|----------------|--------|--------|
| Female | 11.7 | 26.3 | 24.4 | 13.0 | 17.6 | 7.0 | n=1184 |
| Male | 12.6 | 26.0 | 31.2 | 12.9 | 15.9 | 1.4 | n=1088 |

$$X^2 = 50.7 \quad DF = 5 \quad P < .05$$

The positive expressions of sexually animated and happy together accounted for over 50% of cases. The negative expressions of anger, bored/despondent and shock/fear had a total of 42.3% for females and 41.4% for males which is interesting given that Hefner's aim was to show sex in a positive light (Weyr, 1978). One possible reason for this high percentage of negative expression can be found in the humorous content of the cartoon which is derived from inverting customary expectations of sex being pleasurable. Also, as we shall see later, the expressions of

females were very much dependent upon their age with the younger females having more positive expressions. The shock/fear subdivision together with anger accounts for approximately 28% of all cases which although high, can be partially explained in terms of the betrayed or betraying spouse discovering or being discovered by the other spouse. It appears that males were generally happier about participation in sex while females were more likely to express innocence.

Changes Over Time (p<.05)

There were general fluctuations with few discernible patterns. The most interesting subdivision was sexually animated which for females jumped from 20.3% in 1970-71 to 34.6% in 1972-73. This is partially explained in terms of the increase in the sex act depicted (an increase from 49% in 1970-71 to 82% in 1972-73) and a subsequent increase in consummation (from 34.5% in the years 1970-71 to 44% in 1972-73) It could be argued that a higher degree of consummation would result in a higher degree of sexually animated expressions. The increase in sexually animated expressions was mainly at the expense of a decrease in happy from 26.2% in the years 1970-71 to 19.1% in 1972-73.

For males the major changes were also in the sexually animated and happy subdivisions with sexually animated increasing from 18.9% in 1970-71 to 38.9% in 1972-3 and a decline in happy from 35.6% in 1970-71 to 25% in the years 1972-73. Thus for both males and females it appears that the shifts were within the positive expressions (sexually animated and happy) and not between the positive and negative expressions.

Gender and the Cartoon Character's Activity or Passivity in
Relationship

Table 12

Gender by Activity or Passivity (percentages)

| | seducing | willing | resigned | prevent. | |
|--------|----------|---------|----------|----------|--------|
| Female | 29.2 | 51.4 | 10.2 | 9.2 | n=1165 |
| Male | 51.5 | 39.3 | 3.0 | 6.2 | n=1041 |

$$\chi^2 = 135 \quad DF = 3 \quad P < .05$$

Here we find some interesting differences between male and female depictions. The largest single subdivision for males was seducing which involves the cartoon character taking an active role. The largest single subdivision for women however was willing which is essentially a passive role. While these figures show that males are generally depicted as playing a more active sexual role, females are shown to be in four-fifths (80.6% of cases (i.e. seducing and willing) sexually available to men. Whether these women are wives, secretaries, sex partners, prostitutes or unacquainted, they have one thing in common: they are generally agreeable to male sexual advances. Their own desires, aims and wants are subordinate to those of the male. Playboy cartoons thus depict a male fantasy world where a bevy of young, beautiful, sexily clad females are sexually available to old, young, dressed, undressed males be they employers, husbands or whatever. The very essence of women is reduced to an existence which is principally described in terms of male sexual desire. Again it is

important to point out that a common theme which in the cartoons is consistent with the rest of the magazine (problem two on the Checklist). One of the main feminist objections against the pictorials in Playboy is that females are depicted as always sexually accessible to male desires (see, for example, Coward, 1982). The female in the centerfold, with her body and face angled towards the male spectator and mouth slightly parted, becomes an object who exists for the pleasure of men. In this way the female in the cartoons speaks to the spectator in the same language used by the 'Playmate' of the month.

Changes Over Time (p>.05)

While the changes over time were not significant, there appeared a few interesting patterns. For females the seductive category increased from 26.1% to 34.4% in the years 1970-71 and 1972-73. This increase was mainly accounted for by a decrease in willing from 53.8% in the year 1970-71 to 47.6% in the years 1972-73. The interesting point is that while females were becoming slightly more seductive, males were becoming less so with a decrease from 59.2% in the years 1970-71 to 44.3% in the years 1978-79. With this change, the willingness category increased from 32.4% in the years 1970-71 to 44.3% in 1978-79. Thus while males were still the main seducers, we did see over the years, a slight trend toward more egalitarian relationships.

Gender and Cartoon Characters' Involvement in an Age Discrepant
Relationship

Table 13

Gender by Age Discrepant Relationship (percentages)

| | older man/ younger woman | older women/ younger man | equal ages | |
|--------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------|--------|
| Female | 29.4 | 3.5 | 67.1 | n=1243 |
| Male | 31.9 | 3.8 | 64.3 | n=1163 |

$$X^2 = 514.1 \quad DF = 2 \quad P < .05$$

The stereotype of the older male, younger woman occurs in just under one-third of Playboy sex cartoons. We find however little evidence of the older female/younger male stereotype. Such a finding fits in well with the Playboy view that the young woman is the only sexually desirable type. Males however are not sexually limited by age but rather continue to be active throughout the life cycle. Because the female is cast as the commodity and the male is the user, cartoon males can choose the most desirable on offer irrespective of their own age.

Changes Over Time (p>.05)

There were slight fluctuations with no discernible patterns.

Gender by Adultery

See discussion of adultery.

Summary of Gender Findings

The discussion so far suggests that female characters are more extensively depicted in a caricature style than males. The 'idealized' Playboy female character is young, dressed in a sexually provocative manner, if not completely undressed, and possesses a body featuring large breasts, curvaceous hips, a protruding bottom and long legs. Irrespective of setting -home, office, street- this female has one major function, that of sexual plaything. She is generally shown as passive and available. Her wants and needs are subservient to the male character's sexual desire. The converse of this image is the old aggressive predator who is ridiculed and rejected. The male characters on the other hand are not so rigidly stereotyped but rather play a number of roles, are generally dressed and only undressed if the cartoon scene calls for it and are sexually aggressive. Thus far it would appear that Playboy cartoons embody an ideology similar to that articulated by Hefner in that females are depicted as toys for male consumption.

The preceding discussion can be seen as a general introduction to the findings of the content analysis. Since the aim of this content analysis was to illuminate the structure of Playboy cartoon stereotypes, specific variables were pinpointed and

investigated in a more comprehensive manner. Those variables chosen were Major Defining Role, Age and Adultery. Clearly the variables chosen do not represent an exhaustive account of the structure of Playboy cartoon stereotypes. They do however provide us with certain key indicators as to the nature of this fantasy world. And of course, it is recognized that the choice of variables depends very much on the academic and political orientation of the researcher as does all research conducted in the social sciences.

Rather than presenting every cross-tabulation with a discussion, this section will group together variables which have similar themes and which provide interesting data. The variables age, clothing and body shape are grouped together under the new heading personal characteristics. Each of these variables provided important information on the ways in which the cartoon characters are depicted and the roles assigned to them. The type of sex act shown, the satisfaction level of the sex, the location of the sex and the role of the cartoon character in that sex are grouped together under the heading nature and satisfaction level of sex act. By linking together these variables, it is possible to construct a multi-dimensional picture of the nature of the sex act depicted in Playboy cartoons. The facial expression and body expression variables are grouped under the heading expressive behavior of the cartoon character since both provide clues as to the cartoon character's moods and motives. This method serves to make the discussion more succinct while avoiding repetition. Those variables which do not add any more information than that given in part one on gender will not be mentioned. In addition only those tables which contain a number of discussion points will be included while others will simply be referred to. This strategy prevents the reader from having to wade through those tables which illustrate only one or two points.

Major Defining Role

When analyzing the cartoons, it became clear that the MDR of the cartoon character was a central defining feature necessary for making sense of the cartoon and the humor. Much of the humor revolved around the expectations associated with the role and the subsequent inverting of these expectations. Knowledge of the social status of the cartoon character provides a useful yardstick against which we can measure the ideological nature of the Playboy fantasy world. The following discussion looks at the personal characteristics, nature and satisfaction level of sex act and the expressive behavior of each of the subdivisions found within the category of Major Defining Role

Major Defining Role and Personal Characteristics

Table 14

Female MDR by Age (percentages)

| | adol. | young/ middle | middle/ old | old | |
|-------------|-------|------------------|----------------|-----|-------|
| Wife | 0.5 | 67.8 | 30.8 | .9 | n=208 |
| employee | 0.8 | 93.1 | 4.3 | 1.8 | n=116 |
| sex-partner | 4.7 | 85.3 | 6.9 | 3.1 | n=605 |
| prostitute | 4.3 | 84.1 | 11.6 | 0.0 | n=69 |
| unaqtd. | 2.7 | 76.4 | 11.5 | 9.4 | n=182 |

$\chi^2 = 126$ $DF = 12$ $P < .05$

Table 15

Male MDR by Age (percentages)

| | adol. | young/ middle | middle/ old | old | |
|-----------------------|-------|------------------|----------------|------|-------|
| husband | 0.5 | 36.4 | 59.5 | 3.6 | n=195 |
| employer | 0.0 | 25.6 | 63.6 | 10.8 | n=121 |
| sex-partner | 2.8 | 53.3 | 36.0 | 7.9 | n=531 |
| prostitute client. | 0.0 | 18.9 | 71.7 | 9.4 | n=53 |
| unacquainted | 1.1 | 42.9 | 45.2 | 10.8 | n=177 |

Chi square not valid

Although the majority of wives (67.8) fell into the young subdivision, 30.8% were middle to old. Table 14 shows that wives had the highest percentage of middle age cases when compared with the other subdivisions. Wives were also the single highest subdivision to be fully clothed (28% were either conservatively or conventionally dressed) and to have a realistic body (37.5%). These higher percentages are mainly accounted for by those wives who were being betrayed by their husbands and while this will be dealt with more fully later in the section on adultery, it needs to be pointed out here that Playboy depicts betrayed wives as beyond the 'sexy' stereotype of being young with a idealistic body partially or fully exposed. Clearly the message here is that older women who have a realistic body which is clothed cannot keep their husbands from straying with younger women. The age, clothing and body shape of the husbands tended to conform to

the overall patterns discussed in the previous section.

The overwhelming majority of female employees (93.1%) (Table 14) were young to middle aged. This is not surprising given the role of the female employee. She was depicted in the workplace, not as a worker, but rather as an object for the sexual desires of the employers or as an object for adding glamor to the workplace. This is further borne out by the finding that 51.7% of employees were seductively dressed, 30.2% partially undressed and 5.2% naked. Thus in 87.1% of cases employees were dressed in an inappropriate manner for work. Moreover one wonders how the Playboy male cartoon employer could concentrate long enough to do any work when 81.9% of employees had an idealistic body. These findings taken together clearly illustrate that the female employee is cast in a stereotype which precludes the female being portrayed in any serious manner, performing any function which goes beyond the the sexual servicing of males.

On the other hand, male employers were in 63.6% of cases middle aged and 10.8% old (Table 15). In contrast to female employees, male employers were firmly established in the work place, often situated behind a desk in their own plush office. The employer tended to be older than the other subdivisions (apart from prostitute client which will be discussed below) because he was depicted as having reached some form of seniority. We see this point especially exemplified in the employers dress where 53% were conservatively dressed and 21% conventionally dressed. Moreover these clothes were in 98.3% of cases, covering realistic bodies. When the employer was shown either seductively dressed, partially undressed or naked, it was context relevant to the cartoon since it was in the privacy of his own office (98.3%) whilst engaged in sex with the female employee.

The findings for employees and employers are especially interesting since they stand in sharp contrast to the image which the Playboy corporation attempts to create in the wider society. It will be recalled that in Chapter Five it was mentioned that Playboy has given money to feminist organizations such as N.O.W.

and that Hefner has stated that women should be treated equally in all areas, including the workplace (Playboy, April, 1970). However in the cartoons it is clear that women are not considered equal workers to men but rather are the sex toys of the office. This is an example of the content of cartoons diverging from editorial policy rather than reflecting it. It would seem that the cartoons are considered a safe place to articulate the sexist view that women should be the providers of sex for their bosses since the humorous quality of cartoons provides a means for defense should they be criticized for their sexism. The cartoons are therefore being used as a covert form of communication, a finding which fits in with problem seven on the Checklist.

For both female and male sex partners, the majority (85.3% and 53.3% respectively) were young to middle aged (Tables 14 & 15). However, for females it was a much larger majority which lends weight to the argument that Playboy tends to depict only young women as viable sex partners while males are more evenly depicted across age ranges. The fact that male sex partners were younger than any other subdivisions could be partially explained in terms of the male sex partners being free of marital or work obligations, they are in fact the 'ideal type' playboy. This latter point is borne out by the finding that male sex partner was by far the highest subdivision to be partially undressed (41.1%). Clearly the ideal state for the ideal playboy. Female sex partners also had the highest level of partial undress which is understandable given that her only role was one of provider of sex.

Table 14 shows that prostitutes were overwhelmingly young (84.1%). Moreover they tended to fit into the stereotype of the sexually desirable female in that 92.6% were either seductively dressed, partially undressed or naked and 88.4% had idealistic bodies. Such a depiction takes no account of the reality of the difficult life that a prostitute often leads. Gail Sheehy (1971), in her account of the life of a prostitute, argues that prostitution is a physically punishing business and the prostitute tends to age

quickly. In her study, Sheehy found that the average street prostitute in major U.S. cities usually walks five miles a night, six nights a week and deals with six to twelve 'clients' daily. Also, prostitution is an extremely violent sub-culture with the prostitute often falling victim to muggers, pornographers and of course pimps. This latter point is extremely interesting since initial investigation into Playboy cartoons revealed that it was impossible to create a MDR called pimp since no pimps were depicted. However as Sheehy points out, it is very rare for a prostitute not to have a pimp as the structure is such that independent females are not allowed to walk the streets. Instead the pimps organize the areas which fall under their control and only allow 'their girls' to work in those areas.

Playboy's depictions of prostitutes therefore bears no relation to the actual life of these women. Rather the stereotypes of the prostitutes is the same one used for all sexually active females in the cartoons, namely, young with an idealistic body which is clothed in sexy garments. However if Playboy were to depict the life of a real prostitute, there would be little humor in the cartoon and of course, cartoons are ultimately about humor. Thus given the distorted glamorous world of Playboy, this image of the 'happy hooker' is expected.

The only notable finding for the prostitutes's client is that he is on the whole older than any of the other subdivisions (81.1% were either middle to old or old) (Table 15). This suggests that Playboy sees older men as having to pay for what younger men get free, another common stereotype. In a sense this can be seen as a form of ridicule for Playboy offers a world of sexual promiscuity yet for older men the sex has to be bought.

The only notable finding for unacquainted is that the female unacquainted had the highest incidence of old (9.4%) and also the highest incidence of freak body (9.9%). These figures are almost wholly accounted for by the old woman cartoon of Buck Brown (see previous discussion of gender by body).

Major Defining Role and Nature and Satisfaction Level of Sex Act

Table 16

Female MDR by Consummation or Non-consummation (percentages)

| | non-consm. due to sexual dysfct. | female avoidance | male avoidance | consum. | don't know | |
|--------------|---|---------------------|-------------------|---------|---------------|-------|
| Wife | 1.5 | 5.3 | 4.3 | 57.2 | 31.7 | n=208 |
| employee | 0.9 | 7.7 | 0.9 | 57.9 | 52.6 | n=116 |
| sex-partner | 4.5 | 5.8 | 5.1 | 48.3 | 36.3 | n=604 |
| prostitute | 0.0 | 1.4 | 4.4 | 30.4 | 63.8 | n=69 |
| unacquainted | 0.0 | 8.7 | 8.2 | 7.1 | 76.0 | n=183 |

 $\chi^2=168.6$ DF = 16 P<.05

Table 17

Male MDR by Consummation or Non-consummation (percentages)

| | non-consm due to sexual dysfct. | female avoidance | male avoidance | consm. | don't know | |
|----------------------|--|---------------------|-------------------|--------|---------------|-------|
| husband | 2.6 | 8.2 | 3.1 | 51.8 | 34.3 | n=195 |
| employer | 2.5 | 5.8 | 2.5 | 33.0 | 56.2 | n=121 |
| sex-partner | 4.3 | 6.6 | 6.2 | 45.1 | 37.8 | n=530 |
| prostitute client | 0.0 | 3.8 | 5.6 | 28.3 | 62.3 | n=53 |
| unacquainted | 0.6 | 6.2 | 8.5 | 7.9 | 76.8 | n=177 |

 $\chi^2 = 133.3$ $DF = 16$ $P < .05$

Table 18

Female MDR by Sex Act (percentages)

| | inter- course | group sex | oral sex | sadism | bestial. | exhib. | prop. | |
|----------------|------------------|--------------|-------------|--------|----------|--------|-------|-------|
| wife | 70.7 | 16.1 | 2.5 | 1.9 | 3.9 | 3.4 | 1.5 | n=205 |
| employee | 58.3 | 6.9 | 4.3 | 0.0 | 0.9 | 8.7 | 20.9 | n=115 |
| sex partner | 63.8 | 14.9 | 4.6 | 3.0 | 6.6 | 3.2 | 3.9 | n=594 |
| prostit. | 65.2 | 7.3 | 7.3 | 4.3 | 1.4 | 4.3 | 10.2 | n=69 |
| unaqtd. | 21.1 | 5.0 | 1.1 | 2.8 | 1.1 | 32.8 | 36.1 | n=180 |

$X^2 = 416.1$ $DF = 24$ $P < .05$

Table 19

Male MDR by Sex Act (percentages)

| | inter- course | group sex | oral sex | sadism | bestial. | exhib. | prop. | |
|--------------------|------------------|--------------|-------------|--------|----------|--------|-------|-------|
| husband | 70.2 | 16.2 | 2.1 | 2.6 | 3.7 | 3.7 | 1.5 | n=191 |
| employer | 56.2 | 8.3 | 4.1 | 0.0 | .9 | 8.2 | 22.3 | n=121 |
| sex partner | 68.7 | 13.9 | 5.0 | 2.9 | 1.9 | 3.9 | 3.7 | n=518 |
| prostit. client | 66.0 | 5.7 | 7.5 | 5.7 | 1.9 | 5.7 | 7.5 | n=53 |
| unacqud. | 22.1 | 6.4 | 1.2 | 1.7 | 0.6 | 28.5 | 39.5 | n=172 |

Chi square not valid.

In the Tables 16 & 17 the greatest number of 'don't knows' was the unacquainted subdivision which was in the main due to the finding that 68.9% of unacquainted females and 68% of unacquainted males were involved in either exhibitionism or propositioning (Tables 18 & 19). Neither of these sex acts involves the actual depiction of a sex act which ends in some form of consummation, rather they both suggest such a future sex act. It is not surprising that unacquainted people were mainly involved in exhibitionism and propositioning since these two acts typically

involve people who are unacquainted for they are *anonymous*, quick and often carried out on the street where unacquainted people tend to pass each other (62.5% of unacquainted cartoon characters had sex in a public location).

Further investigation into propositioning and exhibiting revealed certain differences for male and female unacquainted. Here we split female and male unacquainted into four groups; participants of propositioning and exhibitionism and observers of propositioning and exhibitionism. For exhibitionism it was found that 80% of females participated i.e. exhibited themselves and 20% observed, that is, were exhibited to. For males the figure were very different with 30.5% participating and 69.5% observing. While exhibitionists (see McNeill, 1987) are nearly always men, in Playboy it is depicted mainly as a female act. This would seem to reflect the occurring Playboy male fantasy: men, irrespective of their age, are confronted by young, sexily clad women eager for sex. For propositioning, findings revealed that 36.5% of females participated, that is propositioned and 63.5% observed, that is, were propositioned. For males however 80% participated and 20% observed. Thus propositioning was depicted as a male activity which could again be partially be explained in terms of Playboy fantasies where the ideal playboy is a smooth talking male who is confident enough to approach even the most beautiful of women.

Tables 16 & 17 show that the highest level of consummation was for spouses (57.2% for wives and 51.8% for husbands). This finding is not an indicator that marital sex is more successful for as we shall see later in the discussion of adultery, consummation was very much dependent upon whether the sex was between husband and wife (less successful) or between spouse and lover (more successful). Intercourse was also the most common sex act for spouses since much of the joke focused not so much on the nature of the sex act but on the relationship between its participants. Thus sexual intercourse allows room in the cartoon for the focus of the humor to be beyond the actual sex.

Prostitution also had a high percentage of 'don't knows'

because much of the humor was concentrated on the negotiating stage of the interaction (72% of cartoons) and therefore did not contain the information necessary to code the consummation category. The most common form of sex indicated was intercourse (65.2% for prostitutes and 66% for prostitute's client, Tables 18 & 19). This was not coded as propositioning since the context of the cartoon suggests that this was not the sex act in itself but was rather a prelude to intercourse.

For employee/employer, intercourse was also the main sex act depicted but we did find a relatively high percentage of propositioning which usually took the form of the boss propositioning the secretary. While research shows that this is one of the major forms of sexual harassment in the workplace (see Mackinnon, 1987), in Playboy it was often shown to be harmless fun.

Major Defining Role and Expressive Behavior

Table 20

Female MDR by Facial Expression (percentages)

| | anger | sexually animated | happy | bored/ despond. | shock/ fear | innoc. | |
|----------------|-------|----------------------|-------|--------------------|----------------|--------|-------|
| wife | 18.7 | 27.3 | 16.7 | 14.6 | 20.2 | 2.5 | n=198 |
| employee | 8.1 | 21.6 | 21.6 | 14.4 | 22.6 | 11.7 | n=111 |
| sex partner | 9.9 | 30.9 | 26.1 | 12.3 | 15.0 | 5.8 | n=572 |
| prostit. | 6.2 | 36.9 | 33.8 | 13.8 | 3.1 | 6.2 | n=65 |
| unaqtd. | 13.9 | 12.8 | 28.5 | 11.6 | 23.3 | 9.9 | n=172 |

 $\chi^2 = 72.1$ $DF = 20$ $P < .05$

Table 21

Male MDR by Expression (percentages)

| | anger | sexually animated | happy | bored/ despond. | shock/ fear | innoc. | |
|--------------------|-------|----------------------|-------|--------------------|----------------|--------|-------|
| husband | 26.3 | 15.3 | 21.6 | 14.7 | 21.1 | 1.0 | n=190 |
| employer | 4.6 | 44.0 | 36.7 | 6.4 | 8.3 | 0.0 | n=109 |
| sex partner | 12.3 | 29.4 | 30.1 | 13.5 | 12.9 | 1.9 | n=489 |
| prostit. client | 9.6 | 26.9 | 26.9 | 15.4 | 19.3 | 1.9 | n=52 |
| unaqtd. | 4.8 | 20.9 | 43.7 | 9.6 | 20.4 | 0.6 | n=167 |

 $\chi^2 = 104.4$ $DF = 20$ $P < .05$

Table 22

Female MDR by Activity or Passivity in Relationship (percentages)

| | seducing | willing | resigned | prevent. | |
|-------------|----------|---------|----------|----------|--------|
| Wife | 31.8 | 57.1 | 4.1 | 27.0 | n=170 |
| employee | 22.4 | 44.9 | 21.5 | 11.2 | n=107 |
| sex-partner | 22.4 | 62.0 | 8.9 | 6.7 | n=597 |
| prostitute | 52.2 | 42.0 | 2.9 | 2.9 | n=69 |
| unaquid. | 46.6 | 15.5 | 17.4 | 20.5 | n= 161 |

 $X^2 = 160.4$ $DF=12$ $P<.05$

Table 23

Male MDR by Activity or Passivity in Relationship (percentages)

| | seducing | willing | resigned | prevent. | |
|----------------------|----------|---------|----------|----------|--------|
| husband | 55.2 | 33.6 | 4.3 | 26.9 | n=195 |
| employer | 77.1 | 18.6 | 0.9 | 3.4 | n=118 |
| sex-partner | 40.5 | 50.1 | 3.1 | 6.3 | n=523 |
| prostitute client | 60.8 | 29.4 | 5.9 | 3.9 | n=51 |
| unaquid. | 61.9 | 25.6 | 1.9 | 10.6 | n= 160 |

$$X^2 = 88.6 \quad DF = 18 \quad P < .05$$

In Tables 20 & 21 wives and husbands had the highest single percentage of anger (18.7% for wives and 26.3% for husbands) but almost 75% of these cases were accounted for by the betrayed spouses discovering their spouse with someone else (see later discussion of adultery). This also explains the relatively higher percentage of preventing (27% for wives and 26.9% for husbands) (Tables 22 & 23). Moreover husbands were more angry because they were betrayed more often. Wives were more sexually animated because they were more often engaged in adulterous sex.

Employees and employers expressed different attitudes toward sex with the employer being the most sexually animated of all male subdivisions (44% were sexually animated) (Table 21), while employees were amongst the most shocked (22.6%) and bored/de-spondent (14.4%) of all female subdivisions (Table 20). This latter

finding is especially interesting in light of the statistic that only 11.2% of employees were actually resisting the sex act (Table 22). Thus while Table 20 shows that 45.1% expressed negative feelings toward the sex (i.e. they were either angry, bored or shocked/fearful) only a small percentage actually took any active steps to prevent the sex act. This would appear to be a variation on the theme of when a woman says no she does in fact mean yes. The employers on the other hand were actually the highest male subdivision to seduce while the employee was one of the lowest. One explanation for these findings is that the employer and employee are involved in a clearly defined power relationship where the boss is more senior, older and a male. The employee however is a subordinate, younger and female. As the male has the power he is the one most likely to initiate the relationship and the female is less likely to actively prevent but more likely to acquiesce in the form of being willing and resigned.

Prostitute was the cartoon character with the highest positive expression toward sex with 36.9% sexually animated and 33.8% happy (Table 20). This is not surprising given the nature of the prostitute's job. She was also the most active female seducer. The 20% that were either angry or bored/despondent can be mainly accounted for by the cartoons which showed the prostitute and client haggling over the price.

Findings for the unacquainted subdivision show clear differences between females and males: the males having a more positive expression (64.6% of males were either sexually animated or happy compared to 41.3% of females) (Tables 20 & 21). It appears that females act less favorably to exhibitionism and propositioning while males act more positively irrespective of whether or not they were observing or participating. When we split the unacquainted into observers and participators for exhibitionism and propositioning, major differences were revealed. Only 14% of female observers of exhibitionism reacted positively (that is were either sexually animated or happy) whereas for males this figure was 57%. Thus males displayed a greater degree of

positive expressions when exhibited to which, given the cartoon scene, is understandable. When the females were exhibiting they were very often depicted as seductively dressed in a public location, exhibiting to anyone who walked past. Male exhibitors on the other hand were depicted as deliberately exposing their penis to a chosen female target often in an isolated area such as a park.

For propositioning, while less of a difference was found between females and males, results show that males responded more positively to propositioning (30% were sexually animated or happy) than females (18%). This could be because propositioning from a male carries a potential threat of sexual assault, while propositioning from a female is dependent upon the male agreeing with no potential threat of the act being carried out against his will (rape of men by women is almost unheard of). This argument is further borne out by the finding that 38% of females were either resigned or preventing while for the males the figure was only 12.5%.

The outstanding feature for male and female sex partners is the similarity in feelings expressed. From this it appears that where the cartoon characters have no clearly power differentiated roles, such as husband/wife, employer/employee, then they have more egalitarian relationships. This could partially explain why the male sex partner was the least likely of all subdivisions to be seducing (40.5%) and the most likely to fall into the equal power subdivision of willing (50.1%) (Table 23).

Summary of Major Defining Role

By examining the differences across the Major Defining Roles, the discussion provided insight into the ways in which the cartoon characters' MDR impacts on the other categories. From these findings we can build a more complex picture of the Playboy fantasy world and the characters who inhabit it. Whilst much of

the discussion focused on intra-gender comparisons, the overall picture that emerges suggests that the differences are more inter-gender in character. Females, irrespective of their MDR, are overwhelmingly assigned the role of passive sex-object while the male is, irrespective of his MDR, the 'ideal playboy'. The MDR acts mainly as a vehicle for playing out these more over-arching roles and provides variation on the general theme.

An important point which became apparent while coding the MDR's was how the roles are played out in locations which are based around scenes from everyday-life. Such scenes contrast sharply with the scenes in the centerfolds which tend to be somewhat more exotic and fantasy-based. Often models will be photographed in tropical countries, laying on white sandy beaches with palm trees in the background. By focusing on mundane places such as the office or the home, Playboy cartoons differ from the pictorials in that they "contribute to a 'normalization' of the erotic" (Pratt, 1986). According to Pratt, one of the main differences between up-market men's magazines such as Playboy and Penthouse and the cheaper, more risqué ones such as Fiesta or Knave is that the latter deal in the normalization of the erotic in that eroticism "is represented as being all around: in the office and in the library, in the open, in the privacy of one's home and so on: the sexual moment, at least according to these magazines, is likely to materialize at any time" (1986: 75). While Pratt is correct when comparing the pictorials in both types of magazines, his analysis is incorrect when applied to the cartoons. Rather Playboy cartoons also deal in the normalization of the erotic. What is especially interesting here is that such scenes, according to Pratt, encourage the reader to participate in the action since they are much closer to the social reality of the readership. Thus even though Playboy readers tend to be in the higher wage earning groups, they are more likely to find themselves (on a regular basis) in an office than on an exotic beach.

The potential for the reader to identify with the images depicted is considered by Pratt to be an important factor in the

level of circulation: a focus on the exotic could be one explanation for Playboy and Penthouse's declining readership. While this is indeed an empirical question it could be argued that Playboy cartoons specifically deal in the everyday scenes as a form of compensation for the fantasy scenes in the pictorials. The argument that Playboy cartoons serve as a means to facilitate the identification of the male reader with the magazine could go some way towards explaining why most of the cartoons also depicts a male character. The most striking feature of the cartoon when compared to the pictorials in Playboy is that the former is the only place where a male is consistently featured. Rarely do the centerfolds or other pictorials include male characters. When the pictures only show women they, according to Kuhn (1985), invite the male reader to play the role of voyeur. However when a male is also shown then voyeurism gives way to identification. As Kuhn has suggested:

the presence of men...allows for a new variant of address 'in the masculine': the male spectator may identify with a male protagonist. Although he is obviously not obliged to do so, pornography may nevertheless invite such an identification in various ways (1985: 45).

While Kuhn does not really elaborate on the 'various ways' in which male readers are invited to identify, I will discuss some of the possible visual factors used in the cartoons. The Playboy Readership Survey (1985) shows that the age of the readers are as follows:

| | |
|--------------|-----|
| Under 25.... | 19% |
| 25-34..... | 35% |
| 35-44..... | 26% |
| 45+..... | 19% |

If we take the under 25 and the 25-34 category as loosely fitting in with the study's categories of up to adolescent and young/middle age then we see an interesting correspondence: 54% of the readership of Playboy fits into the age categories which had 45.4% of cartoon characters. Similarly if we take the 35-44 and the 45+ categories together then 45% of the readership fits into the middle to old category which had 45.4% of the cartoon characters (the study's category of old has not been included since most of the men here were depicted in an advanced state of old age and the 45+ category is too imprecise to make meaningful comparisons). Thus one way of facilitating identification is for the age distribution of the males in the cartoons to approximate to that of the readership.

The readership survey also shows that the mean household income of Playboy readers is \$42,900 per year. In that year the average median family income in the United States was approximately \$30,700. Thus the average Playboy reader lived a comfortable middle class life style similar to that depicted in the cartoons. Moreover, 75% of Playboy readers are in white collar occupations which (as previously discussed) tended to be the dominant professions in the cartoons which had a work orientated theme. In addition, by drawing the male with a normal proportioned body, Playboy could expect that the majority of its readers could identify with the character. Thus it would seem that Playboy does attempt to depict its cartoon characters with characteristics which are somewhat similar to the readers and in so doing facilitates some kind of identification. It is not being suggested here that all readers will find points of identification in all the cartoons but rather that one function of the cartoon is to provide a mundane contrast to the exotic, fantasy world of the centerfolds.

Having examined the variable Major Defining Role, the discussion will now focus on the ways in which age is depicted by Playboy cartoonists.

Age

One of the major criticisms levelled against Playboy by feminists has been its discrimination against older women (see Steinem, 1983). Initial investigation into the cartoons seemed to validate this claim but it was felt that more information was needed in order to provide a serious analysis. The initial investigation also suggested that the age variable was one of the key variables where the depiction of females and males differed markedly and it was thus decided that this would be a useful tool for illustrating the various Playboy stereotypes on offer for females and males.

Age and Personal Characteristics (percentages)

Table 24
Female Age by Clothes

| | conserv. | convent. | seductive | partial undress | naked | |
|------------------|----------|----------|-----------|-----------------|-------|--------|
| up to adol. | 2.3 | 20.4 | 43.2 | 27.3 | 6.8 | n=44 |
| young- middle | 0.5 | 6.3 | 40.2 | 44.8 | 8.2 | n=1005 |
| middle- old | 22.6 | 28.1 | 28.8 | 17.8 | 2.7 | n=146 |
| old | 5.0 | 20.0 | 30.0 | 42.5 | 2.5 | n=40 |

chi square not valid

Table 25
Male Age by Clothes (percentages)

| | conserv. | convent. | seduct. | partial undress | naked |
|------------------|----------|----------|---------|-----------------|-------|
| upto adol. | 28.0 | 48.0 | 4.0 | 20.0 | 0.0 |
| young- middle | 17.3 | 31.0 | 8.6 | 42.9 | 0.2 |
| middle- old | 38.9 | 32.6 | 4.3 | 23.1 | 0.1 |
| old | 27.9 | 34.9 | 10.5 | 26.7 | 0.0 |

chi square not valid

Table 26
Female Age by Pictorial Representation of Body (percentages)

| | realistic | ideal. | freak | |
|------------------|-----------|--------|-------|--------|
| upto adol. | 40.9 | 59.1 | 0.0 | n=44 |
| young- middle | 15.4 | 83.2 | 1.4 | n=1016 |
| middle- old | 61.5 | 30.4 | 8.1 | n=148 |
| old | 15.0 | 7.5 | 77.5 | n=40 |

$$X^2 = 703.6 \quad DF = 6 \quad P < .05$$

Table 27
Male Age by Pictorial Representation of Body (percentages)

| | realistic | ideal. | freak | |
|------------------|-----------|--------|-------|-------|
| upto adol. | 92.3 | 7.7 | 0.0 | n=26 |
| young- middle | 97.8 | 2.0 | 4.1 | n=501 |
| middle- old | 95.1 | 0.8 | 4.1 | n=527 |
| old | 88.8 | 0.9 | 10.3 | n=107 |

$$X^2 = 46.7 \quad DF = 6 \quad P < .05$$

Table 24 shows that for up to adolescent females over 77% were either seductively dressed, partially undressed or naked. These three subdivisions place the cartoon character in the realm of the sexual. This is borne out by the finding that 59.1% of females up to adolescence were shown as having an idealistic body (Table 26). The physical characteristics associated with having an idealistic body (that is, large breasts, curvaceous hips and a protruding bottom) are not ones usually associated with pre-adolescents. To overcome this problem Playboy would depict a young face (freckles, pig tails stubby nose) on a mature body. These findings suggest that Playboy depicts up to adolescent females in a manner similar to the standard 'female as sex toy' stereotype shown throughout the cartoons. Moreover 93.2% of up to adolescent females were shown as participating in the sex act.

Clearly the 'humor' contained in this depiction of sexualized children is based on our customary expectations of children as 'pre-sexual'. Playboy has inverted these expectations by depicting sexualized children and moreover 19.5% were shown as seducing and 58.5% were shown as willing participants (Table 30). Mention must be made here however of recent feminist research into the potential effects of depicting female children as sexually sophisticated and active. Florence Rush (1982) has suggested that these images contribute to the sexual abuse of children in that they chip away at the cultural norms which prohibit the sexual use of children.

That Playboy should show sexualized images of children is interesting in light of the cartoon editor's claim that Playboy does not use any child-like images. Urry (1990) claimed that a recent report on Playboy unfairly accused the magazine of "peddling in child pornography". Urry said that the report was "preposterous" and the result of "the twisted mind of one crazy researcher". However during an interview I showed Urry a cartoon by John Dempsey (see appendix A, cartoon 14) which employs specific

signifiers of childhood such as bobby socks, pigtails and freckles. Urry responded by arguing that the female has big breasts which clearly indicate that she is not a child. When I asked about the signifiers of childhood she said that they were indeed questionable and she would no longer allow such images. Urry then refused to discuss the issue any further. Interestingly, nowhere else in the magazine is pedophilia addressed as a valid sexual practice. Thus it appears that in their depictions of children as sexual partners, the cartoons are being used as a covert form of communication for messages which if disseminated elsewhere in the magazine (for example the pictorials or editorials) might lead to censorship³ or maybe a loss of readership (problem seven on the Checklist).

In comparison to the above, up to adolescent males tended to fit in with the overall stereotype of males in that they were realistically portrayed.

The findings for the young to middle age females were as expected in that 93.2% fell into the sexualized dress categories (seductive, partial undress and naked) (Table 24) and they had the highest percentage (83.2%) of idealistic bodies (Table 26). While the majority of young females were thus depicted as sex objects, middle to old females tended to be more evenly distributed with over 50% being dressed. Moreover, this category had the highest percentage of females with realistic bodies (61.5%) which suggests that this age subdivision of women is portrayed in a wider range of roles than the younger counterpart.

Whereas the two previous subdivisions show a tendency for the older females to be clothed, we see a reversal of this trend for old women. Table 24 shows 75% of these cases fell into the sexualized dress subdivisions, however unlike the younger version of the sex object, 77.5% had freak bodies (Table 26). This subdivision of women is almost wholly made up of the Buck Brown granny character. When examining the data for age by

³ Child pornography is illegal in the United States and if convicted, carries a prison sentence.

consummation we find that all the age groups tended to be similar except for old women where 60% were not consummated due to male avoidance. Thus we find that the old woman is unsuccessful at playing the highly sexualized roles that younger female characters apparently adopt so readily. Hence the ambiguity of Buck Brown's cartoons: on the one hand, old women do have sexual interests, on the other hand their sexual activities are the subject of ridicule. Old men were not so ridiculed with them conforming to the general pattern of men being realistically portrayed and in fact have the lowest level of female avoidance (4.7%) than any other age subdivision.

