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VIEWING TELEVISION IN PUBLIC PLACES: AN ETHNOGRAPHY

The Ohio State University

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VIEWING TELEVISION IN PUBLIC PLACES:
AN ETHNOGRAPHY

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

by
Dafna Barkai Lemish, B.A., M.A.

* * * * *

The Ohio State University
1982

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Approved by:
Thomas A. McCain, Advisor
Department of Communication
To my sons -

Leeshal, who shared his mother with this study, and

Noam, who won't have to...

and

To Peter -

without whom none of the three would have been possible.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My knowledge of viewing television in public places I owe greatly to the many unknown viewers encountered throughout this study. My two advisors, Thomas McCain and Ellen Wartella, invested great amounts of time and effort in helping me gain perspective on the vast amount of data collected. Their overwhelming enthusiasm, thoughtfulness and confidence in me have enriched my life beyond the scope of this study. Donald Cegala was particularly helpful in his insights on the interpersonal communication dimension of the study, and Enrico Quarantelli in his methodological advice. Allison Alexander and James Lull provided helpful comments on earlier drafts of this report.

My Israeli and American families provided all the wonderful support that can be possibly given from a distance. To my parents, Chaya and Yehuda Barkai, I am grateful, in particular, for encouraging my curiosity and drive for self-growth.

Most of all, I am grateful to Peter, a husband, friend and colleague, for serving as a role model, and for teaching me a lot about the pursuit of knowledge and about "family liberation," among other things...
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PREFACE

This is a study of one ordinary phenomenon in the course of everyday social life, that of viewing television in public places. It was conceived by a curious observer and student of media, enriched by the theory and research of a number of fields, and executed in the way that seemed most sensible and feasible at the particular time and place.

The opening chapter of this report offers a general perspective on the phenomenon of viewing television in public places, probing mainly into the role of context in television consumption. It attempts to ground this particular study in the more holistic framework of media research on one hand, and behaviors in public places on the other hand.

Yet, as Birenbaum and Sagaring (1973) argue:

The most difficult things to study scientifically are the familiar, the stuff out of which our everyday experiences are constituted. These taken-for-granted occurrences, and relationships are elusive and slippery things, providing no vantage point, no "strategic research site," no outside perspective or scaffolding on which to stand. (p. 3)

As a result, in a similar fashion to many other research efforts, the study itself was only able to tackle some of the lines of thought presented in the rationale and left others unpursued. However, it is still crucial to ground the data described in the following chapters in the general understanding presented in the first chapter, for a more complete and relevant interpretation.

Chapter two describes the methodological considerations and
procedures employed in this study, and is followed by chapter three, a description of Places, in which People watch Programs. The interaction of these three major elements: places, people and programs, uncovers the role of the context in viewing television and the rules of viewing in public, as discussed in chapters four and five respectively.

Finally, chapter six attempts to tie together the various aspects pursued in this study as they advance our understanding of television viewing in everyday life.
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Past and current research on television viewing behavior have focused almost exclusively on the exposure taking place in the home context (see for example, Comstock, et al., 1978). Given all the research endeavors, there seems to yet exist another form of television viewing behavior—viewing television in public places. A husband watches the Saturday ball game leaning on a couch which is for sale in the department store while his wife shops for linens. A woman having lunch in a store's cafeteria watches her favorite soap opera. A businessman whose flight has been delayed is watching a news program in the lobby of the airport. A mother is glancing at a quiz show in the barber shop while her son is getting his hair cut. A group of students are completing preparation for the next class in front of the television in a college lounge. The clerk at the bowling lanes is watching a situation comedy on a quiet night.

These are just a few familiar examples of television viewing done in public places. This phenomenon is engaged in quite frequently in the lives of many average television viewers, yet, the published literature provides no data to support or refute such an observation. The only known source of data available about television viewing other than the home, has been reported in time budget studies which documented both primary and secondary activities of subjects (see for example Robinson, 1972 and 1977).
In Robinson's research, the category for viewing television away from home presented negligible time span information. It included homes other than one's own yet made no specific reference to public places. Indeed, this viewing time away from home decreased with ownership of a set, a variable not very relevant anymore. As Robinson admits: "The data were collected for the purpose of better understanding the effects of Industrialization on every day life; hence they are not ideal for the study of television." (Robinson 1974, p. 45) Even if viewing television in public places was indeed a negligible phenomenon quantitatively speaking, an argument can still be made in support of the study of the abnormal as a means of understanding the normal. However, on the other hand, the data collected in a pilot study suggest that certain locations attract a regular clientele of viewers, for whom viewing television in a public place is a significant part of their viewing diet. Furthermore, these data suggest that employees in stores, hotel lobbies, bars, airports and the like may be regular public viewers of television. Thus television viewing in public places seems to be a phenomenon worthy of study in its own right, even though it has not attracted the attention of researchers, programmers, or rating companies so far.

Consequently, the purpose of this study was to investigate the phenomenon of viewing television in public places from two complementary perspectives:

1) As a particular kind of viewing behavior, worthy of a study in its own right; and
2) As an additional source of information of viewing television, which, by comparison and contrast with the knowledge on home viewing, may advance the understanding of the general phenomenon of television viewing.

In the present study, a public place is understood to consist of a place, other than home, containing an operating television set, to which access is free to all as long as one follows the rules, norms, expectations and the like of the setting.

The present discussion excludes structured television viewing for instructional purposes such as classroom use of literacy projects in remote villages in developing areas. Viewing television in public places, however, includes watching the "Rose Bowl" in the community bar or a spontaneous gathering around the set in a building's lobby during a crisis situation (e.g., breaking the news on President Kennedy's assassination, President Reagan's assassination attempt, the Entebbe Rescue, or the release of the hostages in Iran).

**Context and Television Viewing**

The role of context is the central unifying theme for this study of viewing television in public places. Indeed, an understanding of the role of context is crucial for understanding the two perspectives mentioned above. That "television viewing does not occur in a vacuum" (Bechtel 1972, p. 299) is a commonly accepted statement. Yet, while a concern for the role of context is predominant in ethnographic media studies, it has been barely touched upon in the survey type studies (i.e., statements were concerned mainly with the presence of other
viewers). In one of the better known discussions of context in the literature, it has been suggested that:

...it is the situation in which media exposure occurs which, per se, provides most of the opportunity to escape. It seems plausible to assume that certain types of content do serve some purposes better than others, but at least as important may be the fact that all content is characteristically received in certain socially defined contexts. (Katz and Foulkes, 1962, p. 383-384.)

Similarly, it has been argued that:

...the context within which mass media use is placed in terms of singular attention to mass media use versus comparisons of mass media use with other (interpersonal) communication behaviors which may support, supplement, or oppose time spent with, preferences for, or choices of media and media context. (Morrison, 1979, p. 90.)

Life Span Changes

A most recent and quite unique treatment of context can be found in Rubin and Rubin's comparative study of television use by hospitalized adults of different ages (1981). Their major research question was whether the differential television use by the elderly is a function of age per se or of changes in life circumstances as expressed by the situational context of television viewing. This research is an example of the general perspective which studies television viewing over the life span. Dimmick, McCain and Bolton (1979), who offer such a perspective, suggest that:

...one crucial task of research and theory in media use and the life span is to ascertain how changes in the antecedents of need satisfaction—socio-psychological state, needs, and available gratification alternatives—are associated with changes in gratifications across the life course. (Ibid, p. 9.)

The biophysical and psychosocial progressions, in their view, can be described as three-dimensional spirals.
These three characteristics of any spiral are analogous to the three major concerns of understanding development in the life cycle: Life span position, cohort (shared life event), and period (history). Uses and gratifications of media in the life cycle is a function of these three factors working on each spiral of progression. (Ibid, p. 15.)

Identifying the change points and mapping "the changing salience of needs across the life stages in relation to the changes in the patterns of gratifications derived from the media and other sources of satisfactions" (Ibid, p. 28), are essential endeavors in furthering understanding of the dynamics of media use.

Similarly, Brown (1974) offered the reorganization hypothesis, according to which media use should be

...regarded as adaptive behavior characterized by an on-going process of reorganization, the dynamic of which is provided by changes in the communication environment and developments in the audience member in unfolding experience. (Brown, Cramond, and Wilde, 1976, p. 107.)

Brown's reorganization hypothesis serves to exemplify the usefulness of the life span approach in studying children's developing usage of the media.

Changes Across Context

Research concerned with media use in the life span is basically concerned with changes across time. Context, in this approach, is one changing element. The concern of the present study was with another interpretation of change—this one was with changes across context in a given life stage. The focus of interest was in differential television use which results from environmental changes. The term context, was expanded here from the former uses implied by writers such as Freidson (1953), Katz and Foulkes (1962), and Morrison (1979).
As addressed in this research, context includes those changes occurring as a result of television audiences transferring from their home environment to public locations.

The Aspects of Context

The present study had a dual set of concerns for context. Context was seen as reflecting sociological aspects of viewing as well as the psychological makeup of the particular viewers. Here we enter into the controversy between the sociological and psychological theories of television viewing. This controversy is particular to the uses and gratifications approach to audiences, which is grounded, according to Carey and Kreling, in two kinds of influences:

First, it assumes that uses of the media depend upon the sociological milieu of the audience: the structures of groups and contexts in which the audience is situated. Second, uses and gratifications research rests upon the psychological principle that human perception is not a passive registering process but an active organizing and structuring process. (1974, p. 227.)

However, as Elliott pointed out, uses and gratifications in practice is mentalistic and individualistic ("relying on intervening mental states and processes" and "deals with intra-individual processes" 1972, p. 252). Thus, the audience members are treated as individuals, abstracted from their social environment. The sociological alternative, as presented by Elliott, calls for the study of the media and their audiences at the macro level of the social structure and their role in social change.
The study of television viewing in public places presented here had a unique advantage over many of the uses and gratifications studies in relation to the psychological versus sociological approaches to television use. The study of television viewing across contexts provided an opportunity to study individuals as they interact with television at the micro level of social settings. More specifically, the context of viewing was utilized in this study as consisting of three complementary dimensions: The sociological aspects of context, the psychological aspects of context, and the meeting ground between them—the nature of viewing as the context. The remainder of this chapter is devoted to an elaboration of these three dimensions of context.

The Sociological Aspects of Context

In the same manner that home television viewing needs to be studied in the context of family life, personal relationships and communication patterns in the home, so the study of television viewing in public places needs to be interpreted in the larger context of the setting.

Two complementary theoretical perspectives contributed to my present understanding of behavior in public places: Ecological psychology, represented here by Barker (Barker and Wright, 1955; Barker, 1968 and 1978), and the dramaturgical perspective in sociology, represented mainly by Goffman (1959, 1963, 1967 and 1974) and other writers such as John Lofland (1976) and Lyn Lofland (1973).
Ecological Psychology Perspective

Ecological psychology is concerned ...

... with both the psychological environment (the life-space in Kurt Lewin's terms; the world as a particular person perceives and is otherwise affected by it) and with the ecological environment (the objective, perceptual context of behavior; the real-life settings within which people behave). (Barker, 1978, p. 1.)

The "behavior setting," an extra-individual unit, is a key concept for ecological psychology, encompassing behavior patterns with their context and the milieu to which they are attached. Some of the behavior setting's properties, defined and studied by Barker and his associates, are the geographical locus, temporal locus, population, occupancy time, functional position of inhabitants, action patterns, behavior mechanisms, pressures, autonomy and welfare (1978, p. 26-28). For the purpose of this study, one characteristic of a behavior setting was of special interest, "the environment is seen to consist of highly structured, improbable components of objects and events which coerce behavior in accordance with their own dynamic patterning" (Barker, 1968, p. 4). Part of this coercive quality can be understood in terms of physical arrangements and stimuli in the setting, social forces, and in terms of the pre-selection of individuals with appropriate behavior possibilities. For example, the presence or absence of sitting arrangements, size of the television screen, noise level, etc., on the one hand, and the intended purpose of individual behavior on the other hand, may affect a person's viewing behavior in a particular place. Furthermore, behavior setting is understood to be the: "locus of opportunities and obligations" (Barker, 1978, p. 219). Satisfaction of personal
goals while maintaining the setting intact are two crucial forces in the behavior setting.

The Dramaturgical Approach

The study of social life in behavior settings is the focus of the dramaturgical approach:

It is concerned with the structure of social encounters—the structure of those entities in social life that come into being whenever persons enter one another’s immediate physical presence. (Goffman, 1959, p. 254.)

The goal of such encounters is to sustain a shared definition of reality, while in the process to defend a face, i.e., one’s positive social value, and to protect the face of the other involved in the interaction (Goffman, 1967).

Goffman’s work provides a framework in which to place and to interpret people’s behavior in the immediate physical presence of others, in general, and for the study of television viewing in public places, in this particular case. It also supplies us with a much needed vocabulary that captures central concepts and facilitates their discussion. For example, a most useful distinction is made between unfocused interaction,

...that is, the kind of communication that occurs when one gleans information about another person present by glaring at him, if only momentarily, as he passes into and then out of one’s view.

and focused interaction,

...the kind of interaction that occurs when persons gather close together and openly cooperate to sustain a single focus of attention, typically by taking turns at talking. (Goffman, 1963, p. 24.)
Thus, an individual's behavior in the presence of others, whether involved in focused or unfocused interaction, seems to be regulated by social rules, expectations and norms, which may differ greatly from those dominating the private home. Encouraging your favorite football team or arguing with the presidential candidate when you are sitting with your feet on the table, wearing a T-shirt, and nibbling on a chocolate bar may not be appropriate or even possible in a public place.

The Fitting In Constraint. Goffman has noted that "the rule of behavior that seems to be common to all situations and exclusive to them is the rule obliging participants to 'fit in'" (Goffman, 1963, p. 11). Violations of this expectation, as those observed in the pilot study, can be especially informing. Such was the case at the Student Union B. when one of the viewers was suddenly, and loudly, called by name from the other end of the room. The student, obviously embarrassed, quickly assembled his belongings, while the rest of the group followed him with their eyes. As the student went out of sight, everyone went back to his/her reading or viewing. These "fitting in" and conforming to norms of behavior were expected to constrain and influence both viewing habits and gratifications derived from the viewing.

The "fitting in" constraint has numerous manifestations. An individual entering a situation is expected to show alertness and readiness for any face-to-face interaction that might develop and to present a personal appearance that is attuned to the situation. Yet, s/he is also expected to refrain from invading the other's personal space.
and to honor him/her by showing "civil inattention" (i.e., acknowledging the other's presence yet not forcing him/her into an encounter). Involvement in the situation, the individual's capacity to allocate his/her attention appropriately, and the use of "involvement shields" to avoid certain encounters without being negatively sanctioned, are other illustrations of concepts deemed relevant at the initial steps of the study. Numerous applications of these concepts were followed during the research period, inquiring, for example, whether television viewing in public places was a recognized and accepted involvement shield protecting a social-avoidance function. At other times, it became more relevant to treat television viewing as a seemingly side involvement allowing the individual to comfortably engage in the main activity of maintaining a social encounter by providing a ground for mutual interest. Yet, other viewers immersed in a program, were excused from being readily recallable to the gathering, while a day-dreamer staring at the ceiling was not.

Interaction Requirements. The requirement to follow social rules is most specifically expressed in "focused" interactions, from their initiation to their termination. Goffman's writings are rich with detailed discussions and illustrations of such social values and norms: the person's obligation to be available for encounter, not to exploit the accessibility of others, to follow the "interaction ritual," to protect the other's face, to release the other when s/he desires, etc., to mention a few. Overall,

...situational requirements are of a moral character; the individual is obliged to maintain them, he is expected to desire to do so; and if he fails, some kind of public cognizance is taken of
his failure. (Goffman, 1963, p. 240.)

Coping with Strangers. Lyn Lofland's study of urban public space presents an especially informative illustration of the general approach suggested by Goffman.

The city, because of its size, is the locus of a peculiar social situation: the people to be found within its boundaries at any given moment know nothing personally about the vast majority of others with whom they share this space. (1973, p. 3.)

The city dweller's ability to survive in the world of strangers surrounding him depends on his ability to utilize "appearance and location and behavioral clues to make identifications—each piece of information reinforcing, correcting, or adding to the other" (Ibid, p. 97). This information provides the basis for either stranger avoidance or stranger seeking, as typical behaviors when alone in public places. Three styles of making clear that one is not open for interaction, in other words, of privatizing a public place, have been documented by her:

1) The Sweet Young Thing: Having once taken a position inside the setting, usually a seated one, she rarely leaves it. Her posture is straight, potentially suggestive or revealing "slouching" is not dared. (Ibid, p. 147)

2) The Nester: Having once established a position, such persons busy themselves with arranging and rearranging "props," much in the manner of the bird building and occupying a nest. (Ibid, p. 148.)

3) The Investigator: Having first reached a position within the setting, the investigator surveys his surroundings with some care. Then, having done this, he leaves his position to begin a minute investigation of every indwelling object in sight. (Ibid, p. 150.)

Lofland proceeded to suggest some principles of using body management in order to symbolically create shields of privacy in public
places. Such as:

1) Minimize expressivity.
2) Minimize body contact.
3) Carefully looking before sitting, to maximize distance from others.
4) Minimizing eye contact.
5) Fleeing when in doubt about interaction starting.
6) Carefully disattending when in doubt. (Ibid, p. 151-156.)

Similarly, Henderson in a study of bus depots, concluded:

…the individual in a public place faces a precarious situation toward which he must devise strategies that effectively achieve privacy and psychic protection. He does this by two means—he lets his body define territory and inaccessibility, and he employs props as a means of involving himself in activity. (1975, pp. 454-455.)

But stranger avoidance strategies are not the only lines of action in which strangers engage in public places.

Although urban life has been characterized as discouraging primary-type interaction except in areas where people of similar interest see each other on a long-term basis, this is not entirely accurate. Quasi- or fleeting relationships of a primary nature do occur in some city settings, either by design (such as in the case of some entertainment sites), or by the accident of their social structure and ecology. Furthermore, despite their limited nature, these latter contacts can be very enjoyable. (Wiseman, 1979, p. 44.)

In a discussion of stranger seeking, Lyn Lofland considered at least three factors that city dwellers weigh in deciding whether it is appropriate for them to initiate or reply to a conversation with a stranger:

1) Desirability: Whether such a person or encounter has attractive attributes or aspects.
2) Legitimacy: The belief that the encountered other will agree that the circumstances are proper for openness between total strangers.

3) Appropriateness: The right amount or the right setting for such an encounter. (1973, pp. 169-173.)

Similarly, John Lofland points up tactics in the situation of a person who attempts to begin interaction with a stranger:

1) Finding qualifiers that make interaction worthwhile.
2) Determining whether the other is free for the encounter.
3) Finding an opener for interaction.
4) Discovering an interesting topic.
5) Projecting a come-on self.
6) Scheduling a second encounter. (1976, p. 103.)