Age and Expressive Behavior of Cartoon Character

Table 28

Female Age by Facial Expression (percentages)

| | anger | sex. anim. | happy | bored/ despond | shock/ fear | innoc. | |
|------------------|-------|---------------|-------|-------------------|----------------|--------|-------|
| upto adol. | 17.9 | 10.3 | 17.9 | 0.0 | 15.4 | 38.5 | n=39 |
| young- middle | 9.1 | 28.5 | 25.3 | 12.5 | 18.0 | 6.6 | n=965 |
| middle- old | 22.7 | 22.0 | 17.0 | 19.9 | 15.6 | 2.8 | n=141 |
| old | 28.9 | 5.3 | 36.8 | 15.8 | 13.2 | 0.0 | n=38 |

chi square not valid.

Table 29

Male Age by Facial Expression (percentages)

| | anger | sex. anim. | happy | bored/ despond | shock/ fear | innoc. | |
|------------------|-------|---------------|-------|-------------------|----------------|--------|-------|
| upto adol. | 8.7 | 17.4 | 30.4 | 17.4 | 8.7 | 17.4 | n=23 |
| young- middle | 11.3 | 29.1 | 31.8 | 9.4 | 16.3 | 2.1 | n=471 |
| middle- old | 14.4 | 22.1 | 31.9 | 16.3 | 14.9 | 0.4 | n=498 |
| old | 10.5 | 33.3 | 23.9 | 11.5 | 20.8 | 0.0 | n=96 |

chi square not valid

Table 30

Female Age by Activity or Passivity in Relationship (percentages)

| | seductive | willing | resigned | prevent. | |
|------------------|-----------|---------|----------|----------|-------|
| upto adol. | 19.5 | 58.5 | 17.1 | 4.9 | n=41 |
| young- middle | 26.2 | 54.6 | 10.1 | 9.1 | n=971 |
| middle-old | 39.5 | 34.2 | 12.3 | 14.0 | n=114 |
| old | 84.2 | 13.2 | 0.0 | 2.6 | n=38 |

chi square not valid

Table 31

Male Age by Activity or Passivity in Relationship (Percentages)

| | seductive | willing | resigned | prevent. | |
|------------------|-----------|---------|----------|----------|-------|
| uptr adol. | 37.5 | 50.0 | 0.0 | 12.5 | n=24 |
| young- middle | 41.7 | 49.0 | 2.4 | 6.9 | n=461 |
| middle-old | 60.7 | 31.9 | 3.5 | 3.9 | n=455 |
| old | 58.4 | 25.7 | 4.0 | 11.9 | n=101 |

$$X^2 = 53.7 \quad DF = 9 \quad P < .05$$

We find that 38.5% of up to adolescence females expressed innocence (Table 28) which at first sight would appear understandable given their age. However studies of child sexual abuse (see Herman, 1981) present an altogether different picture and suggest that it would appear more realistic if the majority expressed shock or fear. The current research shows that youngsters, while not understanding the full implications of sexual molestation by an adult male (further analysis of the data revealed that 100% of up to adolescence females were involved in a relationship with an older man), express real fear when involved in such an activity. In the Playboy fantasy world only a minority express fear (15.4% for females and 8.7% for males) with 28.2% of females and 47.8% of males expressing positive expressions (tables 28 & 29). On the other hand, 33.3% of up to adolescence females and 34.8% of males showed negative feelings which suggests that

Playboy does not completely ignore the realities of child-adult sex.

For females we find that anger increases with age. The majority of anger cases for middle to old (75%) was accounted for by the older wife discovering her spouse in bed with someone else. For the old woman this is explained in terms of the Buck Brown character being rejected by the male. Table 30 shows that old women were overwhelmingly seducing (84.2%) and the single largest facial expression was happy. In many cases the female expressed happiness at seeing a man irrespective of how he responded. She was portrayed as totally desperate, attacking any man on sight and often oblivious to their negative expressions. The vast majority of these cases (95.5%) involved old women seducing younger men. Old men on the other hand were seen as having the highest cases of sexually animated which suggests that they were more sexually fulfilled. They also did not have to seduce at the desperate level that old females did, suggesting that sex was relatively easier to obtain even though more than 80% of the cases involved a younger woman.

Both female and male middle to old had relatively higher levels of seducing which suggests that the older you get the harder you have to work to get a partner. This is borne out by the finding that young to middle age characters tended to be more involved in willing relationships.

Summary of Age

The age of the cartoon character was clearly a more important factor for female depictions than it was for male depictions. The female cartoon characters differed markedly depending upon their age whereas the male characters tended to exhibit more stable characteristics across the life-cycle.

The above findings are consistent with the overall Playboy ideology with young-middle age females being the idealized sex object, the middle to old female conforming more to the sexless

stereotype and the old woman being the ridiculed predator. These findings cannot be explained away wholly in terms of the humor contained in the stereotypes since there exists the same humor potential for males, especially the old predator stereotype which could have been easily applied also to older male cartoon characters. Rather it can be argued that Playboy works on the widely held sexist assumption that older women are by virtue of their age no longer sexually attractive and are thus open to ridicule. This does not mean that the image of the younger female is any more positive since being reduced to a sex-object is as negative as being reduced to an object of ridicule.

Adultery

As previously stated, the spouse MDR stands apart from the other subdivisions in that it denotes a relationship which has a sense of history and commitment. It was this difference that fuelled the interest for further investigation. Also, as we shall see later, the concept of marriage stands in sharp contrast to the hedonistic and consumerist ideology which predominates throughout all the sections of Playboy magazine and thus I was especially interested in the ways in which Playboy cartoons deal with this otherwise ignored subject.

The focus of investigation in this section is the 403 cases coded as spouses in the Major Defining Role category. These 403 cases were isolated from the other subdivisions in the MDR variable and subsequently split into three groups for their coding for the variable adultery. The distribution amongst the three new groups or subdivisions was the following:

Of the 208 wives:

151 (72%) were involved in adultery
45 (21%) betrayed
106 (51%) betraying
57 (28%) were not involved in adultery

Of the 195 husbands:

134 (69%) were involved in adultery
82 (42%) betrayed
52 (27%) betraying
61 (31%) were not involved in adultery

This new independent variable with its three subdivisions (betrayed spouses, betraying spouses and non adulterous spouses) was then cross tabulated against all the other variables. The aim here was to explore any possible differences which may exist in Playboy's depiction of betraying, betrayed and non-adulterous spouses. The reduced number of cases in this section (i.e. 208 females and 195 males compared to the overall sample of 1249 females and 1163 males) necessitated, for statistical purposes, the collapse or deletion of those subdivisions which had fewer than 10 cases or where the number of subdivisions within each category would have invalidated the chi square test.

Collapsed and Deleted Subdivisions

Age

The two subdivisions 'up to adolescence' and 'old age' were deleted as only 3 females and five males fell into one or the other.

Clothing

The subdivision 'naked' was deleted as there were only 9 females and 2 males.

Body

'Freak' was eradicated as there were only 6 females and 4 males.

Consummation

The subdivision 'non-consummation due to partner's inability to sustain an erection, or due to inadequate size of penis or due to premature ejaculation' was collapsed with 'non-consummation due to females avoidance of sex' and 'non-consummation due to male's avoidance of sex' to form one new subdivision now called 'non-consummated, problematic sex'. The above subdivisions were collapsed into one due to there only being 23 female cases and 27 male cases scattered amongst the three collapsed subdivisions.

Type of Sex Act

The subdivisions 'oral sex', 'sadism', 'bestiality', 'exhibitionism' and 'propositioning' were joined under the heading of 'alternative sex' while sexual intercourse and group sex remained unchanged. The reason for this is that only 27 females and 26 males fell into these subdivisions.

Facial Expression

The subdivisions 'sexually animated' and 'happy' were collapsed under the new heading of 'positive expressions' while 'boredom/resignation and despondency' and 'shock/fear' were collapsed under the new heading of 'negative expressions'. 'Innocence' was deleted as we had only 2 female cases and 1 male case. 'Anger' remained unchanged.

Marriage: 'Playboy Style'

Of the 16.7% of Playboy cartoon characters who are married, over two-thirds are involved in adultery, either betrayed or betraying their spouse. The small number of actually married characters suggests that Playboy tends to downplay the depiction of relationships with any long standing commitment. Moreover, when marital partners are portrayed they are in the majority of cases, involved either directly or indirectly in adultery. The life-style which is depicted in the cartoons fits in with Playboy's overall world view (problem two on the Checklist). As Hefner himself wrote in the first issue "... we aren't a family magazine" (Miller, 1984: 44-45). Taking this one step further, Hefner wrote: "Playboy is dedicated to the enjoyment of the good life, instead of settling for job security, conformity, togetherness...and slow

death" (Brady, 1974: 89). Hefner carried this belief through to the running of the magazine and was long opposed to his editors marrying. In addition, the cartoon editor of Playboy, Michelle Urry (Urry, 1990) has said that she does not buy cartoons which have as their theme "domestic bliss" since this is not what the magazine is about.

Playboy is thus in the business of constructing a male centered world that is far removed from workday realities and family responsibility and the cartoons can be seen as reflecting this stand. Moreover, given that the Playboy cartoon has to provide humorous possibilities within the single frame then adultery offers much potential. It would indeed be difficult to sustain sexual humor in cartoons which had as their theme mutual commitment and fidelity. Given this however it is still relevant to compare the Playboy reality with what is known about the actual occurrence of such events since one of the interests here is examining the ways in which the Playboy depicted world differs from the social world.

The data shows that in the cartoons featuring adultery, twice as many husbands (42%) as wives (21%) were being betrayed and nearly twice as many wives (51%) than husbands (27%) were betraying. Hunt's survey (1974) however reveals that in reality the figures are very different with 41% of husbands having committed adultery and only 18% of wives. Thus in the Playboy world of marriage it is the wives who are the most likely to be involved in an adulterous relationship which is clearly at odds with Hunt's finding. It appears that men who marry are depicted, unlike their single counterpart, as more the sexual observers who in the majority of cases fall victim to the sexual freedom advocated throughout the magazine. The married man is in fact depicted as the cuckold male. Marriage clearly is not depicted as the ideal state for the playboy. Married females on the other hand, similar to the single counterpart, are still sexually available. It could be argued here that the butt of the joke is in this case the man since he is denied that which most cartoon males freely

receive, that is, the sexual service of females.

The following discussion will focus on those cross tabulations which yielded interesting findings regarding the image of betrayed, betraying and non-adulterous spouses.

Adultery and Personal Characteristics

Table 32

Female Adultery by Age (percentages)

| | young- middle | middle- old | |
|------------|------------------|----------------|--------------------|
| betrayed | 28.9 | 71.1 | n=45 |
| betraying | 81.9 | 18.1 | n=105 ⁴ |
| non-adult. | 76.4 | 23.6 | n=55 |

$$X^2 = 43.2 \quad DF = 2 \quad P < .05$$

⁴ In some tables the numbers are less than the actual sample coded. This is due to the deleted subdivisions since the cases were also deleted for that variable.

Table 33
Male Adultery by Age (percentages)

| | young- middle | middle- old | |
|------------|------------------|----------------|------|
| betrayed | 32.9 | 67.1 | n=82 |
| betraying | 28.6 | 71.4 | n=49 |
| non-adult. | 52.7 | 47.3 | n=55 |

$X^2 = 7.8$ DF = 2 P<.05

Table 34
Female Adultery by Clothes (percentages)

| | conserv. | convent. | seductive | partial undress | |
|------------|----------|----------|-----------|--------------------|-------|
| betrayed | 42.2 | 37.8 | 11.1 | 8.9 | n=45 |
| betraying | 1.0 | 5.0 | 32.0 | 62.0 | n=100 |
| non-adult. | 13.0 | 16.8 | 35.2 | 35.2 | n=54 |

$X^2 = 87.9$ DF=6 P<.05

Table 35

Male Adultery by Clothes (percentages)

| | conserv. | convent. | seductive | partial undress | |
|------------|----------|----------|-----------|--------------------|------|
| betrayed | 57.5 | 31.5 | 4.1 | 6.9 | n=73 |
| betraying | 23.4 | 31.9 | 6.4 | 38.3 | n=47 |
| non-adult. | 19.3 | 42.1 | 0.0 | 38.6 | n=57 |

Chi square not valid

Chi square not valid

The tables show clear differences between those women being betrayed and those betraying. The overwhelming majority of those wives being betrayed fitted into the Playboy 'sexless' stereotype. Here we find that 71.1% were middle aged (Table 32), 80% were clothed (Table 34) and 86.4% had a realistic body. Each of the afore mentioned subdivisions denote sexlessness in a fantasy world populated on the whole by young, large breasted, sexily clad females. The betrayed wife is depicted in such a way that it is immediately clear why the husband is betraying and moreover 42.2% of the betrayed wives were dressed in a conservative manner (Table 34) which could be defined as 'frumpish' since it often involved shapeless dresses and flat shoes. Thus in the Playboy world middle aged women are seen as unattractive and in effect worthy of betrayal for when the currency of worth for females is youthful sexual attractiveness, middle aged women are no longer 'legal tender'.

The personal characteristics of the betrayed wife stand in stark contrast to the betraying wife who in the vast majority of

cases conformed to the sexy stereotype. 81.9% were young to middle aged (Table 32), 94% were either seductively dressed or partially naked (Table 34) and 84.3% had an idealistic body. The betraying wives, since they were depicted as actively engaged in sex, conformed to those characteristics perceived as 'sexy'. This image fits in with the overall image of women in the Playboy cartoons since it is very rare to find a female who does not conform to this 'sexy' stereotype engaging in sex.

The non-adultery females also generally conformed to the sexy stereotype in that 76.4% were young (Table 32), 70.4% were seductively or partially clothed (Table 34) and the majority had an idealistic body (57.1%). This can be partially explained by the finding that 98.3% of these wives were shown as having sex with their husbands. Again, to be depicted in the act of sex in Playboy dictates that the women are portrayed as sexy. Moreover these women were shown as being able to keep the interest of their husbands which is not an achievement associated, in Playboy, with middle-aged women.

While there is a clear picture emerging for wives we find no such one for husbands. Instead each category has to be treated as a discrete entity. The majority of husbands who were betrayed and betraying were middle to old age. This at once suggests that older men are more likely to be betrayed while older men are more likely to betray. Thus while older husbands are similar to wives in that they are more often betrayed, unlike wives, for some, sexual opportunities still present themselves and men are still desirable with the onset of middle-age. The non-adulterous husbands tended to fit the overall pattern of age distribution for men.

The betrayed husbands were in the majority of cases conservatively dressed, even more so than the betrayed wives. However, given the popular scenario found in the Playboy adultery cartoons, this is not surprising. The husband was shown returning from work, the brief case in hand being a symbol of white collar work, only to find his wife in bed with another man. The white collar work situation often demands that a suit be worn

and thus the husband is coded as conservatively dressed.

While similar percentages of betrayed husbands and wives were clothed, we find differences for betraying spouses for where only 6% of betraying wives were clothed, the percentage for males was 55.3%. Now even though 71% of sex with betraying husbands was in progress, the husbands were still depicted as clothed. Thus even during sex the male body in Playboy is covered more often than the female body. Whereas for women we found large percentage differences between betrayed and betraying wives, for husbands the percentage difference was much less which suggests that Playboy tends to depict men in a similar fashion regardless of their sexual role. Women on the other hand are clearly demarcated depending upon their involvement or non-involvement in sex.

Adultery and the Nature and Satisfaction Level of the Sex Act

Table 36

Female Adultery by Consummation (percentages)

| | non-consm. problem. sex | consm. | don't know | |
|------------|-------------------------------|--------|---------------|-------|
| betrayed | 2.2 | 46.7 | 51.5 | n=45 |
| betraying | 2.8 | 71.7 | 25.5 | n=106 |
| non-adult. | 33.3 | 38.6 | 28.1 | n=57 |

$$X^2 = 50.3 \quad DF = 4 \quad P < .05$$

Table 37

Male Adultery by Consummation (percentages)

| | non-consm prob. sex | consm. | don't know | |
|------------|---------------------------|--------|---------------|------|
| betrayed | 6.1 | 62.2 | 31.7 | n=82 |
| betraying | 0.0 | 57.7 | 42.3 | n=52 |
| non-adult. | 36.7 | 33.3 | 30.0 | n=60 |

$$X^2 = 40.6 \quad DF = 4 \quad P < .05$$

The only interesting finding to emerge from the adultery by sex act tabulation was that approximately 70% of all spouses were involved in sexual intercourse which is higher than the average of 59.3% recorded for the whole sample. One reason for this is that the focus of the cartoon is the marital bond and not the sex act and thus the depicted sex act itself does not require further explanation. Few meaningful statements can be made on the other 30% of cases since we are dealing with small numbers.

Tables 36 & 37 suggest that adultery cartoons depicted the most successful sex with betraying wives having the highest degree of consummated sex (71.7%). The findings for the overall sample (see table 8) show that 41.3% of females and 37.9% of males had consummated sex. Thus adultery appears to be shown as more likely to result in successful sex. Linked to this it appears

that marital sex is shown as generally having more problems for while a third of all marital sex was problematic, the figure for the overall sample was only 14%. The possible explanation for both findings can be sought in the humor aspect of the cartoons. For the adultery cartoons, sexual dysfunction was not the focus of the joke, clearly adultery was the theme. Given that the cartoonist has to convey complex information in a single frame, the actual sexual activity would have to be simplified. With non-adultery marital sex, the inability to consummate the sex act could clearly be the theme of the cartoon for the information conveyed was less complex.

Adultery by Expressive Behavior

Table 38

Female Adultery by Facial Expression (percentages)

| | anger | positive express. | negative express. | |
|------------|-------|----------------------|----------------------|------|
| betrayed | 46.7 | 15.6 | 37.7 | n=45 |
| betraying | 5.1 | 58.8 | 36.1 | n=97 |
| non-adult. | 21.6 | 45.1 | 33.3 | n=51 |

$$\chi^2 = 40.7 \quad DF = 4 \quad P < .05$$

Table 39

Male Adultery by Facial Expression (percentages)

| | anger | positive express. | negative express. | |
|------------|-------|----------------------|----------------------|------|
| betrayed | 50.0 | 7.5 | 42.5 | n=80 |
| betraying | 6.1 | 59.2 | 34.7 | n=49 |
| non-adult. | 12.1 | 38.6 | 29.3 | n=58 |

$$\chi^2 = 63.1 \quad DF = 4 \quad P < .05$$

The majority of betrayed cases (84.4% for females and 92.5% for males) fell into either the anger or negative expression category which, given the scenario of adultery, is expected (tables 38 & 39). The majority of the cases arrived home unexpectedly only to find their spouse involved in a sexual relationship with another person. It appears that betrayed wives were slightly less indignant than betrayed husbands. The majority of betraying spouses (58.8% for wives and 59.2% for husbands) appear to have found sex pleasurable as they exhibited positive expressions. It could be argued that the high percentage of negative expressions for betraying spouse was due to being discovered by their spouses. Indeed in over 50% of cases the negative expression was shock. For non-adultery spouses it appears that the husbands found sex slightly more pleasurable than their wives with the wives being generally more angry.

Table 40

Female Adultery by Activity or Passivity in Relationship
(percentages)

| | seducing | willing | resigned | prevent. | |
|------------|----------|---------|----------|----------|-------|
| betrayed | 2.2 | 13.3 | 4.4 | 80.1 | n=45 |
| betraying | 36.8 | 60.4 | 1.9 | .9 | n=106 |
| non-adult. | 24.6 | 47.4 | 26.3 | 1.7 | n=57 |

Chi square not valid

Table 41

Male Adultery by Activity or Passivity in Relationship (percent-
ages)

| | seducing | willing | resigned | prevent. | |
|------------|----------|---------|----------|----------|------|
| betrayed | 4.9 | 3.7 | 2.4 | 89.0 | n=82 |
| betraying | 67.3 | 25.0 | 1.9 | 5.8 | n=52 |
| non-adult. | 39.3 | 37.8 | 16.4 | 6.5 | n=61 |

chi square not valid

One of the most interesting findings from the above tables is the degree to which betraying spouses differed in seduction. It appears that the male betrayers were far more active in seducing the partner while the majority of female betrayers were more passive. This suggests that Playboy also depicts wives as passively available to men. Male spouses on the other hand were more the initiators of the relationships. The majority of both male and female betrayed spouses were attempting to prevent the relationship, a greater number of wives were however willing to participate in the adultery but as we are dealing with small numbers it is impossible to make any meaningful comments.

More non-involved in adultery husbands were actively seducing while the more wives were passively willing or resigned than their husbands which fits into the pattern noted in the analysis of the general characteristics of males and females (see Table 12). The betraying spouses seemed to be the most positively orientated towards the sex which suggests that sex involving adultery is more highly regarded by the participants than sex between marital partners.

Summary of Adultery

The previous discussion has indeed shown that betrayed spouses, betraying spouses and non-adultery spouses do exhibit different characteristics as a function of their role in the marital relationship. This was most sharply illustrated with the females where the betrayed wives fitted into the 'non-sexy' stereotype of being older, clothed and having a realistic body. Clearly in Playboy cartoons the 'non-sexy' woman is not seen as a likely candidate for sexual activity with her husband or any other male partner. This finding is borne out in the tables which show the betraying wife as fitting into the stereotype of the young, sexily dressed, idealistically built female. Thus for Playboy, sexual activity (be it with their husband or another partner) is reserved

for those wives who fit this narrow stereotype. For husbands however, the data revealed far less rigid stereotyping where all men are potentially sexually active.

The satisfaction of the sex act also tended to differ depending on whether the sex was within marriage or was adulterous with the latter depicted as the most enjoyable and successful. The betraying spouses on the whole were the most active in seducing the partners which is consistent with Playboy's overall message that marriage is not the ideal state, especially for men. In effect the butt of the cartoons is the married man for he is more likely to be the betrayed than the betrayer and if he is not betrayed then he is much more likely to be involved in problematic sex. Both of these states clearly set the married man apart from his more sexually accomplished single counterpart. The betraying male however does have successful sex which is understandable since he is being the 'ideal playboy'. Thus the image of marriage in Playboy cartoons is in keeping with the general ethos of the magazine and the humor contained within it (problem two on the Checklist).

General Conclusions of the Study

The discussion of the general conclusions which can be drawn from this study will be set within the five aims of content analysis listed at the beginning of Chapter Five. Included in this discussion will be an analysis of the advantages of content analysis as applied to the study of Playboy cartoons.

1. Describing Communication Content

The first aim of any content analysis study is to identify what exists. Clearly no one study can purport to have yielded

data which exhausts all possible description of the media content under discussion. Other researchers may choose to focus on aspects other than those highlighted in this study. However, given the breadth of the categories and the subdivisions within each category, it can be argued that this content analysis has produced a description of the Playboy cartoon fantasy world which goes beyond any previous study of this cultural form.

Above all, the world depicted in these cartoons is one characterized by transient, temporary relationships with no sense of history, commitment or obligation. The female players in these relationships are young, voluptuous and sexily clad. They are to be found in the office, the street, the bar the church congregation and of course the bedroom. They tend to have no role other than that of sex object for they are generally available and amenable to the sexual advances of the male boss, husband, priest, doctor or whatever role the male is cast in. In this fantasy world all interpersonal relationships are sexualized and most of the characters are far removed from workaday realities and family responsibility. If the partners are married then in virtually all of the cases there is no evidence of children and in order for the husband to remain faithful the wife must meet the standard Playboy criteria for being sexy.

In this male centered world all men are highly sexual beings, irrespective of age, body measurements and clothing. They are surrounded by the temptation of a bevy of young beautiful women and more often than not these men succumb. For the females however being highly sexual is dependent above all on their age. If they are young then they will generally be voluptuous and sexily clad which in Playboy language stands for sexual availability. If however they have the misfortune to age then their libido dies along with their youth. That is of course until they enter old age when they regain their desire but it is too late since they stand no chance against the competition of youth. They then turn into predators but where this is glamorized for the males in the cartoons, for the old female it takes on an air of

desperation and ridicule. Old men however do not have to resort to trickery since they are still able to attract younger women.

The Playboy cartoon world is a world without disability, people of color, poverty, homosexuality, famine, disease, and death. It is in short a white middle-to-upper class, privileged world where time is spent playing with cars, gadgets, golf clubs and most importantly, women. Indeed as previously stated, Arthur Kretchmer, Playboy's editorial director, argued that one of Hefner's main aims in developing the magazine was to tell the world that it is okay to play. Thus in this way we can see that the cartoons in Playboy embody messages which 'fit' with the articulated ideology of the host magazine (problem two on the Checklist). Such a life-style is clearly in keeping with the magazine whose targeted audience was from the very beginning the upwardly mobile, college educated male, the group most likely to have the financial resources necessary to 'play' at the level dictated by Playboy.

The categories which were devised aimed to build up a multi-dimensional picture of the fantasy world of Playboy cartoons. The focus of this world is the cartoon characters and thus most of the categories involved some aspect of these characters' activities and relationships. This approach stands in sharp contrast to many of the studies discussed in Chapter One where the focus was on a single theme within the cartoons. While this type of content analysis adds to our understanding of cartoons, it cannot provide the depth of information which is characteristic of a more complex category system of the type employed here.

2. Testing Hypotheses of Message Characteristics.

Having discussed the male centered, hedonistic philosophy advocated by Hefner in Playboy it would be difficult to express surprise, contrived or otherwise, at the findings of the content analysis. Hefner stated in the very first issue that this was a

magazine exclusively for the 'masculine tastes'. The original hypothesis (and Urry's claim, see Chapter Two) that the image of women and men in the cartoon will be consistent with the overall ideology put forward in Playboy has indeed been shown to be the case (problem two on the Checklist). The interesting feature of the study was not really showing the hypothesis to be valid but rather in providing insights into how Playboy cartoons construct idealized versions of femininity and masculinity and the resultant power imbalance. The content analysis revealed the ways in which the image of women as sex toys was woven into numerous aspects of daily life. We saw the gender dynamics being played out in the home, office, on the street, in fact every social situation was a potential scenario for reiterating the basic message that males are the consumers and females the consumed.

The cartoons proved to be a rich visual resource for illuminating the sexist assumptions found in Playboy. Indeed it can be argued that nowhere in the magazine can such clear articulations be found. Cartoons, by virtue of being seen as humorous, have a greater freedom for expressing the underlying value system of the magazine editors (Seymour-Ure, 1975).

3. Comparing Media Content to the "Real World".

It would clearly be ludicrous to argue that Playboy visually depicts the real world in that by virtue of our membership in the wider society we are aware that the average woman is not young, voluptuous and does not walk around in transparent underwear or blouses which barely cover a size 40" chest. While such women may exist, they are not in the majority in the way that Playboy cartoons suggest. However, on a deeper level it can be argued, as Fiske and Hartley do (1978), that media content, in this case Playboy cartoons, do reflect symbolically the structure of values and relationships beneath the surface. Studies show that men prefer large breasted, voluptuous females (see Freedman, 1986)

who are willing to exhibit the socially defined female characteristics of passivity and dependence. Moreover Freedman discusses the studies which suggest that females who conform to the current standard of beauty are more likely to receive a job when in competition with more 'homely' looking women. Furthermore these accepted standards of beauty have been internalized by women in ever greater numbers seeking cosmetic surgery (currently 600,000 a year in the United States, see Freedman, 1986). Indeed one sixth of these women have had breast enlargement which does suggest that Playboy's subtle message that large breasted women are more desirable is one which has a following in the society at large. This of course is not to mention the sales of padded bras and bra inserts which have consistently been a major seller (see Freedman; *ibid*).

The ever growing cosmetic trade in creams which purport to make women look younger is evidence of the widely held sexist view that youthful women are the most sexually desirable. Moreover Freedman cites studies which show that women seeking psychotherapy point to aging as a major factor in their depression. This is a western phenomena for as Freedman points out, in many non-western societies aging is met with much anticipation by women since it signifies wisdom and thus elevated them to a status not previously enjoyed. Now while Playboy did not create the message that youth in women is preferable to aging, it does both reflect and reproduce this message and thus its depictions can be meaningfully compared to the real world.

In a broader sense the overall position of women in Playboy is characteristic of the position of women in patriarchal society. While there are women who are in positions of relative economic power (a phenomena ignored in the Playboy cartoons) women as a class are exploited in ways which parallel their caricatured sisters in the cartoons. Women as a group have been relegated to a position of service for men by men. This service can take many forms such as ensuring that men are released from the tedious life support duties of cleaning, cooking, child rearing (as in the

housewife role) or typing letters, answering phones and making coffee (as in the numerous office jobs which are the almost exclusive domain of women) or the decorative and accompanying sexual service of men (as in wives, girlfriends, lovers and prostitutes)

Thus it can be argued that when we compare the content of Playboy cartoons to the "real world" we find that the basis of these portrayals, rather than being peculiar to Playboy, is merely an exaggerated form of existing sexual stereotypes and that moreover these stereotypes do conform to a certain degree to the actual position of women in western patriarchal society.

4. Assessing the Image of Particular Groups in Society.

This study which examined the image of women in Playboy cartoons can be seen as part of a wider genre which has sought to examine the image of women in the print and broadcast media. This area of research gained popularity in the 1970s with the publication of a number of germinal texts. The most important amongst these books was Hearth and Home: Images of Women in the Mass Media, edited by Gaye Tuchman et al. (1978). This book contained articles on the image of women in television shows, advertisements, newspapers and magazines. One of the key concepts introduced is what Tuchman calls the "symbolic annihilation of women". In the media, women are either absent altogether or otherwise trivialized to the extent that they might as well not exist at all. For example, Tuchman points to a number of studies which show that males dominate the television screen by a ratio of 2:1.

The studies in the book report that when women are shown in the media they tend to be depicted as housewives whose main aim in life is to serve their husbands. Lemon's article on prime time television argues that men were more likely to be portrayed as having high status occupations and that "television maintains

societal stereotypes in its portrayal of power" (Lemon, 1978: 52).

Another major text book on the subject of women in the media is Women and the Mass Media by Butler and Paisley (1979). This book mirrors much of Tuchman's in content and findings. The emphasis is on quantitative data and the research method is almost always content analysis. While this approach to female imagery has been criticized (see for example Jaddou and Williams, 1981) it has been instrumental in bringing the topic to notice and indeed has prompted high level organizations in both Canada and the United States to commission their own investigations (see, for example, US Commission on Civil Rights, 1979).

The research in this study, although on a different topic to that usually found in the literature on the image of women, has yielded findings which are consistent with those found in books such as Hearth and Home. While females appear in Playboy cartoons in roughly the same proportion to males, they do tend to be relegated to the role of servicing men, only here it is their sexual needs which are being serviced as opposed to their more mundane domestic needs. Thus this study can be seen as contributing important data to the overall task of assessing the image of women in society.

Feminist concern with the image of women in the mass media which employs content analysis as a method and which aims to document the types of media roles women play is only one of three types of feminist criticism which have been applied to the study of media output. Kaplan (1989) notes that this type of criticism has tended to dominate feminist scholarship and moreover is rooted in what she calls liberal feminist philosophy in that "such studies show women demanding equal access to the (patriarchal) symbolic" (1989: 222). A good example of such research is Meehan's (1983) study on the image of women in prime time television. Meehan, using content analysis, studied the occurrence of female roles (the imp, the goodwife, the harpy, the bitch, the victim, the decoy, the siren, the courtesan, the witch, the matriarch) and the changes in each image from 1950-1980. While

the specific findings of Meehan's study are not relevant here (see chapter 13 in her book), her overall conclusion is that "except in the rarest of cases, expression of female autonomy, even expression of her own sexuality, was potentially harmful or dangerous" (1983: 113, quoted in Kaplan, *ibid*: 221).

A major criticism of this specific study is based on the inherent problem with the methodology in general in that "it does not tell us much about how these images are produced ...or about exactly how these images mean, how they "speak" to the female viewer" (Kaplan, 1989: 221). Meehan's solution (which calls for women being depicted in the same roles as men, that is, as heading families and corporations) is also open to criticism in that it demands that women submit to the present patriarchal structure without challenging the underpinning value system.

Although Kaplan's discussion of the liberal feminist approach is important in that it provides a framework for understanding much of past research into images of women (a good example being Hearth and Home), she fails to distinguish between the methodology employed and the theoretical underpinnings adopted. She suggests implicitly that the problem with the liberal feminist approach is two fold, firstly the quantifications of themes and or categories and secondly, the unquestioned assumption that women should work within the patriarchal system rather than advocating for deep structural change. The problem with Kaplan's argument is that it does not address the possibility that content analysis can be used in a more critical way as a tool for uncovering the ideology which is embedded in patriarchal imagery. In other words, just because content analysis has been adopted by feminists whose theoretical position is often found wanting in that it does not seek to change the present system of power relations, it does not mean that there is anything inherently problematic with the method itself. This point was previously discussed in the chapter on content analysis where it was argued that often the problem with past studies was the atheoretical use of the method and not the method itself. It is thus useful to reiterate Winston's (1983)

argument that content analysis is an important tool for critical researchers since it provides a map of media content without which we can not understand what is produced and what effects media may have on the audience. Thus it is suggested here that Kaplan is too quick to throw out content analysis without providing a discussion of what should take its place.

The criticism that liberal feminists fail to question in any satisfactory manner the workings of the patriarchal system can not be levelled against the radical school. Although the women working within this approach tend to differ in their focus, (Millett, 1970, for example examines novels; Caputi, 1988 looks at popular films and magazines; Aschur, 1976 analyzes soap operas) they generally do not use content analysis but rather provide lengthy discussions of selected texts. Moreover, as Kaplan suggests, much of the criticism is concerned with a discussion of the portrayal of family life as the solution to all personal and social problems, or with the media emphasis on heterosexuality as the norm. Here the solution to such images lies with women confronting and challenging the male symbolic order by refusing to engage with the whole structure of patriarchy, the media being just one institution to reject.

The third and most recent type of feminist criticism is post-structuralist. This approach depends heavily on concepts developed within psychoanalysis, semiotics, film theory and Marxism. Much of the work is concerned with how meaning is produced, both by the text and the reader. While it is clearly impossible to discuss fully the range of work carried out within this highly complex approach, it is useful to delineate some of those major areas of interest which are relevant for this thesis. Following on from Mulvey's (1975) influential article (see Chapter Nine for a fuller discussion) many feminists have been interested in what a possible female gaze may look like. It is suggested here that women, by virtue of occupying a particular place in the patriarchal culture, learn to look at images differently to men. Many researchers have therefore turned their attentions to more

women orientated genres such as romance novels and asked how the actual female viewer reads these texts (see for example Radway, 1986). One specific area of debate is how much power to attribute to the text rather than the reader and vice-versa (this point will be taken up further in Chapter Nine). Irrespective of the particular site of emphasis, post-structuralist feminists do not view texts as containing a true meaning which can be apprehended through the use of quantitative techniques such as content analysis.

Although the three feminist approaches differ markedly in their particular emphasis and research strategy, it would be a mistake to assume that any one approach dominates the field. Rather, as Kaplan argues "we find that most types of feminist research are still being produced concurrently..." (1989: 219). Given this it would seem that a combination of the three approaches would be the most beneficial for understanding the ways in which women are depicted in media. This entails employing a method such as content analysis which would yield a map of media content while also using the data to challenge the patriarchal structure which subordinates women for, as Winston (1983) argues, one of the main functions of content analysis is to raise consciousness as to the nature of media output. Moreover it also important to examine how real readers construct meaning since it is not enough to just provide a systematic and quantitative description of output. Thus Chapter Nine is specifically concerned with how women and men read Playboy cartoons. In this way all three types of feminist criticism can be applied to a study such as this one on Playboy cartoons in order to enrich our understanding of the ways in which media texts serve to legitimize patriarchal oppression.

5. Establishing a Starting Point for Studies of Media Effects

In the discussion of the American approach to mass media (Chapter Two) it was argued that the research into effects had neglected the important first step of analyzing the media that was supposed to produce the effect(s). This oversight is beginning to be rectified, particularly with the work of Gerbner and Gross (see bibliography). This content analysis has aimed to produce data which will provide insights into the world of Playboy cartoons so that future researchers could begin to assess the possible effects of these images. Chapter Nine examines some potential areas of investigation for future work into effects.

Generally speaking, the choice of content analysis as the method of textual analysis proved to be useful since it furnished us with a substantial amount of data on a media form which has by and large been ignored by researchers. This study of Playboy sex cartoons has provided us with important insights into the ways in which Playboy constructs idealized versions of masculinity and femininity. It also adds an important dimension to the growing body of literature on the image of women in the mass media. However, no discussion would be complete without a consideration of those limits that were imposed upon the study by the research method chosen.

General Limitations of Content Analysis: Playboy Sex Cartoons as a Case Study

One widely-recognized (see, for example, Sumner, 1979; Woollacott, 1982) limitation of content analysis, namely that by splitting the text into quantifiable units the researcher cannot apprehend the meaning of a text as a structured whole, also applies to this study. The cartoons in Playboy are seen as a humorous interlude and unfortunately the system of categories

devised could not account for the humor content of the cartoons. Moreover, since Playboy cartoons can be seen as texts whose constituent components are articulated to form a complex message, the quantification of the occurrence or non-occurrence of specific themes served to fragment the content and thus decontextualize the message. This is especially serious in light of the fact that audiences interpret a picture as a gestalt, with each element contributing to the overall meaning of the text. Since these problems are inherent in any content analysis study, irrespective of the level of sophistication of the system of categories, it is necessary to supplement the findings with more detailed data on how audience members interpret the cartoon as a whole (see Chapter Nine for a discussion of the development and findings of an audience-centered study of Playboy cartoons).

A further problem with content analysis concerns the generalizability of its findings. This study furnishes us with data regarding the sex cartoon content of only one magazine, Playboy. We cannot extrapolate from these findings to provide a discussion of the content of sex cartoons as a specific genre. It is an open question whether or not the categories developed for this study would be applicable to other pornographic magazines.

Another limitation of this study is that the categories and subsequent findings of this study only tell us how the particular researcher(s) read the cartoons under investigation. We do not know if the actual readers themselves make the same readings and thus it is important to include an analysis of audience decodings. It is incorrect to assume that media content, in this case Playboy cartoons, have one meaning which is waiting to be discovered by the researcher(s) since texts do have polysemic potential.

Since content analysis depends upon pre-established categories applied to manifest elements of the content of communication, there is the potential problem that that the researcher might pay inadequate attention to the significance of elements of the text (Kracauer 1952). Given that the categories were pre-established, there is the very real danger that this

study missed some of the important themes in Playboy cartoons which may not occur so often but nonetheless are important for an understanding of this media form. One such example is the occurrence of people of color. Although the Playboy cartoon world is populated on the whole by white characters, there were occasionally images of black people. However to include a category for race would have been impossible since the statistical occurrence was so low⁵ that it would have caused the chi square test to have been invalid. Given Playboy's repeated claim that they support the black civil rights movement (Playboy, November 1971), it would have been interesting to see just how they depict black people. One reason for the low statistical occurrence of black people is Playboy's fear of appearing racist since, due to the fact that they have no black cartoonists, they would have to rely on a white cartoonist's depiction of blacks (see the discussion of Urry's comments in Chapter Three).

The same holds true for female employers, who, while occurring more often than black people, still had a low statistical frequency. I would argue that the study would have been greatly enhanced by comparing the image of male employers with that of female employers. Especially interesting would have been the ways in which the power imbalance between women and men was played out in a context of boss-worker relations with the female being the holder of power.

The preceding considerations clearly indicate that there are certain limitations which unavoidably arise when using a pre-established category system. However all research methods have specific problems which are inherent to that method. The aim of the researcher should not be to find the perfect method but rather to use a combination of methods in the hope that the strengths of each can be combined to produce research findings that can do justice to the complex nature of media texts. Such an

⁵ Greenberg and Kahn's study found that between 1956-1969 less than 2% of Playboy cartoons contained images of black people. There are no studies which looks at the statistical appearance of blacks in Playboy during the 1970s.

approach has been advocated by Holloran (1983) when he suggests that "there is no need to apologize for a 'multiperspective diagnosis' in mass communication research; indeed, we should seek to promote eclecticism rather than try to make excuses for it" (ibid: 270). It is thus suggested here that different methods of textual analysis (that is, those which rely on pre-established categories such as content analysis and those which utilize a more interpretive strategy such as semiotics) should be employed and it is through the combination of these methods that the sociology of cartoons will best be served.

Beyond Textual Analysis: Looking at Effects of Cartoons

It will be recalled that in Chapter Two it was argued that textual analysis is just one of the elements involved in the sociological investigation of mass media. The other two are the process of production and diffusion and the reception and appropriation of media messages. Although Thompson (1988) has suggested that these three elements are interconnected, for the purposes of research they should be viewed as separate areas of investigation. Chapter Three attempted to show how a sociologist of cartoons might investigate the production and diffusion of cartoons. What remains to be discussed is the ways in which audiences may receive and appropriate the messages which are contained within the cartoons. The following chapter aims to lay the groundwork for such an investigation by examining the theories and research of those sociologists who have gone beyond the traditional effects-orientated research and have instead sought to conceptualize media effects in terms of how audience members make sense of media messages and integrate them into their lives.

Chapter Eight

Directions for Future Research

Chapter Eight and Chapter Nine are concerned with how sociologists can begin to understand the ways in which cartoons and the texts in which they are found affect the reader. Although the discussion will be couched in terms of media effects it is important to point out that the term effects is not being used in the traditional, positivist sense to refer to short-term attitude change. The review of the effects research in Chapter Two clearly demonstrated the limitations of past research and the need for a more sophisticated analysis which is grounded in sociological rather than the psychological approaches. Because sociologists have for some time now been thinking of ways to reconceptualize media effects, there exists a large body of research and thus choices had to be made regarding what areas to cover. The three approaches to be discussed represent the diversity which exists in the field, both in terms of theory and research methods. The first approach is that offered by Erving Goffman in Gender Advertisements. Although Goffman does not explicitly talk in terms of media effects, his arguments are relevant in that they provide sociologists with a conceptual framework for understanding how audience members may read cartoons. He is especially interested in understanding the processes at work in decoding stills, specifically advertisements. Although it is difficult to operationalize Goffman's arguments, his discussion of the relationship between the interpretation of stills and visual images of real objects is important for the sociologist of cartoons since he suggests that members of society decode lived social reality and various pictorial representations of it (such as cartoons) in much the same way.

While Goffman's Gender Advertisements provides important insights into how audiences learn to decode visual communication,

what is missing from his discussion is an empirical analysis of how actual audience members may be affected by the visual messages. In Chapter Two it was suggested that media sociologists have often failed to pay sufficient attention to empirically investigating the ways in which audience members make sense of the media messages and integrate them into their lives. Thus the second approach discussed is that developed by George Gerbner and Larry Gross, namely the cultural indicators project. The main aim of this project is to show, empirically, how the messages learned from the mass media contribute to the audience's social construction of reality. The advantage of this approach is that it provides the sociologist of cartoons with a framework for investigating the effects of different media forms. This is especially pertinent to the discussion since cartoons rarely appear alone but rather within a magazine or newspaper. It is therefore necessary to develop a research strategy which will seek to examine the effects of cartoons found in a wide variety of texts. Thus to understand the effects of cartoons found within Playboy, the analysis has to go beyond the cartoons and instead investigate the potential effects of pornography with the cartoons being one component.

The third approach discussed (in Chapter Nine), cultural studies, provides a research model that can investigate the ways in which audiences interpret the actual cartoon, divorced from its surrounding context. The main focus of inquiry is the different ways in which variously positioned audience members may decode the actual message contained within the cartoon. Those sociologists who have adopted the cultural studies approach take issue with past researchers who suggest that media messages are decoded in similar ways by all viewers. By acknowledging that specific groups may decode images in different ways, we can begin to conceptualize the ways in which women and men may decode pornography and specifically Playboy cartoons in various ways by virtue of occupying a different location within the patriarchal structure.

All of the above three approaches have something to offer the sociology of cartoons. No one theory or research method can explain or investigate the complex issue of media effects. Taken together however they add to our knowledge regarding the ways in which audience members interpret and integrate media messages into their lives. Combining a number of different theories and research methods is, according to Holloran (1983), the most fruitful path to take since "... the more complex the subject matter...the more types of approaches will be needed" (ibid: 271).

Goffman's Gender Advertisements

In *Gender Advertisements* (1979) Goffman presents ideas that lay the groundwork for a new and innovative form of visual analysis whose starting point is not so much the visual product itself but rather "how social structures are employed as the scenic resource for constructing visually accessible, instantaneous portraits of our claimed human nature" (ibid: 27). While the title of Goffman's book suggests that advertisements are the focus of analysis, we find that it is stills in general which attract the author's interest. Analysis of Goffman's arguments about stills reveals that it is the displays of non-verbal conduct that they portray which forms the basis of his ideas on how social actors make sense of the visual imagery. In what follows I will detail those ideas¹ which I have found most fruitful for the analysis of cartoons as a form of stills.

For Goffman, an examination of visual media (in this case stills) is not a separate area of sociological investigation but is

¹ What follows should not be read as a summary of the long and sometimes torturously argued analysis of Gender Advertisements. The discussion rather aims to highlight those points which further our understanding of the manner in which readers make sense of visual communication and specifically cartoons. These points were chosen from a wide range of possibilities and it is noted here that other researchers may choose to focus on different aspects of the book

instead inextricably bound up with an analysis of the "...displays that individuals manage to inject into social situations" (ibid: 27). Given this, it is not surprising that much of Goffman's book is concerned not with advertisements but rather with social behavior. From this I would suggest that the concepts and arguments advanced are thus applicable to most forms of still visual communication, including of course cartoons. Indeed Goffman himself often lumps together advertisements with cartoons when discussing how social actors make sense of visual media. However I will highlight those instances where Goffman discusses important differences between the various types of stills, focusing on those which are most pertinent to the discussion of cartoons.

It can be argued that Gender Advertisements (GA) embodies much of the previous work of Goffman for those cleverly concocted stills we call advertisements are particularly fruitful examples of human displays. Half way through G.A. Goffman asks the central question:

How can stills present the world when in the world persons are engaged in courses of actions and doings through time, where sound is almost as important as sight, and smell and touch figure as well. (Ibid: 26)

In attempting to answer this question Goffman turns not to advertisements, but to human behavior. Specifically he draws upon the concept of ritual which he defines as "a single fixed element of a ceremony" (ibid: 1). Here Goffman is interested in ritual from the ethological position and especially those emotionally motivated behaviors which become, in the sense of Julian Huxley, "...formalized - in the sense of becoming simplified, exaggerated and stereotyped" (ibid: 1). Goffman draws much of his theory from Darwin and defines these behaviors as displays in that:

Instead of having to play out an act, the animal in effect, provides a readily readable expression of his situation, specifically his intent, this taking the form of ritualization

of some portion of the act itself, and this indication presumably allows for negotiation of an efficient response from and to witnesses of the display. (Ibid)

As the argument unfolds, it becomes clear that it is these displays which are the basis of Goffman's ideas about how viewers make sense of stills. When discussing the various types of stills², that is public and private, we find that Goffman engages in two activities, first, pulling apart the different types of stills to identify their individual characteristics and then putting them back together to characterize their commonalities. Although there is a lengthy discussion regarding their differences, Goffman makes the following claim when considering stills as a whole:

Somehow we learn to decode small, flat tracings for large, three dimensional scenes in a manner somewhat corresponding to the way we have learned to interpret our visual images of real objects. (Ibid: 12)

From this we can argue that Goffman differs from much of media sociology (for example, Key, 1974, and Tuchman, 1979) in two respects: first, rather than dealing with properties of advertisements as images Goffman deals with our viewing competence which we bring to advertisements and second, media sociologists tend to consider advertisements as independent of real world situations and/or as distortions of real world situation. Goffman on the other hand sees the reading of advertisements as part of everyday life, drawing on methods available there for making sense out of the real world. Now Goffman does of course argue that there are important differences between the viewing of ads and live scenes (see below) but also stresses the similarities. Thus we find the discussion in GA continuously moving back and forth, comparing interpretive live and photographed scenes in an attempt to highlight the similar visual mechanism we employ for making sense

² These differences are not relevant here. Further elaboration can be found on pages 10 and 11 of G.A. (Ibid.).

of both.

For Goffman, live viewing "...ordinarily assures that what is seen is as it appears now, whereas a picture at best guarantees that it was once so" (ibid: 12). Here, Goffman is referring to what he calls caught or candid photographs (ibid: 15) which are contrasted with covertly doctored, rigged or openly contrived pictures where "inferences as to what was going on in the scene can't be correctly made from what is pictured" (ibid: 14). Although the distinctions between these different types of photographs are important for the student of photographs, what must be emphasized are the similarities which Goffman points to with respect to reading skills (including cartoons). Goffman thus goes on to argue:

Now it is essential to go on to see that all these pictures share one important feature, namely they are all scenes, that is representations, whether candid, faked or frankly simulated of events happening. Narrative like action is to be read from what is seen, a before and after are to be inferred and this location in the ongoing stream of activity provides the context... (ibid: 15)

The common feature among all these scenes is that their "...meaning can be read at a flash" (ibid: 27). Indeed if, following Goffman, we are going to argue that a still has narrative like action, then the actual event in the scene has to be meaningful as a segment of an act which has come to serve as a symbol of the whole act. The whole act does not have to be played out in the still (this would of course be impossible) rather what we have is "...this activity being symbolized, as it were, by a quotation of one of its dramatically telling phases" (ibid: 19). It is in this way that a frozen moment of time captured in a still can be likened to live action which is based on doings through time. This argument links to the previously discussed animals displays where:

...instead of having to play out an act, the animal in effect provides a readily readable expression of his situation, specifically his intent, this taking the form of a "ritualization" of some portion of the act itself... (ibid: 1)

Goffman then continues to point out that in certain stills, the segment of the act photographed is not always an intention display in the ethological sense. Rather in stills an added dimension comes into play which is most clearly seen in the differences between candid and posed stills. Whereas in candid stills the caught actions can be seen as foreshadowing intention in its realization, in posed photos the task of the model is to act as if it were the case, but the model is not required to fulfill the promise in the real world. With respect to this argument, Goffman makes the distinction between displays and emblems with the latter referring to posed scenes. The point that Goffman makes however is that routinely we read emblems as if they were display, that is, we suspend belief in a posed scene's emblematic quality. Goffman terms this the "...photographic fallacy, namely, the very general tendency to confuse realness with representativeness and ideographic with nomothetic validity" (ibid: 20). Thus when we see a group of people in an advertisement which are meant to represent a family, we will read it as such although on further questioning we may admit that this "family" is nothing more than a group of individuals, unconnected by blood ties. As Garfinkel argued, we will accept the visual depictions as real until further notice.

An example which Goffman points to is the "...candid wedding picture of the groom placing a ring on the finger of the bride" (ibid.: 20). From just this segment we read the before and after even though the picture tells us very little other than the point that the ring was placed on the bride's finger. However, as Goffman points out

...it is very hard to avoid thinking that one has established something beyond this, namely, something about the event's currency and typicality, commonness, distribution, and so forth... (ibid.: 20)

With respect to the actual photographing of the scene, we would have a very different before and after for a candid wedding scene as compared to a faked one. However, the before and after we read into the photographed scene itself is not dependent upon whether the still is posed or faked, that is of course as long as there is no reason to think otherwise since the only before and after available to the reader are the ones depicted.

From this, Goffman argues that stills provide us with visual information which we interpret as an "...objective, veridical version - an actual picture of socially important aspects of what is in effect out there" (ibid: 12)³. Here again, Goffman is linking pictured scenes to live scenes and argues that both in a sense afford us the same information. This Goffman terms "...the carryover of the way the world is to any photograph" (ibid: 19). For Goffman in any pictured scene, be it candid or faked, the model will bring to bear "...something of what he affords the eye of the actual participants in his real scenes." (ibid: 20). The discussion here is not concerned with real personal identity of the model but rather with the social identity portrayed by any given model that transcends that particular model. Goffman continues by

³ Goffman's claims (on page 15) about "Advertisements that employ commercial realism or some other variety of overtly concocted scene [which] can be aptly compared to what the stage presents" can equally be applied to cartoons, namely, "the viewer is to engage knowingly in a kind of make-believe, treating the depicted world as if it were real but of course not actually real". In photographs the issue may arise of whether or not the one who posed for the photo (model) actually can be taken as the subject as well. While Goffman makes a distinction between subject and model, he says that in reading advertisements this distinction is blurred. This is also the case for cartoons for although they are caricatures, not direct representations, they are often modeled after real people so they do have both subjects and models. It is exactly because of this link that the depictions of females in Playboy is criticized in the chapter on the findings of the content analysis.

postulating that "...for however posed and artificial a picture is, it is likely to contain elements that record instances of real things" (ibid: 21). These real things are gestures which Goffman sees as those common idioms of posture, position and glances which we are trained to employ and which constitute non-verbal communication. These gestures will also be brought to the photographed scene and therefore are in a sense 'record instances of real things'. One reason for being able to read stills is this instant recognition of the meaning behind these gestures.

Continuing from this, Goffman likens the reading of stills to the interpersonal observation that we all undertake in an industrialized society. Due to the sheer size of society we can't possibly know everyone we see personally. Therefore we merely 'catch glimpses' of strangers, however:

...due to the warranted reputation of various behavioral setting and to the conventions of self-presentation, we will be able to infer something about the social identity of these strangers, their personal relationships, to one another... (ibid: 22)

This glimpsed world is defined by Goffman as a 'truncated' one in that we deal mainly in broad categories which are lacking in detail. Now it is this world which Goffman likens to commercial realism in that both

afford us similar information regarding the participants. Neither world is concerned with the actual personal biographical details yet the participants are not strangers to us in the sense that the displays provide us with cues as to their social identity (ibid)

In this way, living in a glimpsed world trains us for being accomplished readers to stills. Thus for Goffman understanding visual media requires, as a first step, an analysis of how "members of society decode lived social reality" (Dines-Levy and Smith, 1987: 244), for it is this decoding power which we employ

in making sense of advertisements.

From the above discussion it is clear that Goffman's analysis of how audiences read visual images stands in sharp contrast to much of past research into the effects of mass media. In general the positivist, behaviorist research did not seek to understand the processes involved in making sense of media images. The question now is how can the sociologist use Goffman's arguments to analyze cartoons.

Applying Goffman to the Sociology of Cartoons

One of the main contributions of GA is that Goffman presents the reader as an active participant in the media experience. This stands in sharp contrast to the image of the passive audience blindly receiving the message which characterizes the North American tradition of media sociology as well as the European political economists. For Goffman, the readers are actively involved in decoding the images and the manner in which these images are decoded depends very much on their common sense knowledge as social actors. In this way Goffman does not treat the mass communication process in isolation from other social processes but rather entwines the two together. Thus Goffman returns us to the readers as the place of research.

Goffman makes clear that a sociology of the cartoon must include research on the ways in which readers make sense of the imagery and what kinds of common sense knowledge they bring to bear on this reading. Clearly readers have to be treated as members of society who decode lived social reality in much the same way as they decode the pictorial representations within the cartoons. Listening to readers discussions of cartoons would provide clues as to what features within the cartoon are necessary for facilitating decoding. Moreover we do not know if viewers differ in their reading of the cartoon. Goffman does not address this issue since he is interested in the common elements

in the knowledge readers bring to the viewing situation.

If the concept of reader reception is to be taken seriously then we have to consider the idea of a multiplicity of readings as opposed to just one common reading. We do not know if viewers read cartoons in the same way or if there exist alternative readings. Goffman tells us that readers rely on their common sense knowledge to decode visual imagery. What we need to know beyond this is to what degree do readings differ due to variations in common sense knowledge. And moreover are differing readings to be viewed in terms of the individual or rather as a function of specific group membership? Clearly a sociological understanding of reader reception would be based on the latter assumption, namely that different readings would be based on an understanding of the reader as situated within a particular socio-economic group and not as a result of individual psychological states. The previous discussion of the uses and gratifications approach illustrated the limitations of using the inner states of an individual as preconditions for understanding reader reception. Many of these arguments will be addressed in the discussion of the cultural studies approach which prioritizes group membership as a key explanatory factor for understanding how audience members decode images.

One of the major problems with Goffman's analysis is that it does not lend itself to empirical investigation. Thus it is necessary to look elsewhere for a framework which the sociologist of cartoons might use in order to investigate effects. The next section therefore provides an account and appraisal of the cultural indicator project since the main aim of this project is to empirically investigate the role that media images play in the audience's social construction of reality.

The Cultural Indicators Approach

The cultural indicators project grew out of a dissatisfaction with previous research models. The project, which originated in 1967, was designed to investigate the nature of television content and its relationship to viewers' conceptions of social reality. Although the research is mainly seen as the work of George Gerbner and Larry Gross, it is more accurately produced by a core of four researchers (the other two are Nancy Signorielli and David Morgan⁴). The following discussion provides a background account of the history of the project and the theoretical underpinnings and empirical techniques which have informed its development and suggests how it might be applied to the the study of pornography.

Television as the New Mythteller

■ According to Gerbner and Gross, all societies engage in constructing mythologies which serve to control the behavior of its members. These mythologies provide a coherent picture of what exists in that world, what is important, what relates to what, and what is right. In order to maintain and continue this socially constructed reality, ways must be found to disseminate these myths on a wide scale:

Common rituals and mythologies are agencies of symbolic socialization and control. They demonstrate how society works by dramatizing its norms and values. They are essential parts of the general system of messages that cultivates prevailing outlooks (which is why we call it culture) and regulates social relationships. This system of

⁴ In the following discussion I will refer to either Gerbner and Gross or Gerbner and Gross et al. depending on who wrote the article cited.

messages, with its story telling functions, makes people perceive as real and normal and right that which fits the establishes social order. (Gerbner and Gross, 1976: 173)

Gerbner and Gross see religion as having performed this story telling function and now the mass media and particularly television have assumed the function. They point to television specifically because:

Unlike print, television does not require literacy. Unlike the movies, television is "free"...and it is always running. Unlike radio, television can show as well as tell. Unlike the theater, concerts, movies, and even churches, television does not require mobility. It comes into the home and reaches individuals directly. With its virtually unlimited access from cradle to grave, television both precedes reading and, increasingly, preempts it. (Gerbner and Gross, 1976: 176)

Moreover, studies have found that viewers tend to be non-selective in their viewing habits of television since they watch by the clock rather than the program. The time that the program is aired is a more crucial indicator of audience numbers than is the content of the show (Gerbner and Gross et al., 1986). Also studies have shown that prime time television (those hours watched by the greatest number of people on a regular basis; currently 8-11 pm in the U.S.A.) is the most standardized in terms of type of programming, characters portrayed, actions and story line plots (for a fuller discussion of the ways in which prime time television is organized see Bagdikian, 1987). Given this standardization, Gerbner and Gross argue, the same messages and images are being disseminated to audiences which cross gender, class, age and race boundaries. Other types of media tend to be more selectively used and targeted to specific audiences. Television consequently has the potential to destroy heterogeneity within the public and thus disseminate a mass ideology, especially when research has shown that the typical household in North America has the set on for seven hours and actual viewing by

persons older than two averages over four hours a day (Gerbner and Gross et al., 1986). No other medium can boast such use. Given the distinctive character of television viewing, Gerbner and Gross suggest that traditional methods of measuring media effects cannot be applied to television research and hence a new research strategy is needed.

The Need for a New Research Strategy

Earlier research has focused on measuring effects in terms of a change in either attitudes or behavior. Such studies were generally conducted under laboratory settings using often only a single exposure to an individual stimulus. Clearly such studies do not in any way represent the actual viewing habits of the public, habits that entail regular and continued exposure to multiple stimuli, a process Gerbner and Gross refer to as "broad enculturation" (Gerbner and Gross, 1976: 180).

The issue of change is in itself misleading since:

We cannot look for change as the most significant accomplishment of the chief arm of established culture if its main social function is to maintain, reinforce, and exploit rather than to undermine or alter conventional conceptions, beliefs, and behaviors. (Gerbner and Gross, 1976: 181)

Thus for Gerbner and Gross the role of television is not to change attitudes and opinions but rather to reproduce, reinforce and consolidate the dominant ideologies. Murdock and Golding (1977) have made similar arguments, but because they clearly identify themselves with the Marxist school their call for a shift in the focus of research is couched in somewhat different terms. Murdock and Golding agree that change is not the key factor in understanding media; their formulations differ from Gerbner and

Gross' by stating explicitly that the issue which should be investigated is the nature and persistence of class stratification. They argue that:

media sociology should address itself to the central problem of explaining how radical inequalities in the distribution of rewards come to be presented as natural and inevitable and are understood as such by those who benefit least from this distribution...our argument is that the sociology of mass communication should be incorporated into the wider study of stratification and legitimation. (Murdock and Golding, 1977: 12)

Although both sets of authors call for a shift in research towards understanding the media as a force for legitimizing the current socio-economic system, they tend to differ on the location of emphasis. Whereas Murdock and Golding are interested in understanding the ownership and economics of cultural production, Gerbner and Gross focus more on the content itself and the ways in which television cultivates shared conceptions of reality among diverse publics, what they call the cultivation process. Put simply, Murdock and Golding concentrate more on the structural factors shaping the encoding side of the message while Gerbner and Gross focus more on the actual content found within the programs and the ways in which these messages are subsequently decoded.

Gerbner and Gross take issue with previous content analysis studies where isolated elements such as commercials or news stories are analyzed, divorced from the total context of television output. Their argument is that

the "world" of television is an organic system of stories and images. Only system-wide analysis of messages can reveal the symbolic world which structures common assumptions and definitions....The system as a whole plays a major role in setting the agenda of issues to agree or disagree with. (Gerbner and Gross, 1976: 180)

Thus for Gerbner and Gross a new method of content analysis needs to be developed which can examine television output as a structured whole: message system analysis. The following discussion will focus on the ways in which the cultural indicators project modified both the more traditional method of content analysis and the research strategy for investigating the potential long-term effects of television.

Message System Analysis

In keeping with their theoretical model, the first research stage of the cultural indicators project is "message system analysis". This involves the periodic analysis of large and representative aggregates of television output with the emphasis being on all forms of television programs, rather than on isolated segments of a specific genre. Because, as Gerbner and Gross argue, we cannot investigate effects without first examining content, it is necessary to establish the composition and structure of the television world. Thus the aim of their content analysis is to map television's "geography, demography, thematic and action structure, time and space dimensions, personality profiles, occupation and fates" (1976:182). Gerbner and Gross et al. have been conducting message system analysis on annual samples of prime-time and weekend-daytime network dramatic programming since 1969. These studies are conducted by trained analysts who observe and code various aspects of television content.

The list of topics examined by the researchers since the project began is indeed impressive, ranging from media depictions of violence to sex and age-role stereotypes, health, religion and science (for a fuller discussion of the breadth of issues investigated see Gerbner and Gross et al., 1986). By far the most developed area however is the violence profile, which provides a regularly updated account of the number and nature of incidents of media violence. One of the main reasons for this concentration

is the on-going controversy in the U.S.A. over what critics see as the media's obsession with gratuitous violence. Indeed many of the grants awarded to the project have been specifically for such research (Gerbner, 1984).

The specific findings yielded by Gerbner and Gross' use of the message system analysis are not relevant for the purpose of investigating Playboy sex cartoons since we are dealing with two different genres and topics. However, I will briefly present some of the findings from the violence profiles since this will facilitate the following discussion of the cultivation process, a process which is directly applicable to my genre and topic.

The researchers define violence as "the overt expression of physical force against self or other, compelling action against one's will on pain of being hurt or killed, or actually hurting or killing" (1976: 184). Research found that the level of violence on television has remained fairly constant since monitoring began in 1969. In 1969, for example, there were 8.1 violent acts per hour, in 1977 the rate was 8.0 and in 1982 it was 8.3, for children's television the 17 year average is 20 violent incidents per hour (see Gerbner, 1984). Between six and seven out of every ten leading characters are involved in violence. When victim and victimizer are distinguished, there are very different rates of violence by women and men, black and white and old and young (Gerbner 1984). The group most likely to commit violence were white men in the prime of life while the most likely group to be victimized were old, young and minority women.

One criticism levelled against the message system analysis is that it is nothing more than sophisticated content analysis (see Newcomb, 1978). Now while the research, like traditional content analysis, does involve counting it is not counting for counting's sake. Sumner (1979), it will be recalled, has argued that counting can have an important role to play when used in conjunction with an explicit theory of significance:

If a social theory of significance is used which presents a rational and convincing explanation of why certain signifiers should exist within a discourse, there is no reason why it should not count the appearance of these signifiers to illustrate its point. (Sumner, 1979: 73)

Gerbner and Gross have indeed developed such a theory responding to what they see as the failure to recognize the significance of violence on television by those researchers who have been eager to prove a causal relationship between violence in the media and real world violence. Gerbner and Gross argue that the incidence of violence on television has more far-reaching lessons than the instigation of occasional acts of violence. Their theory is based on what they see as the social role of violence in the real world: it demonstrates who has the power to scare, terrorize and impose their will upon others. Symbolic violence is seen as carrying the same message in that "it is the quickest and most dramatic demonstration of who can get away with what against whom" (Gerbner, 1984: 5). Thus by showing minority groups as more likely to be the victims of violence, television reinforces and perpetuates the existing social order. By depicting white men as the major perpetrators of violence, it is reflecting who has the actual power in the society. Now clearly power is not only reflected in violence but also in economic and institutional arrangements. However, because television is involved in providing a shorthand account of the power structure, quick and dramatic symbolic acts of violence are the most economical way to get the message across.

Gerbner and Gross continue by proposing that the depiction of minorities as more prone to being victimized cultivates a sense of fear which is a powerful means of social control. Fear as a form of social control has been widely cited and indeed become a major area of research in feminist writings on violence against women. Hanmer and Saunders (1984) in their study of a small English community found that women's fear of male violence "leads to a lessening of public participation by women. This can be total if

they decide never to go out alone, or partial if they go out less often" (Hanmer and Saunders, 1984: 65). This form of control works on the public level by severely restricting women's movement. On the private level this fear results in:

greater dependency on the protection of men both as escorts and in a more general sense. The pressure from the outside, or public world, creates a feeling of dependency that helps to structure an actual dependence of women on men in their home. (Ibid)

This dependency makes it "easier for individual men to assault 'their women' secure in the knowledge that they cannot retaliate easily" (ibid: 66). Dworkin (1983) argues that this fear results in women accepting the current power structure by forcing them to focus on protecting themselves instead of channeling energy into changing the conditions of their oppression. For Gerbner, fear plays a key political role in that:

fearful people are more dependent, more easily manipulated and controlled, more susceptible to deceptively simple, strong, tough measures and hard-line posture -- both political and religious. (Gerbner, 1984: 8)

Dworkin (1983) has shown how fear can be invoked to help explain the relatively new phenomena of right wing women. While the U.S.A. has always had a strong right wing religious movement, the late 1970s and early 1980s saw greater numbers of women adopting this ideology. Dworkin argues that one explanation is that the increased levels of violence against women has literally terrified women from all socio-economic backgrounds and led them to seek refuge in the more traditional, clearly defined role of female in the hope that they will escape the mayhem.

If Gerbner and Gross' theories are to have empirical validity, they have to demonstrate that television has indeed cultivated in

its viewers an image of the world consistent with the one depicted on television. Such a demonstration is provided through their "cultivation analysis."

Cultivation Analysis

The second research stage of the cultural indicators project is "cultivation analysis" which explores the role television plays in the viewers' conceptions of social reality. A key concept here is the "cultivation differential" which "highlights differences in conception of relevant aspects of social reality that television viewing tends to cultivate in heavy viewers compared to light viewers" (Gerbner and Gross, 1976: 191). Gerbner and Gross are well aware of the potential criticism that the cultivation differential could in fact be due to the socio-economic differences between heavy and light viewers. Indeed they themselves discovered that heavy viewers tend to have (among other differences) less education, lower mobility and lower aspirations than light viewers. The researchers thus controlled for all potential confounding variables so that they could focus on the conceptual and behavioral correlates of television viewing in otherwise relatively homogeneous groups.

In order to examine the cultivation differential, researchers divided respondents into two groups, heavy viewers (those viewing an average of four hours a day or more) and light viewers (those viewing an average of two hours a day or less). Using the content analysis findings as a conceptual basis, questions are formulated which have one answer closer to the facts in the television world and one closer to the real world. The investigators then relate the answers of these questions to the respondents viewing habits. Obviously the questions vary according to the nature of the topic under investigation.

With respect to violence on television the questions deal with factual matters related to law enforcement, trust, and a sense of

danger. Questions asked include what proportion of people are employed in law enforcement, the television answer (message system analysis) is five percent and the real world answer, one percent. Results show that heavy viewers are most likely to give the television answer. The same kind of result was found for the question: during any given week, what are your chances of being involved in some type of violence. One in ten was the television answer, one in a hundred was the real world answer (Gerbner and Gross, 1976: 192). One of the major findings reported by the researchers was that although answers tend to vary according to education level, reading of newspapers, age and gender, those who were heavy viewers within each group were pulled more towards the television answer. This process they have termed "mainstreaming", which refers explicitly to:

the expression of that commonality by heavy viewers in those demographic groups whose light viewers hold divergent views. In other words, differences found in the responses of different groups of viewers, differences that can be associated with other cultural, social, and political characteristics of these groups, may be diminished or even absent from the response of heavy viewers in the same group. (Gerbner and Gross et al., 1986: 31)

The researchers argue that this mainstreaming effect has been consistently demonstrated across all the studies, irrespective of the television message being examined. Given these findings, it is important to point out how the cultural indicators project differs from previous attempts to study, empirically, the effects of the mass media.

The Cultural Indicators Approach: An Appraisal

Although the work of Gerbner and Gross is geographically North American, their theoretical approach owes much to the

European tradition. In Chapter Two, the two traditions were compared in terms of Carey's typology (1977). There it was argued that the North American studies are grounded in a transmission or transportation view of communication since the thrust of the research was on examining the transmission of messages from the source to the audience. The main terms of the debate were therefore couched in concepts such as "persuasion, attitude change, behavior modification, socialization through the transmission of information, influence or conditioning" (Carey, 1977: 412). Clearly Gerbner and Gross have gone beyond such concepts and have adopted what Carey terms the "ritual view" of communication popular in Europe, where the emphasis is on

communication...as a process through which a shared culture is created, modified and transformed...the maintenance of society in time...the creation, representation, and celebration of shared beliefs (Carey: *ibid*).

Thus Gerbner and Gross have retained the American term 'media effects' while locating the debate within a more European paradigm by reconceptualizing the role of the media to include the production and dissemination of an all-embracing, legitimizing ideology for a mass audience.

Now, while Gerbner and Gross et al. have, similar to Murdock and Golding, asked questions regarding the role of the media in legitimizing the current socio-economic system, they have also, unlike Murdock and Golding, paid equal attention to the audience side of the communication process. Their project is based on the premise that "...findings about media content cannot be taken at face value as evidence of impact" (Gerbner and Gross, 1986: 25). Indeed, one of the major criticisms levelled against Murdock and Golding is that they ignore the role the audience plays in decoding the media messages (Hill, 1979). It could be argued therefore that this project is more similar to Morley's work in that attention is focused on the way in which the content is decoded by the audience. Morley's method was more fitting to news and

current affairs programs; Gerbner and Gross' work covers television as a structured whole.

Another common element in the work of Morley and Gerbner and Gross is that both projects tend to overlook the economic and institutional factors involved in cultural production. In his postscript to the study on the Nationwide audience (1981), Morley recognizes this oversight as a problem but still does not attempt to include an analysis. The most Morley says is that in the "Nationwide" project "...this field - of the broadcasters' professional ideologies...is simply left aside, rather uneasily bracketed off" (Morley, 1981: 4). Although I agree that the ideologies of the broadcasters need to be investigated, the discussion has to be set within the framework of the media as an institution located within the wider capitalist structure.

Gerbner and Gross et al. (1986) also discuss, without implementing, the need for locating media content within the wider socio-economic framework when they announce the first prong of the research project is called "institutional process analysis", which is "...designed to investigate the formation of policies directing the massive flow of media messages" (1986: 22). They then continue however by arguing that this is the least well developed area of the research strategy since its direct policy orientation makes it difficult to fund. Their claim is especially interesting in light of Rowland's research (1983), which documents the enormous sums of money handed out to Lazarsfeld and Merton by the American media industry, particularly C.B.S. and Time Inc. The main funding years, the 1940s and 50s, coincided with what McQuail (1977) calls the "limited effect" stage of research history. As previously discussed in Chapter Two, research of that time suggested that media has at best limited effects and at worst no effect. Rowland's book shows that in the U.S.A. funding for research into media has been highly politicized and heavily caught up with the industry. Given this information it is not surprising that Gerbner and Gross et al. have had little success in attracting commercial funding to pursue this area of research. The net result

has been a lack of systematic analysis into the economic and institutional factors shaping cultural production.

In Chapter Two it was argued that both the European and North American schools had important contributions to make to the field of mass communication. What we see with Gerbner and Gross is the beginnings of a more unified approach where research on both content and audience effects are integrated. What is missing is the type of analysis advocated by Murdock and Golding which involves investigating actual cultural production. Indeed, within media sociology there are a number of researchers who have conducted intensive participant observation studies within media institutions (see for example, Tunstall, 1972; Tuchman, 1978). This omission in the cultural indicators approach is striking and one I would argue not sufficiently explained by a lack of funding.

The failure of Gerbner and Gross et al., to make explicit their theoretical allegiance to the neo-marxist paradigm better explains their omission of an important part of communication production. To argue that the media plays a part in reproducing the dominant ideology requires a systematic examination of who controls the media and the ways in which this control translates into cultural production. To leave out this part reduces the argument to one of a conspiracy theory devoid of conspirators. As Murdock and Golding (1977) have shown, examining cultural production is indeed a complex task which requires painstaking investigation and analysis of media institutions at all levels. To argue that those who control the media use it merely as the institutional mouthpiece for legitimizing the dominant ideology is simplistic. We need to know, as Gerbner and Gross themselves recognize, the processes involved in the "formation of policies directing the massive flow of media messages" (Gerbner and Gross et al., 1986: 22). Conjecture cannot stand in for empirical analysis.

Since beginning in 1969, the cultural indicators project has continued to develop theoretically and empirically (see for example Gerbner and Gross et al, 1980, 1982, and 1984) as well as expanding its range to include topics such as the image of blacks

and gays (Gross, 1984), health and medicine (Gerbner and Gross et al, 1981) and sex role stereotypes (Morgan 1982). The project has also been extended to other countries (see Weimann, 1984 and Pingree and Hawkins, 1980).

Although a large number of researchers have adopted the approach developed by the cultural indicators project, it has not been without its critics (see for example, Newcomb, 1978 and Hirsch, 1981). The major criticism levelled against the cultural indicators project is that it fails to address the issue of how different sub-cultures decode television messages according to their differing positions in the socio-economic hierarchy. According to White (1983), the cultural indicators project concentrates too much on analyzing the audiences' conformity to media messages while ignoring "the forms of critical response to and rejection of the television message that are the seeds of cultural dissidence and cultural change" (White, 1983: 289). That audiences can and do reject the messages contained within the media is the basis for much of the research conducted within the cultural studies paradigm. The following section on Morley's study of the Nationwide audience continues this line of inquiry and shows that the cultural indicators project has indeed overlooked the possibility that audiences themselves actively construct meaning from the text rather than the text being the sole bearer of meaning.

A further criticism of the cultural indicators project is that it relies too heavily on traditional content analysis and conventional survey techniques (Smyth and Dinh, 121: 1983). Now while this is indeed the case I would agree with Gerbner (1983) when he argues that given the complex nature of mass media effects, it is necessary to develop and employ a number of different research techniques since it is clearly impossible to apprehend the nature of media effects using any one specific methodology. It is thus suggested here that a sociology of cartoons might best be served by utilizing a variety of methods for as Holloran argues "there is no need to apologize for a 'multiperspective diagnosis' in mass

communication research; indeed, we should seek to promote eclecticism rather than try to make excuses for it" (ibid: 270).

In spite of the criticisms levelled against it, the cultural indicators project has clearly had an enormous impact on the field of mass media research, specifically by providing a blue print for studies into a wide range of media content. One area where this blue print has not yet been applied is to the study of pornography. The following section discusses some of the ways in which the theory and methodology developed within the cultural indicators project might fruitfully be applied to the study of pornography.

The Cultural Indicators Project and Pornography

Much of the previous discussion of the potential effects of pornography has been focused on Playboy sex cartoons. This section attempts to broaden this focus by proposing a research model which would go beyond Playboy and instead examine the effects of pornography as a specific genre of representation. The underlying assumption is that researchers interested in Playboy need to develop research strategies which include different levels of analysis; from the specific (that is, Playboy sex cartoons) through to the more general (pornographic imagery as a whole) since Playboy is ultimately a magazine which employs pornographic modes of representation (see Chapter Nine for a fuller discussion of pornography as a mode of representation).