**Television's Role In Coping With Strangers.** The above illustrations of stranger avoidance and seeking strategies were presented in some detail in order to better understand the potential role television viewing in public may serve in the privatization of public space, and more specifically, in facilitating stranger avoidance and stranger seeking lines of action. Nordenstreng has argued that...

...it has often been documented (e.g., during television and newspaper strike in Finland in 1966-1967) that perhaps the basic motivation for media use is just an unarticulated need for social contact. (1970, p. 132.)

Therefore, the present study addressing this issue attempted to document how people in public places were using television, consciously and not as a means to facilitate social contact, and how, under certain circumstances they were perhaps immersed individually in the television world, or pretending to be, in order to avoid the uncomfortable presence of strange [...].
A few examples from data collected in the pilot study may illustrate the richness of this phenomenon:

* In the Sports Lounge, the only black student around asked, by nodding his head and raising his eyebrow, whether he could switch the channel. Upon receiving answers of shrugged shoulders and indifferent glances, he set the dial on a black situation comedy. Within fifteen minutes, the lounge was dominated by blacks, with a few white students left in the back corners. Obviously, a particular content attracted a certain audience yet it had limited appeal to another segment of the audience. The black students may have also been sharing some sense of belongingness as they viewed the program, although there was very little interaction between the participants.

* A salesman and a potential client in a department store withdrew from their "setting related roles" and engaged in a new relationship: that of two fans sharing enthusiasm over the success of their team's play. The barman and a female client were verbally flirting with each other although their eyes were "glued" to the set, seemingly avoiding eye contact. Again, television in this manner served as a meeting ground in the setting for social happenings to take place.

* A group of security guards and maintenance employees in the airport were engaged in a heated discussion which was stimulated by the viewing which involved work condition issues of their present jobs.

Similarly, some social activities seemed to be reduced by the viewing.
Upon entering the second floor of the department store via an escalator, couples spontaneously became viewers or non-viewers. Viewing the set was regularly used by the barwoman to avoid persons seated at the counter with whom she did not want to speak. A teenage girl in the airport bar turned her back 180 degrees away from her family, who were seated around the same table, in order to view television. This behavior, which was not responded to with disapproval from her parents, would have probably been interpreted as rude or as an attempt to avoid contact with her parents if the television set was not present.

Mediated and Interpersonal Communication. Along this very line, namely the role of television in social processes, the study of television viewing in public places suggests one other opportunity to bridge two separately conceptualized areas—mediated and interpersonal communication. So far, two lines of inquiry tried to bridge the gap. First, the study of "intimacy in a distance" where the interaction between audience and performers on radio talk shows and with television celebrities (e.g., Avery and Ellis, 1971; Horton and Wohl, 1956) has been compared and contrasted with real life interactions. Another line of research explored the role of the media in facilitating or discouraging interaction during and following consumption in families and peer groups (e.g., Bechtel, et al., 1972; Lull, 1980a and 1980b). The opportunity to explore television's role in communication between strangers, presented a potential third line of inquiry centering on the meeting ground between mediated and interpersonal communication processes.
In summary, both the ecological psychology and the dramaturgical perspectives suggest that some attributes of behaviors vary less among individuals than they do across settings. When applying this notion to the present study, viewing television in public places afforded an opportunity to examine those social aspects of the viewing phenomenon that override the individual's psychological needs and result in modification of viewing behavior.

The Psychological Aspects of the Context

The psychological aspects of viewing comprises the second major line of theory relevant to this study, and the most prominent one in the uses and gratifications tradition. "Why" questions in nature are the foci of concern: Why do people watch television? What kinds of needs does viewing satisfy? What kinds of gratifications are obtained?

Typologies of Needs and Gratifications. Since Herzog's study of the motivations and gratifications of daytime radio serial listeners (1944), through a wealth of studies about audiences, children in particular, the uses and gratifications approach developed more sophisticated and elaborated typologies of needs sought from the media and gratification derived (see for example, Katz, Gurevita and Hass, 1973; Peled and Katz, 1974; Brown, 1974; Greenberg, 1974; Noble, 1975; Felitzen, 1976; Rubin, 1977; Rubin, in press; and many others). Across the different studies, there seems to be an agreement over the proposition that the gratifications people derive from the media result
from three dimensions:

1) The content of the medium—this is reflected, for example, in preferences for particular programs, such as planned exposure to certain news-information programs.

2) The exposure, per se, to the medium—fulfilling needs such as those of entertainment, relaxation, excitement, withdrawal from present pressures, diversion from past experiences, and avoidance of future pressures.

3) The social context of the medium—in the more specific sense of the presence or absence of other participants such as family or friends and the role of television in substituting or complementing them.

These three dimensions also comprise the three clusters of gratifications that seem to unify the results of a host of studies, namely, the information, entertainment, and social functions of the media in general and television in particular.

Ambiguity of Terminology

The concern over the theoretical confusion in the uses and gratifications approach, is clearly demonstrated in the dispute over the ambiguity of key terms. "Use," "need," "motivation," "gratification," "function," and other concepts have been used loosely, often interchangeably to express motivations for certain behaviors, media acts themselves, and consequences of the behavior (Swanson, 1977). A study of gratifications sought versus gratifications obtained is an illustration of an attempt to clarify this issue in its empirical manifestation (Palmgreen, Wenner, and Rayburn, 1980).
The variety of typologies of human needs and gratifications sought/obtained that emerge from the literature has yet to be integrated and synthesized in order for further conceptual development to take place.

The lack of precision and consensus over major concepts has also resulted in

...considerable confusion over the underlying explanatory approaches which presumably unifies the diverse lines of inquiry pursued under the uses and gratifications research. It is not clear: (1) what are the necessary components of a uses and gratifications explanation, (2) how those components serve to provide a satisfying account or explanation, or (3) how a uses and gratifications explanation differs from other accounts which might be offered to explain the same behavior. (Swanson, 1977, p. 218.)

Self Report Measures

Too often in the past, the answer to conceptual issues such as these has been "more data." More data, in the uses and gratifications perspective, has resulted in more gratifications typologies, commonly emerging from subjects' responses to a host of statements describing potential media gratifications. While this measurement tool has grown in sophistication and detail, the core assumption on which it is based is still the focus of much controversy (see for example Rubin and Rubin, 1981; Rubin, in press).

Methodologically speaking, many of the goals of mass media use can be derived from data supplied by individual audience members themselves, that is, people are sufficiently self aware to be able to report their interests and motives in particular cases, or at least to recognize them when confronted with them in an intelligible and familiar verbal formulation. (Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch, 1974, p. 22.)

Self report as a measurement tool can be subjected to numerous issues of validity. The ability of the media audience to first engage
In a reflective process and then to verbalize feelings and thoughts to a stranger—interviewer is questionable. Deception, engagement in socially desired answers, tailoring answers to interviewers' expectations—all consciously or not—may seriously jeopardize the validity of information collected. When gratification statements are imposed on the interviewee rather than being self-generated, answers may be guided by what seems to be intuitively pleasing, rather than what is actually relevant. It can also be argued that with self report measures, one can at the most hope to clarify those manifest gratifications of media use which barely tap the latent ones. Lists of gratifications statements have not commonly included items such as "I watch the late news in order to avoid my spouse's sexual expectations." Neither do we commonly expect interviewees to volunteer such information in a twenty minute interview, even if they are aware of it themselves.

Validating Self Reports

McLeod and Becker summarized four basic approaches to the validity of self reported media gratifications items. First, reliability as a necessary condition for validity:

If the various gratifications items can be shown to have stable correlations across periods of time, we can begin to have some faith that the responses are not merely capricious or so highly tied to the immediate situation that they have no predictive power.

Second:

...pragmatic validation through demonstration that some known criterion group is higher or lower than a control group on the self reported gratification.
Third, construct validity:

...establishment of a significant relationship between various antecedent, causal conditions theoretically linked to specific gratifications and the measures of these gratifications.

And finally, "construct validity through the study of gratification effects." (1974, p. 40)

Another approach to validity of gratifications reported, but not mentioned by McLeod and Becker, is validation through observation. This approach has been practiced by a relatively new line of research in mass communication, namely ethnographic studies, where the audience viewing behavior is observed in its natural settings (Meyer, Traudt, and Anderson, 1980, p. 266).

Using an ethnographic approach to the study of mass communication phenomena, Lull presents a compelling case for expanding the variety of research methods employed in the study of television viewing (Lull, 1979, 1979b, 1980b, in press). For example, Lull and his students lived with families for three days and acquired first hand knowledge of their media behaviors as an integral part of the natural home environment. Their observations and in depth interviews provided some insights not obtainable from the quantitative literature in the uses and gratifications tradition.

A commonsensical proposition assisted in understanding television viewing behavior in public places: People rarely go to the store, barber shop or airport with the primary reason of watching television (even though there may be a small group of people who do not own a television set for financial, ideological or other reasons who on
occasion purposefully go to such places to watch television). Viewing television in public places is most commonly (1) a result of circumstances calling for waiting and boredom behaviors, (2) a strong stimulation originating from the screen that overrides the primary reason for presence in the place, or (3) a combination of both. Therefore, "time filling" gratifications in nature, such as "having nothing better to do," "the set was already on," "other people were watching," "viewing for the sake of viewing," and the like are highlighted in the study. However, other viewing situations, in particular in bars, presented a very different reason of viewing motivations, sharpening the contextual importance of differences. The unstructured, often unanticipated viewing situation in public places offered a unique opportunity to compare and contrast the variety of needs satisfied by television. In particular, it seemed most important to examine the uses of television and behaviors associated with television viewing that seemed to be invariant, transcended viewing contexts. The opportunity to discuss this issue with viewers out of their home environment enabled the interviewees to be more reflective and to engage in a more insightful self-report, based on comparing and contrasting their own viewing behavior in the different settings.

It is difficult to be reflective about an activity while we are part of that activity because we lack psychological space in which to make an examination. When asked to look at ourselves particularly in reference to our media activities, we tend to become protective of our behavior and attitudes even though we do have a vague sense of dissatisfaction. Some degree of psychological distance is necessary if we are to become critics of our face-to-face and media behaviors. Detachment can be developed only to the degree that we gain perspective on, as well as gain
some knowledge about the process in which we are immersed. (Gumpert and Cathcart, 1979, p. 12.)

However, a note of caution is needed at this point. As the data collection process unfolded, opportunities to indeed examine this proposition became scarcer than anticipated. As a result, the psychological distance advantage was not as fully exploited as was hoped.

Nature of Viewing as the Context

So far the discussion has been somewhat artificially divided into social and psychological aspects of context. The purpose of this section is to suggest that the nature of viewing behavior, those highly neglected "how" descriptions, can be understood as the meeting ground between the two. The actual viewing behavior observed in public places was the result of a combination of the individual needs, circumstances of presence in the place, personality make-up, viewing habits and the like, with the constraints imposed and opportunities provided by the social setting.

Measuring Viewing

Conceptually defining and pragmatically measuring television viewing is in itself a problematic issue. Uses and gratifications studies have commonly defined viewing in terms of quantity of hours the respondents reported to have been viewing (whether "yesterday," "last week," or "on an average day"). Data gathered from viewers' responses commonly produced different results than objective measures such as eye contact. Indeed, the study by Bechtel, Achelpohl, and Akers in which video-taped behaviors observed were coded and compared to
questionnaire responses, has confirmed viewers' tendency to over-report viewing. Stated differently, viewers perceived television viewing as different than mere eye contact.

The findings point to the fact that television viewing is a complex and various form of behavior intricately interwoven with many other kinds of behaviors... Clearly, watching television is not a behavior in its own right but is a mixture with many threads of which the viewer seems only partially aware. (1972, p. 299.)

**Defining Viewing**

Recently, there seems to be a growing concern about what viewing television itself is. Salomon and Cohen's discussion of its meaning and validity offer at least four ways to conceptualize viewing television:

One may conceive of television as a social-situational factor leading to the conception of "viewing" as a choice between behavior activities; one can conceive of television as the transmission of a repertoire with "viewing" implying decision making and choice behavior from among messages. It is equally possible to conceive of television as a source of content-messages. Thus, "viewing" would mean recall, comprehension, or attitude change; or one could conceptualize television as a "language" though which messages are uniquely coded in which case "viewing" would pertain to the process of encoding messages in the service of extracting knowledge. (1978, p. 266.)

Ethnographic studies of home viewing (see above) reported the amount of viewing as a measure that does not capture the complexity of viewing television phenomenon. In ethnographic research, viewing television is studied while it takes place, in situ, and from the viewer's perspective. The present study seeks to add another building block to this newly recognized territory. It allows the researcher to both observe viewing behavior and discuss its meaning with the actual
viewers while enjoying a major advantage over home studies: Observation can be as unobtrusive as possible, without viewers awareness or permission. Consequently this approach affects the observees only to the degree that the presence of other strangers in the place affects them.

**Home Viewing**

The uses and gratifications literature has been dominated by studies concerned exclusively with home viewing. Even the few ethnographic studies conducted so far have limited the parameters of interest to the study of television viewing taking place in social units where television contributes to the structuring of the day: "There is a time for viewing. That time is often related to other responsibilities and activities in which the individual is involved" (Lull, 1980a, p. 202). Television viewing at home is often associated among other characteristics, with control over selection of television content, mediated by a known or assumed power structure, and commonly negotiated in the case of conflict of interests. The growing phenomenon of multi-set homes may emphasize this control to an even greater degree, especially in reference to potential viewing conflicts between children and adults (Comstock, et al., 1978, p. 157).

**Public Viewing**

In public places, however, control over the program watched takes one of the following forms:

1) No viewer control—the set is permanently tuned to a pre-selected channel.
2) Selective control—programs are selected by an authority, employee, or another central figure in the setting; negotiations with customers or the general public rarely occur.

3) Potential control—regular television sets are available but the viewers have to take initiative to make use of this potential.

4) Full control—an individual set is available, but the privilege is earned by expending money.

Switching from one channel to another, a common viewing behavior at home, is a limited option for the individual using a public set. The consequence of this restriction of viewing television in public places serves to reemphasize "viewing for the sake of viewing" type gratifications, on the one hand. A complementary phenomenon may be an "either-or" viewing preference: the viewer either likes what's on or does not. In this case, s/he may continue viewing a disliked program, discontinue viewing, or view a program about which s/he has no negative or positive feelings.

**Active Viewing**

Limited control over program choice is only one aspect of viewing television in public places. It highlights, however, another central conceptual issue in the uses and gratifications perspective, namely, the one evolving from the "active audience" characteristic outlined by Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch (1973):

The audience is conceived of as active, that is, important part of mass media use is assumed to be goal directed (McQuail, Blumler, and Brown, 1975). This assumption may be contrasted with Bogart's (1965) thesis to the effect that "most mass media
experiences represent pastime rather than purposeful activity, very often (reflecting) chance circumstances within the range of availabilities rather than the expression of psychological motivation or need." Of course, it cannot be denied that media exposure often has a causal origin; the issue is whether, in addition, patterns of media use are shaped by more or less definite expectations of what certain kinds of content have to offer the audience member. (1974, p. 21.)

Little attention, however, has been paid to both specifying and operationalizing the concept of audience activeness and to treating it as a variable rather than an either/or matter.

One approach to this task might differentiate forms of "activeness" likely to manifest themselves at different moments in a temporally ordered mass communication sequence: before exposure; during consumption; and after the media experience as such has been terminated. For example, a person might be regarded as more active in advance of exposure if he consults information about what is available; or has a clear prior expectation of what he can get out of patronizing some medium; or can specify the criteria of what counts as superior specimens of materials that interest him. During consumption, activity might be indexed by degree of attention paid to the output consumer or by ability to recall what it included. Subsequent activity would presumably depend on such after-exposure uses as readiness to reflect on media materials, to talk about them with others, or to absorb them into other activities (e.g., in voting choices, purchasing behavior, children's play, taking over styles of dress, singing, and so on). (Blumler, 1971, p. 14.)

For Swanson, however, perception is the key element in the assumption of an active audience:

... the manner in which particular messages are used and whether they prove gratifying is assumed to be determined, at least in part, by how messages are interpreted or given meaning by audience members in the active process of perception. (Swanson, 1977, p. 219.)

Consequently,

...audiences are understood to be inherently active in the sense that they necessarily create for themselves the meanings of messages through a process of interpretation. (Swanson, 1978, p. 7.)
The present study assumed that the viewer indeed engaged in perceptual and meaning derivation processes, however, this aspect of activeness was not emphasized. Rather, it is suggested that the study of viewing television in public places examined the "active audience" issue on both the most active and the most passive ends of the continuum. For example, an extremist on the passivity end was a shopping viewer who had no prior knowledge of the existence of a television set in the store or of any opportunity to watch; who accidently found himself/herself in the presence of such a set while searching for towels; who had no control over the content of the program; who during consumption attended to a diverse, competing set of stimuli which were available in the store; and who after exposure did not reflect upon, talk about or absorb the television content into any of his/her behaviors. An extremist on the activity end was a viewer who took the time to walk out of his office in a cold winter day to a nearby lounge to watch the presidential inauguration or the American hostages; who had prior information and expectation of such content to be broadcast; who leaned uncomfortably on a wall in a crowded room but paid full attention during consumption; and who afterwards reflected upon, talked about it with his colleagues; and who in the future might use the information in building a case for supporting a group of Vietnam Veterans in their public awareness campaign. It seems therefore, that viewing in public places has the advantage and the disadvantage of combining the two poles; the public place makes tighter demands on the active viewer, on one hand, yet makes it so much easier on the passive viewer to remain passive, on the other hand.
Contributions of Ethnographic Studies

The potential of including the three dimensions: the social aspects of the context, the psychological aspects of the context, and the nature of viewing as the context, has been demonstrated by the ethnographic work of Lull and his associates on home viewing. Several of the social uses of television documented in Lull's work "are not obvious behaviors and may never have been thought about or understood by the respondents. These subtle, unconscious influences... may only be uncovered and documented by ethnographic research" (1980b, p. 333).

Lull's first study of viewing behaviors in a home setting has highlighted some social functions that television served for its viewers. The present study of television viewing in public places provides additional support for the need to integrate those sociological and psychological aspects of viewing through the study of actual viewing behaviors.

Summary

The study of television viewing in public places addressed in this report attempted to link the uses and gratifications of mass media consumption with the actual experience of consuming them in a variety of social settings, and through this process to highlight the role of context in television viewing.

In the above discussion, three central propositions were explic-
The study of viewing television in public places:

1) sharpens our understanding of the phenomenon of viewing television in general and that of viewing for the sake of viewing and as a time filler in particular;

2) offers us a better understanding of the role of the viewing context for the viewer and his/her behavior by means of contrasting different viewing environments;

3) reveals the role of television in coping with the world of strangers in urban public space.

Based on these propositions, the following research questions were of special interest:

1) Who are the viewers of television in public places?

2) What are the needs sought and gratifications derived from viewing television in public places?

3) How is the context of viewing in public places related to the needs sought, gratifications derived and behaviors during viewing?

4) What are the behaviors viewers of television in public places are engaged in?

5) What social functions do these behaviors serve?

6) What kinds of norms, regulations or rules are associated with television viewing in public?

On a different level of conceptualization, it was also hoped that the reported study will offer another illustration for the potential of ethnographic studies to contribute to the future development of the field of mass communication. The next chapter will discuss this
methodology in detail.
FOOTNOTES

1 The pilot study was conducted during Spring of 1979. It consisted of around 30 hours of field work.
CHAPTER II

METHOD

Based upon the previous theoretical discussion the present study focuses on viewing in its natural context, from the viewers' own perspective, with minimal obtrusiveness, and with the potential for validation through observation. The procedures best suited to this type of study are participant observation, in-depth interviews, and the use of informants. (For detailed accounts of these procedures see, for example, Lofland, 1971 and 1976; Douglas, 1976; Schatzman and Strauss, 1973; Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Webb, et al., 1966; McCall and Simmons, 1969; and others.) In order to better understand the methodological decisions reported below, it is necessary to emphasize that the qualitative perspective, in juxtaposition to the quantitative emphasis on verification of a priori existing hypotheses, calls for a process of discovery, of confirming rather than reconfirming knowledge, and of the development of a theory grounded in the empirical world (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Therefore no specific hypotheses, schemes, typologies or categorizations were imposed on the process of data gathering. More specifically, the research questions suggested above were not restricted to specific hypotheses, neither was any typology of television uses and gratifications employed.

Lull's studies as well as some others are all illustrations of the potential of qualitative research methods in the mass communication field (Lull, 1979a, 1979b, 1980a, 1980b, 1981a, 1981b, in press; Blumer, 1933; Bogart, 1955; Mendelson, 1979; Anderson et al., 1979; Reid, 1979;
Reid and Frazer, 1980; Meyer, Traudt, and Anderson, 1980). However, since all of these studies have been conducted in home settings or media designated settings, many of the strategies, tactics, and techniques developed and reported have limited practical relevance to the study of viewing in public places and therefore were of limited help in making the decisions necessary for designing this study. The methodology developed and used throughout this study was based on the following sources of experience:

1. General literature on qualitative studies.
2. Case studies of qualitative studies conducted in public places.
3. A pilot study of viewing television in public places.

All methodological strategies and tactics were altered and reshaped in accordance with the changing needs of the study and the nature of the emerging data.

In the process of data gathering on the topic of television viewing in public places several problems were encountered and a series of decisions were made. The following discussion of the data gathering process presents an analysis of the methodological components: sampling, observing, interviewing and recording.

**Sampling**

The phenomenon studied needed to be limited to specific places, times, as well as to specific television programs and specific people. Sampling thus became a major concern from the initial step until the very end.
Location

The list of public places containing an operating television set that has been encountered in person throughout this study was overwhelming indeed. Department and specialty store showrooms, airport lounges, bars, restaurants, university lounges and student unions, libraries, barber shops, hotels, sports clubs, hospital lobbies were all potential locations for this study. Narrowing this list down to a manageable, yet varied group of locations produced a constant tension between an in-depth study of a few selected settings versus a more extensive study of a wide variety of settings. Balancing the demands of depth versus variety can best be illustrated by examining the list of locations studied and amount of note taking time spent in each. As Table 1 indicates, for example, observation of viewing behavior in the Sports Lounge outweighs time spent in any other location. Observation in the hospital was much more limited in scope. This emphasis evolved as a result of the actual experience in the different settings, their potential for data gathering, technical circumstances that facilitated access to certain locations as well as other considerations to be elaborated on later. Overall, locations were chosen according to their ability to offer a variety of physical settings, probable program content, viewers' demographics, dominant activity, and convenience in executing the research.

Study of the different groups of audiences in a variety of sub-settings allowed me to study both similar people in different contexts (e.g., students in a bar versus a lounge) as well as different people in similar contexts (e.g., students and travelers in bars). This combination of a variety of settings, on one hand, and similarities, on the other hand, was selected in order to provide further insight into the relationships
### TABLE 1
SUMMARY OF NOTE-TAKING OBSERVATION TIME *

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LOCATION</th>
<th>NUMBER OF HOURS</th>
<th>NUMBER OF VISITS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shopping locations</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University locations (total)</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports Lounge</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Union A</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Union B</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bars (total)</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighborhood</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Airport</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University area</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospital</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>113</strong></td>
<td><strong>83</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Not including interviews, around 30 hours of pilot study and observation hours without note-taking, totalling around 100 additional hours of study.
between the setting and the viewing behavior.

**Time**

The most crucial factor in determining the time of observation was the level of expected activity. For example, bars were studied in the evenings with special care to be present on nights when sporting events were televised; student lounges were studied during soap opera time; dining areas during lunch time; shopping areas during the weekends; etc. No visit lasted longer than three hours, (most of the time, around one hour to an hour and a half), in order to avoid the fatigue experienced in the pilot study. Special effort was made to be in the field during the occurrence of critical events. Therefore data were collected during the following events: the release of American hostages from Iran and President Reagan's Inauguration (January 20, 1981); Space Shuttle Columbia's first landing (April 14, 1981); the attempted assassinations of President Reagan (March 30, 1981) and Pope John Paul II (May 13, 1981); the Royal wedding in England (July 29, 1981); Space Shuttle Columbia's second launch (November 12, 1981) and landing (November 14, 1981).

In total, 113 hours of note taking observations and around 100 additional hours of interviewing, pilot study, and general impression observations without notes constituted the basis for this study.

**Programs**

Due to the nature of public places, I, like any other member of the audience, had little control over the specific program choice, and therefore I was generally unable to make comparisons between behavior at different settings with the program being invariant. However, an effort was made to observe similar types of program-categories (e.g.,
news, sports, soap operas, and the like).

**Viewers**

The most complicated of all sampling decisions was that of selecting people for observation and interviewing. Later this issue will be discussed in more detail. At this point it should be mentioned that one of the main problems encountered in the study was the conflict between quantity of subjects for observation and interviewing versus the depth of the data gathered and my ability to cope with it.

**Observing**

**Entree**

By the very choice of viewing behavior in public places, I was released from the necessity of obtaining formal entree permission (as was already mentioned). Yet, the degrees of freedom for observation that were actually enjoyed differed greatly from one setting to the other. This freedom ranged from complete freedom in the airport to heavy constraints in a small bar. The strategy of entrance which was used was to be as much a full participant in the situation as possible. Thus, I shopped for linens on sale at the department store; drank beer at the airport bar; and jogged a few laps before joining the sweating students at the Sports Lounge. Overall, it was a surprise to find out how long a person can wander around in public places without being conspicuous enough to be at least followed suspiciously by a local authority. This is only one of the observations in which my foreign background surfaced as breaking expectations. Raised in a society at war, Israel, I have developed heightened sensitivity to suspicious behaviors,
unattended packages, people jotting down notes or mapping public places, etc. Thus, it was expected that I would be spotted quickly by security guards, local employees, or at least reported to them by other people. Naturally when this did not happen, and the lines prepared for justifying the research behavior were left unused, it was realized that what seemed to be so natural to a particular investigator, was obviously irrelevant in this situation. The nature of the setting in which observations were done reinforced this "laissez-faire" approach.

Locations were not limited to a permanent clientele in the strictest sense of the term, although one may suspect that there is always a core group of travelers, shoppers, and soap operas viewers. Yet, it seemed that at least as many non-familiar faces as familiar from previous observations were encountered, even in the "permanent clientele" locations, such as the Sports Lounge and the Neighborhood Bar. My presence, therefore, did not in itself alter the setting beyond the level of the presence of any other person.

Even though formal entrance was not necessary in most settings, I often found it helpful to ask for one. In this way, together with entree permission, a communication channel was opened with key informants. In many cases these informants also volunteered their protection against other employees as well as store detectives.

An incident recorded during the pilot study is illustrative of the variety of entree decisions I was prepared to make: At the popular department store, the Investigator was once approached with the familiar "can I help you, Ma'am?" I had considered on the spot one of the following (1) "no thank you" - and then to quit the study for that day;
(2) "yes please" - with the invention of some excuse to create initial contact with the employee; or (3) to immediately introduce myself and my activity. Despite the ethical issue involved in choosing the second alternative (since there was no serious consideration of buying the $499.97 television set about which inquiry was made), I found that it offered me an easy way to get the saleswoman to cooperate. It would have been very artificial on the saleswoman's part to refuse answering research related questions after she was already following the routine of "pleasing the customer." In this way I gained both entree into the saleswoman's territory for further observation and enjoyed a useful informant interview.

Physical and Social Constraints

While entree did not constitute a major difficulty, the nature of the setting placed constraints on the freedom of behavior. Settings ranged from relatively open building space (e.g., an airport lobby, shopping display areas) to small, four wall settings (e.g., sports lounge, airport bar); from one large screen (e.g., student union, airport lobby) to a corner set (e.g., bar) from special seating arrangements (e.g., bars, student union) to no seats at all (e.g., stores).

Each of these settings demanded flexibility on my part in considering where to sit or stand, or whether to take notes at the time or to avoid doing so. For example, there was little difficulty in writing notes in the Sports Lounge, where the other participants were engaged in studying with open note-books; yet I felt awkward doing the same at a bar.
In a similar manner, I was constrained by the changing "social space" in each of the settings. For example, while wandering around at the airport, it was realized that certain seats were occupied by groups of related people. To take a vacant seat next to them would have been an obvious intrusion. Similarly, it was observed that a certain glass wall of the gift shop, in front of the lobby television set, was a meeting area for the maintenance and security staff. With this in mind, it was decided that it would be wise to choose another spot. Once, while purposefully (yet seemingly innocently) breaking this norm, I found myself arguing about Middle-East issues with an employee. Later on this "heated" discussion developed into an informant interview.

In the Sports Lounge, after completing a number of interviews with permanent viewers, I chose on occasion to intrude on familiar groups of viewers and to initiate conversations, while at other times it was felt that richer information would be gathered from an isolated corner seat.

**Quantity of Observations**

After adjusting to both the physical and social space, it was necessary to confront the problem of how many people to observe. In other words, to what degree depth of information to be gathered and the reliability of the procedures would be sacrificed for quantity of subjects. This was a major problem in places that were either clearly designated for viewing (e.g., Sports Lounge or the Student Union) and those which had large transit populations (e.g., Airport Lobby, stores). The decision in each case was influenced by the specific circumstances, such as the number of people, whether it was possible to take notes, etc. It was also based on previous experience (e.g., judged to be interesting
behaviors to observe).

**Viewers and Non-Viewers**

It should be noted that observations of those people who barely glanced from time to time to the screen constituted important data. These were counted as examples of the "non-occurrence" of the phenomenon being studied, namely— not viewing television. Indeed, at the onset, a major task was to develop criteria for distinguishing between a viewer and a non-viewer. Some of the questions considered in establishing these criteria were: does one glance at the television set made upon entering the room constitute a viewer? The person was obviously exposed to the television set and has made a conscious or unconscious decision not to continue viewing. Or, does a student sitting oriented toward the set, yet reading a book, constitute a viewer? Often s/he would be suddenly attracted to the screen for some reason. Most of the decisions made were at the expansionist end of the continuum (i.e., cases such as the above were included). Related to this was the question of when to start the observation of a certain person and when to end it? When a woman showed up on the shopping floor where the television sets are located, one had no clue as to whether she would become a viewer or not. At the same time, when a student left the Lounge, one could not predict that s/he would not return with a friend to watch a certain program. Observing the behavior preceding and following television viewing could have offered important insights into the viewing episode itself. Thus, for the purpose of this study, the definition of a potential viewer was a methodological one: an individual who was in my visual field in a setting containing a television set.
Withdrawal

Finally, in regard to observation issues, there was the question of withdrawal. Since no long-lasting relationships were created, no commitment, emotional involvement or expectations established, it was assumed that withdrawal, as with entrance, did not affect the setting in any significant way.

In summary, observations were concerned with behavior present and with getting the data first hand. In simple observation...

...the observer is unobserved, and in settings where the investigator has had no part in structuring the situation. The secretive nature of the observer, whether hidden in a crowd or miles away before a television screen, protects the research from some of the reactive validity threats. The subject is not aware of being tested, there is thereby no concomitant role-playing associated with awareness, the measurement does not work as an agent of change, and the interviewer (observer) effects are not an issue. (Webb, et al., 1966, p. 138.)

Interviewing

The purpose of interviewing viewers in public places was three fold:

1. To be able to validate information gathered by means of observation.
2. To obtain information otherwise not available.
3. To gain insights into the interviewees' perceptions and meaning of viewing television.

Interviewing followed a loosely structured schedule. The schedule was adjusted according to the particular setting and the individual interviewed. Most interviews could be characterized as casual talk following the formal introduction. The timing of the interview was of
special concern. Interfering with concentrated viewing was both untacteful and ineffective for this study's purposes. On the other hand, interviewing might stimulate the partial-viewer to view more attentively or to discontinue viewing. Waiting for the person to leave the scene was risky since the reason for leaving may be that it was simply the end of the waiting period (e.g., the flight was leaving/arriving; her husband was picking her up; class was starting in five minutes; etc.). Working within these constraints, little cooperation could have been expected. Again, as with other decisions, each case needed to be evaluated individually with consideration of the level of attention, the presence of other potential interviewees, the length of observation, the pattern of behavior, commercial breaks, etc.

In the interviews questions were asked in regard to circumstances leading to presence in the setting, the general nature of behavior in the setting, and television viewing at the examined situation as compared with other situations. Interviews were given a special non-standardized treatment.

By special, nonstandardized treatment I mean: 1. Stressing the interviewee's definition of the situation; 2. Encouraging the interviewee to structure the account of the situation; 3. Letting the interviewee introduce to a considerable extent... his notions of what he regards as relevant, instead of relying upon the investigator's notions of relevance. (Dexter, 1970, p. 5.)

From beginning to end, interviewing remained the most complicated of all research related activities. It was relatively easy to contact viewers and to re-interview store employees, bartenders and permanent viewers. Response level was high in almost all cases. However, most of the time circumstances made it very uncomfortable to interview bar
viewers in noisy dark bars or rushing shoppers while being followed by a store detective. As a result, adjustments were made in both informant interviews and in participant observation tactics in order to compensate for lack of sufficient first-hand interview information.

Self-assessment during and following the interview process was of special value since the phenomenon called interview is in and of itself a form of interpersonal communication process which involves roles and rules, expectations and manipulations.

The only universal requirement is that the interviewer, in analyzing the interview, should try to determine what tactics he did in fact employ and make at least an informed guess as to how the chosen tactics may have affected what the interviewee said. (ibid, p. 27.)

Recording

Notetaking of observations was done on the spot, where appropriate and nonobtrusive (e.g., Student Union) and/or in short visits to ladies rooms and other unnoticed corners. Each session's notes were extended, organized and typed as soon as possible following the observation so as to assure the optimal level of accuracy and to maintain the spirit of the setting. Each setting was mapped and described in detail. Based on the circumstances, interviews were either recorded by hand or taped, when permission was granted. Taping was done with a small purse size cassette-tape recorder with a built in microphone. It had a relatively unthreatening appearance. The "stop" button was pointed out to the interviewees with the suggestion to stop at any time they would like. Confidentiality of the data gathered and anonymity of participants were guaranteed. A few free-flowing conversations were also recorded with
the recorder concealed and without permission but actor's anonymity was completely protected.

In general, data were gathered in three phases: first at the university settings; then at store settings; and finally at bar settings. This was done in order to maximize familiarity with the populations at hand, yet to retain diversity across sub-settings. After completion of data gathering procedures in all three types of settings, additional observation sessions were scheduled in order to focus primarily on the contrasting aspects across settings.

**Terminating Data Collection**

Stopping the process of data gathering was as important a decision as all others. Developing criteria for ending this research project turned out to be a surprisingly crucial issue. As the data emerged and observation notes piled high, there was a development of a growing sense of data-saturation which had to be singled out and not confused with general physical and mental fatigue. Generally speaking, the data-saturation feeling can best be described as a feeling of jogging on one spot: no more new patterns of behaviors and regularities were observed, even though additional data to support the familiar ones could have been collected for still a longer period of time. No more did the unpredictable occur, and there was a growing sense that the effort spent was not producing enough data to make it a worthwhile investment. In short, data-saturation can best be described as an example of the "law of diminishing returns."
Accordingly, data collection in the various settings was completed at different points in time with the realization that there could never be an absolute end to studying viewing television in public places, and like in all research endeavors, an artificial one had to be created.

**Overview of Data Collection**

In summary, one unifying theme characterizes the methodological discussion: there was a need to adjust to each and every setting as well as to each individual person observed and/or interviewed. On-the-spot decisions not planned or anticipated ahead of time were necessary. Since the process of data gathering was perceived as creative, special care was given to maintaining flexible strategies so decisions could be altered as the data emerged. Therefore, it should be emphasized that the data gathering plan was tentative and emerged as the study unfolded.

The data gathering process was not without its limitations. On the one hand, I was able to maintain a low profile in public places and was as unobtrusive as possible during the occurrence of the behavior of interest; but on the other hand, this study did not permit me to develop an in-depth acquaintance with individual viewers (excluding perhaps the regular employee-viewer type and some of the students in the Sports Lounge). Both Douglas (1976) and Schatzman and Strauss (1973) discuss long term research projects in which the researcher takes his/her time in building relationships through trust and liking and in checking and testing them out. Unfortunately, studies such as the one reported here pose different challenges. Often researchers do not have two years to follow the sexual behavior of nudists, or the funds and time to employ
a team to investigate massage parlors (Douglas, 1976). The present study was not different in that account. Neither, in most cases, did the option of a two hour in-depth interview exist. Contact was immediate, short, and in most cases nonredeemable. Immediate trust and liking were relatively superficial and the issue was not as exciting or sensitive as sexual behavior in American society or politically complex as underground movements. Different tactics, strategies, and decisions were called for in studying the questions to which the above discussion has been devoted.

Similarly, concerns for validating observed information with interview insights, as well as conducting post-research interviews with informants are two of the ways in which the quality of the data was protected. These interviews took place at the conclusion of the study with key informants in the study locations: two store associates, two students and one barman. They were generally in the form of a friendly conversation. I shared the emerging major conclusions and then asked for feedback. The interviewees were often quick to offer illustrations from their personal experience in support of my comments, as well as to predict viewing behaviors in upcoming events. In addition I have incorporated peer debriefings throughout the study, including their reactions to visits in the actual locations. This is related to a more general concern, shared by all studies conducted by a single person: the role of the investigator as the data gathering instrument, as well as the data analyst. Awareness to personal biases, expectations, fatigue, and the like affect the quality of the data gathered. An honest and sincere
attempt to understand and report them has been a high priority in this study. All the above safeguards built into the study, combined with the relatively prolonged engagement in the different settings, protected both the rigor and the relevancy of the data presented in the following pages.