As an area of scientific investigation, pornography and its effects really developed in the early 1970s. One major impetus for this was the publication of the findings of the U.S. Presidential Commission on Obscenity and Pornography, which stated that "the commission cannot conclude that exposure to erotic materials is a factor in the causation of sex crimes or sex delinquency" (1970: 223). The Commission's findings were immediately subject to scrutiny by both feminists and psychologists (see Lederer 1982)

and the net result was, for the former, the founding of a national organization called Women Against Pornography (WAP) and, for the latter, the development of a number of research projects further investigating the nature of the causal link.

The most influential of the psychological experiments into the effects of pornography were conducted by Neil Malamuth (1978, 1981, 1984), Edward Donnerstein (1980, 1983 and 1984) and Gene Abel et al. (1976 and 1978). These studies were conducted within the classic experimental model. Respondents (often male college students) were pre-tested on their attitudes towards violence against women and specifically rape. They were then matched for similar responses and divided into two groups. Group A was shown a sexually violent film while group B watched a neutral film (often National Geographic). The respondents were then tested again and in some cases given the opportunity to aggress against a female (e.g. in the form of administering electric shocks). Malamuth and Billings (1986) in their review of the findings of the experiments concluded that the data

support the proposition that exposure to stimuli that combine violent and sexual content may increase males' acceptance of violence against women, beliefs in rape myths (e.g., that rape victims derive pleasure from being assaulted), and aggressive behavior as measured by the willingness to deliver unpleasant stimuli against a woman. (Malamuth and Billings, 1986: 97)

These findings, together with a well coordinated lobbying campaign organized by the new right (a loose coalition of religious and right wing politicians and grass roots organizations), prompted the Reagan administration to re-open the discussion (for an historical account of the anti-pornography campaign see Gubar and Hoff, 1989). President Reagan commissioned a study under the auspices of the Attorney General's Office (then held by Ed Meese) which in 1986 published its two volume report. This time the commission came out with a different conclusion: "We are satisfied that the vast majority of depictions of violence in a sexually

explicit manner are likely to increase the incidence of sexual violence in this country" (1986: 308). The commission was severely criticized for bowing to right wing pressure and for relying on secondary sources (the funding, approximately \$500,000, did not allow for the commissioning of new experiments). However Malamuth, arguing from a scientific position, has also stated that:

taken as a whole, these data clearly show that under certain circumstances exposure to pornographic stimuli that fuse sexual and aggressive elements affects perceptions and behavior in socially undesirable directions. (Malamuth and Billings, 1986: 97)

Elsewhere I have criticized the experimental method adopted by Malamuth (Dines-Levy, 1988) for being too limited. Most of the studies discussed by Malamuth were measuring the short-term effects of one exposure to sexually violent stimuli. The criticisms levelled against traditional research into the effects of television by Gerbner and Gross are applicable here since these experimental studies "...do not provide us with a theoretical construct, firmly grounded in empirical research, that can address the implications of long-term exposure to pornography" (Dines-Levy, 1988: 318). What is needed is a research strategy similar to the one adopted by Gerbner and Gross. However it is clear that there are some major differences between pornography and television which need to be explored before developing a research program.

For Gerbner and Gross, defining the area of research was a reasonably unproblematic endeavor since television content is clearly demarcated. Children's television is broadcast at a specific time every day, prime time is defined as those hours between 8-11 pm and soap operas are those shows on network television between 1-4 pm every weekday which depict the lives of characters living in a small community. Defining pornography is however a much more complex task and has indeed generated much debate. In the introduction to this thesis it was argued that in the research literature the term pornography has been used

interchangeably with the following: sexually explicit magazines, erotica, men's entertainment magazines, sex magazines and sexually aggressive stimuli. Obviously it is necessary to define clearly the population before it can be studied.

The attempt to define pornography has a long and varied legal history and has often resulted in confusion such as expressed by Justice Potter Stewart of the U.S. Supreme Court when he said, "I can't define it, but I know it when I see it" (Longino, 1982: 26). Clearly such a definition is inadequate for scientific and legal purposes. Many attempts have thus been made to clarify the term. One inclusive definition widely adopted in feminist writings on the subject, is offered by Helen Longino. She defines pornography as the:

verbal or pictorial explicit representations of sexual behavior that ...have as a distinguishing characteristic the degraded and demeaning portrayal of the role and status of the human female... as a mere sexual object to be exploited and manipulated sexually. (1982: 28)

While this definition does capture the inequality which is inherent in pornographic pictures of women in a patriarchal society, it does not provide the researcher with concepts which can be operationalized for empirical research. Dworkin and Mackinnon (1983) on the other hand have developed a definition of pornography which attempts to name and categorize all the scenarios found in current magazines and films, including violence against women, bestiality and those films which specialize in women being smeared with feces or dirt. They define pornography as the sexually explicit subordination of women graphically depicted in pictures or words, that also includes the presentation of women in one or more of the following ways:

1. As dehumanized sexual objects things or commodities
2. As sexual objects who enjoy pain or humiliation

3. As sexual objects who experience a sexual pleasure in being raped
4. As sexual objects tied up, cut up, mutilated, bruised or physically hurt
5. In postures of sexual submission, or sexual servility, including inviting penetration
6. With body parts—including but not limited to vaginas, breasts and buttocks—exhibited, such that women are reduced to these parts
7. As whores by nature
8. As being penetrated by objects or animals
9. In scenarios of degradation, injury or torture and shown as filthy or inferior, bleeding, bruised, or hurt in a context that makes these conditions sexual

Drawing on this definition of the data to be analyzed, we are now in a position to construct a research strategy.

Re-conceptualizing the Effects of Pornography

Following Gerbner and Gross, the aim here is to devise a research strategy which will explore the ways in which pornographic images of women cultivate conceptions of social reality. Clearly social reality is too broad a concept to investigate, thus it is necessary to ask (as Gerbner and Gross did with the violence profile) what are the potential lessons of this medium? Since the materials under investigation depict mainly women in some type of sexual scenario, the most obvious question to ask is: what do the viewers learn about the role and position of women in

society and about female sexuality? Having broadly framed the research questions, we can now begin to discuss in more detail the specifics of the research.

Message Systems Analysis of Pornography

As discussed in Chapter One there are only a small number of studies which have attempted to analyze the content of pornography and, moreover, these studies have tended to be limited in their findings. What is needed is a larger scale, on-going content analysis of all types of pornographic magazines and films. Clearly the content analysis developed would depend on the nature of the medium under investigation. The aim here is to apply the Gerbner and Gross method of investigating television to the world of pornographic imagery so that we would have a basic knowledge of the contours of that world. Of special importance would be the constructed position of women in that world in terms of the following symbolic representations:

1. Are women seen as sexually passive or aggressive?
2. Can the women exercise free will in choosing sexual partners and practices or is there evidence of coercion?
3. Are women shown as having their own sexual needs or do they merely fulfill the needs of their partner(s)? (Here partner(s) refers to the actual participants in the depicted sexual scenario and/or the male viewer; see Kuhn, 1985, for a fuller discussion of the role of the male gaze of the viewer)
4. Is there violence of any type used against the woman?

5. What social role do the women play? Are they represented as only sex objects or do they have a history, personality, profession?
6. Are women shown as physically diverse or do they all tend to conform to the sexist stereotype of the young, big breasted sexually insatiable toy?

After articulating what kind of data is required from the content analysis, the next stage is developing a system of categories similar to the one used in the study of Playboy cartoons. The above questions raise but a few of the many potential themes which are available for analysis of pornographic material. It is hoped that the topics to be considered within this genre would expand in a manner similar to the cultural indicators project which might include analyzing how pornography depicts women of color, male-female relationships and pre-pubescent females. At present so little is known regarding content that the field is open to a wide range of content studies. Also the types of material to be studied should range from the popular men's entertainment magazines such as Playboy or Penthouse to the more sexually aggressive, low budget films such as Kill the Bitch or Make it Hurt.

Cultivation Analysis and Pornography

After examining the messages within the pornographic stimuli, it is possible to formulate questions based on those findings. Here the aim is to see what lessons are learned from these messages. While the exact formulation of the question will depend on the findings of the content analysis, there exist enough qualitative accounts of pornography to begin to hypothesize on the nature of these questions. Dworkin (1981), Cole (1989) and Barry (1984) have discussed extensively the type of messages contained within these

stimuli. All three writers argue that the overriding message is that women as a class are always sexually available to men and that the only sexual needs addressed are those of men. It is further argued that images which depict women's body parts solely for the purpose of male arousal strip women of their dignity and personhood. The result is that women come to be seen as mere objects, to be used, and abused, by men. These writers argue that this type of representation has very real consequences for all women since men come to view all women in this light and thus tend to see women as undeserving of equality, both socially and economically. In this way pornographic imagery is seen as legitimizing gender inequality and perpetuating sexist stereotypes for the images are "designed to dehumanize women, to reduce the female to an object of sexual access...Pornography is the undiluted essence of anti-female propaganda" (Brownmiller, 1975: 443). Whereas for Gerbner and Gross, symbolic representations of violence provides a shorthand account of who is in power, for Dworkin (1981), Barry (1984), and Cole (1989), these images serve to demonstrate that women's role in society is to be subservient to men.

Dworkin and Cole have taken this analysis one step further and have argued that images of sexual violence against women create an atmosphere which legitimizes real world violence against women. Thus, rather than being depicted as just sex objects, women come to be seen also as objects of violence. Sex becomes fused with violence in the minds of men. The continuation of this argument is that violent sexual imagery is largely responsible for much of the increase in rape, incest and wife battery. This type of analysis has however not gone unchallenged and has in fact escalated into a full blown controversy with very real implications for public policy. Researchers such as Gagnon (1977) have argued that all pornography should be seen as belonging to the realm of fantasy and thus without real world implications. They argue that such images fulfill the sexual curiosities and needs of the consumers and are in fact a beneficial form of sex education. The

major thrust of this approach is that media and social reality are two separate and distinct entities and cross over is minimal. As Gagnon has argued:

Pornography is fantasy sex, consumed by people who know it is fantasy....In the fantasy world of the book or theatre they are released from responsibility from the realness of life. Unlike real life they do not have to perform or succeed, they are having a momentary and pleasant escape from daily constraints, from sexual victory or defeat. (Gagnon, 1977: 357)

Experimental research into pornography's effects does not provide us with enough information to make a scientific judgement on either of the above two positions. Because most of the research has been carried out under control conditions in a laboratory, we do not know what effects viewing the stimuli might have in a social setting. The approach adopted by Gerbner and Gross asks questions which seek to investigate the ways in which media information informs the viewers' social construction of reality. In this way it is possible to examine the claim that viewers separate media (fantasy) from reality. Whereas Gerbner and Gross asked questions about facts of life that relate to issues of violence such as law enforcement, this project is more interested in those facts which relate primarily to respondents' perceptions of women. This is because over 90% of pornography (Lederer, 1982) features only women's body parts and thus the messages given are primarily messages regarding what constitutes the category "women". In order to test the hypothesis put forward by Dworkin, Cole and Barry (see above) that the depiction of females as sex objects has implications for how men view women in society, it is necessary to ask respondents questions which can elicit data on a wide range of opinions regarding women's rightful socio-economic position.

Also because it has been argued that images of sexual violence have specific consequences, it is important to include questions related to the issue of sexual violence.

Issues a list of questions (to be administered to high and low consumers of pornography) might explore include:

1. Women are entitled to the same social and economic rights as men
2. Women who are young and attractive are more sexually desirable than women who are older and/or who do not fit the conventional model of beauty
3. Women can do all the jobs that men can
4. There are certain occupations and/or tasks which are more suited to one sex than the other
5. Men and women are equally able to nurture children
6. If a woman has been taken out on a date, and paid for, then the man is entitled to some sexual services in return
7. If a couple are involved in sexual contact and the woman decides that she wants to stop, the man is justified in using some force
8. When some woman say no they really means yes
9. A woman's past sexual history is important evidence in a rape case
10. Woman prefer men to take the lead in sex

11. There are some women who like a bit of rough play in sex
12. Sadoomasochism is an acceptable sexual practice between consenting adults
13. Feminists tend to be extreme in their demands
14. If a woman is driving alone at night and breaks down, she should not get out but stay in the car and wait for a police patrol

It is clear from the above list that the resultant questions would not have real world answers which can be gleaned from police or other statistics. The aim here therefore is not to compare media answers with real world answers but rather to compare light viewers with heavy viewers to see if they differ on their views towards women and sex. Signorielli and Morgan (1990) make this point with respect to the cultural indicators project when they argue that "what is important is that there are basic differences in viewing levels, not the actual or specific amount of viewing" (ibid: 20). One major advantage of not needing real world answers as comparisons is that the range of questions asked is not limited by the existence or non-existence of statistical data. Also because research has shown that police statistics are socially constructed (see Douglas and Waksler, 1982), real world answers such as the ones used by Gerbner and Gross (1976), are themselves problematic. Respondents would have to tick one of four boxes: strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree.

The above questions are not meant to be exhaustive but rather to provide pointers for future research. Clearly there are many directions which research can take with the potential range of topics being as diverse as those investigated by Gerbner and Gross et al. The overall aim of this genre of research would be to uncover as much as possible about the cultivation process involved in viewing pornography.

The most complex part of the research is controlling for possible confounding variables. This is especially problematic given what has been termed the ripple effect, meaning that "violent pornography has moved from special hard core magazines and shops to the larger mass media" (Lederer, 1982: 4). This ripple effect means that exposure to images of violence against women is not limited to those men and women who view those magazines and films classed as adult entertainment. Indeed research has revealed that advertisements, films and television shows now contain more violence against women than ever before and that this violence has become more graphic. A recent report on the subject concluded that one of the major current themes found in advertisements in mainstream magazines is the eroticization of women's death. Women were shown as having an orgasmic response to being strangled, mutilated and/or having their throat cut by sharp objects. The authors suggest that this trend is a logical outcome of the images which were prevalent in the late 1970s and 1980s where women were depicted as enjoying their own rape (for a fuller discussion of violence against women in popular culture see Challenging Media Images of Women Newsletter, June 1989).

Thus as well as controlling for the more conventional characteristics such as age, sex, education level, and income, we would have to add consumption of general media which would include television, films and general interest magazines. Only in this way could we argue that the margins of difference between the matched light and heavy viewers' responses to the questions define the level of cultivation.

The Missing Respondents in Research on Pornography

The vast majority of empirical studies carried out in this field have tended to concentrate on the ways in which men are affected. Given that much of the research has been concerned

with examining the link between pornography and violence against women, it is understandable that men would be the subjects since they are statistically the primary abusers of women. When women have been included as respondents, the studies have treated women and men in a similar fashion, with emphasis being placed on measuring the level of sexual arousal for both sexes. Findings have tended to be inconsistent with some studies reporting similar levels of arousal for both women and men (Griffith, 1973), while others have found that women report more shock, disgust and annoyance than males (Schmidt, et. al., 1973). I would argue that these type of studies represent what DuBois et. al., (1987) calls male-centered thinking. This refers to the tendency in academic disciplines to treat *women as surrogate men by assuming that women experience the world in ways similar to men*. The above studies, by couching effects in terms of sexual arousal, assume that women are going to respond to pornographic stimuli in a similar way to men. The argument here is not that female sexual arousal should be ignored but rather that there could be other responses particular to women by virtue of their position in a patriarchal society, which are submerged by studies that do not set women's responses as problematic.

There have been attempts in the past by feminist researchers such as Diana Russell (1982) to investigate how women respond to pornographic imagery. In addition the Attorney General's Commission on Pornography (1986) invited testimony from women who claimed that they had in some way been hurt by such imagery. Although much of the evidence is anecdotal, it would seem that women express a wide range of feelings which can not be documented in the traditional experiments since they do not constitute sexual arousal. Many women expressed feeling embarrassed and upset when viewing magazines such as Playboy or Penthouse because they felt that they could not compete with the models. Many feared that their husbands or lovers would not be sexually aroused by their bodies since they did not process the "perfect" 36-24-36 figure and some women said that this

caused them to hate their own bodies. One common emotion was anger at the men for reading the magazines as women saw such reading as evidence of their partners' preoccupation with external features. Women said that they had worked hard at building a relationship based on trust and love and the men reading these magazines represented a slap in the face (see the Commission on Pornography, 1986: 767-835, for more detail).

The contrast between women and men's responses were even more marked when the variable fear is introduced into the discussion. Dworkin and Mackinnon (1989), in their discussion of the testimony given at the Minneapolis hearings, argue that women who have watched sex films which depict some form of violence against women, express feeling a deep and profound fear for their own safety. Many had said that after viewing the films they had limited their movements at night, added more locks to their door and had a general sense of unease around men they didn't know personally. While the above evidence can not be taken as scientific proof of women's responses, it does provide insights for potential future research and suggests that women may learn specific lessons from viewing the stimuli by virtue of their occupying a different ideological and socio-economic position to men. The clearest difference between women and men is that in the case of rape women are the raped and men are the rapists. This fact in itself could have profound impact on the way women perceive images of violence against women and the way men perceive these images.

The questions which seek to examine the cultivation process involved in viewing pornography (see above) would enable researchers to investigate the possibility that women learn different lessons from the material. Since the focus of attention in this proposed research is not arousal but rather the ways in which these images contribute to the viewer's construction of reality, women's experiences are more likely to be documented. In this way researchers can begin to address the gender bias which has dominated past research into pornography.

Conclusion

The above discussion suggested the ways in which research into pornography could go beyond the psychologically based experiments and instead focus on the wider implications of viewing material whose staple product is the naked female body. Questions related to the effects of these stimuli have concentrated on whether or not individual men may rape after viewing images of women involved in sexual activity, with or without the added dimension of violence. While this is indeed a major issue since rape has a devastating effect on women, researchers have tended to ignore the broader question of what role these images may play in reproducing sexist ideology. While this latter point has been a major concern in feminist writings, it is rarely addressed in the empirical literature. By applying the Gerbner and Gross method to the study of pornography, researchers can begin to go beyond the narrow concerns of past research and instead re-define the question of effects. Whereas Murdock and Golding (1977) ask how the media contribute to maintaining the radical inequalities in capitalist society, the question for researchers interested in pornography should be what role do these images play in maintaining the radical inequalities between women and men in a patriarchal society. Understanding the role that visual images of women play in patriarchy is a major step toward addressing the broader issue of women's subordinate position in society.

For the sociologist of cartoons, the cultural indicators project provides a model for investigating the effects of the different media forms where cartoons are found. It is clear that the project was specifically designed to investigate the effects of television, however, with modification, the model can be applied to an analysis of the effects of newspapers and magazines. Using this model means that it is impossible to isolate cartoons for study since the research is designed to investigate the effects of specific media genres (such as television or newspapers) or sub-genres (such as pornographic magazines). What is thus

needed in conjunction with this type of research is a method which can examine how cartoons themselves are read, divorced from the context in which they appear. The next chapter on Morley's research attempts to develop such a method.

Chapter Nine

Cultural Studies: Encoding and Decoding Playboy Cartoons

This chapter aims to provide a framework for an audience-centered analysis of cartoons in general and Playboy sex cartoons in particular (problem six on the Checklist). However, rather than relying on the theories and research strategies developed within the positivist and behaviorist effects paradigm traditionally associated with North American researchers, the discussion will focus on the more contemporary approaches being developed in England and increasingly in North America. The previous section discussed the important advances being made in effects research by the cultural indicators project. It was argued that one of the major problems associated with this approach is its failure to provide a framework which can account for how the same media content may be decoded differently by various audience segments. At issue here is how meanings are constructed out of the conjuncture of the text with the socially situated audience rather than seeing just the text as the bearer of meaning. Thus if the intention is to study how the reader's biography and location in the social formation interacts with the meanings embedded in the text, then we need to go beyond the cultural indicators model and instead develop, as White has suggested with respect to television analysis, "...a more general theory which accounts for the mutual interaction of structural conditions, cultural expression in response to these structural conditions, and the role of television in cultural expression" (White, 1983: 290).

To this end much of the discussion will initially focus on David Morley's (1980) study of how differently situated audiences read the Nationwide television program since this was one of the first major pieces of work which set out to develop the more general theory of the type advocated by White. Following this, we

will then examine how a similar study to that of Morley's can be applied to the analysis of how women and men read Playboy sex cartoons. This study is especially interested in how women and men may make different readings of a pornographic text since the vast majority of research (see for example Malamuth and Check, 1980; Donnerstein, 1980) has been concerned only with how men are affected by pornography. This will necessarily entail an investigation into the nature of the pornographic text and a consideration of how women and men may look differently at commercially produced images of women.

David Morley and the "Nationwide" Audience

Morley's work (1980) represents both a dissatisfaction and a break with traditional paradigms (such as the 'hypodermic' model and the 'uses and gratifications' approach) which have dominated North American studies of mass media. Although some of his arguments take as their starting point areas of investigation opened up by previous research, he adopts a theoretical framework not previously used, at least in any systematic fashion, in research on audience effects.

Morley's work clearly owes much to the 'socio-culturalist' approach identified with the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham and particularly with past director Stuart Hall. A full account of the varied strands found within this school are available in numerous articles and books (for a fuller discussion of cultural studies see Fiske, 1989). Of direct relevance here is work on media studies which according to Hall "has been a focus of Centre work and interest since its inception" (1980a: 117). Because Morley sees his work as an attempt to refine and empirically test the arguments developed by the Birmingham group, it would be useful to first examine some of the ideas developed at the center.

In Chapter Two, the importance of the cultural studies

approach was discussed and it was emphasized that one major area of research focused on the role of the audience in constructing texts. In contrast to the previous paradigm which privileged the audience (the 'uses and gratifications' approach), the theory and research developed by the Centre and used by Morley firmly locates the reader in the wider social formation by emphasizing that what needs to be studied is the relationship between the reader's social situations and meanings that she/he makes from the text. This kind of audience based research develops and operationalizes many of the arguments found in contemporary literary criticism which seeks to examine how audience members read the text (see Chapter Three)

In discussing the development of audience based research in cultural studies, it is necessary to point to Hall's essay "Decoding and Encoding" (1980b) which according to Fiske "is often seen as a turning point in British cultural studies, for it opened up the idea that television programs do not have a single meaning, but are relatively open texts, capable of being read in different ways by different people" (1989: 260). Hall begins by criticizing the traditional mass communications research model for its view of communication as the unproblematic transmission of a message from the sender to the receiver. For Hall, the encoding and decoding ends of the communication chain are not necessarily perfectly symmetrical because the production and reception of a television message are not identical but rather related as "differentiated moments within the totality formed by the social relations of the communicative process as a whole" (1980b: 130). If, as Hall suggests, each moment has its own specific modality and condition of existence then each (linked) moment in the communication chain needs to be investigated on its own terms. Because, as Hall argues, each message must be encoded and decoded before it can have an 'effect' or satisfy a 'need', it is incorrect to assume, as have most past researchers, that a necessary fit occurs between all moments in the chain.

The position adopted by Hall and by Morley could conceivably

be seen as slipping into the critical anarchy trap so dreaded by Hirsch (see Chapter Three). Hall has suggested that the text is in fact polysemic. Audiences are now actively engaged in constructing the meaning of a text and this meaning need not fit with that of the producer, an outcome that Hall calls 'lack of equivalence' between the two sides in the communicative exchange. Hall However continues by developing the concept of the preferred reading, arguing that the structure of a text always prefers a meaning which tends to promote the dominant ideology. According to Hall the domains of preferred meanings

have the whole social order embedded in them as as a set of meanings, practices, and beliefs: the everyday knowledge of social structures, of 'how things work for all practical purposes in this culture', the rank order of power and interest and the structure of legitimations, limits and sanctions". (1980b: 134)

By introducing this concept of preferred reading, Hall does not fall into the trap that many uses and gratification theorists fell into by suggesting that there are as many textual meanings as there are readers. He does not however suggest that all readers will make the preferred reading, and thus does not advocate a form of determinism characteristic of the earlier more vulgar Marxist theorists. Rather Hall (developing the ideas of Parkin, 1972) suggests that there are three possible positions from which decodings of a particular text may be constructed; dominant, negotiated or oppositional (see the section on the encoding-decoding relationship below, for a fuller discussion of each of these three positions). Hall calls these 'hypothetical positions' since at the time of writing the article, they had not been empirically tested. The work of Morley is especially important since he was the first to empirically test the validity of Hall's arguments.

Before the work of Morley is discussed it would be useful to establish how Hall's hypothetical model goes beyond some of the previous arguments on how audiences read texts. In Chapter

Three it was argued that Iser made important advances in understanding the role of the reader in constructing literary texts. Iser's main argument was that the individual reading of a text will vary "...only within the limits imposed by the written text" (1974: 133). While his statement somewhat echoes, albeit in different terminology, Hall's claim, Iser lacks Hall's sociological sophistication in that he also argued that "...each individual reader will fill in the gaps in his own way..." (1974: 131). It was suggested that this slippage into psychological reasoning was a result of Iser's failure to take into account the socio-historical context of the reader and, by extension, the reading. Hall (1980b), in contrast, sees the reader as firmly located in the social formation while he argues that differing locations give rise to different types of reading. In this way the audience in cultural studies is conceived within a sociological rather than a psychological framework.

A further advantage of Hall's model is that it allows for the reconceptualization of what was often perceived by researchers to be misunderstandings on the part of the audience. Traditionally the audience was thought to either 'get' the message or not 'get' the message, the latter being due to either poor communication skills on the part of the sender or misunderstanding on the part of the receiver. While Hall acknowledges that this may be the case with some readers, he suggests that more often this discrepancy is due to audiences failing to adopt, rather than failing to understand, the meaning the broadcaster intended. This point sheds light on Carl's study (1968) discussed in Chapter One where he found that less than 15% of readers understood cartoons. It could well have been that these readers did not make the readings which Carl did. This point is especially pertinent with respect to studying how women and men view sex cartoons in Playboy. What may appear to be a misunderstanding on the part of female viewers may in fact turn out to be an oppositional or negotiated decoding of the cartoon (a point that will be explored further in the study presented at the end of this chapter).

The above discussion, by introducing the main points contained within Hall's article, serves to provide a context for understanding Morley's theoretical approach. It has been argued (see for example Allor, 1988) that Morley's work represents the clearest application of the three hypothetical positions outlined in Hall's "Encoding/Decoding" article. Moreover, as Fiske (1989) suggests, Morley's study helped to establish ethnography as a valid method of studying television and its viewers. After a discussion of Morley's research some of the criticisms levelled against it will be discussed and worked into an outline of how Morley's method could be fruitfully applied to a study of the ways in which women and men may decode Playboy sex cartoons.

Morley's Criticisms of Communication Research

Morley identifies two major approaches that have been used in communication research. The first (otherwise known as the magic bullet theory), he terms the message based studies "which moved from an analysis of the content of messages to their 'effects' on audiences" (1980: 2). The second approach, uses and gratifications, he sees as focusing "on the social characteristics, environment and, subsequently, 'needs' which audiences derived from, or brought to, the 'message'" (ibid). Morley's main attack on both of these schools is directed at the lack of theoretical and empirical integration between the two elements central to each approach. A 'fit' between the meaning of the message and its effects, and between audience characteristics and perceptions, tends to be assumed rather than investigated.

Morley's criticism of the first approach is similar to that of Gitlin (1978). Morley argues that much of the research is overly behavioristic wherein "messages can be seen to have effects only if a change of mind was followed by a change in behavior" (1980: 2). In a similar vein to Eliot (1979) Morley charges that the second approach has been too concerned with individual needs and uses

rather than with a more sociologically orientated analysis which takes account of the socio-economic background of the audience. Although these two approaches have different theoretical premises, Morley argues that they both have an inadequate conception of the audience.

For Morley, the message in social communication is always complex in structure and form. Like Hall, Morley claims that we cannot assume that all messages will be decoded in the same way by all readers. Here Morley is not arguing for textual autonomy, rather he echoes Hall in saying that messages do propose and prefer certain readings over others. For Morley, the sense that people make of messages is an empirical question, not a taken-for-granted assumption as it is in the effects research. Working on the premise that a message can be decoded in a manner different from the way in which it was encoded, Morley states that "it is central to the argument that all meanings do not exist 'equally' in the message: it has been structured in dominance, although its meaning can never be totally fixed or 'closed'" (1980: 10). Morley thus calls the message a "structured polysemy". He thereby allows for the possibility of a break in the encoding-decoding chain while rejecting the postulate of the uses and gratifications theory that the message can be read in any way depending on the needs of the reader. Moreover for Morley the polysemic nature of a given text is itself an empirical question. In Willeman's words, "some texts can be more or less recalcitrant if pulled into a particular field, while others can be fitted comfortably in it" (Willeman, 1978: 63; quoted in Morley, 1980: 149). This argument that some texts have more polysemic potential than others will be discussed below with respect to Playboy sex cartoons.

Within cultural studies the audience now becomes active in that they have work to do in the decoding process, they are not the sponge-like receivers which behaviorist research seems to suggest. Moreover, the argument contains an implicit criticism of the effects research in that any attempt to understand media

effects without first examining the decoding process becomes meaningless. To merely examine the different components of the message and use this data as a basis for postulating effects is to assume the unassumable, that is, "...a fit between the encoding and decoding ends of the communication chain" (Morley, 1980: 11).

While the above clearly demonstrates Morley's criticism of an assumed 'fit' he continues by arguing that he is equally opposed to the 'no fit' arguments put forward by cultural autonomists such as Paul Hirst (1976). Morley criticizes this latter approach on two counts; firstly:

by denying the relevance of cultural contexts in providing for individuals in different positions in the social structure a differential range of options, the argument is reduced, by default, to a concern with the (random) actions of individuals, abstracted from any socio-historical context.... (1980: 16)

Secondly, on the basis of the autonomists' claim that any attempt to understand social class as an important factor in how audiences decode texts is misconceived; Morley maintains that social class needs to be explored and questions asked regarding the ways in which class determinations do produce specific types of readings. Thus, for Morley, to argue for either total autonomy or total determinism is absurd, and the most fruitful approach must include but transcend these two positions.

Morley advances the argument that class determinations do produce relations and patterns; however to merely lump the working class together or the middle class together for the purpose of understanding what sense is made of texts is to view each class as an undifferentiated whole, defined simply by economic position. Morley goes one step further and argues that it is also inadequate to present demographic/sociological factors (such as age, sex, race and class position) as "objective correlates or determinants of differential decoding positions without any attempt to specify how they intervene in the process of

communication" (Morley, 1980: 19). Morley thus argues for ethnographic studies which investigate how the decodings are structured by socio-economic constraints. It appears that Morley provides that much needed modification of Marx's base/superstructure dichotomy in order to address both the issue of relative autonomy and class determinism:

The object of analysis is...the specificity of communication and signifying practices, not as a wholly autonomous field, but in its complex articulations with questions of class, ideology, and power, where social structures are conceived as also the social foundations of language, consciousness and meanings. (Ibid: 20)

Morley's work brings together the American and European approaches whilst improving upon both. In this new approach equal weight is given both to audience centered research and textual analysis, each area of investigation taken to make sense only in terms of the other. As Morley himself states "we need to develop a theory which gives due weight to both the text and audience halves of the equation" (ibid).

What follows is a brief review of Morley's empirical method and findings in order to set the stage for a future study of cartoons.

Morley's Methodology and Methods

Morley's starting point is clearly different from that of much current research into communication which focuses on either the text or the audience, according to Morley, "...we are committed to a position that insists on the necessity of the empirical dialogue; rather than the attempt to deduce audience positions or decodings from the text in an a priori fashion" (ibid: 22). Given Morley's aim, the ensuing problem is one of developing an adequate methodology for empirically investigating the relationship between encoding and

decoding. In keeping with Morley's general framework, his research procedure includes a framework for examining both text and audience and the subsequent fit between the two. For the sake of clarity I will present each issue separately.

The "Nationwide" Text

Morley argued that his analysis of textual messages attempts to "...elucidate the basic codes of meaning to which they refer, the recurrent patterns and structures in the message, the ideology implicit in the contents and categories in which the messages are transmitted" (ibid).

The Nationwide programs were thus analyzed¹ in terms of the following features:

1. How topics are articulated
2. How background and explanatory frameworks are mobilized
3. How expert commentary is integrated and how discussions and interviews are monitored and conducted.

Morley's goal here was to "...establish provisional readings of their (the programs) communicative and ideological structures" (ibid: 23). Because cartoons are significantly different media forms from television news programs and therefore involve different types of analysis, it is only necessary to point out here that

¹ For a comprehensive discussion on the method and findings of the analysis of the Nationwide text see Brunson and Morley (1979)

Morley undertook textual analysis; (later on in the chapter the issue of what kind of textual analysis is most appropriate to a study of cartoons modeled after Morley will be addressed).

The "Nationwide" Audience

In order to establish how the messages previously analyzed have been received and interpreted by sections of the media audience in different structural positions, Morley conducted field research by interviewing pre-selected groups (see below for fuller discussion). When looking at this process, Morley employed three ideal type² possibilities:

- a) Where the audience interprets the message in terms of the same code employed by the transmitter - e.g. where both 'inhabit' the dominant ideology.
- b) Where the audience employs a 'negotiated' version of the code employed by the transmitter - e.g. receiver employs a negotiated version of the dominant ideology used by the transmitter to encode the message.
- c) Where the audience employs an 'oppositional' code to interpret the message and therefore interprets its meaning through a different code from that employed by the transmitter. (Morley, 1980: 23)

The Encoding-Decoding Relationship

Having collected all the data on how the messages were received, Morley then compared them with the textual analyses previously carried out on the message to see:

² These three ideal types originate from F. Parkin (1972) Class inequality and Political Order, London: Paladin.

- a) If some receptions showed levels of meaning in the message which had completely escaped the notice of our analysis.
- b) How the 'visibility' of different meanings related to respondents' socio-economic position
- c) To what extent different sections of the audience did interpret the messages in different ways and to what extent they projected freely onto the message meanings they would want to find there. (Ibid)

I would suggest that Morley's research procedure represents one of the most important advances in communications research, for not only does he include some form of textual analysis so often lacking in European media research, but he also adds sophistication to audience centered research. Morley specifically attacks the concept of the undifferentiated mass audience, an attack directly relevant to academic audience centered research in the U.S.A.

Given that Morley's "...first priority was to determine whether different sections of the audience shared, modified or rejected the ways in which topics had been encoded..." (ibid: 26), he attempted to construct a sample of groups who might be expected to vary from dominant though negotiated to oppositional frameworks of decoding. In keeping with his claim that class position is not necessarily the determining element in the decoding process, Morley investigated 29 different groups. The first program (a fairly typical "Nationwide" broadcast in May 1976) was shown to eighteen groups drawn from different levels of the educational system, with different social and cultural backgrounds. These groups were made up of schoolchildren and part-time and full-time students. The second Nationwide program used was broadcast in March 1977, and was a special on the budget and its economic consequences. Morley selected eleven groups from different levels of the educational system, but others from trade union and managerial training centers. In order to give some idea

of the diversity among these groups, I will quote Morley's descriptions of six of these groups. These six groups illustrate the different ways in which the audience decoded the text.

Group 1: A group of mainly white, male apprentice engineer, non-unionized with a skilled working class background, age 20-26. Studying part-time in a Midlands polytechnic; predominantly 'don't know' or Conservative in political orientation.

Group 6: A group of mainly male, all-white trainee laboratory technicians studying part-time in a Midlands technical college; skilled working class background, mainly members of Association of Scientific, Technical and Managerial Staffs, predominantly 'don't know' or Labour.

Group 14: A group of white women students, with an upper middle class background, aged 19-20, in a London Teacher Training college; predominantly 'don't know' or Conservative.

Group 15: A group of white students, predominantly women, aged 21-46, with a middle class background in a London teacher's training college; predominantly Conservative.

Group 17: A mixed group of West Indian and white women students, aged 17-18, all with a working class background, on a full time community studies course at a London F.E. College; predominantly Labour or socialist.

Group 23: A group of mainly white, male and female shop stewards and trade union activists with upper-working class backgrounds, aged 23-40, studying part-time for a diploma in labour studies at a London polytechnic; predominantly socialist or Labour.

Findings

The provision of a full account of Morley's findings is unnecessary since my interest in Playboy cartoons requires developing a set of variables considerably different from those used by Morley (for example political affiliations and social class position are not considered primary in my study). What is important however is the point that different groups do make different readings. Although Morley did find contradictory positions within the same groups, the major differences were actually between groups. Thus Morley found that:

the apprentice groups, the schoolboys and the various managers are the groups who most closely inhabit the dominant code of the program. The teacher training college students inhabit the 'dominant' end of the spectrum of 'negotiated' readings, with the photography students...and the university students...positioned closer to the 'oppositional' end of the spectrum. The black students make hardly any connection with the discourse of Nationwide....They do not so much produce an oppositional reading as refuse to read it at all. (Ibid: 134)

Morley classifies the groups as follows:

Forms of Dominant Code: Groups 1 & 6 decoded most of the main items in the program within the dominant framework or preferred reading established by the program. Morley found this especially interesting since the group members expressed cynicism and alienation toward the program by such comments as "they're biased though, aren't they" (ibid: 140). At the beginning of the research Morley had expected such awareness to lead to a rejection of the dominant reading. The findings suggest however that cynicism towards a text does not prevent an acceptance of its ideological formulations if that ideology is shared.

Forms of Negotiated Code: Similar to the groups 1 & 6 above, groups 14 & 15 have a dominant political affiliation to the Conservative party. However rather than adopting a dominant reading these students exhibited a negotiated pattern which Morley argues is a result of "their insertion in the discourse of higher education" (ibid: 141).

Forms of Oppositional Code: Although groups 17 & 23 both exhibited oppositional readings, they did so for different reasons. Group 17 is seen as totally alienated from the discourse of nationwide while group 23's oppositional reading is explained by their active involvement in and commitment to trade unionism.