Analysis

The distinction between data gathering and analysis is in many respects foreign to qualitative research. The gathering and analyzing of data go hand in hand and reshape each other. Therefore the above discussion of data gathering procedures and problems has necessarily involved inseparable data analysis issues. Formal analysis occurred in the following manner. Edited and typed observation and interview notes were first sorted into folders according to location of study. Duplicate copies were then sorted into various "emerging" categories through a process of reading and re-reading the data. These categories later became the framework for the description and analysis contained in the following chapters.
FOOTNOTES

1 Columbus airport was going through complete reconstruction and remodeling in the period between the pilot study and the completion of this study. Certain settings, such as the four-screens television cube at the old airport's lobby no longer exists.

2 The two exceptions to this experience took place in department stores. Once, I was personally approached by a store detective as a result of completing an interview with a customer and was specifically requested to stop all research related activities. In the second incident, a store associate reported that a detective was inquiring about my presence, and he informed him that I was "just a friend."
CHAPTER III
VIEWING TELEVISION IN PUBLIC: PLACES, PEOPLE AND PROGRAMS
A DESCRIPTION

Introduction
The study of viewing television in public places has produced a vast quantity of data, which could be presented in a variety of ways. Any categorization framework developed would likely be in danger of isolating the portions of the phenomenon from the general context and reducing it to the sum of its parts. This is particularly true in the present study where data were collected in a wide variety of settings. A descriptive report of each single setting, could have created a tedious, detailed and uninspiring report, with the real issues of interest crushed within its many pages.

As a result, a different framework was created for the purpose of the study addressed here. Data are discussed under three major headings: places, people and programs. This framework can be tied together by the following mapping sentence: What programs are viewed, by what people in what public places. An analysis of major issues concerned with people watching programs in public places is offered in the following chapters.

Places
Observation and interviews took place in four major groups of locations (see Table 1): shopping locations, university locations, bars and a hospital. A fifth group of miscellaneous locations will be
mentioned when relevant.

Shopping locations

Television sets located in stores were usually found in a specifically designated area for media products. While these areas varied in size and in their physical arrangement, they had quite a few common characteristics.

Media departments in stores displayed a great number of television sets, among other items, which varied in screen size, quality, price, cabinet-work and other set-features. They were commonly arranged in a certain permanent order: sets rested on little platforms in parallel lines and/or along the display walls at different heights. Certain items, such as big screen sets or close-circuit sets for home use, were highlighted and such displays changed from time to time.

The media department was usually separated from other departments by some physical means, such as uncarpeted walk, counter or associates' desks. Those areas were commonly respected by customers and associates alike. As a customer entered the marked area s/he was expected to accept the rules of the territory: to be open to interaction with the associate who sooner or later was going to approach him/her, to respect the equipment, maintain a limited noise level, and follow any restrictions imposed, or even hinted at by the associates. The associate, on his/her part, would not approach a person outside of the marked area, and would respect their privacy even in the "border line" zone. Since the unwritten rules were expected to be of common knowledge, any violation of them caused some anxiety and sometimes even bitterness in the store associates. During an interview with a rather reluctant store associate,
he unexpectedly became very verbal and enthusiastic, volunteering information in response to a question about viewers presenting problems to him:

They do present a problem, they try to eat their lunch here, and this is not the place for it. They get into conflict with each other about the volume and the channel, they try to turn the volume up, they argue about changing channels, then at the end they all get up and leave at once, they don't even have the courtesy to turn the set down and back to the original channel.

In two other interviews with male store associates, similar responses were made:

A lot play with the equipment. If they just watch or listen we don't care. Only if they play with the stereo and sets. Mainly kids, but quite a few adults too.2

and

They (children) turn channels, oh yes, they do everything, everything. You try not to be rude to them, but I feel that I can say to them yes or no sometimes.3

Incidents of breaking the rules, like the ones reported above, which have been both observed and reported on, indicate that rules, even if unspoken, do indeed exist.

Most of the television sets were usually on, all day long. The different stores seemed to have different preferences or habits in regard to channel choice, but all seemed to prefer tuning as many sets as possible to one channel, perhaps as an attention getter. While they sometimes claimed to tune the sets randomly, associates were often observed to habitually, almost compulsively, turn all sets back to the original channel, the minute viewers of certain programs got up to leave. Channel choice was sometimes a result of "games" played by bored associates: "We like to keep them on the same channel, so you can compare
pictures, etc. It's the matter of who is here, they play with it, make patterns, etc. Depends on who is here. 4 Another male associate proudly related to me how he liked to annoy children: while they were watching a program, he would play with the remote control. The children were confused, upset, and tried to fix the set. 5

Customers and potential customers in shopping locations varied in all characteristics possible: they seemed to come from all walks of life; differed in age, sex, race and ethnic origin. They came in groups or alone, with shopping bags or empty handed. They wore formal business suits, casual dress, sporting outfits, torn jeans and sometimes even ragged clothes. They passed by, stood for a few minutes or stayed for a full hour. They were quiet and polite as well as noisy and rude.

Except for the customers and the departments' associates, other store personnel constituted a third potential audience. Associates from other departments, managers and store detectives, were often observed in the television viewing area. They could be easily detected by their business suits, easy flowing conversation with each other and with the department associates, and the air of self-confidence and familiarity surrounding their behavior.

The particular position of the media department in regard to other sections of the stores, seemed to have important consequences on behaviors typical in that area. For example, when facing a furniture area, sofa and chairs for sale became attractive sitting arrangements for viewers refraining from violating the privacy of the media territory. Interestingly enough, this phenomenon has been apparently recognized and accepted by the furniture associates, who avoided approaching such
viewers in their territory. Where the media department was close to certain store services, such as photography studio, beauty salon, optometry clinic and the like, waiting circumstances of customers seemed to become an important drive directing transient audience to the television area.

All media departments observed were located in the specialty areas of the store, most commonly on the upper floor or in relatively isolated sections. Since no media departments were found in the main browsing-shopping areas, a certain self-selection process of the transient population commonly found around these departments had been assumed.

In summary, viewing television in shopping locations was behavior found in very localized and specifically designated areas. The audience was highly diversified and transient. Television was in great competition with the variety of shopping activities available around it. Viewers varied in number from a handful at most times to around 60 during special media events.

University locations

For a variety of reasons, university locations were the most intensively examined in this study. The most important reason of all was the richness of the data gathered. Three different settings were observed, all of which were located in a large, midwestern state university—the Ohio State University.

(1) A Sports Lounge. The lounge was located in a large sporting complex in a relatively central part of the university. The two doors, a main one and a less used side one were located in such a way that persons entering or standing in the doorway could both be heard
and observed from every spot in the lounge, a fact that eliminated any privacy in the acts of entry and exit of viewers. The room was the size of a very large living room. It was equipped with snack and pop machines, along with round tables, chairs and benches. A regular size colored television set was located on one side of the rectangular lounge, creating four viewing zones: the primary zone closest to the set, where viewers sat on the floor in a semi-circle formed by the furniture; the secondary zone, separated from the primary one by an empty stretch of floor connecting the main door on one side and the pop machines on the other side; the tertiary zone, at the far back of the room. Viewers in both the secondary and tertiary zones usually were seated at the round tables or leaned against the far back wall. The location of each viewer became a strong predictor for his/her level of interest in the program. Primary viewers were commonly the most involved. Most of them maintained a high attention level to the screen, often watching commercials closely as well. They were more likely to get involved in secondary activities, they were usually non-distracting in nature (e.g., eating and drinking). The primary audience was also the more permanent one in nature: more of the viewers were seen often, they came for a particular program just before it started and left immediately at the end.

On the other extreme of the viewing continuum were the tertiary viewers. As a group they were the least interested and the most unattentive viewers. Some sat in groups and were involved in totally unrelated conversation, others were immersed in their studies. They came and left regardless of the program aired. Out of the three zones, the tertiary was the least occupied.
The secondary viewers, constituted a certain mixture of the primary and tertiary ones—some were more involved and some less. Many of the primary viewers would use the secondary area when they were together with a group of friends, apparently expecting a larger degree of freedom of behavior, mainly of loud conversation in the secondary area. Most of the transient audience, visiting for short periods of time, chose the secondary area as well. They did not enter the close-viewing area on one hand, nor did they remain in the isolated, away from the exit tertiary zone.

A fourth viewing zone was by the main door. There viewers, for lack of seating space or lack of viewing time, stood, often leaning back, viewing attentively. Sometimes these viewers dropped by for a short time to catch a glimpse of their favorite program before leaving the building. Often they stood out of no choice, when the lounge was completely full, waiting for a seat to become available. Yet, other times, standing in the fourth area took place for a brief period, when the viewer was focusing on the program, seemingly trying to make a decision about whether or not to sit down as well as which of the other three areas was the most appropriate.

The above physical arrangement, while an almost permanent phenomenon, was also violated under special circumstances, the most notable one of all being the broadcasting of critical media events. Then the four zones seemed to merge into one viewing zone, primary in nature, where distance from set was more a function of available space rather than level of involvement.
Most of the inhabitants of the sporting lounge were undergraduate students of both sexes and all races, very informally dressed. Many of them came right before, during or immediately after sports activities, and were wearing sports clothes such as shorts, T-shirts, sweatsuits, swimsuits and even towels wrapped around their waists. Older students, maintenance personnel, and occasionally a nurse, a security person and the like were viewers too.

Overall, the Sports Lounge was occupied by anywhere from a handful of people during most of the day, between 10-30 around soap operas time and 40 or more during special events. The television set was on as long as the lounge was open—which was usually from early morning to late at night. The choice of program was totally in the hands of the viewers, as will be discussed later.

(2) Student Union A. Student Union A was a major recreational center for university students, located somewhat on the margin of the main campus area. Three television viewing areas within it were studied: main dining area, small dining area and Ballroom area. The main dining area was a large hall surrounded by a variety of small fast-food shops and hallways. The tables and chairs had the capacity to seat many dozens of students at any time. While mainly functioning as a busy eating place during the lunch hours, many students were observed doing homework or holding conferences on its premises throughout the day too.

The main dining area had one large screen television set, which was kept locked in a wooden cabinet. At the onset of this study, the set had been located near a central wall and had attracted a large viewing audience during the lunch and early afternoon hours. Later, the set was moved
to a less central location, and was turned on only occasionally.

In its place, a regular size colored television set was placed in the adjacent smaller dining area, closed in by four walls, and limited in occupancy to about 50 seated people. The set was turned on each morning and turned off at night either by maintenance personnel or viewers, with channel choice option open to viewers, as was the case in the Sports Lounge.

The Ballroom was a wide empty hall, serving many different entertainment functions. On certain special occasions, such as the one observed in this study, four large size screens were temporarily located in the center of this hall. Specific, predetermined and well advertised programs were broadcasted simultaneously on all of them. Due to the absence of any furniture, all viewers sat uncomfortably on the floor.

The three viewing areas represented, to a certain degree, different degrees of purposefulness on the part of the viewers. Viewing in the main dining area, when the large screen was regularly on, could have occurred accidentally while eating lunch or meeting friends. Viewing in the small dining area demanded a decision making process and choice behavior, and viewing in the Ballroom was very definitely a planned, purposeful viewing engagement. The audience in all three locations consisted of undergraduate students, with a small percentage of older students and young faculty. The number of viewers ranged from over a hundred during busy lunch hours and special events in the main dining area, to a dozen in the small dining area, and a few hundred in the Ballroom.

Most students were informally dressed, carrying books and bags, and most often were seen eating. This was one of the more obvious ways
In which the physical setting determined the nature of secondary activities during viewing: while wearing swimsuits in the Sports Lounge was perfectly acceptable, doing so in the Student Union would have been completely out of place. Snacking was one of the most commonly observed secondary behaviors in the Sports Lounge and chewing loudly on a big lunch was the dominant activity in both dining areas in the Student Union A.

(3) Student Union B. This Student Union was a smaller complex of recreational facilities, with only one cafeteria. It was located at a distance from the main campus area, yet was close to a major complex of student dormitories. Two large screen sets were located at the two opposing ends of the main hall-lobby, with the only few seats available arranged in a semi-circle around each set.

Besides students, faculty members and other university personnel working or using the facilities were observed to be frequent viewers. Both the location of the sets close to the exits and the limited number of seats seemed to discourage the grouping of viewers as well as offer no control over channel choice. Since a relatively shorter study time had been devoted to this location, it is not emphasized in the following pages.

Overall, university locations presented an entirely different picture from that of the shopping locations. The viewing audience was much more homogeneous, the majority were white undergraduate students in their late teens and early twenties. Television sets were purposefully located in areas designated for viewing with seating arrangements to facilitate the activity. In the shopping area, viewing television,
per se, though not for the sake of inquiring about potential purchase, was a tolerated behavior, but certainly not the most desired one. In the university locations, television sets were placed there for actual recreational value. While shopping-viewing areas were controlled by permanent personnel, such control was absent in the university viewing area. As a result, any viewing related behavior had to result from some group consensus, formal or not. Interestingly enough, while violating store rules was frequently observed and reported, the non-authoritative nature of the group consensus was rarely challenged. This issue will be explored further in relation to the rules of viewing television in public.

Bars

Viewing television in bars turned out to be the most confining of all viewing situations observed. Seven different bars were studied, three more in depth than the others. Two of the bars were located in the airport (one before the remodeling and one following it), two were working class neighborhood bars, and three were located around the university area.

All bars, except for one, were surprisingly similar in their physical television arrangement. All had one regular size, colored television set, located on one end of the bar's service counter, most commonly hanging high from the ceiling. Stools ran the length of the counters. This forced viewers to turn their backs to the person sitting on one of their sides and to face the back of the one sitting on the other side. Small tables with chairs and/or booths lined along the walls usually completed the viewing area. Bigger bars had additional sections,
separated from the viewing area, where television was not available. The one exception to this, a neighborhood bar, had a large screen television set, located on the main wall across from a rectangular O-shaped service counter.

All of the bars served both drinks and food. All but the two airport bars also had pinball machines. Bartenders were of both sexes, all white, and mostly in their 20s and 30s.

In all bars, with the exception of the airport bars, the general atmosphere was informal, including casual dress of bartenders and most customers. There was a free flow of interaction between bartenders and customers and an apparent sense of mutual familiarity. The airport bars, served mostly a transient population, with almost no permanent clientele and had an air of formality: bartenders wore uniforms, customers were well dressed, and interaction was usually polite and straight to the point.

Different bars attracted different groups of viewers, as could have been guessed from their locations. Business-type males and waiting family members of all ages were the ones most often observed in the airport bars. White working class males and females, mainly in the 30s and 40s, occupied the neighborhood bars. Students and alumni were found in one of the campus-area bars, undergraduate students were found in the second, and graduate students and young faculty members in the third campus-area bar. Occasionally, a businessperson or traveler from a nearby hotel were also encountered in the campus-area bars.

All bars, with the exception, once again, of the airport bars, seemed to share a general television philosophy. Often, this view was
expressed in interviews with bartenders. When asked, interviewees volunteered the following information:

Question: When do you turn the television on?

We always turn the television on for sports. Otherwise it's shut off. No Happy Days and all that stuff... Everyone wants to watch General Hospital, but the owner doesn't allow us to do it... We turn it on for big disasters, but not for news. 6 (male bartender)

We usually keep it closed, so it won't irritate people. We turn it on for sports events.7 (male bartender)

I can tell you one thing. Our policy is that the only time we have television is when the sport events come on. Baseball, football, hockey games, any sports. We can't sit here and watch the soaps. (Question: Why?) I don't know why. It's the rule of the bar... Anything like national disasters we put on... They do "cheat" sometimes. Like Sunday after the game, they'll leave 60 Minutes or something like that on, for a while.8 (female bartender)

Never! When Ohio State plays and its televised, and major professional fights; Browns games; when a customer asks for it to be on--doesn't happen very often, it is being discouraged here; baseball, Super Bowl Sunday, if we aren't closed, mainly major sporting events. (prompt) Critical events, something major like that, yes. We have requests for soaps. We have it on when they ask for it, but it is discouraged.9 (male bartender)

The general picture emerging from all interviews is that bars had definite television rules, sometimes clearly imposed by owners, and at other times, "that's just the way it is." Viewing major televised sports events was accepted as a legitimate activity at bars. Bartenders often got calls from customers inquiring about their plans to turn on certain programs, or they were asked in the bar itself to turn the set on for sports events. While sports viewing seemed to fit in as an integral part of the bar's life, viewing other programs, in particular soap operas and situation comedies, seemed to be inappropriate. An underlying assumption that highlighted this notion dominated the responses: everyone tolerated sports on television, even if they were uninterested
and not watching the programs, but people would not have tolerated soaps, for example, if they did not watch them themselves. When prompted, bartenders admitted that they also turned the set on for critical media events (but not for the regular news) and even to the "taboo" programs, when a specific request was made by a customer. Apparently such requests were rare, confirming the shared knowledge of what was an accepted program for in-bar consumption.

Another expressed reason for discouraging television viewing other than sports was the revenues made on pinball machines: "It distracts from business, they could have been drinking and playing the machines instead."¹⁰ (female bartender)

The two airport bars and others reported about, represented a different approach to television viewing: the television set was turned on each morning at opening time, and remained on the whole day. "Television is on all day, but usually ignored. Sometimes someone will ask me to switch for a game on another channel."¹¹ (female bartender)

Last place I worked television went on first thing in the morning and was turned off last thing in the evening. It was a men's bar in a private country club. The members wanted it on. They were also equipped with clocks so they showed what time it was. We'd have around 20-30 customers in the viewing area. I would say that two or three would watch it. It was on for the sake of being on. Just in case there was a crash on Wall Street. No, I'm serious. When the Dow Jones came on at noon, you could see all the heads turning. Really. That was very important to them. Otherwise it was like radio, stereo."¹² (male bartender)

The background noise function of television was also suggested by the airport bartenders.
The role of the television set as a business aspect of the bar was not salient in the minds of interviewees, most of whom admitted they never thought about it before.

Question: Do you think television has an effect on business here?

I never thought about it before. Now that you are asking me these questions it strikes me what an important role television has, because lots of people just sit and watch after they've finished their drink.

Question: Do you think that if there was no television, let's say it was just shut off for a day, would people not stay so long?

I really don't know, but it seems that it might be the case, that watching television kind of helps them stay here longer. 13 (female bartender)

I don't think it keeps customers longer. Most are just waiting for a plane. For a ball game they stay. That's the only thing. 14 (female bartender)

I didn't think it added or distracted. I don't think it had any bearing on the business. 15 (female bartender)

Even though television was not often recognized as a money maker, prime viewing time and prime business time in the bars coincided. While most major sports events attracted a larger clientele, football games, and in particular, a televised Ohio State game, were the busiest times of all. While the particular location of the study and the general social context had a lot to bear on this phenomenon, it is suggested here that a parallel one could have been observed in other locations in this country, where support for a local team (e.g., during the World Series) as manifested in bar viewing, is an important opportunity to express local patriotism.

With the televised football games, not only the size of the average clientele jumped from 10 to 50 and over, but so did the seating
arrangements and the general behavior.

As soon as the football season starts, our clientele jumps. Not only people drink, but they come and stay for the whole time. A lot of people come for one drink and they stay when they see the game's on. 16 (female bartender)

This was not the usual crowd in terms of size. It was unusual in their sitting at the counter. Usually they are spread all over. The people standing were probably different because they just dropped by for the game.17 (female bartender)

During an important game, customers would crowd next to the counter and in the primary viewing area. In comparison, during a regular time, customers next to the counter were observed to sit at least one seat apart from a stranger (when space permitted). During crowded-special event times, every single counter space was occupied, to the point where strangers were in actual physical contact (such as rubbing shoulders and arms). The general atmosphere, noise level and degree of interaction—all seemed to change dramatically, as did tolerance for unusual behavior, including shouting, jumping up and down, and even entering the bar without buying a drink.

Overall, viewing television in bars was restricted to particular programs, yet a great degree of freedom of behavior and expression was exercised during viewing. When on, television usually had a dominating role in the viewing area of the bar.

Hospital

A large size private hospital with seven patient floors contained a working television set in each floor's lobby. The lobby was a room the size of an average living room. It was located next to the elevators and between the different wings of the floor. There were comfortable seats along the walls and a couple of round tables and chairs. Each
lobby could seat around 15 people at a time.

The television set was hung from the ceiling in one corner of the room. The channel and control buttons were on the wall at hand reach. Given the size of the room and the height of the set, it became quite inconvenient to watch the set from most angles for an extended period of time. Even the best sitting positions across from the television demanded strenuous neck stretching.

The lobbies offered very little privacy to their visitors. The entire space could have been viewed at once from every seat in the room with very little eye movement. Many of the occupants often passed their time observing each other thoroughly. This social strain, combined with long hours of waiting visitors spent there while their friends and relatives were being treated, may explain why privilezing the personal space was the most dominating activity in the lobby. While visitors who had company often conversed quietly, most single visitors engaged in reading books, newspapers and magazines; pacing; or glancing back and forth to the television set. Very little concentrated viewing was observed and very often the set was not even turned on.

In order to understand the marginal role television seemed to have in the hospital, it is crucial to remember the circumstances under which people find themselves in the hospital. Visitors' behaviors were observed to be anxious and bored. Patients had television sets in their rooms, where they could have been much more comfortable. When alone, they preferred the lobby over their room for the purpose of stretching
their body, and most of all—the permission to smoke. When in the company of visitors, both patients and visitors usually ignored television, resorting to it occasionally during dead minutes in a mostly polite and boring conversation. Children, who were not allowed into patients' rooms, would sometimes watch television, but even they seemed to be distracted by the general hospital atmosphere. While interviewees had not said it in these very words, there seemed to be a sense of inappropriateness, even guilt, in being involved in a recreational activity, such as viewing television, when all around people were suffering.

This illustration of the phenomenon of not viewing television in a public place, has great importance for the understanding of the role of the context in viewing television.

Shopping locations, university locations, bars and a hospital, were the major settings in which data for this study had been collected. It was the purpose of the description in the preceding pages to aid the reader in grasping the general nature of the settings in which viewers were found. We now turn to a description of these viewers.

**People**

The viewers of television in public places studied in this research project can be grouped according to the viewing locations: shoppers, students, bar customers and employees. A variety of viewers, such as travelers, businesspersons, hospital patients and others, upon whom not much data are available, are mentioned where relevant.
Shoppers

Shoppers were a very heterogeneous group of people in terms of most demographic indices. Responses to direct questions about the breakdown of the shopping audience varied according to the specific location of the store in question.

Question: What kind of people visit your department?

We get lots of young professionals. This is the biggest market we have, young working class. The north end is new and growing, new house owners. Growing. We also get a good share of retired people, we get a retired home's bus trip every week... We get older ladies, women in their 20s and 30s who come regularly to watch their soaps. We learn to recognize them, we don't even bother to ask them. They work in the mall and come here for their break. The older ones are retired. We see them walking around in the neighborhood, and they come here, too. We get parents too often who drop their kids, mainly in the evenings and weekends of course. We end up being like babysitters. In the summer time we get gangs of school kids who come here. (male store associate)

(We get) daytime soap opera people. It's getting more diversified. Mostly store employees and state librarians and office people, women and teenagers, school kids who work here in the summer... Some come every day, have their own TV set that they sit in front of, they change it to their own channel, and they then change it back. Lots of wards of the state. They come here every day, day after day, even Saturday. They sit and watch or play with the stereo. There are four, five people like that every day. I don't want to sound like that, but there is one black guy who comes every day, and just stays here... We get lots of people because the State buildings are right here. It attracts more of the business during the day time, doctors, lawyers, business, accountants, secretaries, they all come here, and also people from all around the state that spend the whole day in the store... The main problem is when we have groups of ten kids, usually blacks, who come to play with the stereo. We have to call security and they have to take care of it. Kids will come here on Saturday during cartoons. I always enjoy seeing the type of people and what they watch, especially General Hospital. (male store associate)

(We get) everybody from children to established middle class customers. Poor, rich, blend of everybody... Lots that come to watch the soap operas. They stop for half an hour or an hour. More female, about 70 percent. The occasional male who stops by too... Do we get kids! Lots of theft problems. Girls and boys following one another. (male store associate)
(We get) everybody, all walks of life from little kids to grandparents... And you know them right away... (We get) people who are having their car worked on at the auto center, and kids while their parents shop. Also there is a lady that watches her soaps here, when she can't watch it at home... A few regular associates are here for their break to watch their favorite soap. Not too many guys for the soaps. But I've seen more men come and sit and watch while their wife shopping or their car worked on. During a football game you can see 30-40 of them. Some sit, some will lay down, like kids... Usually adult males waiting for their wife or girlfriend... We used to have lots of people bring their kids, we'll be like babysitters especially on Saturday morning.21 (male store associate)

Oh, yeah, you get a lot of lookers on this floor. You get a lot of people--the beauty area is just across over there, women waiting for their appointment or husbands waiting for their wives or kids, and they see something and they stop by... We have a lot of ladies with their soap operas. They'll be shopping and a certain soap opera comes on, and they'll come in... Usually you have people during their break come in... Lots of children, especially on Saturday mornings, watching cartoons, laying here on their stomachs, watching. (Question: While their parents are shopping?) Yeah, or getting their hair done... Oh, I've seen maybe around 15 children laying around on the floor... Usually we have five or six.22 (female store associate)

The above illustrations have been quoted in detail, in order to suggest the colorfulness of the phenomenon on one hand and the commonality among the subgroups of viewers found in all of the shopping locations. With somewhat of an over-generalization, we can suggest the following types:

(1) The Single Man type. The single man type was a member of all age groups. Most often he was waiting for a spouse or friend to complete shopping, as was reported by an interviewee:

I'm just sitting here while my wife is shopping. I'm resting. I left her on the first floor. We split off. I do my business and she--her business, and we usually meet here. So she can take as much time as she needs.23

His wife, who later joined the interview, confirmed that arrangement:

"He is always the one waiting for me. We always meet here. 'Meet me
The single man would come in the evenings or weekends, commonly watched the sports events and sometimes the news, and would rarely attempt to change the channel or volume level. He would refrain from entering the department's area, and his posture—leaning on the escalator railing in one location, sitting on sofas for sale in another one, or just standing on the walk—clearly indicated no interest in purchasing. He would rarely be approached by sales personnel—except for commentary on the program viewed when the salesperson seemed to be viewing too. The single man would basically keep to himself, even in situations when he was standing or sitting next to other single men like himself. Sometimes he briefly and quietly exchanged information and opinions with other viewers, especially when an initiative came from a newcomer. The single man would commonly stay in the viewing area anywhere from a few minutes to half an hour or so, with very little change of position.

(2) The Single Woman type. The single woman type was a daytime soap opera viewer. She would stop her shopping activities, or complete them prior to appearing in the viewing area. She would commonly be in her middle age years, and would look for a place to sit herself and her numerous shopping bags. She would often enter the viewing area, pick a particular spot on one of the platforms on which the television sets were located, and view another set across from her. She would often change the channel and raise the volume and would not get up to leave until the program was over. Generally, she would keep to herself and would not be bothered by the associates. One woman in her 50s, who
admitted to coming to the store "everytime I get caught up in shopping downtown and can't make it home in time" responded to a question about the store personnel: "Oh they don't mind, and if they do--I can just go somewhere else where they won't bother me!"25

Sometimes a few single women sitting close to each other would strike up a conversation. It would usually take one comment to turn the silent group into a verbal one. A separate chapter will discuss conversations such as these more fully.

(3) The Neighborhood Worker type. The neighborhood worker type was mostly a female (but many times a male too) in her 20s, who worked in a store or an office near the studied location. She would stop by occasionally for a favorite soap opera, a special event or just to pass time on a break. Often, she would bring her lunch or some snack. Similar to the single woman, she would choose a spot inside the viewing area and settle down. In contrast to the single woman, however, she would often know the associates or other viewers as a result of certain regularities in her visits, and probably had a favorite spot where she always chose to sit. The neighborhood worker was often more verbal than the single woman, and usually was the one to initiate the original comment that would trigger a conversation. Due to her time limits, she would often not stay for the whole program, and loudly express her frustrations about it as she would rush to leave.

(4) Children. Children, who usually were dropped off by busy parents, would stay for relatively longer periods and watch cartoons or anything else that happened to be on at the time. They would sit or lay on the floor inches away from the screen. Even though other sets would be
available around them, they would tend to crowd around next to one or two sets. They seemed to have no sensitivity for being in the way of associates and customers, and would manifest a capability for getting entirely immersed in the program they were watching to the point of ignoring everything else around them.

(5) The "Gang." The gang was a group of children, usually of early teenage years, who would come by to pass away their time in the media area. They would usually be more interested in playing with the equipment rather than in actually watching television, and therefore would be moving around, quite restlessly and noisily, exploring the entire area. The "gang" members would speak loudly to each other, laugh a lot and irritate associates with irrelevant questions and arguments. They would often be dressed in sports clothes, as if they were on their way back from or to practice or play sessions. They would often talk about how much time they have to spend and argue about what to do with the rest of it.

(6) The Aimless "Time-Killer" type. The time-killer type was mostly elderly male or female, often quite poor, if one is to judge these persons by their clothing. The time-killer person would view nondiscriminantly and with little concern for time. S/he would stay mostly to himself/herself, wearing quite a bored/day-dreaming expression. Not many aimless time-killers were actually encountered during this study.

An additional group of viewers in shopping locations were the store employees. They will be discussed separately.
Overall, viewers in the shopping locations constituted a very heterogeneous and transient population. A very small percentage viewed television there on any regular basis. They were usually in the store for purposes of shopping, looking around, or accompanying people engaged in these two activities, and accidentally, or on the spur of the moment decided to view some television. They would stay in the media department for a few minutes and revert back to their main purpose of being in that location.

Students

Students, as a viewing audience, were a much more homogeneous group. The majority consisted of white undergraduate students in their late teens and early twenties, similarly dressed, all of whom were, at least officially, going to school. Their behavior was much more predictable, they had structured daily routines, some of which—like attending certain classes at certain times and places—seemed to also determine their leisure activities, including when and where to view television. Some had specific program preferences, which they tried to fit into these routines and most of their viewing in public was not quite as accidental as seemed to be the case in the shopping areas.

Students' viewing in public were of two types—either primary viewers or secondary viewers. Primary viewers were engaged in purposeful and quite regular viewing in terms of places chosen, time of the day and particular programs viewed. They often were involved in secondary activities, such as talking, snacking, reading newspapers and even doing homework. In interviews, primary viewers described their viewing decisions:
Question: When do you come here?

I have class until three, and then I come and watch General Hospital.26 (female graduate student)

...that's like a break in gymnastics, and I have a little time off between my workups, so I quickly run here.27 (female undergraduate student)

I have like a standing tennis date at 2 o'clock, so I always end up here usually at 3 o'clock and watch General Hospital.28 (male graduate student)

Secondary viewers, on the other hand, were quite different: they were first of all having lunch, meeting friends or doing homework, and then, as a secondary, mostly unplanned activity, also viewing television. As a result of regularly conducting these activities in the same locations and being exposed to the same programs, secondary viewers often shifted to become primary ones:

Question: When do you come here?

I have classes in the morning till 11 o'clock and then I go eat lunch, and I'm usually looking for a game of racketball so I come here, start doing homework... I have never payed attention to them (soap operas) really, I just come in here every afternoon, and I saw they had them on, so I just come in here to watch them... I don't know, I just, some of the stuff is pretty stupid, you just watch a couple of them and you see what's happening. And they always leave you hanging, so you always have to come back to see what's happening.29 (male undergraduate student)

Both primary and secondary viewers in university locations, summarized their motives for viewing television on campus for either of the following reasons:

(1) Preference and attachment to a particular program--most often a soap opera but often other programs as well.

Question: Do you watch this program regularly?
Yeah, I always make a point to watch General Hospital. It's my favorite soap.30 (female graduate student)

Question: So what would you watch there?

Bugs Bunny (laughs apologetically). It's around four thirty, and I come to see it every once in a while when I could... Sometimes they have the Merv Griffin on. I don't watch that show.31 (male undergraduate student)

I used to be here at 8 o'clock in the morning. They'll have Good Morning America here. I watch that.32 (female undergraduate student)

This type of motivation is parallel in nature to the "content" category of viewing gratification in the uses and gratifications literature described in the first chapter.

(2) As a time filler--most often students viewed whatever was on at a time.

Question: What do you watch here?

Usually after practice, I'll watch M*A*S*H, sometimes Barney Miller ... cause I wait for my brother, and that's something to do.33 (female undergraduate student)

I don't come here to watch. I come here to drink and cool off after exercising, so I just watch. Relaxation. It attracts attention.34 (male graduate student)

This group of motivations parallels both the contextual and exposure per se type gratifications.

The program preferences versus time filling functions of television viewing on the campus locations was also reflected in the division between primary and secondary viewers. Most primary viewers were also content oriented; they came to view a particular program and left immediately afterwards, creating, what many viewers labeled humorously: "rush hour" or "evacuation time." The secondary ones, however, were
context and/or exposure-oriented. Naturally, as has been mentioned before, the two groups could become easily fused, and the dividing lines were far from being clear cut.

Since student-viewers had been observed more often and had manifested more predictable behaviors, it is possible to describe types of viewers, regardless of their specific campus locations. Four viewer types can be offered from the data collected: the leader, the follower, the challenger and the observer.

1) The leader. The leader was always a primary viewer, well versed in the program's plot and characters and eager to share his/her knowledge. The leader, often a permanent figure in a location, was many times surrounded by friends or other viewers who by then had turned into acquaintances. When alone, the leader would initiate conversations more willingly than the others present, and would be the first to respond to strangers requesting program related information. Overall, the leaders were characterized by three qualities: knowledge about the program, willingness to share it, and enthusiasm over doing so. Except for sharing information about plot development, leaders would also be involved in loud guessing as to further developments, speak to the television characters, and complete their sentences before they did; they would glow with pride when they guessed correctly and be cheered for it by other viewers. They often had complementary sources of information, such as magazines and television talk shows which they would use to support their theories about the future direction the program might take.
Leadership of the nature described above was most noticeable during soap opera viewing, where knowledge of plot and familiarity with characters was advantageous for a more fulfilling viewing experience, and therefore was a desired and respected commodity. Yet, similar leadership had been also encountered during sports programs, special events and other miscellaneous programs.

Contrary to any prior conceptions, this leadership was often limited to the task at hand—making sense and enjoying the program, and quite often, leaders were quite shy outside of the viewing situation, such as during interviews.

It should also be emphasized that leadership was often temporary, during a certain segment of a program, after which the leader seemed to fade away and a new leader to emerge.

(2) The Follower. As in other social situations, there are no leaders without followers. Followers were usually identifiable by their attentiveness to any of the leader's moves and in the nature of their verbal output. Followers were by no means passive viewers: they were often active conversation mates, but were most of the time engaged in asking the questions and in approving or confirming information received in response. While a few permanent leader-follower couples had been encountered, many of the followers were complete strangers to their leaders. As it became clear, after a brief exchange, who was well-informed, followers would start directing questions and comments to that potential leader, providing him/her more opportunities to indeed exhibit knowledge and through this process enhancing the unspoken recognition of his/her leadership. While this may seem to be a complicated
process, it was surprisingly a brief one, with leaders emerging unexpectedly, yet strongly, to the point that conversation from across tables and seats would gravitate toward his/her direction and flow back and forth from there.

(3) The Observer. A third type of student-viewer was the observer. Often seated in a secondary viewing area, observers were relatively quiet viewers, initiating no conversation. However, when followed briefly, it became very clear that these viewers were constantly and alertly observing other viewers. In interviews with two female observers, the following responses were received:

Question: Do you usually sit in the same place?
...that's why I enjoy sitting in the back table, because I like to look at people, like right now, you know, look at them, it's getting into a real thing now, they are talking across tables, and they are in the front of the lounge, and some days when the soap opera is real hot, you see people, I mean, it's like a comedy out here. (Question: does it bother you?) Oh, no! I like it!... there is something about the soap opera that you watch it and at the same time watch everything that's going around it.35 (female graduate student)

Question: Do you do anything else while watching?
I usually just sit and watch other people's reactions to the show, that's kind of fun to do... Yeah, like if they're going to have a murder on television, people go "woo!". (imitating with laughter)...I figure that if I watch them, somebody else must be watching me (laughs).36 (female undergraduate student)

When approached by strangers for information, observers turned out to be well informed and exhibited leadership potential. Under the right set of circumstances—such as being approached by strangers for information and responding in a manner which encourages continuing the conversation—observers had been observed to take a leader's role.
The Challenger. The challenger was typified by a tendency to make unapproving quite often, hostile remarks about the program viewed and its viewers. However, the challengers, as distinguished from non-viewers who make similar comments in passing, were well involved in the program observed. This challenging phenomenon was especially noticeable among viewers of soap operas, for at least two quite obvious reasons: first, most of the university public viewing was indeed of soap operas and therefore the data available on these programs is the richest. Secondly, stereotypes of soap operas in the general public, as will be discussed later, seem to be laden with misconceptions and a negative overtone. Viewers might be caught between the resulting social pressure and their private attraction to the programs. The loud challenging could well be one form of self-defense mechanisms. The viewer enjoyed the program yet protected his self and public image by constantly making negative comments and disassociating himself/herself from the program viewed. This phenomenon may best be understood as role distance (Goffman 1973) where the challenger defined himself/herself apart from the role he/she were apparently playing, exhibiting "some measure of disaffection from, and resistance against the role." (p. 131.) Such was the extreme case of one black male student, quite athletic looking, who was constantly bouncing a basketball in front of him during the program and holding a constant conversation with a leader, also a black male, familiar to him. The following is an excerpt from a free-flowing conversation, transcribed from a concealed tape-recorder:
Challenger (male): This could kill anybody... they should have done a study, if men didn't work and women worked, they'll have sports on all the time... I can't understand how this could interest anybody.