Morley thus argues that his work has shown the shortcomings in the audience based research which either sees the audience as an undifferentiated mass or merely groups them according to socio-demographic variables. Rather Morley concludes that:

"...social position in no way directly correlates with decodings -- the apprentice groups, the trade union/shop stewards groups and the black FE student groups all share a common class position, but their decodings are inflected in different directions by the influence of the discourses and institutions in which they are situated. (Ibid: 137)

Now, while the specifics of Morley's findings are not crucial to the analysis of Playboy cartoons, his overall conclusion has important implications for understanding the decoding process undertaken with respect to all cultural forms. Here he is clearly articulating the need for empirical analysis of audience decodings:

"...we are led to pose the relation of text and subject as an empirical question to be investigated, rather than as an a priori question to be deduced from a theory of the ideal spectator inscribed in the text. (Ibid: 162)

Given this conclusion, a consideration of how other researchers have used his ideas is instructive.

Recent Developments in Audience-Centered Research

Morley's call for empirical work on actual readers/viewers has been taken up by a number of researchers, mostly those working within the ethnographic tradition (Hobson, 1982; Radway, 1984; Hodge and Tripp, 1986). While these studies differ in terms of their focus of investigation (for example Radway looked at young working class women who read romance novels while Hodge and Tripp studied children who were regular viewers of an Australian soap opera), all share a commitment to shifting the emphasis "away from the textual and ideological construction of the subject to socially and historically situated people" (Fiske, 1987: 63). This development is important for researchers interested in the text-audience relationship since much of the previous work carried out on texts (specifically those working within the psychoanalytic and semiotic paradigms) failed to distinguish the subject formulated by the text from the spectator-subject viewing the text. By contrast, underlying all the above mentioned studies is the notion that the text has polysemic qualities and that reading the text "...is a process of negotiation between the existing subject position and the one proposed by the text itself, and in this negotiation the balance of power lies with the reader" (Fiske, 1987: 66). Fiske's statement highlights some of the developments which have taken place in cultural studies since Hall first wrote his encoding/decoding article.

These developments mainly center on the question of how open the text actually is and consequently which has more power, the text or the reader. According to Fiske, the text (and by this he specifically refers to the television text) must necessarily be open enough to allow a range of negotiated meanings since the economic imperatives of television dictate that it is popular to a

wide range of social groups. As Fiske has argued, "any television text must...be polysemic for the heterogeneity of the audience requires a corresponding heterogeneity of meanings in the text" (1987: 267). As support for his argument Fiske cites a number of cross-cultural studies on the television show Dallas where it was found that readers in varying social positions made very different readings. With respect to Russian Jews for example it was found that they read Dallas as capitalism's self-criticism (Katz and Liebs, cited in Fiske, 1988). Even more interesting in the present context was Ang's study (1985), which found that feminists could make oppositional readings to Dallas which were pleasurable for them. Fiske suggests that one of the main reasons that Dallas was a highly successful television shows is that it is ..."so open, discursively diverse, and unhierarchical, and thus offers a huge range of social pertinencies as its moments of viewing" (1988: 248). For Fiske the text becomes the passive player in the audience-text game for he continues by arguing that "the meanings and pleasures that are eventually produced are determined by the social allegiances of the person engaged in it, not by any preferential or possessive activity of the text itself" (1988: 248).

At first sight it would seem that the concept of preferred reading developed by Hall has now been jettisoned and in its place we have a concept of the text approaching the anarchy concept so dreaded by Hirsch (see Chapter Three). Indeed the concept of the preferred reading has been problematic for a number of researchers, including Morley. In a postscript to the Nationwide study Morley (1981) sets out some problems with this concept:

Is the preferred reading a property of the text per se? Or is it something that can be generated from the text (by a 'skilled reading'?) by certain specifiable procedures? Or is the preferred reading that reading which the analyst is predicting that most members of the audience will produce from the text? In short, is the preferred reading a property of the text, the analyst or the audience? (1981: 6)

Ultimately for Fiske the answer is the audience. Moreover it has been suggested by a number of researchers that the concept of the preferred reading is not always a useful one when trying to understand the audience-text relationship. Fiske (1988), and indeed Morley (1986), have developed an alternative concept of 'relevance' which suggests that "the viewer makes meanings and pleasures from television that are relevant to his or her social allegiances at the moment of viewing" (1988: 247). Thus the text has to be open enough to offer socially relevant meanings to a heterogeneous public with varying and complex social allegiances. Without this relevance the reader would not engage with the text at all which Morley found to be the case with the Black women in his "Nationwide" study (this concept of 'relevance' is important for a study of how women read Playboy cartoons since there is the very real possibility that women may feel that these texts are not relevant for them). Much of what Fiske said and the debate it generated (see for example Rosenthal, 1989), is pertinent to television's goal of reaching a heterogeneous population and less pertinent to an analysis of Playboy cartoons. The main point of this discussion here is to try and tease out some of the arguments which would be relevant for cartoons found in Playboy, a specific genre aimed at a specific homogenous audience, namely heterosexual, middle-class males. Indeed Morley (1981) himself has talked of the need to classify texts into genres and he suggests that it would be useful to develop a model which could account for the different genres of cultural products, ranging from high art to soap opera. The importance of his formulation is that it allows for detailed discussion of particular genres which might not be relevant for other genres.

A number of researchers have argued that genres predetermine texts and readings by setting limits on the audience response and the range of possible meanings that can be made. Hartley (1985) for example has argued that:

audiences' different potential pleasures are channeled and disciplined by genres, which operates by producing recognition of the already known set of responses and rules of engagements. Audiences are not supposed to judge a western for not being musical enough, a musical for not being very horrific, or a sitcom for not being sufficiently erotic. (Hartley, 1985, quoted in Fiske, 1987: 114)

Formulation in terms of genre is important for two major reasons. First, it minimizes the risk of unwarranted generalization: although Dallas is an open enough text to allow multiple readings it does not follow that Playboy sex cartoons are, or intend to be, open texts of the same sort. Rather it could be argued that some genres are more closed than others and moreover that some genres may also bear the stamp of the dominant ideology more clearly than others. Fiske is correct in arguing that the text is not a coherent bearer of the dominant ideology (1988); it is incorrect to conclude that it is not the bearer at all. Secondly, any specific genre provides some level of expectation that serves to limit the polysemic potentiality of the text. Specifically with respect to Playboy, (as an example of the genre of men's entertainment magazines), its male readers are aware that this is a magazine specifically aimed at them and that the presence of female characters (both in the form of centerfold and cartoon characters) usually signifies sex (these points will be elaborated on further below). Readers are not likely to go to Playboy with the expectation that they are going to find a magazine which criticizes women's subordinate position in the society; they are unlikely to be surprised by the way the magazine casts women's role as primarily one of sexual service to males.

In light of the foregoing discussion, it is clear that before Morley's approach can be applied to a study of how women and men read Playboy cartoons, it is necessary to examine, theoretically, specific points which relate to how gender impacts on the reading of visual communication in general and specifically, of the type found in the genre of men's entertainment magazines.

The following discussion looks at firstly, how women and men differ in the way they read images of women both in television and in print and secondly, how pornographic images construct meaning.

Women as Spectators

Interest in women as spectators of popular culture developed in a significant way after the publication of Laura Mulvey's controversial article "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1975). Here Mulvey, using the psychoanalytic approaches developed by Freud and later Lacan, suggested that the male gaze is dominant in mainstream cinema. As a consequence, both men and women spectators necessarily identify with this male gaze at an objectified female. Arguing that the visual pleasures of Hollywood cinema are based on voyeuristic and fetishistic forms of looking, Mulvey suggests that men, when looking at women in film, use two forms of mastery over her: a sadistic voyeurism which controls women's sexuality through dominating male characters, and a symbolic fetishisation of women's sexuality. Visual pleasure is rooted in a hierarchical system whereby the male is the "bearer of the look" and the woman the "object of the look". Thus according to Mulvey the construction of woman as the object of the gaze is built into the apparatus of mainstream cinema, and the spectator position which is produced by the film narrative is necessarily a masculine one.

Mulvey's highly influential analysis is based on psychoanalytic concepts which have proved to be one source of criticism. The debate which followed and the resultant reformulations of the position of the female spectator are pertinent to the present discussion. Indeed the main criticism levelled against Mulvey is that she leaves no room for understanding how female spectators are positioned other than in terms of the male gaze. According to Rodowick (1982) Mulvey's discussion of the female figure:

is restricted only to its function as masculine object-choice. In this manner, the place of the masculine is discussed as both the subject and and object of the gaze: and the feminine is discussed only as an object which structures the masculine look according to its active (voyeuristic) and passive (fetishistic) forms. So where is the place of the feminine subject in this scenario? (1982: 8)

Gamman and Marshment (1988) also argue that the female spectator has been overlooked and moreover that by using psychoanalytical concepts, Mulvey cannot account for power relations other than in gender terms. These authors correctly argue that class and race are also important categories that contribute to the construction of social identity and neither can be accounted for in Mulvey's analysis. Gamman and Marshment specifically attack Mulvey for assuming a heterosexual male protagonist and a heterosexual male spectator. They ask:

what happens when the protagonist is a woman...or where there is a range of female looks. What happens when there is nothing for us to look at but men.... And what about spectators who are not male or heterosexual (1988: 7).

The focus of Gamman and Marshment's edited volume is therefore the spectator who is female, not male. Moreover, in the spirit of Morley, these authors refuse to accept unquestionably the notion that females identify with the male gaze and instead seek to investigate the possibility that women differ from men in their relation to visual constructions of femininity.

It is noteworthy that contemporary feminist theorists have chosen popular culture as the area to investigate. They do not subscribe to the view, widely held among feminist in the 1970s (see for example Komisar, 1971), that women, by engaging with popular culture were collaborating in their own oppression. Much of this earlier work tended to see reception in terms of women accepting the commercially produced patriarchal images of

themselves which it was argued inevitably lead to female acceptance of the male definition of femininity. Rather, following on from the developments in cultural studies, feminists more recently have seen popular culture as:

a site of struggle, where many of these meanings are determined and debated. It is not enough to dismiss popular culture as merely serving the complimentary systems of capitalism and patriarchy, peddling 'false consciousness' to the duped masses. It can also be seen as a site where meanings are contested and where dominant ideologies can be disturbed. (Gamman and Marshment, 1988: 2)

While this argument clearly echoes those of Hall and Morley it differs in that the authors continue by suggesting that for women in a patriarchal society, negotiated forms of reading is the norm. This negotiated reading should be seen as inflecting the dominant ideology towards the social experience of women under patriarchal control. In this way women are constantly re-appropriating textual meaning for their own purposes. Thus the authors argue for seeing the text as polysemic since:

not even the whizz-kids of Saatchi and Saatchi have total control...if the ad talks about 'liberation', in whatever context, liberation is still what it is talking about, not confinement, and if it can sell bras perhaps it can change lives. It works both ways" (1988: 4)

This argument that the typical reading for women is a negotiated one is generally being recognized by a number of theorists working outside feminist studies. Newcomb (1984) for example suggests that Hall's dominant, negotiated and oppositional readings should be collapsed into versions of negotiation because "even when the most powerful, controlled messages are dominant, they must still face the answering "word" of the viewer and the world of experience" (1984: 48). Fiske (1988) similarly recognizes the primacy of negotiated readings when he argues for the concept of

the reader as "poacher". Here he suggests that the text, by serving the economic and ideological interests of the powerful, must necessarily conflict with the social interests of the audience since they are in the main in subordinate social positions. Thus to be popular these texts have to be open to "semiotic raids by the subordinate" (1988: 248). Fiske argues against calling such readings oppositional since elsewhere (1989) he makes the important argument that oppositional readings would eventually result in annoyance, which would probably prevent oppositional readers from regularly watching the program. Thus texts must produce pleasure on the part of the audience if there is to be a sustained engagement between audience and text.

The idea that female readers poach meanings from texts is the basis of Budge's (1988) analysis of why women enjoy watching Joan Collins on Dynasty. Budge begins by arguing against what she calls the traditional feminist belief that women who watch Dynasty are nothing more than passive, pathetic and unwitting victims of its deceptive message. For Budge such an argument cannot account for women's pleasure at looking at the 'attractive' women who populate prime time television and moreover, it fails to conceptualize women as an active audience.

In her analysis of the role Joan Collins plays on Dynasty (Alexis Carrington), Budge suggests that what is on offer to the female audience is a vision of a 'wilder side of women', a vision which has little in common with the pornographic image of woman as vulnerable and always accessible to men. Budge sees Alexis Carrington as a rich, sophisticated business woman who refuses to allow men to out-smart her in a field usually reserved for them. Not only does she scheme and plot in her professional life; she also manipulates and often controls her numerous lovers, most of whom are young and attractive. As a mother, Carrington does not put her children first; she often manipulates them for her own needs. Although Budge did not undertake ethnographic work to

investigate the fit between her reading and the audiences' reading she does open up an interesting debate and a fruitful sphere for feminists interested in visual representations. According to Budge:

the character of Alexis Carrington...represents a far reaching challenge to feminism. Lurking within the elaborate plots and the glamorous clothing is a pleasurable image of women in the eighties which constitutes a challenge to stereotyped feminist analysis of representations of women—a challenge which can be extended, for example, to the analysis of advertising and other visual images. Feminists must be willing to look beyond the celluloid and gloss, as well as the established modes of thinking about them, if they are to tackle the issue of women's pleasure in the eighties. (1988: 110)

Budge's challenge has been taken up by a number of scholars interested in soap operas (see for example Modleski, 1984; Ang, 1985; and Hobson, 1982) and romance novels (Radway, 1984; Modleski, 1984). While these studies offer varying analyses of the text-audience interaction, all tend to agree that the social experience of women in a patriarchal society (for example, women as nurturers, as house-wives, as oppressed in marriage) has a powerful influence on how women negotiate the text and moreover, on how women produce meanings which are against the dominant patriarchal ideology of the text.

I do not intend to explore any further these studies since this discussion is specifically concerned with a very different genre, pornography, which unlike soaps and romance novels is geared to a male readership. These studies do however raise an important issue: if women can poach meanings from texts which have often in the past been dismissed by feminists as examples of patriarchal discourse, could it be argued that such poaching is also possible in other patriarchal texts such as Playboy? Since to date little work has been done on how women read sex cartoons found within a magazine geared to men, it is necessary to explore work which has been conducted in related areas. Of special interest here is the feminist discussion of the ways in

which women read still visual depictions of the female body found in both mainstream media and pornography. Against this background, specific issues related to Playboy cartoons will be discussed.

Women Looking at Women

Many scholars have noted that one of the most enduring images of women in art has been the female nude (Berger, 1972; Nead, 1983; Betterton, 1987). This image continues to be portrayed today, the female body (nude and semi-nude) dominating commercially produced advertisements and photographs (Kuhn, 1985). It is not surprising therefore that a number of feminists have been interested in exploring the ways in which women and men look at images of the female body and how these looks may differ. Gamman and Marshment, for example, suggest that while:

men are invited to look at women (e.g. in 'girlie' magazines) and so are women (e.g. in women's magazines)...obviously these invitations to look are different, and we may assume that that the resulting experiences of looking are also different. (1988: 4)

Betterton is also interested in what it means to look from a woman's point of view and suggests that "women can and do respond to images of themselves in ways which are different from, and cannot be reduced to, masculine 'ways of seeing'" (1987: 217).

Now the above discussion of Joan Collins and Dynasty does suggest that women do not have to take a masculine viewing position. Budge's analysis however was of a fictional television text which, as Fiske has suggested, has more potential for polysemic readings than other forms, geared as it is to a heterogeneous audience and the maximization of viewing figures. The question thus arises: can women make negotiated readings of

still images of women in a magazine specifically geared to men (such as Playboy) or are these images coded in such a way that women are forced to make a male reading, objectifying the depicted female body and ultimately their own. This question is indeed complex and one which has generally received scant attention. Thus it will be fruitful to examine the ways in which female images are coded in pornography and to ask if they are open to multiple readings.

Pornography and Representation

A number of feminists have turned their attention to pornography as a specific genre, examining the ways in which the images employed construct meaning. A common theme running through this work is the argument that the female body in pornography is coded in such a way that she, as an object, suggests sexual availability and submission to the spectator who is presumed to be male. As Coward argues:

The poses...the look which the woman gives to the camera, and the dismemberment of the female body into areas of specialization (bottoms, breasts, genitals) all creates a sense of the absolute centrality of the male to the sexual experience, a sense of his power to use women's bodies as he pleases. (1986: 24)

Implicit in this quote is the claim that pornography involves a specific regime of representation which becomes conventionalized and thus interpreted as pornographic by society. The visual meanings produced by these images "arise from how various elements are combined, how the picture is framed, what lighting it is given, what is connoted by dress and expression, the way the elements are articulated together" (Coward, 1982: 11). For Coward, the meaning of an image is not intrinsic to that image but rather is decided by a range of photographic techniques. Kuhn (1985) makes a similar argument when she suggests that pornography

refers to a specific way in which the female body is coded. She argues that pornography draws on a circumscribed set of conventions which "relate both to the formal organization of the picture and also to the kinds of contents and narrative themes that repeatedly come up in them" (1985: 28). Both Kuhn and Coward are interested in deconstructing those images called pornographic in order to facilitate an understanding of the codes at work within this genre.

For Coward, pornography is problematic specifically because of the codes of fragmentation and submission which pervades the female image. Whereas Coward sees women's fragmentation into bits and pieces as suggesting death, Kuhn sees it as a way of highlighting the differences between women and men, which she suggests is pornography's prime motive. Both writers see this fragmentation as working in two ways. The first, which pertains mainly to 'soft-core', is the way in which women are posed to emphasize breasts and buttocks. Here such examples include photographs where the woman places her arm underneath her breasts in order to make them look bigger or when the model bends over slightly which also accentuated her buttocks. The second form of fragmentation is mainly found in more 'hard-core' images where the the close-up picture is of the female genitals.

Playboy cartoons mainly deal in the first type of fragmentation; women's genitals are rarely drawn. Because cartoonists can draw breasts of any size they do not have to rely on the females pushing them up with their hands. Rather, most female cartoon characters have enormous breasts which are drawn to hang naturally. The same is true for their buttocks and thus the women in the cartoons tend to stand upright and not bent over.

Kuhn argues that by fragmenting and thus exaggerating the female body parts, pornography is saying to men that this is where the difference between women and men resides and moreover that women are reducible to these parts. For Coward the code of submission is the dominant one by which female sexual

pleasure is represented and furthermore also carries overtones of female death. She argues that images which depict women in passionate submissions (for example where women are shown as lying down, neck exposed and body spread wide) "not only ... reinforce ideologies of sexuality as female submission to male force, but they also powerfully recirculate the connection between sexuality and death, which is so cruelly played out in our society" (1982: 18). For Kuhn, the code of submission not only reinforces dominant patriarchal beliefs where women are viewed as sexually passive but also constructs the female body as an object to which things can be done by the active male spectator. A number of other feminist writers (see for example Zita, 1988) see female submission as integral to heterosexual pornography and further suggest that it is female subordination that is eroticized in pornography. In Playboy cartoons the female character is often shown in the classic pose of submission, head thrust back and legs open. Another recurring scenario of submission in the cartoons is to depict the female character in a subordinate social role (maid or secretary), and to show the male in the dominant role (employer or managing director of the company for which the woman works for). Often the 'joke' of the cartoon is showing him as intending to have sex with the female and to present her as ultimately submitting for fear of losing her job

In addition to fragmentation and submission, a third code noted by a number of feminists writers (Kuhn, 1985; Coward, 1982; Meyers, 1987; Betterton, 1987) is that of availability, or as Kuhn calls it the 'invitation' look. In these images the woman gazes at the spectator and thus acknowledges him by looking directly at the camera. According to Kuhn the look:

signifies sexual invitation or teasing, a reading underscored by the cultural connotations of the slightly parted lips. This facial expression, particularly in combination with the conventionalized display of the rest of the woman's body, may be read as an invitation. The

spectator is lured by the picture's assurance that that he is the one the woman wants, him and no-one else. (1985: 42)

For Coward, the invitation look signifies female sexual availability to men, which she sees as reinforcing men's sense of power over women. She sees this as especially problematic in a society where women are the ones who are raped and the men the ones who are doing the raping. Thus for Coward pornography becomes a celebration of this power that men have over women and the sex in pornography becomes synonymous with male power and female passivity.

The interesting difference with Playboy cartoons is that the female rarely displays availability by addressing the spectator; instead she gives the invitation look to the other male cartoon character. Skimpy and seductive female clothes in the cartoon (see discussion of clothes in Chapter Seven) further suggest that the female is sexually available to the male cartoon character. However it could be posited that the female cartoon character, by making herself sexually available to the the male cartoon character, is also in fact making herself accessible to the male reader. This is because, as suggested in Chapter Seven, the male reader is encouraged through a number of techniques (such as depicting the male cartoon characters in similar age, economic status and professional categories as the Playboy readers) to identify with the male cartoon character. In this way Playboy cartoons have much in common with the 'hard-core' films where men and women are shown having sexual intercourse. As Kuhn has points out, women in hard-core films rarely acknowledge the camera and therefore also do not acknowledge the male viewer. However she continues by arguing that the male spectator is not ignored since he can identify with the male protagonist and thus join in the action. The female characters in Playboy cartoons can therefore be seen as inviting the male reader to own her vicariously.

By making explicit the conventions of pornography, these writers allow for distinguishing between sexual imagery and

offensive sexual imagery. Sexual imagery is not considered in and of itself offensive but rather becomes offensive when it draws on the above three³ codes. This distinction is especially important in light of recent feminist attempts to create a feminist erotica which goes beyond the patriarchal notions of femininity and masculinity⁴.

A further point which is stressed by the above writers is that these pornographic codes of fragmentation, submission and availability are ubiquitous; they do not reside solely within those magazines generally classed as pornographic. Images of women in women's magazines can also be seen to employ these conventions. Such an argument problematizes the issue of how and indeed why women read mainstream patriarchal still images of women for if they employ the pornographic code, then it would seem that these images, while being specifically geared towards men, can in fact be enjoyed by women when found in the context of women's magazines. Kuhn argues that pornography speaks to a "masculine engagement....the photograph speaks to a masculine subject, constructing women as object, femininity as otherness" (1985: 31) and furthermore she continues by emphasizing that "the spectators gaze is masculine, and the image addresses him as part of the action, constructing his sexuality as masculine" (1985: 33). Such an argument would seem to endorse Mulvey's claim, discussed earlier, that the female spectator has to engage in a masculine way with mainstream images found in magazines such as Cosmopolitan and Vogue. Such an argument has concerned

³ What is often overlooked by feminist scholars are the images of violence which tend to pervade 'hard-core' magazines and films. While I feel that this is a major oversight given the increasing tendency of pornography to include images of female torture, rape and mutilation (see Andrea Dworkin, 1981, for a fuller discussion on this genre) it is not included here since few Playboy pictorials or cartoons contain images of explicit violence.

⁴ By feminist erotica I do not mean those lesbian magazines which specialize in sado/masochistic images of women (for example On Our Backs) since they also employ the traditional pornographic codes discussed above. I am rather referring to attempts by such artists as Judy Chicago and Natasha Morgan. For a fuller discussion on these and other feminist artists see R.Parker and G. Pollack (1987) (eds).

feminists trying to understand why women buy women's magazines and find them pleasurable but continue to find similar images of women in magazines such as Playboy troubling (Coward, 1982). This point is important to investigate if one is to understand how women may decode cartoons found in Playboy.

The Polysemic Pornographic Text

The background has now been established for posing the question: can the pornographic image which employs the codes of fragmentation, submission and availability, be open to more than one reading? Kuhn and Coward both suggest that pornographic images can be read against the grain because meanings are never fixed. However they point out that there are a number of factors which serve to close the text. Coward suggests that various elements in an image can be ambiguous, resulting in there always being a potential 'polyphony' in representations. However she then goes on to make the important point that:

images rarely appear alone in our culture; they are almost invariably pinned down by some linguistic caption which fixes the meaning in an irreversible direction....Where there is a regime like pornography, which is basically selling the expectation of particular kind of pleasure in the image, the ambiguity of visual message is reduced to a minimum....The meaning of a photo is also given by its context and uses. (1982: 13)

Thus for Coward the polysemic potential of pornography is limited by (1) the caption, (2) the expectations an audience has towards an image, (3) the context of the image and (4) the uses to which the image is put. Kuhn also stresses the link between caption and context of the image when she argues that:

it is not usual...to look at a photographic still in isolation: it may be in a magazine, captioned or surrounded by print, or it may be one of a series of images to be read in sequence as a story in photos. The immediate context in which an image appears will set limits on the ways in which it is likely to be read. (1985: 28)

A similar argument is made by Myers (1987) in her attempt to apprehend the possibility of a feminist erotica. She argues that in order to understand what makes an image erotic or pornographic, we must develop an analysis which includes but also goes beyond the image itself. Otherwise we risk "falling into a kind of 'reductive essentialism', e.g. the notion that exploitation resides in the representation of female sexuality per se, rather than its contextualization" (1987: 195). While I agree that the analysis should look beyond the image, it is necessary also to compare images in magazines such as Playboy with those found in magazines geared towards a female audience for it is argued here that there are some very important differences which both Kuhn and Coward overlook.

Generally women in magazines geared to women (such as Cosmopolitan) are clothed (or at least semi-clothed) in that their breasts and vaginas are hidden while in Playboy women are often unclothed with their breasts (and increasingly vaginas) being emphasized. Also in Cosmopolitan the women tend to be photographed in daylight while in Playboy pictures the lighting usually suggests evening and thus sexual activity. In addition the submission pose appears much less often in women's magazines while in Playboy and Penthouse the women often appear submissive on a bed. While beds do appear in women's magazines it is generally not at the same rate.

That there are subtle differences between images of women in pornographic magazines and women's magazines is the basis of Myers' (1987) analysis of two pictures (see Appendix C) which at first sight seem very similar. One picture is taken from an advertisement appearing in a woman's magazine while the other is taken from a pornographic magazine. Both show a woman lying

down brushing her hair away with her hand. The woman in the advertisement wears a bikini while the one from the pornographic magazine is naked. Through careful comparison Myers show how the bikini advertisement is specifically addressed to women while the second one assumes a male spectator. In the advertisement the woman does not look at the camera and her mouth and legs are closed. She is clearly not inviting anyone to penetrate her; she appears relaxed and enjoying the experience of sun-bathing. In this way the spectator is not needed to complete the image. The pornographic picture on the other hand has the woman's mouth and legs open. Behind the main image is another picture of the model where she clearly acknowledges the camera. In comparison to the women in the advertisement:

the nude model 'asks' the audience to possess her. It is a form of sexual consumption which implicitly genders the audience as male. The model's apparent expression of pleasure is not for herself. She is not autonomous, her pleasure is always for the consumption of other and herein lies one of the fundamental alienations of pornographic imagery. (Myers, 1987: 197)

Myers argues that images of women geared to women rarely present female sexuality in ways that are the stock in trade of pornography, namely showing female sexuality in terms of vulnerability, accessibility or availability. Rather, she argues, because the images have to appeal to women, they instead offer a kind of power and self-determination. While this power may indeed be limited in that it is power which resides in sexual display, appearance and attractiveness (one of the few types of power on offer to women in a patriarchal society), it nonetheless allows women to poach what meaning they can from mainstream images. Myers' analysis of the pornographic image suggests that such images construct meanings which are not open to being poached by women and are thus not pleasurable. This analysis is critical

for understanding why women do not consume Playboy or other similar magazines and moreover why they do buy women's magazines. As Myers concludes:

The advertising image and the pornographic image offer different kinds of pleasure to their respective audiences. If audiences did not find them in some way pleasurable they wouldn't work; magazines and products wouldn't sell. It is their pleasurable associations which perpetuate them. (1987: 198)

Thus it is suggested that pornographic images are coded in such a way as to offer men the expectation and pleasure of sexual arousal while for women they fail to be open enough to permit a reading which women themselves would find pleasurable. It would seem that women are not able to find pleasurable those images of themselves which suggest sexual vulnerability and constant access. Indeed, Coward goes as far as to suggest that the use to which these images are put (that is as masturbation facilitators for men) is especially problematic for women. According to Coward:

women don't dislike the idea of men masturbating but they do dislike the idea that everywhere in our culture images of women's bodies, women's breasts and women's genitals, are available for men to use in securing a release for a pressing functional need. Far from wanting to join in the play of sadism and masochism, women feel hostile to men's repeated use of tawdry sexual cliches to secure themselves physical relief. (1986: 25)

This discussion illustrates the importance of analyzing specific images in order to investigate the range of possible readings which can be made. However as argued above, image analysis has to go together with an understanding of how meaning is produced by contextual factors beyond the image itself. Thus in the following section Playboy photographs and cartoons will be examined in terms of the four factors listed by Coward: (1) the caption, (2) the expectations an audience has towards an image,

(3) the context of the image and (4) the uses to which an image is put.

Coward's first factor that fixes meaning is the caption. The vast majority of pictorials in Playboy have captions which suggest to the reader that the woman's state of undress is linked to her sexual availability rather than to some other activity such as undressing to go to sleep or preparing to have a medical examination. This point is also applicable to cartoons found in Playboy where the caption places the woman's revealing garments in a sexual context. In cartoon 32 (see Appendix A) the women are dressed in revealing clothes which emphasize their large breasts. Without the caption a reader could make a number of possible readings such as it is hot weather and the women wish to stay cool or rather they are lesbians enjoying a quiet night at home and are angry at being disturbed. The caption however which reads "We think the government has some nerve sending a female to check our tax returns" clearly fixes the meaning: these women are dressed in such a manner as to seduce a supposed male tax officer into sex in the hope that their tax returns will receive a favorable response. Thus the message is that women will swap sexual favors for financial gain, thereby implying that these women are similar to prostitutes. It is interesting to note that few Playboy cartoons appear without captions.

A further point which needs to be stressed about captions is that they encourage us to scrutinize an image more than we may have done without the suggestive comments. In cartoon 8 (see Appendix A), a brief glance at the image suggests that a male and female are having a discussion over some point which the male finds annoying. However after reading the caption we re-examine the image in order to understand the meaning to 'something big'. A careful viewing reveals that the male's trousers are undone and the female's mouth is level with his penis, across which her hand is lying. Thus the discussion is in fact over his inability to sustain an erection which is what the 'something big' refers to and this explains further why he is angry with her (presumably

she should not make comments about his sexual dysfunction). While the caption can be seen as fixing the meaning of the image, it can also be suggested that the image fixes the meaning of the caption and thus an interactive relationship exists between the two.

The second point mentioned by Coward, the expectations that an audience has towards the image, has been referred to above when discussing how women and men expect pornography to sexually arouse the male audience. Clearly the way in which the female body is posed (or contorted) in such images does arouse men or they would not buy the magazine. Hefner himself has said many times that men buy Playboy for the pictures and without them the magazine would not sell. With Playboy cartoons however the expectation is that it will be funny, an expectation that would seem to further fix the meaning. However as Linsk and Fine's (1981) study showed (see Chapter One), there are a number of ways in which cartoons can be read depending on which group the reader identifies with. The authors maintain that "if one considers oneself to be a member of a group, there may be perceptual denial of the presence of anti-group humor" (1981: 178). It could then be suggested that when women view the cartoons in which they are the butt of the joke, they will read them differently from male readers who do not see their group being disparaged. Thus it is important to examine whether or not women and men will find different humorous possibilities within the same cartoon.

The context of the image, the third factor pointed to by Coward, is especially pertinent to Playboy images. The cartoons appear in a magazine aimed specifically at men. Indeed Playboy always puts on its cover page "Entertainment for Men" (Penthouse calls itself "The International Magazine for Men"). These statements make it clear to audiences that this is not a magazine intended for women's pleasure. The fact that the cartoons appear in such a magazine limits the interpretive possibilities: readers are aware that the cartoon often has a sexual meaning and that women are often the butt of the joke. There nonetheless exists the

possibility that women will poach meanings and instead see the cartoon as ridiculing men, a possibility that needs empirical testing. One such example is the cartoon discussed above where men may see it as ridiculing the woman since she can not arouse the male while women could see it as ridiculing men's obsession with sexual performance.

The use to which the image is put has already been discussed in terms of male masturbation. I would agree with Coward when she suggests that the major reason women do not engage in consuming pornography is that it is specifically geared to facilitating masturbation in men. Coward argues that the reason for this is that "feminists, and women in general, tend to find offensive the form in which sexuality is shown in pornography" (1987: 176). If such images are designed to facilitate masturbation by males, then the meaning is necessarily fixed in the direction of women's depiction as objects of male sexual arousal and use. The codes employed to ensure sexual arousal for men are the very ones which serve to prevent women from poaching meaning.

However again this argument is more complex when applied specifically to cartoons. Although the images of the female in Playboy cartoons do suggest sexual availability and submission (in terms of dress and willingness to capitulate to the sexual advances of men) and fragmentation (the emphasis on breasts and buttocks), it is still questionable that the female cartoon character is used by men for masturbatory purposes. Rather I would suggest that she (with her distorted body, that is, either idealistic or freak, and flimsy, tight-fitting clothes) is much more used as an object of ridicule. What is sexually provocative in the centerfold becomes in the cartoons caricatured to the point of mockery. Such an argument fits in with the points made in Chapter One on the history of cartoons and caricatures, where it was argued that the main purpose of caricatures was ridicule. Kris and Gombrich, it will be recalled, defined caricature as "the deliberate distortion of the features of a person for the purpose of mockery" (1962: 189). While in early portrait caricature (those

which started to appear in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries) the butt of the ridicule was an identifiable person, by the middle of the nineteenth century, as Johnson (1937) notes, caricatural methods of distortion and ridicule came to be used against the anonymous members of recognizable social groups. Thus in this way Playboy cartoons can be seen as playing a similar role to their forerunners and moreover it would seem that if women do not find pleasurable images of themselves as sex-objects, then it is doubtful that they will find caricatured images of themselves as objects of ridicule any more pleasurable. In relation to television Fiske has similarly argued:

pleasure results from a particular relationship between meanings and power. Pleasure for the subordinate is produced by the assertion of one's social identity in resistance to, in independence of, or in negotiation with, the structure of domination. There is no pleasure in being a 'cultural dupe'. (1987: 19)

It is thus being hypothesized here that women will not enjoy seeing their subordinate social position being the theme of humorous texts found in a magazine which expressly markets itself as a male masturbatory tool.

The discussion so far has suggested that pornographic pictorials and cartoons have limited polysemic potential. The issue is of course one which requires empirical research since it is impossible to discover how different audiences read texts by just examining the text itself. While Myers is correct in arguing that "the anticipated gender of the audience is crucial in structuring the image" (1987: 197) it is also important, as Tony Bennett (1987) suggests, to separate the hypothetical spectator inscribed by the text from the historical subject receiving the text. This means that research has to be done on how real people read the text rather than just assuming that specific groups will decode the text in a predetermined manner. What follows below is thus an outline of

how a study modeled after Morley (1980) can be applied to an investigation on how differently situated groups read Playboy sex cartoons.

Implications of Morley's Study for Future Research into Playboy Cartoons

The content analysis discussed in Chapter Seven opened up a number of interesting possibilities for future work on Playboy sex cartoons. The present concern is to investigate how women and men decode the cartoons. Thus the aim of this section is to discuss ways in which the ideas presented in this chapter can be applied to further the study of cartoons and audiences. These ideas are incorporated in the following discussion, which considers the implications of Morley's Nationwide study for reader centered research into Playboy cartoons under three headings: the text, the audience, the encoding-decoding relationship.

The Text

The cultural products investigated here are those Playboy cartoons which contain a sexual theme. As discussed previously, Morley's technique of analysis is more appropriate to news centered television programs since in fictional works (here Morley gives the example of soap operas), it is difficult to pick out the preferred reading. In the Nationwide study the presenter's framing statements were pinpointed as the textual features where the preferred reading was generated. Morley argues elsewhere (1981) that in texts such as television dramas there is no equivalent to the Nationwide presenter, thus making it difficult to specify the preferred reading.

It is clear that attempting to specify the preferred reading of Playboy cartoons is a complex and multi-faceted project. However

the discussion above on pornography as a regime of representation suggests that the structure of Playboy cartoons (by employing the specific pornographic codes discussed above and by depicting females in the caricatured mode of drawing with mainly large breasts and wide hips) prefer a meaning that generally promotes the dominant patriarchal ideology that women are the sexual adjuncts of males. In order to specify the preferred readings the following are suggested:

1. Become visually literate in the idioms of the cartoons. Here the researcher must become familiar with the content and styles of the cartoons over an extended period of time. The aim of this process is to understand the more subtle means used for constructing messages and the recognition of the themes which the particularly cartoonist tends to repeat (for example Buck Brown and the old-woman as sex-starved predator theme).
2. Interview the Playboy editor of cartoons since s/he plays the role of gatekeeper. This method could be used in conjunction with the first. The aim would be to investigate the dominant meaning in the text as perceived by the editor.
3. Interview individual cartoonists, with the aim of discovering the intentions of the artist. In his postscript (1981) Morley discusses what he sees as a potential problem when examining authorial intentionality. He states, "the problem here is that the focus of analysis can easily slide away from the examination of textual properties towards the attempt to recover the subjective intentions of the sender or author of a particular message" (1981: 4).
4. Morley correctly points out that the authors are not always aware of the meanings of their text since, as Althusser as argued, ideology often works on the level of the unconscious, indeed this is what makes it so powerful. However Morley continues by quoting Stuart Hall who has argued that:

the consciousness of the broadcaster must be an area to be studied, for it exists -the terrain of intention- not as the origin of anything- but precisely as the intentional terrain produced by the field of ideology which is, of course, outside intention. (Hall, 1978; quoted in Morley, *ibid*)

Thus investigating the intentions of the author/cartoonist need not reduce the analysis to a discussion of the intentions of a socially isolated individual with an artistic bent since intention itself is a product of ideological practices at work in the social formation.

In Chapter One it was argued that researchers have generally overlooked the role of the cartoonist in the production of the cultural products. Such an analysis entails detailed investigation of the institutional setting in which the cartoonist works and the constraints imposed upon individual actors by sub-editors, editors and, of course, the owners. As Gallagher (1982) argues, the scope that a communicator has depends on "the type of organization and on the nature of his individual role within it" (1982: 166). Thus it is important to interview the cartoonist in order to elicit how much creative autonomy he (in the case of Playboy all of the cartoonists are male) perceives as having and conversely whether or not the cartoonist feels constrained by the dictates of his editor(s). Moreover this information must be supplemented with what Thompson calls a "contextual, interpretive approach" (1988: 374), where the researcher conducts participant observation in the institution in order to "illuminate the rules, procedures and assumptions implicit in the production process..." (*ibid*: 375). It is only through such research techniques that sociologists might uncover the extent to which cultural products (in this case cartoons) are the work of an individual creator or rather are the result of a collective process.