Leader (male): A lot of guys watch it! I like it.

Challenger: Some guys maybe, but not a lot of guys.

Leader: A lot of guys watch soap operas.

Challenger: I don't. They could be doing something else. A lot of guys watch this?

Leader: This is good! A lot of guys watch it, I bet all the guys at ... watch it.

Challenger: I don't know if cable TV has soap operas.

Laughter at ad for a movie. Program resumes.

Challenger: Rick drinks tea all the time.

Leader: He comes to work in jeans every day.

Challenger: And turtle neck.

Leader: The only character in their life, man, being a Quartermain, man.

Challenger: I like Hutch and ah, Luke.37

As the conversation unfolded for an additional half an hour, it became perfectly clear that the challenger, who could not understand "how this could interest anybody" was quite a regular General Hospital viewer for at least a year. He was well versed in details of the program, such as the one quoted above, that the actor named Rick always wore a turtle neck and preferred tea.

Some of the challenging behavior was directed toward particular segments of the plot or certain characters. The following examples were also recorded directly.
Male student (black): So now we are going back to base one.

Female student (white): I am sick of this Ice Princess.

Male student: I am too.  

Male student 1: They should come back to the Dock.

Male student 2: This is boring.

Male student 1: Pretty good.

Male student 2: nodding with disagreement

Male student 1: You don't like it?

Male student 2: Eh.

A black male student enters the room, smiles to a sitting black female student and sits next to her. He asks her about the program. She updates him.

Male student (black): Oh, how stupid.

In another incident, a white female viewer who was already interviewed earlier, was commenting about how angry and sick she was of the "Island" episode. She kept discussing her feelings and telling me "write it down!"

As boring, sickening or stupid the program or part of it apparently was for some viewers, no challenger was ever observed to get up and leave it in the middle.

The four types of viewers described above—the leader, the follower, the observer and the challenger, were not always clear-cut types, neither do they exhaust the variance of viewer behavior. Many viewers exhibited a little of the behavior of a few types at once or were not easily classified to either one of them. The four types have been presented as an organizational scheme in order to better capture
Bar Customers

Bar customers in this study, as was indicated before, constituted three major population groups: university customers (students, young faculty members and alumni), working class customers in neighborhood bars and businesspersons and waiting relatives in the airport bars. Since certain demographic characteristics of these populations were offered in the description of the bars, as study locations, the emphasis here will be on patterns of behavior most often encountered in bars.

Similar to student viewers, bar customers can also be divided into primary, secondary and tertiary viewers. Primary viewers sat at the counter and around the tables and booths closest to the television screen, some by themselves, and some with company. They were the most attentive viewers, drinking as they watched, and easily being carried away into conversation among themselves, with bartenders and with strangers. Primary viewers were the ones most involved in the sports event: they cheered, clapped hands, jumped up and down, patted each other's backs and yelled back to the television set. They usually occupied their seat for the entire broadcast time, occasionally moving around to exchange greetings with acquaintances at other parts of the bar. Most of the primary viewers were men: young 20s and 30s in the university bars, 30s and 40s in the neighborhood bars, and of mixed ages in the airport bars. Primary viewers also constituted a rare combination of the most permanent clientele and the accidental visitors. The first group felt at home enough to be in the center of attention and the second was lonely enough to seek the company and the action.
Secondary viewers were often couples and groups of customers sitting around tables and in booths; rarely did single customers do this. In addition to the inconvenience a counter presented to group interaction, there also seemed to be an understanding that the counter should be reserved for serious viewers. Secondary viewers exhibited an ability to shift back and forth from involvement in the game, manifested in game-related conversation, and some of the primary viewers' behaviors, to totally unrelated conversation with their companions. While some of them came to the bar with the intention of watching a sports event together, others were involved in unplanned viewing. As a result of the makeup of the group on one hand, and their interest in the sports event on the other hand, secondary viewers would gradually lose the balance between viewing and talking unrelatedly, and turn into more of either primary or tertiary viewers.

Tertiary viewers were customers still in the viewing and/or hearing zone, yet they hardly glanced at the television set. Some came in couples or groups, some were by themselves, eating or reading a paper, as well as drinking. While at times of programs with little interest to the audience, the majority of the viewers were of the tertiary type, at other times, such as major sports events, this type would almost disappear. One either got involved in the game and in the social processes occurring around it, or one did not stay very long in the bar.
Employees

Employees constituted the fourth major group of viewers. Bartenders were both males and females in their 20s and 30s, all white. They were employed at the particular bar studied for a couple of months to a few years. Store employees on the other hand, were mostly white males of all ages, only a few of whom were black. Their working experience ranged from a couple of months to 20 years in the particular media department studied. While they differ greatly in their working circumstances, bartenders on one hand and store personnel on the other hand, shared much of the same approach to viewing television during working hours. Both groups accepted, without exception, that viewing television was a recreational activity which did not go hand in hand with professional performance.

Question: Do you get to watch any television at work?

I'm not interested. I don't watch. They pay me to work not to watch television. Not being sarcastic, but that's basically it. (male bartender)

I think it's difficult to watch when you are working. You may not see someone coming in. (female bartender)

I watch some soap operas at home, but here, I don't plan on watching. They don't like us to watch up here, you know. It's hard on them...because they pay me hourly over here. (male store associate)

I got a few that I like to watch, but it's hard to watch when you are running back and forth, and we got a big area to cover. It's hard to watch... If there is something you really are interested in—that's the day you are busiest (laughs), and before you can look at it, it's over and you missed it... Once in a while you get glimpses of it. You never get an hour to sit down and watch it. Unless you take your break. (female store associate)
Three different groups of reasons for not viewing television during working hours came up during interviews: first, a recognition that one was paid to work and not to watch, that viewing television might create a bad image for the employee personally and for the bar or store generally. Second, viewing television during work was impractical: it was hard to concentrate both on a program and on potential customers. Viewing television endangered the employee's readiness for business interaction with customers. The third set of reasons involved lack of interest in television in general, or the specific programs available in particular.

Regardless of these reasons, employees also admitted to viewing television often during work:

Question: But you do watch television?

Television helps, it does help me too, breaks the monotony. I can look at television and see what's going on. (male bartender)

Question: Do you watch any of the sports programs yourself?

Sure, I'm a big sports fan... I find myself getting bits and pieces when it's busy. I wait on the people first and then watch the television. (female bartender)

Question: Do you watch any television here?

Well, I have one soap--The Guiding Light (with a smile as if confessing). It is a quiet time of day, so by that time I am caught up with work and out of boredom I started watching. It doesn't take first priority, but usually there is no problem. During weekends I sometimes watch the ball games. I keep one eye on the set and still look around. (male store associate)

Lots of time we have an hour without a customer, and you get so bored, you walk back and forth and walk in circles, so not to run crazy you watch television at times... The commission people, doesn't cost them anything to stand around and watch, doesn't cost the store anything. But there is time when there is nothing else to do when you don't have customers. In other departments,
they always have something to do, something to hang or sort. Up here it is not like that. You don't get that many items and they are big items... I don't make a point of it. If I'm not doing anything, I'll turn it up. But I don't avoid customers for that hour (laughs)... Most of television I don't watch that much. After a while you get bored with it too. Looking at it all day, you don't watch it anymore.50 (male store associate)

When prompted for more sincere answers, employees turned out to be quite similar to their customers, in terms of viewing motives: they watched when they were bored and had nothing else to do, and they watched when there was a particular program they cared for. But, again, as the customers were aware of their primary reason for being in the location, so did employees, and even to a greater degree. Serving customers was always, with no observed or reported exclusion, the first and most important task at hand. Viewing television thus became a "role release" (Schwartz 1973, p. 19) or as also known as "subordinate involvement" (Goffman 1963), which was sustained by the employee

only to the degree, and during the time, that his attention is patently not required by the involvement that dominates him. Subordinate involvements express... In their style a continuous regard and deference for the official, dominating activity at hand. (p. 44.)

Therefore, all viewing behavior was terminated at once upon any minor clue that potential customers had entered the department or the bar. An almost ritualistic behavior of quickly taking off the inappropriate "viewing face" (face, in Goffman's terms, 1954, 1967) and putting on the professional "face" had been frequently observed in such cases. Store associates, caught viewing, would immediately check their ties, pat their suits, stretch their necks and put a friendly--yet eager--
expression on their faces, as they would be walking toward the customers. Bartenders quickly got hold of a towel and vigorously wiped the counter in front of them or cleared an ash tray as they approached the customer. Goffman (1971) described this kind of behavior as "orientation gloss."

When an individual is present with others, he often feels obliged to be engaged in some recognizable activity patently occasionally by objectives defined as the official ones for that time and place. When the task he is actually performing gives rise to expressions that cast doubt on this commitment to the current situation then he may try to act out suitable evidence. (p. 130-131.)

These face-saving maneuvers seemed also very similar in nature to what Goffman (1963) described as being caught "out of face" in a public place, such as while day-dreaming or snoozing off.

Another group of employees which slightly differed from the bartenders and the store associates, was that of other store personnel such as the store's management and detectives. These employees would often visit the media department to view a particular program—usually a sports event or a critical media event. In contrast to the local associates, they were not required to maintain their professional faces on one hand, yet they were much more at home and enjoyed a greater degree of freedom than any of the customers. They would walk straight to the set of their choice, sit or stand in front of it in couples or groups, greet the local associates and exchange a few program related comments. Without the obligations toward customers on one hand, and those of being customers on the other hand, they often became the most involved viewers, constantly talking among themselves. As the viewing period ended, they left as quickly as they appeared, fixing their suits
In the process, as if saying: "Fun time is over. It's back to work now."

In conclusion, employees in bars and stores were a very peculiar audience. They had almost unlimited access to television, yet formal rules and a general perception of the role of television in their working environment highly restricted their viewing options. Due to these circumstances, their viewing behavior during particular programs—major sports events and special media events—became an enlightening contrast.

So far, this chapter has offered a description of the public places in which viewing television had been studied, and the viewers encountered in these places. In order to complete the picture, a discussion of the programs viewed by the above viewers in the above public locations will now be offered.

**Programs**

Almost every type of program was viewed, to a greater or lesser degree, in public places. People watched game shows, news, talk shows, situation comedies, cartoons, movies, action-drama programs, and so on. Overall, however, three major groups of programs emerged as the focus of public viewing: soap operas, sports events and special media events. While on the surface these appear to have very little in common, these three program types were somehow able to attract the greatest and most involved audience in public places. In this chapter, each program type will first be examined individually. A summary of the common aspects of viewing these programs will conclude the discussion.
Soap Operas

Soap operas were the programs most viewed in the university locations, and the second ones in the shopping locations. Soap opera viewers were greatly involved in viewing and often expressed strong feelings of attachment to them, such as the ones recorded unobtrusively while viewers were immersed in the program:

Oh good!
I love it!
It must be good!
Oh, that's so good!

One very talkative young female viewer in a store said: "Five more minutes, it's not easy. Oh, I can't wait till three o'clock everyday."51

The reasons for viewing soap operas in public places as were related to me, represent many of the categories suggested in the general literature, as summerized by Buerkel-Rothfuss with Mayer (1981): The viewer is looking for a "friend," for trivia, for humor. Viewing relieves an otherwise boring afternoon. Soap operas are also viewed as a form of escape from reality, for excitement, companionship, relaxation, help with problems, and the emotional satisfaction gained from intimate involvement with the lives of the characters (p. 109.)

A few examples from the study may help illustrate this variety:

Question: Can you tell me why you watch it?

I immerse in day dreaming. (laughs) I love romance. I started when I was discouraged with school and used to view television all day... and that's how I started... I like to live in a world of fantasy, as they say. It happens to me even with stupid movies.52 (female graduate student)
Question: Which one's your favorite?

I particularly enjoy watching General Hospital when I get the chance because I first became aware of the plot line through my roommate who had been watching it... I became involved in the plot line--I'm also--one of my innumerable hobbies is theater. I was very interested in the way they were developing the plot. It's different than what my original conception of the standard soap opera would be. The plot development is very interesting, and of course, the story line is interesting.

(prompt about enjoying the program) Oh, of course. All theater is there for enjoyment. All kinds of theater communication is there to try and get something across but also the enjoyment has to be there or you get bored.53 (male graduate student)

Question: What do you like about it?

I like it because it's always moving... It's a challenge to watch the actors try to get a line without muffing around (laughs) and the production has been going up a lot in soaps lately... You get involved with it, it's like a big book and you read it again and again, or it's like a favorite movie...54 (male undergraduate student)

It's ah, I think it's the humor in the show that I like, the characters of Luke, and the other characters, they have a lot, I just find it entertaining and an aspect of that, somehow, it's not always as serious as the other soaps are, and it's kind of low key at times, you know, they always have the major plot going on but it somehow always comes back and goes back and forth, and I kind of like that... To me it's usually the television I watch is usually because I'm interested and watching is relaxing, I don't take it seriously, I don't put down another show that is not, you know, geared to a high intelligence, you know, crowd of people. I won't put it down, but to me watching a soap is just relaxing.55 (male graduating student)

Oh, it has a, well there are two probably. One, it gives me a way of looking at the way other people view life--looking at life through someone else's eyes, the writers or the directors or who ever, which is always an interesting, stimulating type of thing to do. It also has a lot of good, well-written drama. It brings out the "what would I do in that situation?" feeling of "yeah, that is a good, tender, loving scene and I probably would do the same thing." It's drawing out of emotions which all good drama should do. I don't think it really fills any needs but it brings to the surface thoughts that I might not have otherwise taken a couple of minutes to think about, which it does every once and a while.56 (male graduate student)
Soap opera viewers in public liked the plot lines, characters and humor in the programs. They enjoyed the complexity of the script and the opportunity to escape and relax. Some described themselves as "hooked" on a particular soap, others as being left hanging after each episode which required continued viewing.

Many of the permanent viewers made an effort to view the program two-three times a week for a long period of time, while others viewed almost every day, regularly. The circumstances surrounding being introduced to the programs originally were very similar to most:

Question: Can you recall when you started watching soaps?

I never watched soaps until I got to college. I was the only one that had a TV and everyone would come to my room to watch soaps every day from 12:30 to four. We used to drink and just socialize.57 (female store associate)

I got hooked on soaps about five or six years ago. I used to work at a night club and watch during the day.58 (male undergraduate student)

I had a break between practicing and like swimming. That was just something to do. Just go to the lounge and watch it. We had a television in our high school lounge...On your lunch hour you could watch it.59 (female undergraduate student)

Well, when I really started is quite a way back to when Mom was watching General Hospital. She'll watch in the summer, you know, I never made a point to watch it, but it was sometimes on when I was home, that's you know, how I kind of picked up, you know, the characters of it, and ah, I really kind of started watching All My Children. When I was home for lunch during high school, she was always watching it at that time, and sometimes on a rainy day I'll just leave the TV on and somehow picked on General Hospital.60 (male graduating student)

Viewers of soap operas in public, it seemed, got introduced to the programs by viewing mothers during the high school years, roommates' pressure during early college years, or by accident (e.g., when working night shifts). While they had long been away from these original
circumstances, they kept watching the programs with a sense of loyalty that very few other programs can claim for themselves.

In contrast to my expectations, these viewers, even the most devoted of them, denied quite vigorously any soap's influence on their life outside the viewing situation. While their reports do not by themselves constitute evidence against theories of the cultivation effects of soap operas (see for example Buerkel-Rothfuss with Hayes, 1981), the viewers' personal perceptions are of great interest. All interviewees claimed to have a clear distinction between viewing time and their world. As one male student said:

Usually I just get up. I've been sitting there for an hour, so it's time to do something.

Question: Is there any problem with that for you? Do you have any transition time when you think about what happened and what might happen?

No, it seems like it just stops. 61

Most insisted that they did not get emotionally involved with the characters and that they hardly spent any time thinking about the programs in general and the characters in particular when they were outside the viewing situation. "I don't think about it afterwards. It comes in one ear and goes out the other one," 62 said one female graduate student.

The only related behavior mentioned quite often was exchanging information about the program with other people, such as friends, workmates and even neighbors, most often when one of the interactants had missed an episode.
Some of the thinking done about the programs, was of a surprisingly unexpected nature—analyzing soap operas as a form of art. One interviewee, a male graduate student in engineering sciences, shared with the interviewer his views of soap operas:

The enjoyment is produced, I think, particularly in this particular show, by the fact that the suspense element is very well done. In some soap operas and plays and other dramatic experiences I've watched, the elements are not as well tuned. The cliff-hangers and things like that are not as well put together. There are, of course, problems with the way General Hospital does it, but that's inherent in all types of theater. I think they do it very well. I think they inspire a following in such a way that it works out very well. It's very enjoyable to get the emotional feedback from the show, which is, of course, the idea of most communications for entertainment in the theater, at least in my opinion. That's why we go out and go to a theater, we watch television, we watch movies and such things like this... The whole idea of the writer is to make it predictable enough that people will enjoy predicting, but not too predictable so that there would be no fun in it... The continuing drama, which is becoming, in my opinion, more and more common in night time theater, is not all that difficult to follow if you miss a couple of days, especially if you learn to follow the way the writers are writing. If they get a new writer, if they change the plot, it gets very confusing. You get very upset if you miss a day. But it's too bad if you kind of know more or less how things are done. Like in General Hospital, they always have a dramatic incident at the last scene on Friday, always. And you always know that, so if you can try to see it that day or you ask somebody what happened that day and you always know more or less how to pick it up after you view it long enough. It's just like viewing a play. There's always some intricate element at the end of the act and Shakespeare always put a concluding sonnet at the end of his scenes. It's just a matter of educated viewing...\(\text{male graduate student}\)

This particular viewer was indeed, an educated one, and by no means were abstracts of his monologues presented here to suggest that he represented the average viewer. Yet, other comments made less lengthy and maybe not in as articulate a manner as his did suggest that the student audience of soap operas was not as television-naïve as one might be led to believe from publications in popular magazines.
The clear-cut ability, at least consciously, to distinguish between fantasy and reality, combined with a high degree of sophistication that some of the viewers exhibited, revealed a different kind of soap opera fan, far removed from the stereotypical bored, uneducated housewife: that of an intelligent, educated viewer who enjoyed soap operas for what they are—entertainment. This study, therefore, provides additional support to a recent study by Greenberg et al. (1981) where a random sample of viewers were interviewed through a phone survey. Their conclusions were that:

The data challenge the assumption that the soap fans are passive acceptors of soap content as realistic or useful, and that they are intensively involved and that

Although heavy viewing of soap operas does influence a woman's perceptions of reality and utility of the television world and influences some of the behaviors that accompany her television viewing, the transition of that into real-life behaviors is unconfirmed. At this time, soap operas appear to be a source of amusement and entertainment with very little carryover into an individual's other activities. (p. 25.)

Again, Greenberg et al.'s conclusions, as well as these from the present study, do not necessarily mean that soap operas do not, or cannot affect viewers' perceptions of reality.

Similarly, Compesi (1980) concluded that:

The gratifications identified by viewers of All My Children in this study differed principally from earlier studies in the rather low level of importance that was accorded to the reality exploration/advice gratification... They see the program more as an agent of entertainment, something that is fun to watch because of the continued involvement with the characters and plot. The program also allows them to use it as a "coin of exchange" both as an agent to facilitate social interaction through group viewing and as a stimulus to conversation with friends. (p. 158.)
Since the sample of respondents consisted of solicited volunteers, which potentially, even though not specifically mentioned, could have included viewers in public places, the present study lends additional support to the concept of a "new soap opera audience" (new, not necessarily chronologically, but rather in terms of previous conceptions). Both income and educational level of respondents were higher than the Nielsen data for the time of study (for example, 67% completed some college education in comparison to 22% reported by Nielsen). This demographic information may suggest that the solicited volunteers study might have indeed touched upon a somewhat different audience than the Nielsen national sample of home viewers, possibly similar to the present study's audience.

The viewers in this study, were nevertheless aware of publicly held opinions of soap operas, some of them (like in the case of the "challengers" described above) were still struggling with their own conformity to these stereotypes. One particular interview with a graduating male student is a case of interest.

Question: Anybody makes any laughing comments about it, putting it down?

Oh, sure, all the time.

Question: And what kinds of things will they say?

Like, you know, your brain will disintegrate (laughs) or something along these lines, you know.

Question: Does it bother you?

No, I used to almost feel that way when I was watching All My Children. I never would have said to any of the guys that I was in high school with that I watched that.

Question: Why, because that was something feminine to do?
Yeah, but now, I'm not that concerned about it, you know, maybe that's more mature, or whatever, I'm not that worried about what people think about my masculinity or whatever, if they are questioning it or not, I don't have to respond to it.

Question: You also see other male students who watch it?

Sure, it seems like it came out more in the open, that it's OK for males to watch.

This particular viewer, however, refused to be interviewed in a group situation, and very obviously lowered his voice any time an acquaintance passed by us during the interview.

Additional evidence for "anti-soap" views and for this personal struggle was also apparent from numerous incidents of unexpected confrontations during viewing of the programs themselves. Here are a few episodes recorded in the Sports Lounge:

White female student enters, walks to snack machines, comments loudly to another white female student standing across the room, "Don't tell me you're a part of this!" The second student responds with an apologetic smile and shrugs her shoulders.

A white male student enters the crowded lounge. Looks around and says loudly to self, "It's insane." Nobody responds.

A white male student enters and crosses the room to pop machines. Another white male student that has been standing there for a while says to him, "They are all watching soap operas," with a put down tone. The other student responds, "They should sell tickets to this place." They both stand and watch.

A white male in his 40s, carrying a pile of papers and looks like an instructor crosses the room and briefly comments to a white female student who is watching attentively, "So this is where you spend all your time!" She responds, "Relaxing after hard work," in an apologetic tone.

A white male in his 50s enters the lounge and walks to the snack machines. He spots a white female student sitting on the sofa, and says to her, "God, look who is here! Where have
A white female student enters the lounge and talks to a very involved white male student, "If you are watching the soap operas I'll kick you." A second white female student not addressed to responds for her, "What a way to talk!" The non-viewer continues, "Yes you are! I'm disappointed." The male responds this time, "What can I say," as if caught committing a crime. The female continues, "I thought you graduated last year." Male responds, "No." 70

In none of the cases described and many others observed, was an attempt made at seriously defending viewing soap operas or at suggesting some sincere reasons for watching them, except for "just relaxing" which seemed to pass as a good excuse for being involved in such a degenerating activity. A simple answer such as, "I really enjoy this program" was never overheard during the many hours spent in that particular setting.

Viewing soap operas in public places therefore, exposed viewers as such, to public knowledge. Whereas in the privacy of their home, viewers could have completely enjoyed the "disreputable" programs in secrecy. This was particularly the case of permanent viewers in a familiar environment, such as the students on campus or secretaries in their offices, who exposed themselves to criticism from friends, colleagues, bosses, professors and the like. Apparently, this price was willingly paid for at least two different reasons. First, and the most obvious reason, is the accessibility of television in the public location, when viewing at home was not a realistic option (e.g., when away from home, during working hours, or when set at home was out of order). While this is an important reason in itself,
considering the lack of any research attention to soap viewing away from home, it is the less interesting of the two reasons. Viewing soap operas in public places added a new, totally absent aspect to the home experience—that of viewing with a group.

After a relatively short period of observation, it became quite apparent that viewers in a public place were not a mere aggregate of individuals, each involved in his/her own viewing experience, but a social collective, as short a living as it was, with a shared group spirit. Viewers talked a lot among themselves, shared information, opinions, personal feelings and the like with total strangers. They laughed heartedly together at humor, giggled at commercials, clapped hands and cheered, moaned in shock and sighed in great relief together. They gathered around temporary leaders and with a sense of responsibility to each other, passed essential information around the room. Besides sharing accumulating knowledge about the program at hand, they also shared certain codes of behaviors and rules of viewing, and sanctioned any violation attempts.

While this was strongly the case in university locations, it was also surprising to find out how quickly a few strangers in a department store created a group atmosphere. In one case, for example, I found myself viewing a soap opera with one white female shopper in her 60s, one white female in her 20s from a nearby office, and one black female in her 20s from out of town, all of whom seemed to have nothing at all in common. Everyone was watching quietly, sitting relatively close, yet ignoring each other. Suddenly, the black female made a relatively quiet and insignificant comment. This comment was
Immediately picked up by the other participants. Soon all four
viewers, including myself, were involved in a lengthy conversation
about the characters and the plot. We shared information with each
other and laughed together at the humor. The experience was so
social in nature, that participants parted with greetings and sincere
smiles as the program ended.

Students often admitted in interviews that at home they hardly
viewed soap operas with as much involvement as they did in the lounge.
In an interview with a permanent leader, he reported:

Somehow it's different in that, if I'm alone at home I'm usually
reading something, I don't sit and watch.

Question: Can you explain it?

I don't have any explanation. Like I watch it but I'm usually
doing something else. I'm sometimes, you know, reading a
magazine, reading a magazine off and on.

Question: Is it less entertaining to you when you are by
yourself?

It seems like it.71

In response to a question about watching soaps at home, a male under-
graduate student said:

No, not really, I'm usually doing something, go fishing or
something, 'cause if I have something to do, math or something,
then I can watch television and do it. But if I'm at home
and don't have homework to do I usually go outside. I figure
it's a waste of time to watch them (laughs).72

Other interviewees chose viewing in the lounge over viewing at home:

I'd rather be here. (Question: Really?) Yeah, I think any
show that's not a soap opera, I'll watch alone. But there is
something about the soap operas that you watch it and at the
same time watch everything that's going on around it.73 (female
undergraduate student)
Other interviewees expressed the "fun" aspects of viewing with other people together with the practical reasons, such as having additional sources of information available within the group. Yet, other viewers had no permanent preference:

It depends on my general mood at the time. If I'm in an introspective mood, it bothers me a little to be around a lot of people in general... If I am in an outgoing, friendly let's-go-do-something type of mood, it doesn't bother me at all." (male graduate student)

Overall, the picture emerging from observation and interviewing suggests the following pattern: Viewing soap operas in public places was first of all a second best alternative to viewing at home. No interviewee admitted to leaving home to go to a public place to watch soap operas (which was indeed the case, as we will find out later, for another group of programs). Yet, when circumstances led viewers to watch programs in public, they discovered a new dimension of experience, otherwise absent from their home viewing: the social dimension. This aspect of viewing in public places will later be developed more fully.

In summary, it should also be emphasized that the study of viewing soap operas in public places has uncovered a large audience of attached and loyal viewers, otherwise not accounted for by the available research literature. While hints about the growing attractiveness of soap operas to the college-age group can be found more recently (see for example, Greenberg, 1981), and even one study that focused on that group (Buerkel-Rothfuss with Hayes, 1981), very little is yet known about this group, and even less about viewers in offices,
stores and the like. For one thing, home surveys such as the recent one by Greenberg (1981), naturally only tapped the female audience, while the evidence in this study suggests that a non-negligible male audience was part of the permanent soap operas viewing audience. Most store associates in media departments were males, many admitted to keeping track of what's happening on certain soaps; at least a third of the student audience consisted of males, and bartenders reported that male customers quite often requested to watch the soaps. Many contributing factors may be responsible for this male-viewer phenomenon: The changing nature and appeal of the soap operas, the gradually changing images of what it means to be a female or a male in American society and therefore needs often associated with women and supposedly satisfied by soap operas are now salient to men too, and a host of other possible reasons, all of which are at this point nothing more than speculations. It would seem to me at least, that certain audiences can only be studied in public places, and without them, our understanding of the soap operas phenomenon cannot be complete.

Sports

Another category of programs most often viewed in public places is that of televised sports events, cutting across all locations studied. Due to the different make up of the audiences and the technicalities of the locations, as has been discussed before, not very much data were collected from interviews with viewers themselves, but rather from informants and direct observations. It should also be kept
in mind that viewing sports on television is an almost completely neglected area of research, and therefore no theoretical base was available in which to anchor the observations made in this study. These observations however, seem to lend support to some preliminary findings of a recent study by Gantz (1981), on students' viewing of televised sports as will become clear throughout the following discussion.

Sports events were clearly the focus of all viewing activities in the bars, as had been documented earlier. Less expected was the central role of televised sports in the department stores. All store associates, with no exception, highlighted this phenomenon:

They just stop on their way by, usually it starts with maybe two or three older men that their wives are shopping, you know, they are Browns' fans or Bengals' fans, and they don't want to shop, they want to come and watch the game, you know, we get them, and when that starts, they start gathering like a Ohio State-Michigan game, I think last two years we put a large screen down at furniture, because we get a lot of people stop by. They fill up the whole department and we won't be able to sell.75 (male store associate)

The attractiveness of major sports events resulting in an almost freezing period of time for the business seemed to be shared by all shopping locations studied.

Very little is known about the motivations for viewing televised sports in general. Gantz (1981) summarized the sociological literature and he suggested some of the motivations for being a sports fan. These include:

Being a fan serves fantasy and escape functions and can be a pleasurable experience, particularly when one's player or team performs well. Fans can vicariously experience the struggles and successes of the athletes. Being a fan fulfills needs of sharing, feeling, and belonging. It provides an acceptable outlet for exhibiting emotions and feelings. (p. 264)
While being a fan and actually being in the audience of a game is not quite like watching the game on television, it is suggested here, that viewing sports in public places is the second best thing for actually being there. The rest of the discussion attempts to provide evidence for this assertion.

In contrast to viewing soap operas in public places, which was done out of convenience, viewing sports events in public places, and in bars, in particular, was many times a planned choice. While soap opera viewers would not leave their home to look for a public set, a sports fan would. They would plan to meet a group of friends or go by themselves to a particular favorite bar to watch a program they could have watched at home.

A middle aged man interviewed in a department store, responded to a question about watching television in bars:

Oh, yeah, usually on Saturday afternoon, usually baseball or football. Could be basketball too, I guess. (Question: Does anybody else watch?) Everyone watches. We usually are five or six or seven friends, eating a sandwich, drinking a beer and watching the ball. We go there purposefully to watch with friends. Pretty crowded, except for the summer, like now. Usually it's kind of a ritual, every Saturday afternoon, people come and go. (Question: What else do you do while you are watching?) Talking, discussing and fighting, yes, fighting (laughs). Same bar every time.76

A female bartender in a campus area bar reported:

Especially people from out of town, like the Holiday Inn, will come here. They have a set in their room, but they would rather come here to watch. It is not as exciting by yourself. Who wants to watch alone in the room.77

The functional motivations for viewing sports in public places became very apparent in observing viewers' behaviors. Jumping, cheering, clapping hands, patting shoulders, knocking on counters, whistling,
laughing, booing, yelling and screaming—were all common and accepted behaviors in bars and in university locations. Most noticeable of all, however, was the verbal interaction among viewers, very often even among strangers, which could best be understood in the context of bar life in general.

Public drinking places are open regions: those who are present have the right to engage others, acquainted or not, in conversational interaction and the duty to accept the overtures of sociability proffered to them. (Cavan 1973, p. 143)

Television, it seemed, magnified this accessibility.

Question: What do you talk about?

We talk about the game, talk about players, scores, who will win. If we are in a bar together we won't talk to people unless there is a reason. The tube is a reason.78 (male viewer in a bar)

Question: Do people talk to each other?

If they sit at the counter, they'll start talking to each other even if they are strangers. Television is often used to start a conversation—like they'll be watching something and they'll start to talk to each other.79 (female bartender)

Question: Do you talk to others about the game?

When working, I talk with customers about what happens in the game. I talk to strangers too. Usually talk about the National Football League in general, or if watching baseball, talk about the playoffs, etc., things like that.80 (male bartender)

Information requests and exchanges, discussion of action, disputing tactics of coach or decision of the referee, suggestions for different tactics, discussion of other games, personal information on the players—all were common topics of conversations in all of the locations studied. In addition, viewers were often engaged in talking directly to the screen, giving advice to coaches, applauding one player and cursing another, and the like. Viewers were also observed to
respond to action on the screen directed to the live audience—such as to cheerleaders and camera men, and to count loudly, as a group, steps counted or seconds left to play.

Viewing sports in public was also differentiated from almost all other program viewing by the working personnel behavior: both store personnel and bartenders were observed to join the viewing group and get involved in social interaction which placed them in the role of co-viewers rather than the local bosses.

In all of the above ways, a participant in such a social gathering could not avoid the feeling of almost being at the scene of action. The more important the game was to the local audience—the closer was the atmosphere to what one might expect happens in reality.

Gantz (1981) suggested that:

The uses of televised sports appear to be similar to motivations for attending sports events in person. The TV sports exposure experiences may approach being as multifaceted an experience as actual attendance... While viewers may not root quite as vociferously, the player/team identification and vicarious participation elements associated with actual attendance seem to be important underlying ingredients in the TV sports exposure device. (p. 273)

Combined with his observation that "(r)espondents were least likely to be expressive when alone, most likely when in the company of friends" (p. 272), there seems to be enough reason to explore the phenomenon of viewing televised sports in public as an attempt to get closer to the real experience. It can be at least argued, that viewing television sports in public places contains important social aspects absent from the private home viewing (except maybe for the cases of "viewing parties" held at home).
Special Media Events

The third and final category of programs to be discussed here is that of special media events. Fortunately, the period at which this study was conducted, contained a variety of such events, all of which had been studied in the field: the release of the American hostages from Iran and President Reagan's inauguration ceremony (January 20, 1981), the Space Shuttle Columbia's first landing (April 14, 1981), the attempted assassinations of President Reagan (March 30, 1981) and Pope John Paul II (May 13, 1981), the Royal Wedding in England (July 29, 1981), Space Shuttle Columbia's second launch (November 12, 1981) and Space Shuttle Columbia's second landing (November 14, 1981). What defined these events as "special," or "critical," was their symbolic or actual importance to most of the world in general and the American people in particular, the uniqueness and rarity of the event, and the elaborate live coverage it received from the media.

A few of the events were planned and staged (as the Space Shuttle's launch and landings, the Royal Wedding and the inauguration), therefore clear research decisions could have been made in advance. The other events (hostage release, and assassination attempts) were unpredictable and immediate adjustments on my part as the investigator were necessary. Similarly, there was a difference between viewers who could have planned to watch or not watch a staged event in a location of their choice, while at other times were caught by surprise like the rest of the population.
Special media events were always turned on, in all public locations studied. Whether this was a result of human curiosity, or civil responsibility or a combination or both, every store or bar employee took for granted the legitimacy and importance of tuning into these television programs.

The two types of special events turned out to indeed present a different pattern of viewing in public. The staged events had a great attractive power. During the President's inauguration, an audience of around 30 students, which peaked to 50 during the actual ceremony, occupied the Sports Lounge. At the main dining area, 40 viewers were watching the preparations for the Space Shuttle's first landing; this peaked to over 100 during the last few minutes before it touched the ground. Around 20 viewers were watching the Space Shuttle's second launch in a department store and over 60 were watching it land, in a different department store. The absolute numbers of viewers in themselves are not very meaningful; they depend on the particular location and the time of the day. Yet, a comparison to the average number of viewers in these locations at other times, definitely suggests an unusual aggregation of viewers for each of these locations.

The Royal Wedding in England, although highly staged and advertised, was an exception, in that it hardly attracted any audience in the department store. A few reasons could have accounted for this observation. First, the actual wedding took place a few hours before dawn (local time) when most public places were closed and most potential viewers in bed. Second, the coverage of the wedding, while presenting a glimpse
of a fairy land, seemed to lack one top moment of excitement toward which the show was building. Rather, it seemed to proceed through a long process consisting of little procedural steps made by different royal figures. Third, and maybe the most important, as symbolic and romantic as the wedding might have been, it probably bore little if any relevancy and concern to most of the American audience in comparison to other special events.

The crowding viewers of the first type of special media events, gravitated to a central viewing focus, even in the stores where many television sets were available. They stood quietly very close to each other, briefly exchanging information with friends and strangers. The composition of the audience was typical to the specific locations, with one significant difference: the Space Shuttle events, in all three cases, attracted a much larger male audience. This was notably the case in the dining room, were female students consisted of less than one-quarter of the audience, even at the actual landing minute. In the stores, the presence of management personnel, store detectives and associates from other departments was significantly more than at any other time, excluding major sports events.

As the highlight of the event got closer, the audience grew in size. The tension in the air manifested itself in attentiveness, nervous giggles, sudden quietness and the like. The Space Shuttle's landings were greeted with an outburst of clapping hands, cheering, and lots of movement as if the "spell" was gone. Most of the audience was gone within minutes afterwards.
The President's Inauguration was a special case of interest, since it was entangled with the drama of a critical event of the second nature—the hostages' release from Iran. While the 40 students present during the inauguration listened quietly and respectfully to the new President's speech, they used other parts of the ceremony to let the apparently building tension to steam off: laughter at Barbara Walters, humorous comments about Mrs. Reagan and Mrs. Bush, mocking imitation of the singer performing the national anthem and the like.