All three suggestions aim to gather information on the encoding side of the communication chain. While the goal would be to employ all three strategies in order to arrive at a reading of

the cartoons which attempts to take into consideration all possible decodings, only the first suggestion was incorporated into this study because of the time constraints and organizational problems⁵.

Locating the Preferred Reading: Playboy Sex Cartoons and the Dominant Patriarchal Ideology

Seventeen Playboy sex cartoons (see Appendix A, cartoons 1-17) were chosen for the purpose of this study, all of which contained at least one of the themes discussed in the chapter on the findings of the content analysis. Similar to Morley, the aim here is not to provide a single, definitive reading of the texts, but rather to establish provisional readings of their main communicative and ideological structures. For the sake of clarity, the cartoons will be grouped and discussed according to their themes.

Bestiality: Cartoons 1 and 11. In both of these cartoons the major theme is the female cartoon character having sexual relations with a dog. Such depictions say much about how Playboy perceives female sexuality; women have insatiable sexual appetites which they seek to satisfy by any means possible. The underlying assumptions governing this theme is that women see animals as legitimate sex partners; no mention is found in the cartoon of why women would have sex with animals, rather it is depicted as 'taken for granted'

⁵ Michelle Urry (the cartoon editor) refused to discuss the content of any individual cartoon on the grounds that such information could be used against her or Playboy. When asked to elaborate further she said that her comments might be taken out of context and she could be construed as endorsing certain acts which Playboy officially condemns. The only example she gave was the controversy over using child images in the cartoons, a practice which she stated was completely against Playboy policy. In addition, Urry refused to give names and addresses of cartoonists and given the time constraint it was impossible to do the extensive research necessary to trace the individual cartoonists.

Ageism: Cartoons 2 and 13. The dominant theme running through these cartoons is that older women lose their sexual attractiveness and become either jealous (cartoon 2) or desperate to the point that they become sexual predators (cartoon 13). In both cases men are no longer interested in these women, indeed they often become repulsed by them. The body of these older women stands in stark contrast to those of the younger women in the cartoons, large breasts and voluptuous hips are replaced by either rounded bodies or scrawny, drooping flesh which makes the women look like freaks. These cartoons thus unquestionably trade on the commonly held sexist stereotype that young women are more sexually desirable than older women and that ultimately female aging leads to male rejection.

Overt Violence: Cartoons 3, 5 and 16. These cartoons contain images which suggest clear violence against women. The whip marks in cartoon 3 are evidence of torture and pain and the caption further promotes the idea that this is being done for the pleasure of the men. Cartoon 5 on the other hand is suggestive of future violence, the tools, open chest and the 'tough no leaks' bags being clear indicators that the man intends to murder, mutilate and bury his female victim. Neither of these cartoons provide any explanation as to why these men should want to inflict violence on the women in question, rather the implicit message is that this violence is being done to them simply because they are women. In cartoon 16 the man is holding the woman down and her expression suggests fear and/or shock. The man has his pants down which further suggests that he intends to rape her.

Child Sexual Abuse: Cartoons 4 and 14. The female characters in both of these cartoons are drawn in a way which suggests that they are in the age range of up to adolescence. Although they both have big breasts, there are key signifiers of childhood. In cartoon 4, the female has a small body in comparison to the adult male, she has a bow in her hair and the caption includes the

words 'little girl'. In addition she has Christmas gifts by her bed which is a tradition usually associated with children. The female in cartoon 14 has freckles, bows, bobby socks and an innocent expression normally associated with children. The adult males in the cartoon both intend to have sex with the females; an activity which constitutes child rape.

Sexual Harassment in the Work-Place: Cartoons 6 and 10. The female workers in both of these cartoons are depicted as providing sexual rather than secretarial services to their bosses. Neither of these women seem disturbed by the bosses' behavior even though they are being either molested in full view of their colleagues (cartoon 6) or ridiculed for being stupid (cartoon 10). Both women are drawn in a sexually provocative fashion which suggests, in Playboy terms, that they are legitimately being reduced to sex objects. The unquestioned assumption here is that the role of women in the work place is a sexual one and that this is seen as acceptable by the women.

Covert Violence: Cartoons 7 and 17. Although all of these cartoons embody themes which suggest violence against women, the activity is encoded in a more subtle manner than in cartoons 3 and 5 and moreover the women appear complicit in the act. Cartoon 7 shows a gang rape occurring in the background, however, all the women appear to be enjoying the act. The main female cartoon character is shown to be sexually interested in the main male cartoon character, even though he clearly belongs to the group committing the rape. The visual depictions of rape is further buttressed by the caption which contains the word rape. Cartoon 17 has a woman hanging upside down from a lamp and even though such a position would cause pain and possible serious injury, she appears to be enjoying the act. Her satisfied smile and cigarette suggests that she is in a post-orgasmic state

brought about by the torture. The whip in the husband's hand further suggests that violence is involved. These cartoons perpetuate the myth that women enjoy pain, torture and rape.

Male Sexual Dysfunction: Cartoons 8, 12, and 15. The three cartoons chosen represent the main forms of male sexual dysfunction contained within Playboy cartoons: premature ejaculation, inability to sustain an erection or inadequate size of penis. In all three cases the men are being chastised by the women which suggests that these women are singularly concerned with being penetrated by these men and failure is met with anger and derision rather than concern for the man's problem. Again the message here being that women have enormous sexual appetites which they continually seek to satisfy.

Adultery by Wife: Cartoon 9. The adulterous wife is shown as young and thus by Playboy standards also voluptuous. When her husband is not available, she seeks sexual satisfaction elsewhere in the form of a younger, more attractive man. Moreover when he discovers her with another man she shows little remorse but rather makes a joke. It would seem that women, given their sexual appetites, can not be trusted when left alone.

It is important to point out here again that the concept of the preferred reading has been found to be problematic by a number of researchers. Indeed, as stated above, Morley (1981) himself has argued that in fictional texts it is very difficult to locate the preferred reading. The above discussion of the cartoons is not meant to be exhaustive but rather to provide some pointers as to what the dominant ideological assumptions may be.

The Audience

Similar to Morley's work, this proposed aspect of a study of Playboy cartoons would investigate the type of code the audience employs to interpret the message, i.e. dominant, negotiated or oppositional. Now, whereas Morley classified his groups according to socio-economic variables, I would argue for an additional set of variables. Indeed Morley himself (in his postscript, 1981) discusses the need to examine structural factors other than social class. He does make the point that the list of variables is infinite and might well include such factors as religion and biology. However he argues that there exists enough empirical evidence to suggest that age, sex, race and class are more important determinants of decoding practices. While agreeing with Morley's reformulation with respect to his analysis of news/documentary/current affairs text, I would argue that the list of variables needs to be modified in terms of the nature of the genre under consideration.

Socio-economic position may well play a part in decoding Playboy cartoons, but it should be looked at in conjunction with more relevant variables (listed below). This however would constitute a further study. Preliminary research carried out during a sociology of media class in a Boston college⁶, suggests that the following

⁶ Twenty four students, fifteen female and nine males were asked to discuss twelve Playboy sex cartoons. The discussion focused on the image of the females and males in the cartoon and the main theme of the joke. The results suggested that the female respondents were generally critical of the humor and the drawings while the males generally found the cartoons funny. Moreover the feminists in the group (three) were more critical of the cartoons and the ways in which the females were drawn, arguing that these cartoons embodied many of the sexist assumptions that men have about women. The non-feminist females did not talk in terms of sexism but rather tended to see the cartoons as examples of male locker room humor. The typical male defense was that the women lacked a sense of humor and took the cartoons too seriously. All of the males said that they had seen pornography in the last two months with most of them (seven) saying that they regularly read Penthouse or Hustler. On the other hand only two women said that they had seen pornography in the last two months with the majority (eleven) saying that they could not recall the last time they had seen any pornography.

variables impact on the decoding process: (1) Gender, (2) Readership of pornography in general, (3) Feminist awareness.

For the purposes of this preliminary study, variables 1, 2, and 3, were examined in terms of the following three groups: Group 1. Males who do not define themselves as feminist sympathizers and who read (or watch) pornography on a regular basis⁷; Group 2. Females who do not define themselves as feminists and Group 3. Females who do define themselves as feminists⁸. In order to locate appropriate subjects for each of the groups a questionnaire (see appendix D) was distributed in an Introduction to Psychology class. Subjects were then chosen according to their responses (a fuller discussion of the responses of each group is contained below in the section on the findings).

Group 1, Non-Feminist Males (NFM): This group was chosen because the members represent the reader inscribed by the text, that is, they are the audience that the producers have in mind when constructing the product. By being regular readers of pornography it is hypothesized that these readers will possess the cultural capital necessary for understanding and making dominant readings of the cartoons. The idea that differently socially situated groups will have different forms of cultural competence was discussed by Morley (1986), in his latest research project. With respect to television, Morley has suggested that the different forms (or genres) of television such as soap operas and current affairs programs "requires the viewer to be competent in certain forms of knowledge, and to be familiar with certain conventions which constitute the ground (or framework) within or on which particular propositions can be made" (1986: 44). He continues by

⁷ For the sake of this study, regular was defined as either reading or viewing at least two pornographic magazines/films a month.

⁸ A fourth group, males who define themselves as pro-feminist, was considered as an additional group. However finding seven such males turned out to be problematic at the Boston college where the study was conducted. It is hoped that in the future such a group will be included in a study.

suggesting that these forms of cultural competence are unevenly distributed in our society and moreover that "some people...simply do not possess the forms of cultural competence which^r are necessary in order to understand and gain pleasure from the viewing of these particular types of material" (1986: 44). Here Morley gives the example of soap operas where he suggests that this genre requires a viewer who is competent in the codes of personal relations in the domestic sphere. On the other hand current affairs programs require viewers to be competent in the codes of parliamentary democracy and economics. Thus the former argues Morley is more geared to women while the latter is more of a male genre.

An interesting question to be investigated in this study is therefore whether sex cartoons found in Playboy are intelligible to women in a manner similar to men since it is a genre specifically geared to the cultural capital that is gained by subjects who are culturally constructed as male.

Groups 2 and 3, Non-Feminist Females (NFF) and Feminist Females (FF): During the course of the discussion of how women and men read texts differently, women have been grouped together as a class with the implicit assumption that by virtue of living in a patriarchal society, women share a common social position which gives rise to a specific subjectivity. While this may indeed be true, it is equally true that women are differentiated in terms of social class, race and generation which suggests that we have to be wary of any attempt to speak of a single female subjectivity. As Gamman and Marshment argue "can we really assume that audiences identify on the basis of gender...rather than on the basis of the other categories that contribute to the construction of our identities" (1988: 7). The work of Black cultural scholars such as Bell Hooks (1988) would seem to suggest that one of the problems of feminism is its claim that it speaks for all women while in fact only addressing the concerns of white, middle-class women. However, while it is being acknowledged here

that race and class are important categories, time and space does not permit a thorough examination of how differently situated women read Playboy cartoons. Rather it was decided to split women up according to their identification with feminism for as Kaplan suggests, identification with a sub-culture such as feminism is more likely to result in a textual reading which goes against the grain. She argues that women who are not feminists will be likely to make a dominant reading of a text while feminist will tend to "reject the offered position" (1987: 12).

A similar argument has been put forward by Steiner (1988) who suggests that the "No Comment"⁹ section in Ms. Magazine is an example of oppositional decoding by women who share a specific social identity as feminists. Steiner argues that only by having "access and commitment to an alternative, oppositional definition of reality" (1988: 12) can groups of people challenge and indeed resist the dominant ideological systems. Thus the question here is will feminists make different readings to non-feminist women by virtue of their identification with a sub-culture which has consistently challenged the dominant ideology of patriarchy which Playboy magazine so clearly articulates. The point here is not that feminists will poach meaning and thus negotiate with the text but rather that they will make a dominant reading and then reject it. Steiner has made a similar argument with respect to the "No Comment" section when she argues that "oppositional decodings does not directly change the encoding or decoding performed under dominant rules" (1988: 12). Rather "No Comment" is oppositional in that "it involves...acts of reading and the texts themselves, which, as texts usually addressed to men, are captured and communally repudiated" (1988: 13). Thus it could be hypothesized that poaching meaning and negotiating with the text is a non-feminist female approach (as Gamman and Marshment

⁹ In this section readers are invited to send in advertisements or media clippings which they see as being sexist.

suggest) while capturing and repudiating the text is a feminist approach. These are ultimately empirical questions which will be investigated in the study.

The Encoding-Decoding Relationship

The above decoding data would then be compared to the researcher's decodings in order to investigate the following issues identified by Morley:

1. If some readers made readings which which had completely escaped the notice of the researcher's analysis.
2. How the visibility of different meanings is related to respondents position with respect to the chosen variables (that is: gender, readership of pornography in general and feminist awareness).
3. To what extent different sections of the audience did interpret the cartoon meanings they would want to find there, i.e., is there any evidence that readers poach meanings?

An Audience-Centered Study of Playboy Sex Cartoons

The following discussions focuses on the findings of a small pilot study carried out with fifteen undergraduate students divided into three groups of five; non-feminist males, non-feminist females, and feminist females. The students were chosen according to their answers to a questionnaire (see Appendix D) given out during an Introduction to Psychology course held at a major Boston area university.

The men selected for the NFM group were those who answered

that they had not taken any woman's studies courses and that abortion should be available only to victims of rape and incest or if the woman's life is in danger. Abortion was chosen as a topic due to the current debates raging in the U.S.A on the future status of abortion law. Recently there has been much media debate on the subject and the feminist position has been represented in terms of advocating for abortion on demand. All the men in this study said that they disagreed with this feminist position. To further investigate where these men stood on women's rights, they were classified according to their stated beliefs on the legal and social position of women. All the men agreed with the statement that women and men should be equal under the law but they also agreed with the statements that there are differences between women and men and that they are suited to different tasks in society. Given their claim that they believe in the gendered division of labor and advocate strict abortion controls, these men were classed as non-feminist males. They all claimed to read or view at least two 'men's entertainment magazines/films' in the last month. They all said that they 'flick' through Playboy but never buy it. Two men said that they go to strip clubs about every other week and will often view a film while in the club.

The women selected for the NFF group were those who said they had never taken a women's studies course. They believed that abortion should only be available in cases of rape/incest or where the woman's life is in danger. In addition, while agreeing that women and men should be equal under the law, they believed that women and men are different and are best suited to different tasks. None of the woman could recall the last time that they had seen Playboy or any such magazine. All the women claimed to read Cosmopolitan, Vogue or Glamour at least once a month. None had ever read a feminist magazine.

The FF were selected on the basis that they had all completed at least one women's studies course and that they agreed with the statement that abortion should be available on demand, with no exceptions. In addition these women all answered that women and

men should be equal under the law and that women still have a long way to go in order to gain full equality. None of them agreed with a gendered division of labor or that there were^f differences between women and men. Three of the women has subscriptions to Sojourner while the other two said that they read either Sojourner or Off Our Backs¹⁰ occasionally. Only two said that they glance through Cosmopolitan or Vogue. Three of the women could not remember the last time that they had seen pornography, while two said that they had recently flicked through Playboy or Penthouse which they found in boyfriends' apartments.

After selecting the three groups (five respondents per-group) each group met separately and was asked to discuss the seventeen Playboy cartoons (see Appendix A, cartoons 1-17). The discussions were taped. The interview was unstructured since the respondents determined the types of issues discussed. My initial question for all of the cartoons was "what do you think of this one". This question was often sufficient to start the discussion and respondents would enter into a dialog with each other. Occasionally I would interrupt the discussion to ask another question such as "do you find the cartoon humorous?" However, I generally followed Morley's suggestion that the questions should not cut across the flow of the conversation but rather they should engage with and try to develop points already raised by the respondents.

During the discussion it was apparent that the group tended to develop a consensus of agreement regarding the content of the cartoons. There was little disagreement among the members of each group, most of the differences were between groups (this finding is consistent with Morley, 1980). Thus the account of the readings offered below focuses on the group as a whole. It is possible that the respondents may have answered differently had they been interviewed separately (a point recognized by Wren-Lewis, 1983), however given the time constraints, this was not possible.

¹⁰ Sojourner and Off Our Backs are monthly radical feminist newspapers

For the sake of clarity, the findings for each group will be discussed separately and then tentative conclusions will be drawn regarding the different types of codes employed by each group.

Non-Feminist Males

In the discussion the men appeared to 'get' the jokes immediately and they all offered the same kind of reading. There was no disagreement concerning different interpretations; they all claimed agreement on the major theme and humor content. Their overall opinion was that most of the cartoons were funny and that the humor content was harmless. At one point, for example, one of the respondents said "this is only a joke, it seems dumb to analyze it, it is not meant to be looked at for too long".

What was clear as the discussion progressed was that the respondents assumed continuity between cartoons depictions of women and men and real life. No indication was given that they perceived these cartoons as drawings, produced by male cartoonists. A similar finding emerged from the NFF group but not from the FF, who constantly criticized the drawings as examples of typical sexist male humor, produced by men for men (see later discussion of FF). That the NFM respondents seemed to take these drawings as actual depictions of women was the most interesting finding. Moreover, it fits in with Goffman's argument that stills (and cartoons) provide us with visual information which readers interpret as an "objective, veridical version - an actual picture of socially important aspects of what is in effect out there" (Goffman, 1979: 12). One example emerged in the discussion of cartoon 2. The men commented on the body of the younger woman, saying that younger women do have better bodies than older women and that is why men prefer such women. They also added that they like to look at women in the street and I was informed that "any healthy male would take a second look at a fine young woman". Not one of the men related their comments to

the position of the older woman and when I asked why she seemed angry one typical answer was "older women are usually jealous of younger women", again no mention of the concocted nature of the cartoon. The same was true for Buck Brown's cartoon (13) of the old woman; they all spoke of it as an accurate depiction of old women. For example one of the men said that "when women get old they look gross", while another one commented that "this is the body that gravity beat". They all said that they thought the cartoon was funny because she was a "swinging old lady" and you don't think of old women as wanting sex. Even though some of the cartoons contained old men talking about or preparing to have sex, no comment was made of their age. This noting of the age of women but not men suggests that the NFM have internalized the sexist notion that older women cease to be sexual beings while men are sexual throughout the life cycle.

A further finding was that the NFM did not talk in terms of sexist images. Indeed it appeared that because they saw these depictions as realistic representations of women and where they are in the social world, they did not see the need for and thus did not offer a critical reading. For cartoon 6 for example, the NFM respondents discussed why Jenkins is considered an office joke. The reason put forward by the men was that he "doesn't take advantage of the fringe benefits that the office has to offer". They talked about this cartoon for some time without mentioning the secretary sitting on the desk with her legs open. They did not in fact even comment on the female in the cartoon, suggesting that they are accustomed to seeing sexist images and do not find them noteworthy. Indeed the fact that they view pornography on a regular basis could go some way towards explaining why these men accepted the Playboy version of reality (in contrast, the major theme of discussion among FF respondents was the image of the secretary; Jenkins was scarcely mentioned). When asked who was the butt of the joke, the NFM all answered Jenkins, thus suggesting that the secretary is not being made fun of but rather is being accurately depicted.

The two cartoons which showed up to adolescent females (4 and 14) were responded to as humorous by all the men and moreover the age of the female was not discussed. They^r said they found cartoon 4 especially funny because of the pun on the word 'came'. When I asked how old they thought the girl in the cartoon was, they all said about sixteen or seventeen. I asked them about the caption which said "are you the little girl..." and they replied that she is clearly not a little girl because of the size of her breasts. The NFF answered similarly but the FF (the only group to see the concocted nature of the cartoons) all said that this was the way in which Playboy legitimizes child-rape. The NFM and the NFF all disagreed that these cartoons suggested child rape.

There were two themes which the NFM group did not describe as funny. The first was those cartoons which they felt depicted clear and explicit images of violence, cartoons 3 and 5. The men said that they could not laugh at jokes where someone was going to get hurt. For cartoon number 3, it was the scars and the whips which were considered too blatant and in cartoon number 5 the major clues noted by the men (which were instantly recognized for implying violence) were the tools and the no-leak bags. What was interesting however was that they did not see cartoons 7, 16 and 17 as involving violence but rather the NFM and the NFF found the cartoons funny. When I mentioned to the men that cartoon 7 had the word rape in the caption, they replied that it wasn't really rape because the women in the cartoon were smiling and if it was really rape they would be fighting to get away. This reading clearly links with the commonly held idea that if a woman doesn't want to be raped then she can somehow prevent it and that if she was raped then it must have been because she wanted it.

The NFM also did not respond to the woman's look of fear in cartoon 16 describing the cartoon as funny; no mention was made of fear or a possible rape. The fact that the woman in cartoon number 17 was hanging upside down from the light (clearly a position which would cause real pain and injury) was not

commented upon by the men but instead they described as funny the male cartoon character calling the films 'home movies'. Thus it appears that the men in this group did not see the more subtle forms of violence against women as violence. It may be that such behavior on the part of the male in the cartoon is seen as falling into the realms of normal male behavior. Violence is thus only perceived when the women is clearly hurt or when there are unambiguous tools such as a saw.

The second theme which the men saw as non-humorous was sexual dysfunction on the part of the male cartoon character. The comments here ranged from "I don't see anything to laugh about" to "we all know what it feels like to be in that position". This finding fits in with Fine's (1981), that if the viewers consider themselves to be members of the disparaged group, then they may find the joke less funny. The NFM respondents seem to have been identifying with the men in the cartoon and thus were seeing themselves as the butt of the joke. The interesting point here is that all the men described it as deriding men, not women, saying that the inability to get an erection was his fault and not hers. The fact that men find such jokes in "poor taste" might explain why less than 3% of Playboy cartoons contain this theme.

The men did express approval of the bestiality cartoons and no mention was made of why a woman might want to have sex with an animal. The men thus accepted without question Playboy's message that women's sexual desires include dogs. When I asked them why a woman would want to have sex with a dog, they pointed out that in cartoon number 1, the husband looked ugly so she may prefer the dog. This response contrasts with the NFF and the FF groups, who said they found the cartoon in bad taste because, as one NFF said, "we wouldn't want to have sex with dogs, it suggests that we are dogs". It can thus be argued that the women in both groups identified with the female cartoon characters in the cartoon and therefore did not find the cartoon humorous; the men on the other hand, not seeing their reference group as being ridiculed, found humorous possibilities in the

cartoon.

Although much of what these men said was interesting, what was even more interesting was what they did not say.⁶ Throughout the discussion no mention was made of the ideological nature of the cartoons. Rather they discussed the theme of the cartoon and ignored the larger issues of what the cartoons say about the position of women and men in contemporary U.S. society. For the FF, one overriding issue was that the female cartoon characters were portrayed again and again as sex objects. The men however did not mention this feature. It may be that they see nothing out of the ordinary to comment on since they themselves view women in general as playing this role.

This finding reinforces Althusser's claim that the power of ideology is that it constitutes the limits of common sense; socially constructed relations of dominations are taken to be natural and unchangeable. The NFF generally subscribed to the belief that the cartoons depicted the natural order, although there were examples where this order was questioned. For the FF the gender stratified social system was the target of the discussion and the cartoons were analyzed from a critical feminist perspective.

The NFM decoded the cartoons in terms of the dominant sexist ideology which is prevalent throughout the pages of Playboy magazine and indeed the wider patriarchal society. Women are seen as primarily providers of sexual services and indeed this view has become so common-place as to not warrant any mention. That a woman secretary should be laying on a desk with her legs open so that that her boss can perform oral sex and that such a position is not discussed or even commented on suggests that such depictions fall within the realms of anticipated behavior. Indeed, one of the main reasons that cartoons are intelligible to readers is that "the experiences depicted in the cartoon frames are not wholly peculiar to it. They do not make sense only in terms of this realm, but are parasitic on the readers' wider interpretive competence" (Dines-Levy and Smith, 1988: 244). Thus the cartoons in Playboy did not introduce the men in the study to

the view that women are sex objects but rather they legitimized and reinforced the dominant patriarchal ideology.

The only theme which for these men crossed the boundary of acceptable male behavior and thus warranted criticism was when the women in the cartoons were clearly being tortured or murdered. Rape and molestation however did not constitute aberrant behavior since the men claimed to find nothing offensive in those cartoons. The other theme which met with negative responses was male sexual dysfunction since the butt of the joke here was perceived to be the male. Thus it would appear that the men in the study share the sexist assumptions prevalent in Playboy which perceive women as legitimate targets of ridicule. Even more interesting was the finding that NFFs also shared this ideological position.

Non-Feminist Females

Similar to the NFM, the women in this group all got the jokes immediately and all made the same reading, thus suggesting that the cultural capital necessary to decode the cartoons is not specific to men but rather that the sexist ideology is widely disseminated. What was apparent here is that the NFF group made few negotiated readings and instead tended to agree with the message in the cartoon. Again, the most interesting point was that they seemed to take the cartoons as authentic representations of women rather than as concocted stills. This finding was especially notable for the Buck Brown granny character where the women agreed that women usually look like her when they are old. Also, for cartoon 2, most of the women said that younger women are more attractive than older women and most men would rather be with an attractive woman. They did not describe the cartoon as derogatory to older women but rather as reflecting what actually happens. While studies indeed show that men prefer younger women (Freedman, 1987), recognition of this sexist standard need

not be accompanied by acceptance.

During the discussion it appeared that the NFF accepted the male definition of female worth. They said that women,⁶ as they age, tend to bulge and sag and "there is no way we can fight nature". Aging was portrayed as a process which presumably affects women more than men since no mention was made of what happens when men get older. This view was most evident in the comparison between cartoon number 2 and cartoon 9. The NFF said that the fact that the woman was older and rounder necessarily meant that the husband would look longingly at younger woman with a firmer body. For cartoon number 9 however the fact that the woman's husband is older and less attractive than her and her lover was not mentioned. Instead they said that she is having an affair because he seduced her and she didn't have the power to resist. These women voiced the double standard that women as they age become undesirable while men remain sexually attractive.

In addition these women did not discuss the distorted female body which is the staple of Playboy cartoons. When asked what they thought of cartoons which show women with over-sized breasts and small waists they answered that such body images are considered 'sexy' by men and that is what you would expect to find in Playboy. The women were not critical of Playboy but rather expressed resignation to the fact that "boys will be boys" and all we can do is accept it. Interestingly, these women did not address how they feel about being confronted with images which depict women with a body shape which, while considered desirable, is unattainable for most women. Perhaps the women do not see Playboy as having any relevance to their lives since it is a magazine expressly marketed to men. In contrast, the NFM related their own experiences and feelings to the cartoons while the FF saw themselves as directly affected by the images which men consume.

For cartoon 6, Jenkins was again the focus of debate. The discussion centered on discrimination, but the discrimination of men by other men, with Jenkins being an example of how the

business world is unfair to men who are not aggressive. No mention was made of the female secretary who with justice could be seen as the one most discriminated against in this cartoon. It may be that these women, like the NFM, are so used to seeing sexist images of women that they fail to identify such images as oppressive and demeaning.

For cartoon number 10, where the secretary's lack of skills is being discussed, the NFF at first said the cartoon was funny but after a brief discussion one of the women said "I suppose the moral of the story is really discriminating against women". The other woman expressed agreement but again they tended to make a dominant reading by continuing with the argument that she looked dumb and therefore probably was not able to do the work. They did not mention that this cartoon is a product of male sexist attitudes and does not reflect how women actually operate in the work situation. Thus while the NFF saw the sexism in this cartoon they, rather than negotiating or repudiating the message, instead accepted it as a legitimate definition of women's position in the work place.

The NFF did however make an interesting reading for cartoon 5 where they immediately saw the intended violence and all of them agreed that the cartoon was not funny. However the main point of discussion was "what did she do to bring this on herself". When I asked what they meant by this question, they responded that he must be pretty annoyed with her to want to slice her up. Thus it appears that for these women, there has to be a reason for the ensuing violence. This contrasts with the NFM and the FF since both groups seemed to assume that the violence was explicable in terms of the gender of the victim. For the NFM, this was apparent in their omission of any discussion of why the male was intending to mutilate the woman. The FF however explicitly stated that this is what men repeatedly do to women in a misogynist society, the fact that she was female and he male was enough reason.

In addition, the NFF group did not like cartoon 3 because the

woman was clearly being hurt. They said that this cartoon was "too open about violence to be funny". They however did not object to cartoon 7, arguing that if she did not want to be raped then she would resist more. These women expressed the commonly held sexist view that if women really did not want to be raped then they would fight off the attacker. Without overt signs of violence, these women did not see the implicit coercion which was apparent to the FF.

This argument is relevant also for cartoon number 17 where the woman is hanging upside down. The NFF, like the NFM, found this cartoon humorous because of the unexpected nature of the "home movies" caption. They felt that her satisfied expression and cigarette indicated that she had been engaged in consensual sex. Given that Playboy is a magazine by and for men, a possible question to ask is: Whose reality is being depicted here? What was clearly missing from the discussion was any mention of how it feels to be tied up and hung from a light and under what conditions might a woman agree to such treatment. This was indeed a major concern for the FF, who said that this cartoon perpetrated lies regarding women's sexuality. That this cartoon may be a male construct was not mentioned by the NFF.

Similar to the NFM group, this group did not see the cartoons which had up to adolescent females as involving children. They pointed to breasts as an evidence of age. For cartoon 14, three of the women felt that it was in poor taste because it gave the church a bad image. When I asked about the cartoon which had 'little girl' in the caption they all said that this was just to add to the joke.

One important difference between this group and the NFM was that the women said they found the sexual dysfunction cartoons funny. They discussed what they saw as the male obsession with performance and thought that these cartoons ridiculed men. Thus the women made the same reading as the men but because they do not see themselves as belonging to the group which is the butt of the joke, they could find the cartoon funny (Fine, 1981). These

women also differed from the men in their lack of appreciation of the cartoons involving bestiality. They felt that it demeaned women because it suggested that we are willing to have sex with animals. Although the women saw the bestiality cartoons as demeaning to women as a group, they did not however articulate how such images might affect men's attitudes towards women in general, differing markedly from the FF, who continually criticized the cartoons for perpetuating sexist stereotypes which may ultimately impact on the way women are treated in society.

The NFF made mostly dominant readings of the cartoons. On specific occasions they would criticize a cartoon for disseminating negative stereotypes of women (e.g., bestiality and overt violence), but only in those cases when the depicted activity went beyond the realm of what they saw as normal everyday behavior. A boss molesting his secretary did not fall into such a category, nor did a man jumping on a woman after she cooked dinner. The NFF did not generally identify a distorted female body as a form of ridicule but rather saw the drawings as accurate depictions of women. Throughout the discussion it was apparent that the NFF accepted the male definition of female worth and the nature of female sexuality. The only group to offer a critical and indeed oppositional reading of the cartoons was the feminists.

Feminist Females

While it was anticipated that FF would decode the cartoons differently from the NFM or the NFF, what was unexpected was the degree to which their readings were oppositional. They were not oppositional in the sense that they made different readings but in Streicher's (1988) sense that they made the dominant reading and then repudiated it. All the women got the jokes immediately but unlike the other two groups, these women were highly critical of the content and did not find one humorous theme in the cartoons.

In addition, this was the only group that constantly made reference to the concocted nature of the cartoons, characterizing the images as produced by men who subscribe to the dominant sexist ideology prevalent in a patriarchal society. This characterization was especially the case with respect to the depictions of the female's body; repeated reference was made to the size of the breasts and buttocks. The FF described these images as distortions of the female body and they made a connection between the cartoon character and the female in the centerfold. For example one comment was "this is how they want us all to look like in the pin-up but because that isn't real they draw us with these melon sized breasts". The distorted female body was mentioned throughout the discussion and it was held up as an example of how men demean women and turn them into sex objects.

This type of comment was particularly the case for cartoons 2 and 13, where the women suggested that the theme of these cartoons was ageism. For cartoon 2 the comments focused on females being pitted against each other which, they argued, results in women being alienated from their own bodies and each other. The stress on youth as being a prerequisite for beauty was seen as damaging to all women including themselves; they related their own fears regarding aging (the average age of these women was 19). The granny cartoon was especially criticized for promoting the idea that old women are ugly and sexually frustrated and the FF linked these cartoons with those which showed old men in a more favorable light. They saw the difference in depictions as an example of the double standard regarding age and sexual desirability.

Unlike the other two groups, the FF did not focus on Jenkins in cartoon 6 but rather saw this as indicative of how women are treated in the workplace. One woman said "this is what they see as our acceptable position in the work-place, on the desk with legs apart". What was interesting about the discussion here was that the FF (unlike the other groups) paid careful attention to the

details of the cartoon. For example they noted that the secretary looked happy, even though she was being molested by her boss and all her co-workers were witnessing the event. They felt that this portrayal was one more instance of women being depicted as stupid. Similar criticisms were levelled against cartoon number 10, where the emphasis was on the stupidity of the secretary. While these women acknowledged that she looked "dumb" they all stressed that this is how she was drawn and that such depictions fit into the overall view that women are only good for decorative or sexual purposes. Moreover, they noted that her skirt was inappropriately short, a style meant to suggest that she saw herself as providing sexual rather than office services, thus putting the blame on her.

These women also paid close attention to those cartoons which contained up to adolescent females and all expressed agreement that the cartoons promoted child rape. They saw the large breasts in cartoons 4 and 14 as ploys to detract from the fact that these were children. This group was the only one to comment on the female's nudity from the waist up and they wanted to know how many children in winter (it was Christmas time) go to bed without night clothes. The group agreed that in depicting the child/woman as undressed the cartoonist was implicitly giving the message that all females are just waiting for sex. They added that the size of her body next to his suggests that she is indeed a child, as did the bow in her hair and the wide eyed innocent expression. For cartoon number 14, the freckles, socks and innocent expression were seen as clear signs of childhood. Thus it seemed that by scrutinizing these images carefully the FF came to very different conclusions than the other groups.

This group also differed from the other two in their decoding of those cartoons which showed male sexual dysfunction (8, 12 and 15). They thought that the cartoon ridiculed women for not being able to arouse a man since in Playboy women are portrayed as sex-objects whose only function is to entice men into sexual activity. If the man has a problem then it must be her fault since

she is not performing her function. This reading differs from the other groups which saw the men as being ridiculed. One possible explanation could be that the FF saw Playboy as a magazine which demeans women and thus all images are read within this paradigm.

The bestiality cartoons (cartoons 1 and 11) were heavily criticized for depicting woman as having such insatiable sexual appetites that they will have sex with anything including a dog. Although the initial response to these cartoons was similar for both female groups, the NFF did not articulate their dislike as clearly as the FF. For the former, discussion was focused on just the actual content of the cartoons while the latter's comments tended to go beyond the cartoon and instead were directed at the ways in which the bestiality cartoon fit in with what they described as the overall ideology of Playboy magazine. The FF argued that Playboy pictorials have much in common with the bestiality cartoon since both have a view of women as craving penetration to the point that her very existence is defined in terms of "her open vagina which can never be filled". The FF felt that this was the ultimate lie of pornography (their word used to describe Playboy) and a lie which men believe. Thus these women did not simply criticize the cartoon; they decoded them in light of their feminist analysis of pornography as a genre.

The same was also the case for those cartoons which dealt in both implicit and explicit violence (3, 5, 7, 16, and 17). Whereas the other groups only voiced objection to those cartoons which clearly suggested violence against women, the FF also expressed outrage at the more subtle images of violence. Cartoon number 7 was said to promote the idea that women enjoy rape and that if it is inevitable then we should just relax and enjoy it. The discussion which followed centered on the ways that pornography promotes a rape culture in which violence against women is promoted and legitimized to the point that it is no longer seen as violence but rather "rough sex". One of the points of discussion was how pornography blurs the lines between consensual and

non-consensual sex with the result that when a woman says no, the man hears yes and the more we protest the more they think we want it. All the women agreed that such images cause real violence against women and indeed one commented that "it's no surprise that we are all getting raped, this is the kind of thing that makes our lives intolerable". This was the only group that made any clear connections between the images in Playboy and the actual life experiences of women, a connection which clearly owes much to their association with feminism.

Cartoons 16 and 17 were criticized by the FF for depicting rape and torture. In the case of the former they pointed to her expression, which they defined as one of fear and surprise. Comments were also made about the size of her feet, which were compared to the patriarchal tradition in China of binding women's feet. This group was the only one that mentioned the tiny feet drawn on the woman in the cartoon. Cartoon number 17 was seen as an example of violence since they all said that being hung from a ceiling was akin to torture. The interesting point here is that whereas the other groups decoded this cartoon in terms of the woman agreeing to making the film, the FF read it as a concocted image which served to legitimize male violence against women. For these women, the satisfied expression of the female cartoon character was not offered as evidence of her enjoying the act but rather as an attempt by the artist to soften the violence contained within the image.

The FF, similar to the other groups, were critical of the cartoons which dealt in overt violence against women (cartoons 3 and 5). However, whereas the previous groups saw these cartoons as overstepping the boundaries of what constitutes humorous subjects, the FF felt that such a cartoon was not out of place in Playboy. Rather the consensus of opinion was that this cartoon was a logical extension of Playboy's woman-hating ideology. One typical comment was "if they make fun of child-rape, then why not add murder to the list". This was the only group that linked the overtly violent cartoons to the more subtle depictions of

violence, the argument here being that since most of the cartoons deal in some form of violence or coercion, why should we be surprised when they make these messages explicit. ^f

This group clearly made oppositional readings for all the cartoons. Rather than accepting the Playboy definition of events, the women decoded the cartoons using a feminist frame of reference. Moreover, this group explicitly located the cartoons in the wider context of pornography and the attendant patriarchal culture which informs the production of such images. The cartoons were thus not read as isolated entities but were contextualized. The same can also be said for the other two groups, however, the crucial difference is that for the NFM and NFF, the patriarchal ideology was never really questioned but rather accepted as a legitimate framework for decoding the cartoons. For the feminists, it was this patriarchal ideology, infused within the cartoons, that was the focus of attack. It would seem that without a feminist consciousness, the patriarchal system of relations appear natural and remain unquestioned, an argument which has informed the feminist endorsement of conscious raising sessions (see Morgan, 1970, for a fuller discussion of the politics of conscious raising)

Conclusion

The aim of this pilot study was to investigate the impact that gender, readership of pornography and feminist awareness may have on decoding Playboy sex cartoons. Differences were indeed demonstrated between the three groups, however feminist awareness was found to be the most important variable. The NFM and the NFF made similar dominant readings of many of the cartoons. The readings of the FF on the other hand were oppositional.

All three groups were found to possess the cultural capital necessary for making sense of the cartoons, a finding which suggests that although the texts are geared towards males, the

sexist ideology which informs them is distributed throughout society. Growing up in a patriarchal world ensures that women and men alike are socialized into the dominant sexist ideology which serves to sustain and legitimate the current system of gender relations.

The NFM appeared to be the group which received the most pleasure from the texts which is not surprising given that the cartoons were expressly addressed to a male viewer. Fiske's (1988) claim that pleasure is produced by the reader viewing a text which addresses his/her social allegiances is important here since the NFM indicated that the cartoons expressed many of their own feelings and opinions. They said that they understood why a man would prefer a younger woman and that Jenkins was stupid for not taking advantage of the office fringe benefits. Indeed, the fact that these men regularly read pornographic texts suggests that they find the messages in them pleasurable; if the case was otherwise then there would not be a sustained engagement (Fiske, 1988: 248).

The concept of pleasure developed by Fiske does however have serious problems when applied to pornographic texts. For Fiske, pleasure is created from "the production of meanings of the world and of self that are felt to serve the interests of the reader rather than those of the dominant" (1987: 19). Fiske is specifically referring to the television text which he argues is produced by the dominant for consumption by the subordinate. The subordinate, he suggests, produce readings which are at odds with the dominant ideology and in this way they gain pleasure from the act of resistance. The major difference with pornography however is that it is produced by men (the dominant gender) for consumption by other men who, rather than finding pleasure from resistance, actually gain pleasure from agreeing with the pornographic message that men are the powerful group whose power entitles them constant access to the bodies of those who constitute the powerless (women). Thus, whereas for women, soaps are pleasurable because they "assert the legitimacy of feminine

meanings and identities..." (ibid), for men pornography is pleasurable because it asserts the legitimacy of masculine meanings and identities.

When these masculine identities were challenged, as in the cartoons which depicted male sexual dysfunction, the NFM no longer experienced pleasure. It seems therefore that when masculinity is the butt of the joke, the men felt that their interests were not being served by the text. This argument is also applicable for the cartoons which showed overt violence against women. The men uniformly expressed dislike for these cartoons which would seem to suggest that they objected to the pornographic definition of masculinity which holds that men enjoy inflicting violence on women. If this violence is however depicted in less overt terms and instead couched in sexual discourse (for example the man forcing the woman to have sex rather than mutilating her), then the cartoon is decoded as humorous. Thus one component of the NFM's masculine identity which was re-affirmed was the notion that in sexual relations, power resides with the men. In this way images of rape are decoded not as rape but as humorous scenarios depicting everyday, heterosexual sex.

The obvious question here is did the NFF find the cartoons pleasurable? This group did say on numerous occasions that they found the cartoons humorous, even those cartoons which showed the woman being mocked for her stupidity or where she was being sexually harassed. One possible explanation could be that these women internalized the male gaze and responded in a similar way to men. Indeed it has long been argued by feminists that women have been colonized by men to the point that they perceive the world through men's eyes (Morgan, 1970). Thus the "reading formations" (Kaplan, 1987: 12) of the NFF have been shaped by the same dominant codes which govern the pornographic texts under consideration. However this process is not without its cracks and in some cases (bestiality, violence) the women did resist the dominant reading and took issue with the cartoons' messages.

Overall, the study suggests that these women decoded the

cartoons in terms of the dominant sexist ideology which is prevalent in western society. According to Steiner (1988), subordinate groups will on the whole accept the definitions of the dominant, unless they have "access and commitment to an alternative, opposite definition of reality (1988: 12). These women, by not having access or commitment to a feminist ideology, have no other mode of reading apart from that on offer within the patriarchal society. Thus Kaplan (1987) is correct in her assertion that non-feminist women will tend to make a dominant reading of texts.

The issue of pleasure is however more complex and further investigation is needed. It is questionable whether women can gain pleasure from texts which are both overtly sexist and sufficiently closed as to prevent the female reader from poaching meaning. It will be recalled that it was hypothesized that Playboy cartoons are coded in such a manner as to preclude female poaching, this was indeed the case. The women either accepted the dominant reading or rejected it (as in the bestiality cartoons). Not one of the NFF reported buying or reading pornography which does suggest that they do not find the texts pleasurable (presumably if they did they would buy it). Thus these women were commenting on texts which they normally would not have looked at. This is an important point for as Morley argues "...the question of whether they would make a dominant, negotiated or oppositional reading ... is less relevant than the question of whether or not they would choose to watch that type of material in the first place" (1986: 45). The fact that these women do not look at this material does suggest that it is not perceived as relevant to their lives and thus (according to Fiske, 1987, and Morley, 1986) not pleasurable.

The FF similarly reported that they do not buy pornography and they were very articulate about the fact they did not find any pleasure in viewing these texts. These women consistently made oppositional readings, however, they were oppositional in that they made the dominant reading and then repudiated it. It is important to point out here that women did not make readings

which went "against the grain", rather they were similar readings to those made by the other two groups. However the FF refused to adopt the Playboy definition of reality and this was made possible by their access to an alternative definition of reality, namely feminism.

The FF group analyzed the cartoons as socially produced images located within a patriarchal culture. They did not view these cartoons as harmless fun but rather saw them as visual expressions of an ideology which is detrimental to half the population. While Fiske suggests that readers will find pleasurable those texts which they decode as relevant to their lives, the findings for the FF suggest otherwise. These women did see the texts as extremely relevant to their lives as women but not in the positive sense of re-affirming their identities; rather in terms of promoting oppression and violence toward their own group. Thus the FF perceived these images as having very real consequences in society, a perception which would seem to produce little pleasure.

The findings of this pilot study suggest that the arguments forwarded by those working within cultural studies are not wholly applicable to the case of pornography. Fiske's claim that texts are not bearers of the dominant ideology is questionable in light of the feminist work carried out on pornography as a regime of representation. Moreover, the claim that in the reader-text interaction, "...the balance of power lies with the reader" (Fiske, 1986: 66) requires re-examination since the pornographic text may be coded in such a way as to preclude reader negotiation. Indeed, what was surprising was the degree to which the pornographic messages regarding the nature of female sexuality was accepted by the NFM and the NFF. To date, little attention has been paid to developing an ethnographic approach to the study of pornography consumption and it is thus suggested that scholars, working within cultural studies, need to address the issue of pornography since this area promises to be a rich and fertile area of investigation.

Summary of Chapter

The central concern of this chapter and Chapter Eight has been to investigate the different approaches sociologists can use to understand the ways in which cartoons, and the texts in which they are found, affect the reader. The three approaches chosen, while differing in emphasis and levels of analysis, are all grounded within mainstream sociological theory. Goffman's analysis in Gender Advertisements has much to offer the sociologist interested in understanding the processes at work in decoding stills. Decoding was also a major concept in Morley's work which laid the theoretical and empirical foundation for the growing field of ethnographic work in media studies. Actual sustained analysis of how readers decode media imagery is one of the most exciting areas within media studies today and it is hoped that researchers will add pornography to the list of genres under consideration. On a more macro level, the cultural indicators project utilizes the best of the North American approach to media while also avoiding the pitfalls of the earlier, more simplistic methods which unquestionably assumed attitude change to be the only measure of media effects.

Given the poor quality of much of the work carried out on the sociology of cartoons, there is much that needs to be done. While sociologists should be open to utilizing a range of methods for investigating the effects of cartoons, care needs to be exercised when deciding which approaches to adopt. The field of mass media research is dogged by atheoretical, simplistic research which yield few important insights. Thus many lessons can be learned from carefully reviewing the field and the aim of this chapter was to make some preliminary suggestions regarding the most fruitful paths available to the sociologist interested in the effects of cartoons. The following chapter continues this line of inquiry by setting forth a framework for a sociology of cartoons which looks at all linked moments in the communication chain, that is, from encoding to decoding.

Chapter Ten

Developing a Sociology of Cartoons

The aim of this thesis has been to develop a sociological framework for the analysis of cartoons and thus begin the development of a sociology of cartoons. Concepts developed within related areas of sociology have proved useful. The related areas chosen were the sociology of media and the sociology of art since, as was argued in the introduction, the cartoon is a form of artistic communication. Because sociology is a vast area of study with competing paradigms, the approach taken was to lay out what a sociology of cartoons, not the sociology of cartoons, might reasonably and logically ask. Different sociologists coming from specific theoretical backgrounds could very possibly point to other places where sociological work could be undertaken.

The resultant Checklist, presented in Chapter One, emerged out of an analysis of past research into cartoons. While many of these studies were found to be limited in terms of scope and content, they were important in locating where future work might be most fruitful. Each of the seven research problems on the Checklist were addressed in various chapters; some were dealt with theoretically, others empirically whilst still others were addressed in both ways. In order to develop the framework for a sociology of cartoons, each of the Checklist problems is dealt with below and considered in light of issues raised in this thesis.

1. Methods of Analysis

Discussion of the North American and critical approaches to mass media made clear that any sociology of cartoons had to include an analysis of the content of cartoons. The method chosen

for such analysis, however, depends upon the interests of the researcher and the data being studied. If the researcher is interested in an in-depth study of a limited number of cartoons then a semiotic analysis might be the most useful method. If, however, the aim is to provide a map of the content of a large body of cartoons, then clearly content analysis is more suitable.

It was argued that content analysis can furnish the researcher with a quantitative description of the content of cartoons, or indeed any media product, as long as a carefully devised system of categories is developed which can account for the complex nature of such products. Sociologists need to devise more sophisticated categories than those previously employed and moreover these categories need to be developed with the specific cartoons in mind. This kind of detailed description of content has to be a starting point for a sociological investigation of cartoons for we cannot talk in terms of effects, ideological reproduction, hegemony or conscious raising (a major component of critical and feminist research according to Nielsen, 1990) until we have a map of the content of media products.

2. The Cartoon and its Host Publication's Ideology

The work of political economists such as Murdock and Golding (see Chapter Two), suggests that media products embody the ideology of the owners of the media industry who very often are the owners of major conglomerates. While study of owners' ideology is indeed important, it is equally important for the sociologists to carry out sustained analysis of the day-to-day workings of the media organization under investigation. We need to know the particular working conditions and relations of the actual cartoonists since there exists a great deal of variation: some cartoonists are granted a high degree of autonomy while others have to tow the ideological line. It might prove useful to develop a typology of different forms of organizational control to

provide understanding, rather than just speculating, on the role that the individual artist plays in the creation of the cartoon. This kind of research would also shed light on the ways in which media organizations seek to either perpetuate or undermine the present system of relations.

One of the major problems with much of the research that was conducted within the traditional Marxist paradigm is that it failed to examine the ways in which the texts themselves produce meaning. It was assumed that media products are merely empty vessels for conveying the dominant ideology to the ever accepting masses. This assumption is especially problematic for cartoons since, as it was previously argued, cartoons have been one of the major media forms where alternative ideologies have flourished. If a 'fit' cannot be assumed between ideology and cultural producer, then the sociologist has to undertake research of the type discussed above in Checklist problem one. In addition, because cartoons receive a high interest level rating by readers, it is even more crucial that critical sociologists focus on their ideological content. A sociology of cartoons would be enriched by directing scholarly attention toward this much neglected media product.

3. Cartoons and Contexts

It will be recalled that in Chapter One it was argued that much of past research into cartoons tended to treat the cartoon as if it were read in isolation. However most cartoons appear in either magazines or newspapers and thus it was suggested that the surrounding context is an important area of investigation. In the discussion of Playboy cartoons it was argued that the images and messages contained in the cartoon need to be understood in terms of the general sexist Playboy images and editorials.

Although locating the cartoons within the wider Playboy context was important for interpreting the findings of the content

analysis, it did not reveal much information regarding the ways in which readers read the cartoon as an integral part of the magazine. Indeed, nowhere in the literature on cartoons do researchers attempt to investigate how audiences' decoding of cartoons is affected by the surrounding context. Thus although the sociologist may find that cartoons embody an ideology that is either consistent or at odds with the host magazine/newspaper (problem two), we do not know what sense readers make of this. This issue raises the possibility that the meaning in cartoons is not fixed but rather is somewhat affected by the surrounding context. Thus if we are to fully investigate how audiences read cartoons (problem six) then we have to locate the cartoon within its wider context and empirically investigate the part played by context.

One possibly useful way of operationalizing such a research aim might be to compare the decodings of audiences who read the cartoon within the wider context with those who read it in isolation. Another method is to take cartoons out of their context and to study the decodings of groups differently informed as to the host magazine/newspaper of the cartoon. These types of studies would serve to increase our understanding regarding the extent to which media messages are polysemic as a result of either their context or rather the internal structure of the text itself. At this point there is some debate in cultural studies concerning the degree to which messages are polysemic; the sociologist of cartoons could be instrumental in helping to clarify some of the issues under discussion. Indeed, elucidating the polysemic nature of texts is a crucial prerequisite for understanding how audiences read cartoons (problem six on the Checklist).

4. The Cartoon as an Individual and Collective Product

Because the cartoon is often considered a form of artistic creation, researchers have tended to overlook the collective nature

of its production. The romanticized notion of the artist as an isolated individual appears to have filtered down to cartoonists who have rarely been the focus of sociological investigation. While research into the collective nature of cartoon production would necessarily include elements from Checklist problem two, specifically an understanding of the media organization in which the cartoonist works, it would also go beyond this. As Becker (1982) has suggested, sociologists should conduct research on the training of the artist, the critics, the gate-keepers, the producers of the tools needed for production and others involved in the creation of the product, both overtly and covertly. In other words the focus of investigation would be on the 'art worlds' which serve to both facilitate and constrain cartoon production.

Not only does such an analysis allow investigation of the ways in which cartoons emerge as a product of cooperation but also it provides insights into why certain cartoons are published and others never see the light of day. Rather than restricting sociological analysis to the cartoons which have been accepted by the various gate-keepers, we can instead broaden the analysis to include non-published as well as non-mainstream cartoons, an area hitherto neglected. As Murdock has argued, what is often the most interesting to the sociologist is not that which is printed but rather all the rest which is left out¹. This area of investigation is especially pertinent for sociologists interested in women artists since they are the ones most likely to have their work marginalized (see Parker and Pollock, 1981). A sociology of cartoons thus could seek to understand the collective nature of cartoon production for, according to Becker, collective actions and the events they produce are the basic unit of sociological investigation (Becker, 1982: 370). In this way the sociology of cartoons can be grounded in mainstream concepts developed within the discipline.

¹ Personal discussion with Graham Murdock, September 21, 1989.

5. The Cartoon's Effect on Audiences

The problem of media effects was discussed at length in this thesis, mainly because much of North American research into the mass media has focused on the issue of effects with the emphasis being on short-term, attitude change. The various approaches taken to study this topic were discussed and criticized in light of the more contemporary research which suggests that media effects should instead be broadened to include the long-term impact of media messages on the audiences' social construction of reality. The importance of long term effects was best articulated in the cultural indicators project, which maintains that the role of television is similar to the role that religion used to play as mythteller, propagating an ideology which legitimizes the current system of relations.

That the media reproduces the dominant ideology is the starting point of much of the Marxist work on mass media. The main difference between the various Marxists approaches and the cultural indicators project is that the former, in its more vulgar form, took as given that the media's effect was to brain-wash the duped masses into accepting the status-quo while the latter sought to empirically investigate the ways in which this ideological effect works on a long-term, macro level. It was argued in Chapter Eight that the methodology of the cultural indicators project has much to offer those scholars interested in the effects of pornography and indeed such research is beginning to yield important findings on the ways in which the consumption of pornography produces and reproduces an ideology which strengthens and legitimized the patriachal system of relations (Gubar and Hoff, 1989).

The cultural indicators approach, however, is of limited direct use for the sociologist interested in cartoons since it is impossible to construct a similar study which would investigate the impact of cartoons alone, divorced from other areas of mass media output. Because audiences read cartoons found in newspapers and

magazines, we could not devise a Gerbner and Gross type study which would pinpoint the effect that particular cartoons had on the audience; rather any effect would have to be discussed in terms of the magazines or newspapers as a structured whole. Thus in order to focus on the potential effects of cartoons it is necessary to extract the cartoon from its surrounding context and seek to develop a method which examines how audience members make sense of the message contained within it, a method which examines effects at the micro-level. Because there are problems associated with analyzing cartoons in isolation in that the meaning of a cartoon is affected by what comes before and after it (see discussion of problem three above), it is suggested here that the sociologist of cartoons integrate this micro-level study with a more macro-orientated study of the type conducted within the cultural indicators paradigm. In this way we would be able to understand how the mass media in general serves to legitimize the current system of relations while also gaining important insights into the specific role that the cartoon plays in either reinforcing or undermining the dominant ideology that sustains these systems of relations.

A study which intends to investigate effects at the micro-level must take seriously the culturalists' claim that media messages have the potential to be read in a number of ways. While individual differences are not central to a study which is specifically interested in the large-scale cultivation effect of television (such as the cultural indicators approach), they are of pivotal importance for sociologists who seek to understand the ways in which differently situated individuals make sense of media messages. Since the focus here is on how subjects read specific cartoons, analysis is best served by framing the discussion in terms of how audiences read cartoons (problem six below).

6. Reading the Cartoon

The positivist, behaviorist effects research which was characteristic of the North American school generally failed to examine individual differences in audience reception. When individual differences were investigated (as in the uses and gratifications approach) it was from a psychological perspective with little thought given over to how these differences might be socially constituted. Similarly, the traditional Marxist sociologists (such as the Frankfurt school and the political economists), in their eagerness to show how the media industry served as the mouthpiece for the property owning class, neglected the possibility that not all audience members received the message in the same way. The work of the culturalists however, with their emphasis on the socially constituted subject, illustrated the limitations of theories which neglected to investigate the ways in which subjects construct meaning from the text.

For culturalists such as Fiske, the question of media effects has to be reworked to focus more on the question of how textual meaning is constructed by real subjects who occupy varying positions in the social formation. Answering this question necessarily entails empirical investigation conducted on the micro-level. This type of research is especially appropriate to the sociological study of cartoons since there is no available macro-level method for investigating the effects of cartoons². A sociology of cartoons could therefore benefit from refining the method first developed by Morley (1980) for his Nationwide study. Of special importance here might be extending the list of structural factors which act as determinations for decoding practices. Morley (1981) has argued that one major limitation of his study was the over-emphasis on class as the major variable for understanding textual decodings. Recently gender has been

² It is important to reiterate that the discussion is focused only on print cartoons which have a single frame since there are many studies of television cartoons and their effects on children (Liebert, 1973; Honig, 1983; Simpson, 1985)

added to the list (see Ang, 1985 for example) and age is beginning to be investigated (Hodge and Tripp, 1986). Race however is still an undeveloped area of investigation as is ideological affiliation (that is, identification with sub-cultures such as feminism and gay rights).

By investigating the importance of varying structural factors which affect the ways in which the cartoon is decoded, sociologists cannot only expand the types and range of variable under consideration but also can add cartoons to the growing list of media forms being examined from a culturalist perspective. Such an addition is important, given that studies show cartoons to be highly popular and often the only intelligible mass art form since they may require little literacy. In this way the sociologist of cartoons can make an important contribution to the field of cultural studies.

7. The Cartoon as an Instrument of Covert Communication

This problem was addressed mainly in the discussion of Playboy cartoons. It was argued that the messages in the cartoons did not so much conflict with the ideological stance of the editorials/articles as offer a more clearly articulated version of Playboy's sexist value system. The humorous quality of cartoons provided an acceptable form for presenting such values in stark terms.

For those sociologists interested in uncovering the ideological position of newspapers and magazines, the cartoon provides a rich source of information. Fiske and Hartley (1978) have argued that media, rather than representing the manifest actuality of society, instead reflects symbolically the structure of values and relationships below the surface. Cartoons provide an excellent source for excavating these values since the owners/editors have more latitude to express their ideological position in a media form which is considered to be humorous.

This type of research would have to be linked with an investigation of the kind discussed in problem two (above) since there is always the possibility that newspapers/magazines carry cartoons which are at odds with the overall ideological position of the owners/editors. Even if, however, the cartoon expresses an ideological position which is different from the other sections of the host magazine/newspaper, the message in the cartoon cannot be reduced to the psychological predisposition of the cartoonists, since as discussed in problem four (above), the cartoon is never the result of one person's work. Because the cartoon is the product of cooperation, investigation into the ideological content of the product would also involve analysis of the ideological beliefs of the varying parties who make up the 'art world'. In this way the sociologist of cartoons can begin to uncover the underlying value system governing cartoon production, a project which has much in common with problems two and four of the Checklist.

The above seven problems serve to lay out what a sociology of cartoons might include. Although these problems have been treated thus far as discreet entities, it should be clear from the foregoing discussion that in actuality the issues raised by each of them are inextricably linked. Developing an integrated sociology of cartoons therefore requires an examination of cartoons from a number of different perspectives, with each area of research being influenced by the others. This framework has much in common with Thompson's (1988) project of developing a comprehensive outline for the study of mass media which "requires the capacity to relate the results of these different analyses to one another, showing how the various aspects feed into and shed light on one another" (ibid: 374). If we are to understand both encoding and decoding of the cartoon as linked moments in the communication chain, then a research strategy must be developed which not only examines each end but also aims to elucidate the paths by which the two are connected. For

Thompson, it is within this semantic space that critical theory comes into its own since the task of the sociologist is to "explicate the connections between the mobilization of meaning in media messages and the relations of domination which this meaning serves to sustain" (ibid: 377). The overall aim of the sociologist working within the above framework is thus to elucidate the ways in which cartoons' messages serve to either sustain or undermine the present system of relations. Such a task requires an approach which can do justice to all the different aspects of mass communication and also show how these aspects are related to one another. Anything less will result in a partial and skewed analysis of the type which has plagued mass media research.

The framework for a sociology of cartoons has been developed by drawing on concepts developed within related areas of sociology. Most of the discussion in the theoretical sections was grounded in critical theory while the empirical analysis of Playboy cartoons was located more within a feminist framework. Nielsen (1990) has suggested that critical theory and feminist analysis have much in common since both aim to "...to uncover aspects of society, especially ideologies, that maintain the status quo..." (ibid: 9). However whereas critical theory is mainly concerned with the ways in which capitalist relations of production are legitimized and perpetuated, feminist theory is more concerned with the analysis of gender inequality. That critical theory has tended to ignore the oppression of women is the basis for numerous books and articles (see for example, Hartmann, 1981; Mackinnon, 1983; Ehrenreich, 1984). In addition, critical theory has more recently come under attack for failing to include an analysis of racial inequality (Hooks, 1988; Davis, 1981). Thus it is clear that if we are to develop an understanding of the ways in which the media serves to either perpetuate or undermine oppression in all its forms, it is necessary to develop a theoretical approach which includes but also goes beyond economic inequality to encompass an analysis of gender and racial inequality.

This thesis attempted to develop an approach which seeks to

uncover the ways in which one media form, the cartoon, serves to sustain or undermine the status-quo. The empirical section provided an example of how Playboy cartoons legitimize and perpetuate one major form of inequality, that is, gender inequality. It is hoped that future researchers will continue to both develop the theoretical framework and extend the empirical analysis to other types of cartoons so that we can further our understanding of the role that commercially produced images play in a society which is characterized by inequality. If our aim is to change these conditions of oppression then this knowledge is our major tool; it is used to raise consciousness and to empower, both of which are the major prerequisites for social change.

Appendix A, Cartoon 1



"Here, Prince. Right here, boy. Ah, yes, right there, Prince...."

PLAYBOY INTERV

clearly homosexuals, but straight. I said, "This is m her very much." And Mike said, "I take care of myself. I get plenty of rest and I take Jamitol whenever I get the chance." And then I said, "He makes me take it, too." Another ad parody I did was Tom Schiller's "Tryopenen" ad, which was about those arthritic pain pills in the bottle that's so fucking hard to open—it had one of those tops—and, of course, the guy's trying to open the damned thing, but he can't, because he's got arthritis. The whole thing was my hands trying to open this Tryopenen bottle, banging it and hitting it. Anyway, I came off well on those, so Lorne decided to give me a spot on the show.

PLAYBOY: Why do you think you became the best-known performer on the show?

CHASE: The fact that I used my name and said, "I'm Chevy Chase and you're not"—the connection of this guy with the odd name—got me visibility right away. That, more than anything, made

Appendix A, Cartoon 2

but. . . Here's the secret, and I might as well tell you, so the others can learn something from it, because even as this interview comes out, I'll be making millions while they're just trying to get out another show. The secret is the way you play the camera. *You must play the fuckin' camera.* You've got to look into that lens and do a job on it. I learned this early on, because I was fuckin' around for four years with Ken Shapiro and *Groove Tube*, and all we had were these little cameras that we played with. Basically it was mugging, but it was all connected with the camera. Anyway, on *Saturday Night*, I had a showcase—"Weekend Update"—and you heard my name every week and I got to play the camera. I wasn't forced into awful situations like John, into sketches where you can't play the camera, where maybe the jokes aren't that good and you have to act the shit out of it to make it work,



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and it meant don't worry about opening the show, I'll come up with something and it'll be fine. Just trust me. And Lorne would, because he knew that if I had the confidence in it, it would probably work. One day, Ford fell over a wheelchair onto a little girl with a flag or some kind of inept move, and it was just too much. It was the same week, I think, that he'd announced he was running. So I told Lorne that I had a good opening, that I'd be Ford giving his acceptance speech and then I'd fall. And that was it. I came out to the podium in a tuxedo and I said, "Good evening, my fellow Americans. I am here tonight, good evening, my fellow Americans." He'd read the line twice. I did every possible inept thing I could. I'd fall then say, "Uh-oh, sorry, no problem," get up, then fall again. For some reason, we repeated it every week—much to my pain.

PLAYBOY: You actually hurt yourself badly once doing your Ford bit. What happened?

CHASE: I broke my podium. Broken podium is no big thing.

PLAYBOY: How long was the podium in the hospital?

CHASE: Just a few days, in bed for three or four weeks.

PLAYBOY: Didn't you hurt yourself before dress rehearsal and go on to do the show anyway?

CHASE: Yeah, I didn't know till later that night that it was really serious.

PLAYBOY: Before we go on, there's one crucial question our readers *must* have answered. What's your announcer, Don Pardo, really like?

AYKROYD: Don Pardo is a 15-year-old boy who has a very deep voice.

CHASE: Actually, Don's half Chinese and also has only one arm. He's a very interesting guy. He's been doing methadone for years now, to break him from this awful smack habit. You have to carry him in and put him there, sit him there, because he's always nodding out.

ZWEIBEL: He's great. He's a regulation-looking guy, grayish hair and he likes very, very young girls.

PLAYBOY: Speaking of girls—are there any *Saturday Night* groupies?

FRANKEN: There are these two teenage girls who hang around the studio all the time, but they're not really groupies.

O'DONOGHUE: Unfortunately, writers don't have groupies.

DAVIS: If you want to know about



"Bless you, no, sir. She told us all she knew weeks ago."

an alert, an alarm, it sounded approach to craziness, it was in control, it was in control, in control, and then someone pulled a switch and there was that brief, brief sweetness that comes with the cessation of pain. Most of the cats had hidden and the wiser ones had taken off. Bandit was behind the toilet. Then the metal door rolled open and a bunch of guards came in, lead by Tiny. They wore the yellow waterproofs they wore for fire drill and they all carried clubs.

"Any of you got cats in your cells, throw them out," said Tiny. Two cats, at the end of the block, thinking, perhaps, that Tiny had food, went toward him. One was big, one was little. Tiny raised his club, way in the air, and caught a cat on the completion of the falling arc, tearing it in two. At the same time, another guard bashed in the head of the big cat. Blood, brains and offal splattered their yellow waterproofs and the sight of carnage reverberated through Loomis' dentalwork; caps, inlays, restorations, they all began to ache. He snapped his head around to see that Bandit had started for the closed door. He was pleased at this show of intelligence and by the fact that Bandit had spared him the confrontation that was going on between Tiny and Chicken Number Three. "Throw that cat out," said Tiny to Chicken.

"You ain't going to kill my pussy," said Chicken.

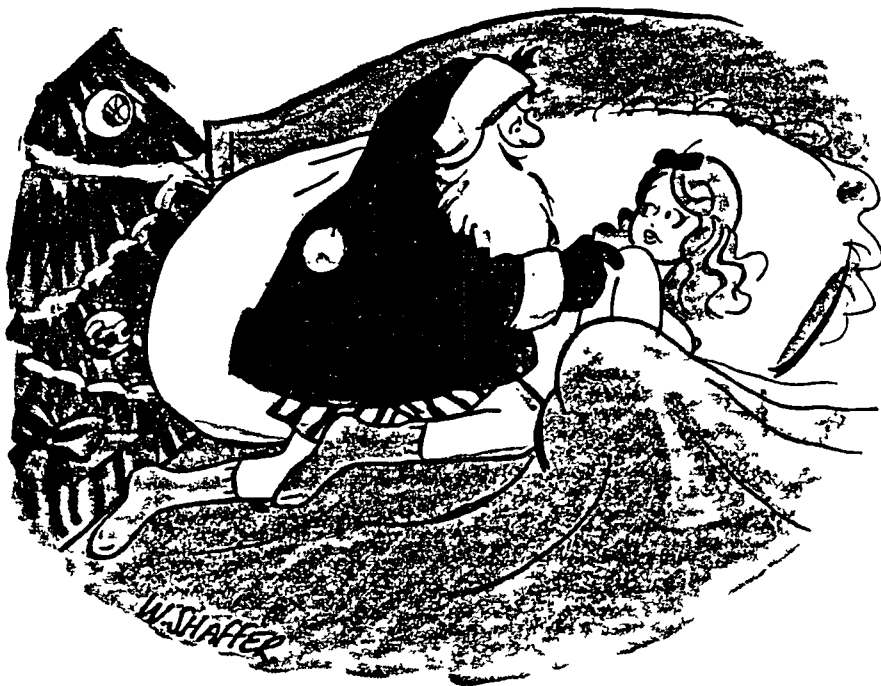
Chicken.

"Eight days cell lock," said Tiny. Chicken said nothing. He was hanging on to the cat. "You want the hole," said Tiny. "You want a month in the hole."

"I'll come back and get it later," said one of the other men.

It was half and half. Half the cats cased the slaughter and made for the closed door. Half of them wandered around at a loss, sniffing the blood of their kind and sometimes drinking it. Two of the guards vomited and half a dozen cats got killed eating the vomit. The cats that hung around the door, waiting to be let out, were easy targets. When a third guard got sick, Tiny said, "OK, OK, that's enough for tonight, but it don't give me back my London broil. Get the fire detail to clean this up." He signaled for the door to open and when it rolled back, six or maybe ten cats escaped, giving to Loomis some reminder of the invincible.

The fire detail came in with waste cans, shovels and two lengths of hose. They sluiced down the block and shoveled up the dead cats. They sluiced down the cells as well and Loomis climbed onto his bunk, knelt there and said: "Blessed are the meek," but he couldn't remember what came next. "For theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven?"



"Are you the little girl who said she wouldn't go to sleep until Santa Claus came?"

gains faith from his contemplations. I know of few rationalists who, placing their hopes on the omnipotent human brain, find much encouragement in our bewildering time.

The story of evolution, despite all of its failures and extinctions, is one of most improbable success. Enough of us have survived to reassemble our genes and temporarily perfect a still more able animal to tackle another of nature's nightmares, the successive waves of the ice age.

Our interglacial experience has been just one more test that accident has thrown our way. I cannot regard our immense production of food—despite its horrendous biological consequences leading inevitably to a most gruesome population outcome—as anything but necessary in the long evolution of Konrad Lorenz' human-being-to-be. We failed the test, it is true. From our brief experience with benevolence, we learned hedonism, gross materialism and institutionalized injustice; entertainments such as mass slaughter, massive destruction, massive reproduction—and, of course, *hubris*, and the delusion that we were masters of nature. Faced now by a ruthless future, we may, through our greed and our quarrels and our scrambles, take the easy way out and most decisively blow ourselves up. Every logic would support the probability.

Yet I find the proposition dubious. Were we beings without history, were we dependent on nothing but rationality and conditioned learning, my pessimism would be fathomless. But we do have our history, and it is older than the hominid, older than the ape or the monkey, older than the tiny arboreal mammals of 100,000,000 years ago. It is older than the reptiles who bore them, older than the first air-breathing fish, as old as those first microscopic organisms, in our earth's young years, who perfected before all others a determination to survive.

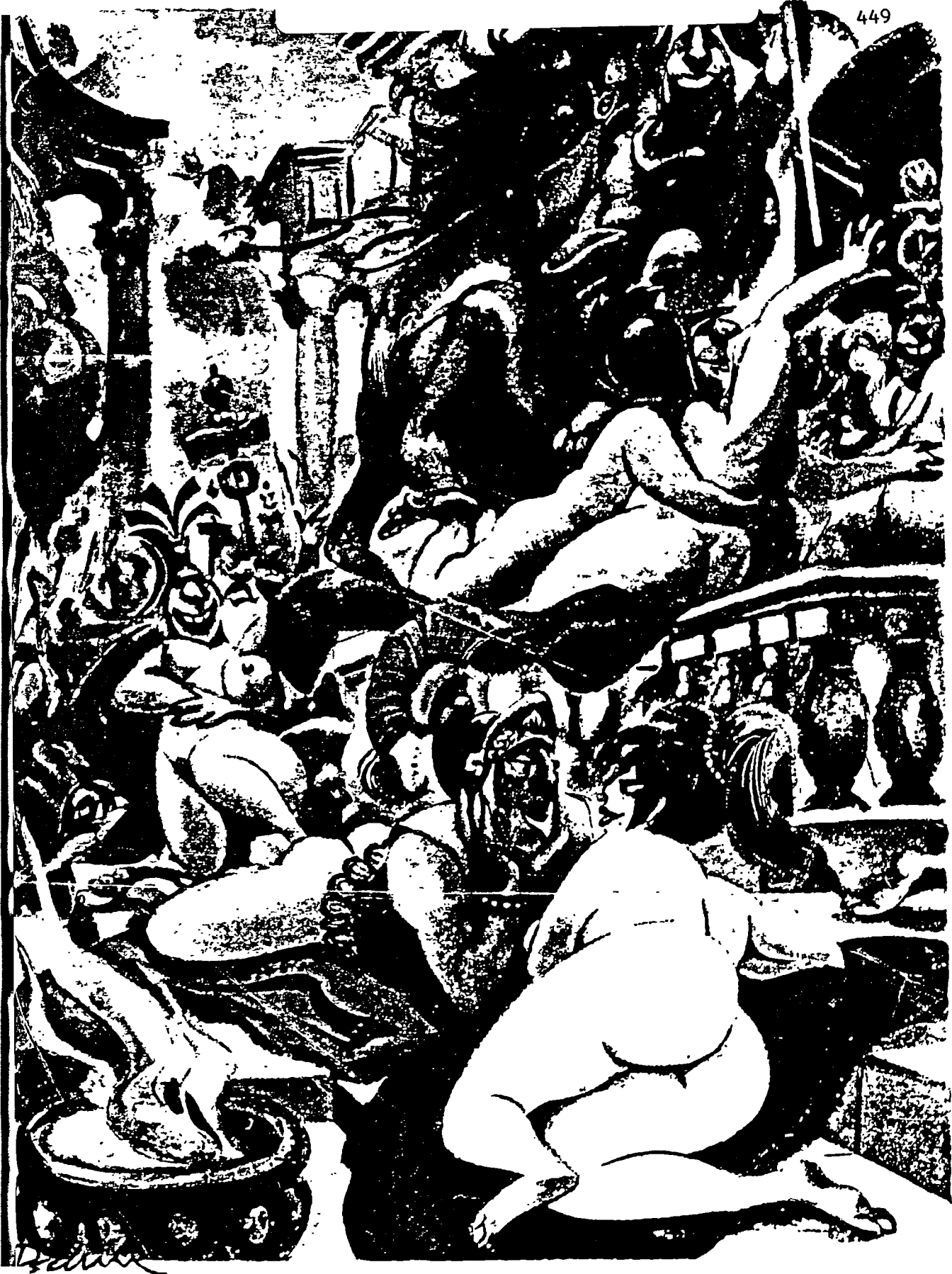
There will be those of us of rare courage and endowment who will accept, perhaps welcome, certainly adapt to a new kind of icy world that in truth is a very old kind of world that we have survived before. I doubt that those survivors will remember interglacial man as harshly as we sometimes see ourselves. The beauty that Cro-Magnon invented we took to soaring



"Gee, Amelia, I'm really very sorry you won't be able to make it here tonight."



"Jenkins, have you ever wondered why your promotions in this company haven't kept pace with everyone else's?"



"You seem very relaxed about rape . . . tell me all about yourself."



"Oh, nothing, Miles—just for one minute I thought this might be the start of something big."



"I think he's Mafia, darling—he made me an offer I couldn't refuse."

mutters. "More interesting if bottom... at says bottom in my book."

Morning Ocean's big moment arrives: Disneyland and Mickey Mouse. He is dressed for the occasion in a kimono of delicate blue and white, with white socks and wooden sandals. The hair, thoroughly greased, is magnificent. As he crosses the lobby of the Beverly Hilton, nostrils twitch in the miasma of dead goats it exudes, but Morning Ocean strides to the bus without looking left or right. I have never seen such a purposeful expression on his face. We sit together on the drive to Anaheim, our conversation restricted to the repetition of the word Disneyland and a sort of competition in which we name the central characters from Uncle Walt's Magic Kingdom. I think he has a guilty secret about Snow White.

My weight-obsessed friend Tabo isn't coming today. He's lurking around the hotel pool, hoping to meet the girl he ran into on last night's sight-seeing tour of Chinatown and the Mexican market on Oliveira Street. He told her he was an important figure in the Japanese record business. When I saw him in the lobby a few minutes ago, he was wearing that remarkable shaggy fur necktie again. I advised him to leave it off for the day.

Arriving at Disneyland, we file through the gate reserved for tours. Morning Ocean actually runs when we get inside, shoving his camera into my hands. I photograph him posing with a bear, a tiger, Peter Pan, Snow White

(...), Goopy and Captain Hook. Other visitors give him their children to hold and stand next to him to be photographed by their relatives; having assumed by his costume that Morning Ocean works at Disneyland, they are surprised that he speaks no English. Later, when the noon parade passes, he stands on the sidewalk, waving happily. About a dozen of us leave early in the afternoon, but Morning Ocean stays behind. The last I see of him he is buying Mickey Mouse T-shirts in a store on Main Street. Extra-large size.

Interlude at the ticket counter, Los Angeles International Airport, while we are waiting to board a flight to Las Vegas. A pink-haired lady in a psychedelic muumuu has engaged the husband of one of our honeymoon couples in conversation.

"My husband and I were in Japan a year ago. Wonderful country, charming people. We planned to return this year, but my husband died a month after we came home."

"Ah, I am so sorry."

"Thank you. We had a marvelous time. Is this your first visit to the United States?"

"Yes."

"And you're going to Las Vegas now? You must be thrilled about that."

"Yes, I think so, but Las Vegas is not—ah—our final purpose in United States. Yosemite and Grand Canyon more beautiful, I think. America beautiful country."

"Oh, that's just scenery. You'll love

"Thar 452

Our he not the j a neon s; the group mem... ed. On my way to make a predinner run on the tables, I pass the wide-open door of Mr. Murayama's room. The old gentleman is engaged in calisthenics of some sort, bent over with his back to the door and wearing what can only be described as a G string. It's clear that he wasn't paying attention at the briefing.

From friends in Las Vegas I hear that ambitious plans are afoot for the expected increase in the number of Japanese visitors, so instead of accompanying our group on the Vegas bus tour—our number is now reduced to about 15—I am meeting Joe O'Rayeh. Mr. O'Rayeh, in addition to being a former slot mechanic and, currently, hotel and casino executive at the Tropicana Hotel, is a converted Buddhist and a member of Nichiren Shoshu of America.

"You can say it's a lay organization of believers in the teachings of the true Buddha," he says when we meet in the Tropicana coffee shop. Approximately every three minutes, Mr. O'Rayeh's name is announced from the ceiling and he leaves to take a telephone call. In this respect, he appears to be orthodox Vegas.

"We spent somewhere between eighty thousand and a hundred thousand dollars on a Tropicana promotion party in Tokyo," Mr. O'Rayeh explains between absences. "We've got Japanese menus, an audio-visual presentation in Japanese—basic rules for craps, roulette and blackjack—and we're giving half-hour gaming lessons exclusively for Japanese guests."

A man wearing tinted glasses and a colorful ensemble of woven chemical fibers approaches our table and whispers urgent words into Mr. O'Rayeh's ear. He is introduced as Rick, the manager of the hotel's keno office. He, too, is a member of Nichiren Shoshu. "I was a Catholic for thirty years," Rick says. "Then I got involved in Nichiren Shoshu. I can't tell you what it's done for me—every day I look at myself in the mirror and say, 'There you are, that's you.'" I would have pursued this theological line, but Rick abruptly resumes his whispered urgencies and then gets up and leaves.

Mr. O'Rayeh gives me his card. It's printed in English and Japanese. "I spend a lot of time over there," he says. "Love it—just love that country."

There is a rumor in town that a party of Japanese businessmen—rich big businessmen—dropped a fortune a few months ago on the tables at the Sands Hotel, somewhere between \$1,000,000 (concluded on page 172)



"I know she can't type, file or take shorthand. How about giving her a job as a paperweight?"

ROVER BOYS AT COLLE

stormed San Juan Hill with Colonel Roosevelt and laid the groundwork for the future discovery of penicillin. All in all, it was a not uneventful summer, but now it was back to studies, football, fun and a flying brick.

The brick was now but two feet from the head of the eldest Rover, when the nimble-witted Dick, reacting to a sixth sense, skipped out of its way in the nick of time and the missile landed harmlessly against a tree. With a bound Dick disappeared in the brush and returned shortly to his brothers dragging a figure by the scruff of his neck.

"Why, it is Dan Baxter, our arch-enemy," ejaculated Sam.

"Perhaps you would care to explain the meaning of this nefarious deed," said Tom hotly to the scalawag.

"I hate you Rovers," sputtered the long-nosed, sharp-faced ruffian. "And every time I see you, I have the urge to throw something at you."

To the wretch's credit, what he said was true. At numerous times in the past, he had hurled at them such things at hand as a hammer, a sack of cement, an anchor chain and, on one bizarre occasion, a pygmy leper, as some of my old readers may recall in *The Rover Boys on Devil's Island*, or "To the Rescue of Captain Dreyfus with Their Chum, Emile Zola."

"What are you doing here on the campus of Brill College, you insufferable bounder?" asked Sam. "I thought you attended State University."

"None of your business, sturdy Sam," said the evil-minded boy.

"Dan Baxter," said Dick coolly, "you

have gone back on your word. When are you going to learn that honesty is the best policy? You are not dumb, by any means. I do fancy that if you pursued an honorable course in life, you could make your own salt."

"I would just as lief follow my own bent," said the bully cockily.

"If you persist," warned Tom, "you will wind up with your cronies in the lockup."

"Humph," snorted the rascal. "My cronies in the lockup, indeed!"

The lads were taken aback by the remark.

"You mean," said Dick, "that those rotters are no longer in the lockup?"

"That's for me to know and for you to find out, Dick Rover," said Dan Baxter smugly.

The boys exchanged meaningful glances.

"Now, then, Rovers," said the scoundrel, "what do you intend to do with me?"

"That, Dan Baxter," said the fun-loving Tom, "is a mystery puzzle, and there is a reward of one herring bone for the correct solution."

At this outrageous humor, Sam laughed outright, but the eldest Rover stayed his impish brother.

"Tom, I fear you are wasting your time on this bounder," said Dick. "Fellows of his ilk little appreciate wit or satire."

Whereupon the eldest Rover fell upon the bully and proceeded to thrash him within an inch of his life, sending him skulking off into the night with yet another promise of character reformation.

we shan't be seeing much of that mucker anymore," said Sam 453

Tom nodded. But if the bro peered closely, they would have seen a look of anxiety pass briefly over their eldest brother's face.

Later that evening, Dick paid a call on Miss Greebe's House for Gentlewomen, one of several offcampus homes of a neighboring girls' school. When he asked to see Miss Dora Stanhope, he received a cold glance from the proprietress, perhaps owing to the lateness of the hour, it being already past seven o'clock. But nonetheless, that worthy duly notified the girl of a gentleman caller.

As he saw the figure of Dora coming down the stairs, Dick's heart began to beat faster. "Friend Dora," he called out, starting for the staircase.

Dora, still unable to see who had spoken to her and not hearing Dick's voice clearly, called out, "Who is that addressing me by name?"

"It is I, Dick Rover," said Dick intimately.

Quickly, the girl scampered down the stairs and ran with quickened steps to the side of the eldest Rover.

"Oh, Dick, Dick Rover," she said fondly.

"Dora," he cried. "You dear, dear girl."

They paused in front of each other for a breathless moment. And then, throwing caution to the wind, they flung themselves down in neighboring chairs and in a frenzy of youthful ardor gave each other a look that spoke volumes.

"How was your summer?" asked Dora, when she could trust herself to speak once more.

"Just peaches and cream," said the lad slangily. "Lots of hunting and a good deal of fishing."

He modestly omitted details of his and his brothers' exploits with Colonel Roosevelt, how they had all but single-handedly defeated the Spanish fleet in Santiago harbor and how they had braved pestilence and rebel bullets to help President McKinley secure a just peace and acquire Puerto Rico, Guam and the Philippines, while guaranteeing Cuban independence, knowing full well she would only have worried.

"And how was your summer?" he asked.

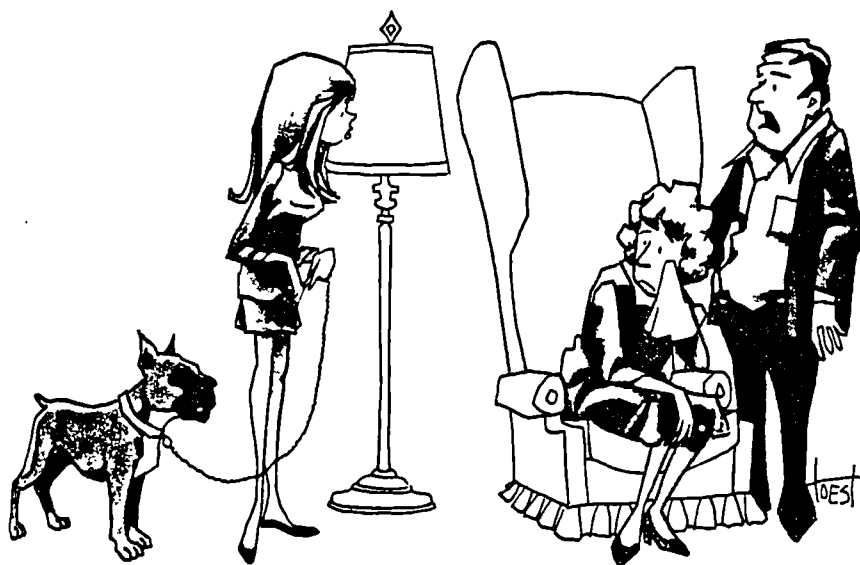
"Absolutely first-rate," she replied. "Except for. . . ." At which point she hesitated.

"Except for what?" he inquired with great concern.

"Er . . . ah . . . nothing," said the young lady, averting his withering gaze.

"Friend Dora," he said familiarly, boldly taking it upon himself to lay a hand on the corner of her sleeve, "did Dan Baxter and his pack of ruffians kidnap you again?"

She nodded painfully. Slowly the blood began to rise to the lad's temples.



"But when we heard you were having an affair with a boxer, we thought. . . ."

together, travel together, ski, skate, sit go to concerts; we did everything together; we watched the world series a drank beer together, although neither of us likes beer, not in this country. That was the year Lomborg, whatever his name was, missed a no-hitter by half an inning. You cried. I did, too. We cried together."

"You had your fix," she said. "We couldn't do that together."

"But I was clean for six months," he said. "It didn't make any difference. Cold turkey. It nearly killed me."

"Six months is *not* a lifetime," she said, "and anyhow, how long ago was that?"

"Your point," he said.

"How are you now?"

"I'm down from forty-four c.c.s to thirty-seven. I get methadone at nine every morning. A pansy deals it out. He wears a hairpiece."

"Is he on the make?"

"I don't know. He asked me if I liked opera."

"You don't, of course."

"That's what I told him."

"That's good. I wouldn't want to be married to a homosexual, having already married a homicidal drug addict."

"I did not kill my brother."

"You struck him with a fire iron. He died."

"I struck him with a fire iron. He was drunk. He hit his head on the hearth."

"All penologists say that all convicts claim innocence."

"Confucius say. . . ."

"You're so superficial, Loomis. You've always been a light——"

"I did not kill my brother."

"Shall we change the subject?"

"Please."

"When do you think you'll be clean?"

"I don't know. I find it difficult to imagine cleanliness. I can claim to imagine this, but it would be false. It would be as though I had claimed to reinstall myself in some afternoon of my youth."

"That's why you're a lightweight."

"Yes."

He did not want a quarrel, not there, not ever again with her. He had observed, in the last year of their marriage, that the lines of a quarrel were as close to ordination as the words and the sacrament of holy matrimony. "I don't have to listen to your shit anymore!" she had screamed. He was astonished, not at her hysteria but at the fact that she had taken the words out of his mouth. "You've ruined my life, you've ruined my life!" she screamed. "There is nothing on earth as cruel as a rotten marriage." This was all on the tip of his tongue. But then, listening for her to continue to anticipate his thinking, he heard her voice, deepened and softened with true grief, begin a variation that was not in his power. "You are the biggest mistake I ever made," she said softly. "I thought that my life was one hundred percent frustration, but



"Don't give me that premature-ejaculation bunk—you just come too fast!"

when you killed your brother, I saw that I had underestimated my problems."

When she spoke of frustration, she sometimes meant the frustration of her career as a painter, which had begun and ended by her winning second prize at an art show in college, 25 years ago. He had been called a bitch by a woman he deeply loved and he had always kept this possibility in mind. The woman had called him a bitch when they were both jay-naked in the upper floor of a good hotel. She then kissed him and said: "Let's pour whiskey all over each other and drink it." They had, and he could not doubt the judgment of such a woman. So bitchily, perhaps, he went over Marcia's career as a painter. When they first met, she had lived in a studio and occupied herself mostly with painting. When they married, the *Times* had described her as a painter and every apartment and house they lived in had a studio. She painted and painted and painted. When guests came for dinner, they were shown her paintings. She had her paintings photographed and sent to galleries. She had exhibited in public parks, streets and flea markets. She had carried her paintings up 57th Street, 63rd Street, 72nd Street, she had applied for grants, awards, admission to subsidized painting colonies, she had painted and painted and painted, but her work had never been received with any enthusiasm at all. He understood, he tried to understand, bitch that he was. This was her vocation, as powerful, he guessed,

as the love of God, and like some star-crossed priest, her prayers misfired. This had its rueful charms.

Her passion for independence had reached into her manipulation of their joint checking account. The independence of women was nothing at all new to him. His experience was broad, if not exceptional. His great-grandmother had been twice around the Horn, under sail. She was supercargo, of course, the captain's wife, but this had not protected her from great storms at sea, loneliness, the chance of mutiny and death or worse. His grandmother had wanted to be a fireman. She was pre-Freudian but not humorless about this. "I love bells," she said, "ladders, hoses, the thunder and crash of water. Why can't I volunteer for the fire department?" His mother had been an unsuccessful businesswoman—the manager of tearooms, restaurants, dress shops and, at one time, the owner of a factory that turned out handbags, painted cigarette boxes and doorstops. Marcia's thrust for independence was not, he knew, the burden of his company but the burden of history.

He had caught on to the checkbook manipulation almost as soon as it began. She had a little money of her own but scarcely enough to pay for her clothes. She was dependent upon him and was determined, since she couldn't correct this situation, to conceal it. She had begun to have tradesmen cash checks and then claim that the money had been spent for the maintenance of the house. Plumbers, 189



"Next time you holler 'Come 'n' get it,' you'd better be talkin' about grub!"



"Feareth not, my dear. In God we trust."

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Interlander

"Is this the famous British understatement?"

2 heat-and-serve *taco* shells, bro
 oven, or 2 *tortillas*, fried bro
 1 cup onions, small dice
 2 teaspoons very finely minced garlic
 16-oz. can tomatoes
 2 cups chicken broth
 2 tablespoons lime juice
 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
 1 oz. grated bitter chocolate (optional)
 2 to 4 teaspoons very finely minced
 chili peppers
 Salt, pepper

Heat 3 tablespoons oil in large skillet.
 Sprinkle chicken with salt and pepper.
 Sauté chicken until light-brown. Add
 more oil to pan when necessary. Place
 chicken in a single layer in a large
 shallow casserole or 2 casseroles if neces-
 sary. Place sesame seeds, almonds and
 pumpkin seeds in a large dry skillet.
 Heat over a low-to-moderate flame, stir-
 ring almost constantly, until contents
 are medium-brown. Place contents of
 pan in blender. Blend until smooth.
 Leave almond mixture in blender. Break
taco shells into small pieces and add to
 blender with almond mixture. Blend
 until pulverized. Keep mixture in blen-
 der. In a saucepan, sauté onions and garlic
 in 2 tablespoons oil until onions are
 tender, not brown. Add to blender.
 Add tomatoes, chicken broth, lime juice,
 cinnamon, chocolate and chili peppers.
 Blend until smooth.

If blender is small, blending may have
 to be done in two batches. Traditionally,
 the rich flavor of chocolate appears in
 this dish. It may be omitted; without
 chocolate, the sauce is more delicate.
 Taste sauce. Add salt if desired. Pour
 over chicken. Preheat oven at 375°. Cover
 casserole. Bake 1 hour. Place chicken on
 platter. Stir sauce in casserole. Thin with
 chicken broth if desired. Spoon sauce
 over chicken.

ZUCCHINI, TOMATO AND EGG SALAD (Serves six to eight)

2 lbs. medium-size zucchini
 4 hard-boiled eggs
 4 large, fresh, firm, ripe tomatoes,
 peeled, seeded and cut into 1/4-in. dice
 1/2 cup olive oil
 1 tablespoon very finely minced chili
 peppers
 1/4 cup minced scallions, white and firm
 part of green
 1 tablespoon very finely minced cilantro
 3 tablespoons wine vinegar
 Salt, freshly ground pepper
 Cut zucchini in half lengthwise. Do
 not peel. Cut crosswise into 1/4-in. slices.
 Boil zucchini in salted water until just
 barely tender, 5 minutes or less. Drain
 well. Cut eggs into 1/4-in. dice. Place
 tomatoes, zucchini and eggs in salad
 bowl. Add oil. Toss thoroughly. Add
 chili peppers, scallions, cilantro, vinegar,



*"You little devil! Don't tell me you didn't know the
 way to a man's heart was through his stomach!"*

and salt and pepper to taste. Toss well.
 Chill until serving time.

ENCHILADAS WITH CHICKEN AND CHEESE (Serves eight)

3 whole breasts of chicken, boiled
 1 lb. Monterey Jack cheese
 2 medium-size onions
 1 to 2 tablespoons very finely minced
 chili peppers
 1 1/2 cups sour cream
 Salt, pepper
 Peanut oil
 24 *tortillas*, 4 1/2-in. diameter
 Remove skin and bones from chicken.
 Cut meat into large dice. Put chicken,
 cheese and onions through meat grinder
 using fine blade. Add chili peppers and
 sour cream. Season generously with salt
 and pepper. Blend well. Heat 1/4 in. oil
 in skillet preheated at 350°. Place *tortillas*
 one by one in hot oil and heat 3 to 5
 seconds, only long enough for *tortilla* to
 become pliable. Dip each *tortilla* in
 green-tomato sauce (recipe follows). Place
 about 2 1/2 tablespoons chicken mixture
 on each *tortilla* and roll *tortilla* around
 chicken mixture. Place enchiladas open
 side down in a single layer in a large
 shallow casserole or 2 casseroles. Spoon

green-tomato sauce on top. Preheat oven
 at 350°. Bake 20 minutes or until heated
 through.

GREEN-TOMATO SAUCE

3 12-oz. cans Mexican green tomatoes
 1/2 cup onions, finely minced
 1 1/2 teaspoons very finely minced garlic
 1 cup diced sweet green peppers
 3 tablespoons peanut oil
 3 tablespoons flour
 2 teaspoons sugar
 1 to 2 tablespoons very finely minced
 chili peppers
 Salt, pepper

Drain tomatoes, reserving juice. Cut
 tomatoes into 1/4-in. dice. Sauté onions,
 garlic and green peppers in oil until
 onions are tender, not brown. Stir in
 flour, blending well. Slowly add tomato
 juice and tomatoes, blending well. Add
 sugar and chili peppers. Season with salt
 and pepper. Simmer slowly 20 minutes.

The preceding recipes should put you
 and your guests in the proper south-of-
 the-border spirit and label you an *hombre*
 of distinction.





SOROL

"Just taking a few home movies with the wife. What are you doing?"



"You're supposed to be laying cable."



"Hello ... do you have special rates for groups?"

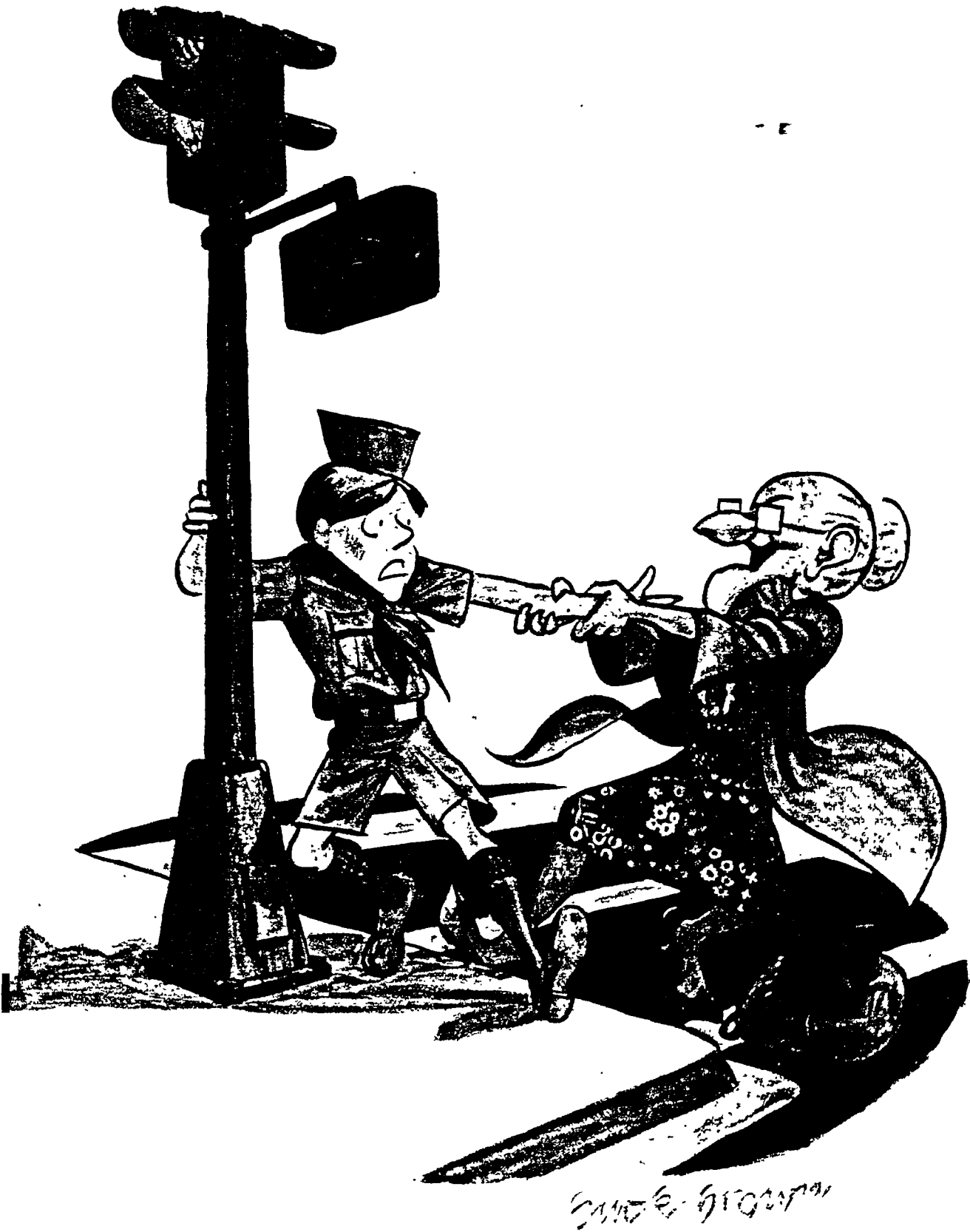


GARRY BROWN

"My God! Talk about an energy crisis. . . ."



"Believe me, child—those old palace balls are nothing to the ball you could have right here with your fun-loving old fairy godmother!"



"I can cross the street by myself, sonny. How'd you like to help me get through the night?"



Smilby

"It's an interesting piece—genuine old casting couch I picked up at the MGM sale."



"It beats giving away toasters."

the situation. She looked around Lintburg for what was available and came up with a boy who wasn't exactly an Errol Flynn but who belonged to a family with a passable pedigree—Hugh Gates, we'll call this one: an utterly decent and likable fellow, if surpassingly inauspicious, who had proceeded through high school as a decidedly remote bystander to all the amorous lowing and churning around Emily, which, as I've said, included at one time or another anybody who could have been considered even faintly eligible for her. When Mrs. Sims commenced to go to work on the problem of Hank Campbell, this fellow Gates was off at some military academy, I believe, so what Mrs. Sims began to do was arrange, through Mrs. Gates, dates for Emily and Hugh that pre-empted her weekends with this odd ungainly, taciturn basketball player over at school whose daddy seemed to be some kind of gambler.

"What this maneuver startlingly occasioned, though, were—for the first time ever—taut and crackling little scenes between Mrs. Sims and Emily, repeated disarrays and frayings, bedroom argu-

ments. While Emily submitted physically to her mother's arrangements, she seemed to become only more intense and intransigent and contrary about the boy back at school. After a while, Mrs. Sims began to panic just a little. Then one Sunday, Emily brought Hank home, and that night, before they left to drive back to school, Mrs. Sims abruptly stalked into the front room where they were sitting and blurted, 'Hank, I just want to know if you're planning to marry Emily!' With that, Hank arose and delivered what was probably the longest succession of syllables he had ever mustered in his life: 'Why don't you go straight to hell.' And just walked out, went through the door and got into his car and left.

"Not quite two months later, it was announced in the *Lintburg Sentinel* that Emily Sims, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. O. P. Sims, was engaged to be married to Mr. Hugh Gates, the son of Colonel and Mrs. Winston Brevard Gates of North Coventry Drive."

At this point, the writer lifted his vodka martini and, with a small elegiac smile, murmured, "So here's to Mrs. O. P.

Sims. She not only ⁴⁶⁶ prevailed by God, she prevails." He took a short sip, and then began coughing—the ragged distracted hacking of a refugee from old familiar warmths and fevers too long stranded in the dim dank snows of the North. Finally he waved his hand and said, "But wait a minute, you ain't heard the real finish. Her *real* victory was yet to come. For several months after that newspaper announcement, see, nobody heard anything more about Emily. But the damn thing kept haunting me for some reason—maybe I just believe that any actual struggle person's life, however token, could to such a neat and trivial and conclusion.

"About a year later, though, I out that not only had they grieved but Emily had moved the up four months—she didn't wait until Christmas, she friends. Not long after the business transacted, Hugh left for his duty with the Service, but Emily behind in Lintburg. And while Sims would occasionally drive around looking for a place where and Hugh might settle when Hank turned, Emily lived there at her mother—in that same square brick house with those goddam cold lacquered fireplaces, those telpiece mirrors, the piano still sitting a corner of that front parlor where practiced her music lessons as a girl. She slept in her old bedroom with dotted-swiss curtains, where like a moment now in some vague mote dream of delirium, she a mother had engaged in those shrill moments. She had some of her old friends over now and then for a bridge and they'd report afterward she talked about Hugh all the time she just adored him and couldn't for him to get back—though she seemed to know exactly who he might be. Nevertheless, they seemed she'd never been happier life. Everything had worked out fully. Then, one morning, she went her mother to the doctor's office and found out she was pregnant."

The writer paused for another look taste of his martini, then a few more croaks of coughing. "Christ," he muttered, shaking his head with a bleak grin, "I'm gonna die if I stay up here much longer." He then added, almost like an incidental afterthought, "Only a few weeks ago, while Hugh was still in Europe or Asia somewhere, she had the baby. She almost didn't come out of the anesthesia—she was under for more than a day, I understand. But the baby was fine and strapping. It was a girl: Emily named her after her mother."





"Come on, baby—just one more goodnight kiss to remember you by."



"You've got it all wrong, baby. I'm taking you home to cook, clean and sew!"

fathers playing catc

center field, maybe 50 players in a group shaped like an amphitheater, with Bill Virdon, the manager, talking softly to them, outlining the day's activities. A few players stare at me, mildly curious—normally, the fences keep out people who look like me—and then look away.

Just as Virdon finishes, a large black player with 17 on his back walks over to me, slaps me gently on the stomach and says with mock concern, "Say, you better do some laps!" Suddenly everybody is running. Number 17 beckons me to follow. I start off. I run. I start in the middle of the pack but soon drag to the rear. As we pull around third base, I see my first fans. They look puzzled to see a civilian doing laps with the players. Jane is grinning and hiding at the same time.

As for me. I am elated. By the time I have done 100 yards, my body hurts but my spirit flies. I know that when number 17 challenged me, he was teasing; taking him literally was teasing him back. By the time I struggle back to center field at the end of the second lap, I am exhausted, but I feel like a free man. Or I feel that illusion of freedom a drunk man must feel when he runs onto the field at Yankee Stadium eluding police and tries to shake the center fielder's hand while 40,000 fans boo and clap.

More of the players turn and look now. Number 17 sees me struggle in (he's half an hour ahead of me) and looks surprised. "You really did it," he says.

Calisthenics begin. I stand in the back row, near a player with a vacant expression and lots of hair (later, I find out he is Bob Robertson), and bounce up and down swinging my arms, bend, stretch, lie down and do it all again. During a pause in the calisthenics, an older man in front of me (a coach named Mel Wright) turns around and says, "Some fine running out there."

"They didn't lap me!" I say.

"It's been a long time since anybody's been lapped out here," he says. "Thought it was going to happen for a while there."

Calisthenics again. Bob Robertson is working hard. Suddenly I see two civilians with cameras dangling all over them. They gesture at me to move closer to Robertson. I oblige and continue my exercises. They bend into their reflex cameras and snap away. I am a novelty photograph.

The loosening up over, I feel wholly unloosened—like an unraveled sweater. I struggle back to the clubhouse and put on number 43, the road uniform of a coach (coaches have bigger stomachs) named Don Leppert. I meet Bill Mazerowski, gray and leathery as an old greyhound, tough and funny. I meet Steve

Appendix A, Cartoon 27

Blass, who points midsection at Gerry and me and shrieks: "Look at those boilers!" Learning quickly that we are a bunch of writers, Blass asks plaintively, "Maybe you guys can tell me, what should I do when I grow up?" Blass is 31, has been the Pirates' best right-handed pitcher for several years past.

In uniform, my sense of calm and control increases. I feel as if I could walk into bullets. I am aware that my happiness now is as absurd as my earlier terror.

Outside, the players have split into many groups, practicing different parts of the game. Some players throw lazily together, loosening their arms. Everyone must do this, every day. If you don't loosen gradually, you will pull a muscle. Others, already warmed up, start to hit against the mechanical pitcher in a little Quonset hangar next to the clubhouse. Distantly, figures run on the four diamonds of the practice field, raising dust. Since it is closest, I go to the batting cage.

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of the Cadillac with the Lincoln grille and the red-leather trim outside. I remember *him*; he is a right-handed fast-ball pitcher, and in 1971, at the All Star break, he was the hottest pitcher in the National League while Vida Blue was the sensation of the American. He made waves when he said the National League wouldn't start him, because they would never start a brother against a brother. Naturally, he was called a radical, though it seemed mere realism; he turned out to be imperfectly prophetic, since Dock started against Vida: Maybe it was a good example of the rhetoric of the self-defeating prophecy. Later, he made more waves when he complained that the Pirates wouldn't hire him a bedroom with a long-enough bed.

I was pleased that it was number 17



"I think this one is intended for you, dear."

BUNNIES OF 1

fact, rather common among t tails. Phoenix Bunny Connie earned a purple belt in the *kenpo* school of karate, and St. Louis Bunny of the Year Rhetta Penninger lifts weights—as does fellow cottontail Joan Egenriether, a lifeguard for the past four years. Miami Bunny Monica White teaches yoga classes at several Miami Beach hotels, including the Playboy Plaza. Los Angeles Bunny Barbara Garson, daughter of ex-race-car driver Joe Garson, is one of the few women in the country allowed in the pits at championship-class events. She's often been a scorer for Dan Gurney's All-American Racers team, for which Bobby Unser is the principal driver. "Having a race-car driver for a father helps," she says frankly. "I consider it a real privilege to work in the pits. That Indianapolis race this year, though, I could have done without. I spent my vacation from the Club in Indy watching it, and I should have stayed home." Having a motorcycle racer for a boyfriend helps, too; Barbara's guy customized an off-road machine for her, and she won an award in the Tridents Custom Car and Motorcycle Show at the Los Angeles Sports Arena. "I don't race

Appendix A, Cartoon 28

Another Angeleno, Dyane McMath, rises at 4:30 A.M. daily so she can get to Santa Anita race track in time for morning workouts; she's learning to be a horse trainer there. "I've loved horses since I was a kid," Dyane recalls. "I used to sneak into a race track near where we lived, just to be close to the animals." Another equestrienne, London's Gillian Van Boalam has won more than 300 jumping prizes with her horse Charley Brown; Gillian's ambition is to be a veterinarian. In Montreal, Bunny Ilona Wahl is a volunteer social worker, taking underprivileged children on trips to the zoo and ball park. Once or twice a year, the Canadian cottontails stage "clean-out-the-closet days" to provide clothing for Ilona's charges.

On Phoenix' not-uncommon 110-degree days, Bunny Toby Ostreicher goes inner-tubing down the Salt River. Over in Miami, Chris Adams recently purchased an 18-foot boat, learned to navigate the South Florida waters and is teaching other Bunnies to water-ski. St. Louis Bunny Claudette Eisele, a self-con-

has
bri
Na
Bot
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acrobatic-stunt plane. My ambition," says Nancee frankly, "is to pilot Hugh Hefner's jet."

There are already cottontails aboard the Big Bunny, of course, but they're there as hostesses, not cockpit crew. The Jet Bunny contingent now numbers 14, all stationed in Chicago—where they work as Club Bunnies when they're not in the air. Of late, these high fliers—Anne Denson, Playmate-Bunny Lieko English, Britt Elders, Kathy Jovanovic, Maynelle Thomas, Leah Anderson (named first runner-up for the Miss Photoflash title in Chicago this year), Karen Ring, Michele Spietz, Joy Tarbell, Sharon Gwin, Pam Gazda, Carole Green, Rebecca Shutter and Sue Huggy—have been speeding about the country with Sonny and Chér, who've chartered the Playboy jet to meet concert commitments.

And within the past year, several other cottontails have been logging flying hours—as traveling representatives for Playboy. Los Angeles Bunny of the Year Bevy Self, Great Gorge B. O. T. Y. Warren Smith, Denver Bunny Judy Berry, Atlanta Bunny Ida Wilson and Chicago Bunny Leslie Moehrle jetted to Japan on a public-relations visit for Playboy Products. As *Pureiboi Bani Garu*—a rough Japanese version of Playboy Bunny Girls—they became instant celebrities, appearing on six television shows and at five Tokyo department stores; and they were interviewed for uncounted newspaper and magazine stories, in both English- and Japanese-language publications. Halfway around the world, six London Bunnies—Catherine McDonald, Anna Gardiner, Rema Nelson, Rebecca Welnitz, Pekoe Li and Anita Stevenson—paid a good-will visit to Norway; and New York Bunnies Sohelia Maleki and Jackie Zeman toured Brazil on behalf of Playboy Records.

Even if your head's not in a spin from traveling through Bunnydom, you can be forgiven for seeing double in three of the Playboy Clubs. Twin Bunnies Julie Anne and Tomie Winsor work in London; in New Orleans, keyholders often confuse Sherry Crider with twin Merry; and in Atlanta, the same problem arises with Brenda and Glenda Lott. But single or double, the view is fine at any Playboy Club, and it's not too soon to stop by and start thinking about your nominee for Bunny (or Twin Bunnies) of the Year—1974.



"I know back at the start of the season that I said I didn't care what you did on your own time as long as you gave me 100 percent on the playing field . . . however . . ."



"What about me? I'm hungry, too."



"For heaven's sake, hurry, Suzette—you should never have left your panties on that black rug in the first place."

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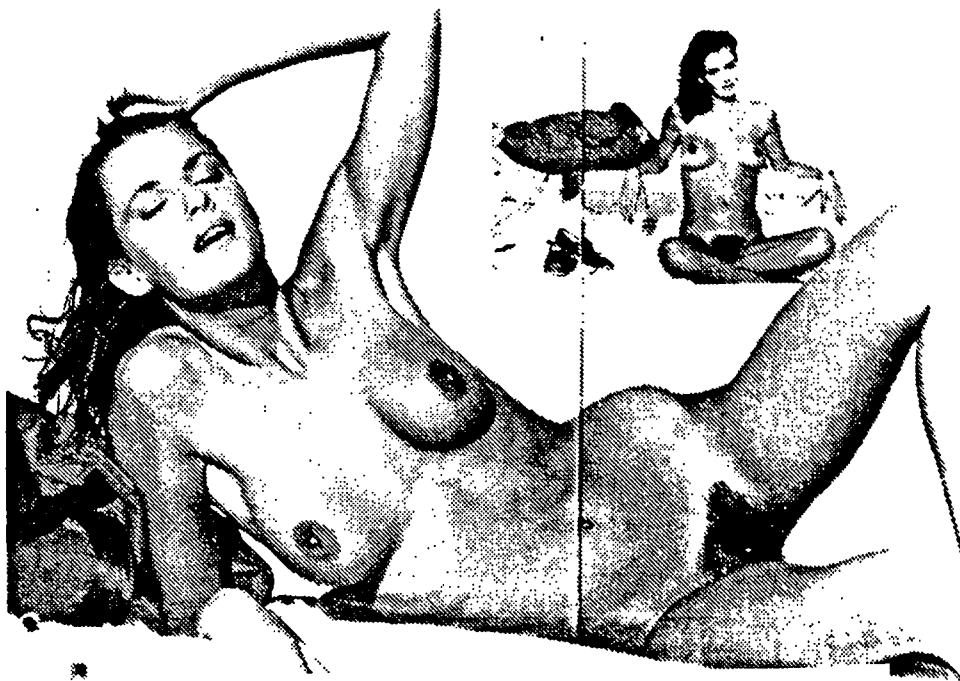
"And on my left is the town's recreation center. . . ."



"We think the Government has some nerve sending a female to check our tax returns!"

Appendix C

Comparison of Images of Women in Women's Magazines with Images Found in Pornographic Magazines



Source:

Betterton (1987: 196)

Appendix D
Questionnaire used in the
study of Playboy cartoons

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1. Personal Data

Age.....

Sex.....

2. Academic Data

Major.....

Minor.....

Have you taken any Women's studies classes? (please specify)

3. Personal Beliefs

(1) Do you think abortion should be: (please circle the ones you agree with)

- a. available on demand
- b. available only to victims of rape/incest
- c. if the woman's life is in danger
- d. not at all under any conditions

(11) Which of the following statements do you agree with? (please circle the ones you agree with)

- a. women and men should be equal under the law
- b. women still have a long way to go in order to gain full equality
- c. women have equal rights
- d. women should have equal rights but there are difference between men and women
- e. men and women are suited to different tasks and roles in society

5. Reading habits

Which of these magazines have you read in the last two months (please circle)

Vogue, Cosmopolitan, Playboy, Penthouse, Time, Newsweek, Hustler, Glamour, Screw, Sojourner, Elle, Off Our Backs. Others.....(please specify)

6. Viewing habits

How often do you watch adult entertainment movies (please tick)

- a. never
- b. now and again
- c. every couple of months
- d. on a regular monthly basis

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