Viewing such critical media events in public shared a few characteristics with soap opera viewing: while accessibility to the set was the major reason for viewing in public rather than at home, it did nevertheless add a different aspect to the viewing experience, the sense of shared identity. One male store associate was describing his experience in the following way (not prompted):

> It is interesting to be here when something is happening, like space shuttle. You are sharing it with the group. There wasn't a single space here, about 200 people. Everybody cheered and clapped hands when it landed. It was nice to be together, the support, you know, it's been so long since we have done something like this. Also it's like a group that gathers. Like when the Pope was shot.

Similar feelings were expressed during the Presidential Inauguration and hostages' release.

The unpredictable critical events presented a different behavioral picture. Since the peak of the event has already occurred (e.g., assassination attempt, hostages are about to be released any minute), most of the television coverage was an attempt to bring the viewers more and better information on the event, confirm or disconfirm earlier reports and provide interpretations and emotional support.
In summarizing the most famous critical media event in American history, the weekend following the assassination of President Kennedy, Peled and Katz suggest:

According to Mindak and Hursh (1965), television functioned during this period to restore faith in the stability of society; to confer status and legitimacy on the leadership who were attending to the succession; to discourage would-be demonstrators and activists by gluing them to their television sets; and to provide emotional catharsis. Examining this and other studies, Schramm (1965) concluded that crisis sharpens the need for (1) information, (2) interpretation of the why of what happened, and (3) assistance in shaking off the shock and expressing grief. (1974, p. 50.)

Such coverage, for which the assassination attempt on the President is especially enlightening, was extremely repetitious in nature. Much of the coverage seemed to basically serve a need to fill vacant time, with very little new information released at any given report. As a result, viewers in public places tended to stop for a brief update on the situation and continue on their way rather than to stay (and gravitate more viewers). On the other hand, viewers already present when a stranger approached, and in particular, permanent viewers such as the store associates and bartenders, found themselves playing the role of information resource. Customers or passing shoppers would stop briefly and ask about the latest information released and sometimes would discuss the event with other viewers. Store associates from other departments would call on the phone for information. Management personnel, detectives and other more mobile staff would wander in and out frequently inquiring about the news. The media department's associates and the bartenders did not seem to resent this role. Somehow sharing this information became both their responsibility as well
as their privilege.

Some critical events observed took quite awhile to reach saturation point, when all information necessary had become public knowledge. Yet, viewers, especially permanent ones of soap operas, often became impatient with this process. One female student reported about viewing the soap operas during the day of the Pope's assassination attempt:

They kept interrupting it like every 15 minutes to give some news brief, and they showed us the same clip and everybody was getting really upset. (Question: Really?) Because it was interrupting General Hospital and All My Children and One Life to Live, and they'll just go, "Take it off!" (laughs)!

Similar reactions had been observed to other special news reports. In one incident, a special report slide interrupted a soap opera unexpectedly. One female student sighed, "Oh, God." In response to the briefing that the court found former President Carter to behave constitutionally on a certain matter, she responded, "Big deal, we can wait till 6 to hear that!!!" Another female student commented back to her, "They probably did it on purpose."!

From the above discussion, it is suggested that soap operas, sports and special media events programs, share at least two characteristics.

First, overall, these three program types were the most often viewed in public places, with exposure to other program types being very sporadic and unpredictable.

Second, viewing soap operas, sports and special events programs in public seemed to facilitate and stimulate social interactions. Whether it was sought after consciously (such as was often the case in bars), or
was a circumstantial result (such as during soap operas and critical events), social interaction became an important aspect of viewing these programs in public places. It is the purpose of the following chapter to explore the phenomenon of social interaction as the major contextual consequence of viewing in public places.
FOOTNOTES

1 Observation notes LD department store, July 16, 1981.

2 Interview with male store associate, PM department store, July 27, 1981.

3 Interview with male store associates, SM department store, July 24, 1981.

4 Interview with male store associate, PM department store, July 27, 1981.

5 Interview with male store associate, PM department store, July 27, 1981.

6 Interview with male bartender, SS bar, October 19, 1981.

7 Interview with male bartender, BB bar, October 19, 1981.

8 Interview with female bartender, VC bar, October 19, 1981.

9 Interview with male bartender, BF bar, October 19, 1981.

10 Interview with female bartender, BF bar, October 19, 1981.

11 Interview with female bartender, A bar, January 25, 1981.

12 Interview with male bartender, BF bar, October 19, 1981.

13 Interview with female bartender, A bar, August 10, 1981.

14 Interview with female bartender, A bar, August 11, 1981.

15 Interview with female bartender, BF bar, October 19, 1981.

16 Interview with female bartender, VC bar, October 19, 1981.

17 Interview with female bartender, A bar, January 25, 1981.

18 Interview with male store associate, LD department store, July 14, 1981.

19 Interview with male store associate, LD department store, July 14, 1981.

20 Interview with male store associate, SM department store, July 24, 1981.
Interview with male store associate, PM department store, July 27, 1981.

Interview with female store associate, SW department store, August 12, 1981.

Interview with male customer, LM department store, July 15, 1981.

Interview with female customer, LM department store, July 15, 1981.

Interview with female customer, DL department store, August 17, 1981.

Interview with female graduate student TR, Sports Lounge, August 12, 1981.

Interview with female undergraduate student H, Sports Lounge, August 12, 1981.

Interview with male graduating student J, Sports Lounge, August 4, 1981.

Interview with male undergraduate student TH, Sports Lounge, August 10, 1981.

Interview with female graduate student TR, Sports Lounge, August 12, 1981.

Interview with male undergraduate student TH, Sports Lounge, August 10, 1981.

Interview with female undergraduate student H, Sports Lounge, August 10, 1981.

Ibid.

Interview with male graduate student K, Sports Lounge, August 5, 1981.

Interview with female graduate student TR, Sports Lounge, August 12, 1981.

Interview with female undergraduate student H, Sports Lounge, August 10, 1981.

Recorded in Sports Lounge, August 12, 1981.

Recorded in Sports Lounge, July 1, 1981.

Recorded in Sports Lounge, September 15, 1981.

Recorded in Student Union A, July 15, 1981.

Recorded in Sports Lounge, August 19, 1981.

Interview with male bartender, F bar, October 19, 1981.

Interview with female bartender, A bar, August 11, 1981.

Interview with male store associate, LW department store, August 12, 1981.

Interview with female store associate, SW department store, August 12, 1981.

Interview with male bartender, SS bar, October 19, 1981.

Interview with female bartender, VC bar, October 19, 1981.

Interview with male store associate, LM department store, July 14, 1981.

Interview with male store associate, LW department store, August 12, 1981.

Recorded in LM department store, July 14, 1981.

Interview with female graduate student A, Sports Lounge, July 29, 1981.

Interview with male graduate student S, Sports Lounge, September 14, 1981.

Interview with male undergraduate student J, Sports Lounge, August 10, 1981.

Interview with male graduating student J, Sports Lounge, August 4, 1981.

Interview with male graduate student S, Sports Lounge, September 14, 1981.

Interview with female store associate, PM department store, July 26, 1981.

Interview with male undergraduate student J, Sports Lounge, August 10, 1981.
59 Interview with female undergraduate student H, Sports Lounge, August 10, 1981.

60 Interview with male graduating student J, Sports Lounge, August 4, 1981.

61 Ibid.

62 Interview with female graduate student A, Sports Lounge, July 29, 1981.

63 Interview with male graduate student S, Sports Lounge, September 14, 1981.

64 Interview with male graduating student J, Sports Lounge, August 4, 1981.

65 Observation notes, Sports Lounge, November 17, 1981.

66 Ibid.


68 Observation notes, Sports Lounge, July 1, 1981.


70 Observation notes, Sports Lounge, September 22, 1981.

71 Interview with male graduating student J, Sports Lounge, August 4, 1981.

72 Interview with male undergraduate student TH, Sports Lounge, August 10, 1981.

73 Interview with female graduate student TR, Sports Lounge, August 12, 1981.

74 Interview with male graduate student S, Sports Lounge, September 14, 1981.

75 Interview with male store associate, LW department store, August 12, 1981.

76 Interview with male customer, LM department store, July 15, 1981.

77 Interview with female bartender, VC bar, October 19, 1981.

78 Interview with male customer, BF bar, October 19, 1981.
Interview with female bartender, A bar, August 10, 1981.

Interview with male bartender, SS bar, October 19, 1981.

Interview with male store associate, LD department store, July 16, 1981.

Interview with female undergraduate student H, Sports Lounge, August 10, 1981.

Observation notes, Sports Lounge, July 2, 1981.
CHAPTER IV

THE ROLE OF CONTEXT OF VIEWING TELEVISION

The preceding chapter pulled apart the phenomenon of viewing television in public places and offered a description of people watching television programs in different public places. The present chapter offers a complementary treatment of the data: the role of context in viewing television as an overall explanatory theme.

Three aspects of context are discussed: The physical aspects, the communicative aspects and the psychological aspects of the viewing context.

The Physical Aspects of the Viewing Context

There are some obvious, yet important, ways in which the context of viewing television dictated numerous aspects of the viewing experience. For example, the appropriate clothing for viewers to wear ranged from business suits at the airport bars to swimsuits in the Sports Lounge. Clothing in itself was only one aspect of the general appearance: business suits did not lend themselves easily to sitting on the floor or stretching feet on a table. The costumes one has on, as Goffman argued, dictates to a large degree the range of behaviors deemed appropriate. The role of the context was also apparent in the power of the public function of the location to determine the range of behaviors in which viewers would be engaged. Eating at
the dining room while viewing was the most common secondary behavior yet eating in the media department in a store was unacceptable. Reading, studying, writing notes in the Sports Lounge was part of the viewing behavior, yet, very out of place in the bar. Loud cheers and yells in bars were common, yet restrained behavior was the norm in the department store, and so on. Respect for the official, dominating, publicly known and accepted function of the location explains these conforming behaviors.

Seating arrangements in the different locations played an important role in encouraging or discouraging grouping or transiency: In the bar, viewers were seated close to each other, focusing on one television set and there was little need to move or wander around. The department store, on the other hand, had no seats, no drinks, many television sets and a few eager sales people. As a result, the viewers as a whole, moved around and stayed for only short periods of time.

The particular location therefore, due to its physical and social arrangements, and for its known public role, had direct bearing on what people viewed, for how long, under what conditions and with what range of behaviors. The location seemed to also dictate under what circumstances breaking the norms would still be acceptable, and to what degree.

The above are more straightforward ways in which the physical aspects of the context manifested themselves in the viewing experience. These aspects also set the stage for various expectations of
participants from the particular location. These expectations were especially noticeable in the communicative behavior of viewers, to which we now turn.

The Communicative Aspects of the Viewing Context

The most observable and consistent sociological aspect of the public context for viewing was the role television served in the initiation and sustaining of social interaction among participants. This observation was so overwhelmingly supported across the people, places, and programs, that an elaborated treatment of this phenomenon is called for now. Throughout the discussion it should be kept in mind that the bulk of conversation in public places was between complete strangers.

That television was often responsible for initiating conversation among strangers was frequently related to me by informants:

Question: Do people talk to each other?

We get lots of talk between strangers. When you have the television on it stimulates the conversation, gives them a common point because it's there.¹ (female bartender)

We get many males--if they sit at the counter they will start talking to each other, even if they are strangers. Television is often used to start a conversation. Like they'll be watching something and they'll start talking to each other. It would start out to be a comment about the news or about the game, and then they find out they are waiting for the same flight, and they'll sit and talk for about half an hour or so and they leave together.² (female bartender)

Every other place people are like making a point to walk right by each other, not even eye contact, real concentration. But
In this lounge things get a little more social.

Question: Do you think it's because of the program?

Oh, yeah! It's the same thing over in the Union, in that television room. People will sit there and ignore each other until 3 o'clock comes on, and the same people that have been sitting there for an hour will turn around and start talking to people two tables across from them about General Hospital. That sure is a real phenomenon. (female graduate student)

Question: Do you ever talk about it (soap operas) while you are watching it?

Yeah, lots of times.

Question: With people that you know who sit next to you?

No, just people who are watching it. When I've been watching it two or three weeks and that guy comes: "What's going on?" and the guy sits back trying to find out what's going on, trying to catch up with the story line. (male undergraduate student)

Question: The woman that was sitting next to you, do you know her?

No, she just started talking to me.

Question: Started talking to you? What did she say, can you remember?

She asked me what the name of the show was, and I told her All My Children, and she asked me how often I watch it, and I told her three times a week, and she goes: "I don't watch soap operas too often," and then she started asking me like who the person was on television, what was her role, and then she had to get up and she was all upset that she had to leave.

Question: Does it happen often, that people you don't know approach you and ask something about the program?

Oh, yeah. (laughs)

Question: Yeah, does it bother you?

No, they kind of have a right to find out. (female undergraduate student)

Question: Do people talk to each other?
Oh, yes, not really talk, but if someone has a great play or a touch or something, then and there one will yell to the other guy: "that's a good hit!" and the guy yells back.

Question: How about among themselves, do they talk at all?

Not lots, they'll talk to anybody during the football game.7
(male store associate)

Conversations were usually initiated by an information request from either a newcomer or other present viewers. The questioning person would either refer the question to a particular person, mostly when it was a familiar one, or throw the question to a group and wait for a response, often coming from a leader. Information exchange of this nature was either terminated immediately or turned out into longer conversations.

Viewers talked among themselves about numerous topics related to television in general and the program viewed in particular. The following categorization of topics emerged from unobtrusively recorded conversations: program related conversations, television related conversations, para-social interaction and unrelated conversation.

A. Program Related Conversations

Conversational exchanges focusing on specific program information and necessarily entangled with viewers' interpretations of the information delivered. Program related exchanges were of the following types:

(1) **Information requests.** One viewer asked another for more detailed information, clarification, or confirmation.
Examples of information requests were numerous:

Female student 1: Did Jeff get off the program?
Female student 2: Yes.\(^8\)
Male student: What's the name of this soap?
1: **General Hospital.**
Male student: Oh, yeah, that's a good one.\(^9\)
Female student 1: Are the papers signed already?
Female student 2: Shrugging shoulders.\(^10\)
Female student 1: What has she got in her hand?
Female student 2: I don't know.\(^11\)
Male student: Is that supposed to be the head Cassadine man?
1: Yes.\(^12\)
Male student 1: Are they still in the island?
Male student 2: Nods. positively.\(^13\)
Male student: What's she sorry about?
Female student: They were arguing...oh, weren't you here?\(^14\)
Female student 1: What happened? What organization?
Female student 2: Answers in detail.\(^15\)
Male student: Excuse me--what happened with Cassadine?
Female student: He offered him 48 hours.\(^16\)
Female student: He doesn't have the statue?
Male student: Nods negatively.
Female student: So who has?\(^17\)
Female student 1: Who is that? The private investigator?
Female student 2: I think so.
Male student 1: How did he get away from Cassadine?
Male student 2: Scorpio helped him.
Male student 1: Who is he?
Male student 2: Private detective.
Male student 1: For who?
Male student 2: For Monica.
Male student 1: Monica Quartermaine?
Female student: She is the devil.
Male store associate 1: Who is that?
Male store associate 2: Is that Luke's old girl friend?
Female store associate: Oh, no.
Female shopper: What's the score?
Male shopper: mumbles unclear response.
Male shopper 1: Has Archie Griffin been in the game at all, have you seen?
Male shopper 2: Only a little bit.
Male shopper 1: Who's this dude?
Male shopper 2: answers unclear name.
Male shopper 1: Who is he?
Male businessman: Who's winning?
Male viewer: gives unclear response.
Traveling father: How much time they have?
Male in bar: gives unclear response.
Mother: Oh, here they are.
Daughter: Who?
Mother: The prince and his bride.
Daughter: What are they doing?
Mother: Getting married. Are they married yet?
I: Yes, they are leaving on their honeymoon.
Female student: Is the actual inauguration at noon?
I: I don't know.
Female patient: Wasn't another girl just named Miss America from Ohio?
I: It was last year, wasn't it?
Female patient: Oh, no, no, just a month ago.

From the quantity and variety of information requests gathered, it became clear that information requests were the most common conversation starters and the least risky form of social interaction. Information requests were almost never ignored—viewers seemed to either feel a responsibility or a privilege to share the information they held with other viewers, giving a new meaning to the concept of the "public air waves." Information requests were usually very specific, as were the responses. Apparently, both participants assumed the existence of a shared body of knowledge pertaining to the program viewed. Therefore the very exchange of information requests and responses served as a "pass word" for the participants to the shared world of viewing.

(2) Plot related information. This form of information exchange focused mainly on past and present plot lines, with leaps to the future when participants were informed by other means of communication (such
as magazines or word of mouth). These exchanges often flowed naturally as a result of an information request. Examples were many:

Male student: This is a strange combination. I don't know if she is doing this for a reason.30

Male student: Did you see it Friday?

Female student: No.

Male student: They shot O'Reilly.

Female student: Oh, so this is a big one.

Male student: Nobody, no doctor.

Male student: Still alive.

Female student: Who?

Male student: O'Reilly. They are taking her to the hospital, but there is no doctor.

Female student: I'm still trying to figure out what's Monica trying to do to Kathy Sommers.

Male student: You can tell she is just going to go like this (imitates a dying person's head falling at the second of death).

Female student: Is she going to make it?

Male student: No.

Male student: He is getting a bit wild there.31
Male student: No Luke and Laura today.

Female student: He was a hit man. He killed lots of people.

Male student: Oh, yes.

Female student: Oh, my God! (reaction to an unexpected kiss)

Male student: So much for objectivity.\(^{32}\)

Male student 1: He says: "When it rains, it pours."

Male student 2: Oh, doesn't it ever.\(^{33}\)

Male student: Is anything going on?

Female student: Joe was talking to, what's her face, what's the name of Heather's friend?

Male student: Sara?

Female student: Sara.

Male student: She got the gun with her.

Female student: unclear

Male student: Looks bad for Heather, huh?

Female student: She looks pretty down.

Male student: giggles

Male student: They showed Hutch with shorts and tennis shoes on. What does he need tennis shoes on for.\(^{34}\)

Female student: They are dead.

Male student: But it was so quick!

Female student: Ray, they are gone. No way. They are gone.
Male student: No, wait. What's he doing?

Female student: He is still at Rose's.

Male student: Does he have the gun?

Female student: No, he gave it to her.

Male student: She always has make-up—perfect. She's been in this island for how long? A month or so? And she still has perfect make-up.35

Male student 1: Heather is going to crash.

Male student 2: I really want to see her nailed down.

Female student: She won't.

Male student 2: She probably didn't even do it.36

Male student: Does he know he is his wife's private investigator?

Female student 1: No.

Female student 2: He does.

Female student 1: How does he know?

Female student 2: He read in the note. It said something about Susan Moore.

Female student 1: It said Susan Moore?

Female student 2: It said S.H.37

From examining the above illustrations it becomes clear that many of the plot-information exchanges were chains of information requests and responses through which the plot line was revealed.

Although no direct quotes from bar conversations were available, it is important to note that similar discussions of the televised sports events took place there as well. Viewers exchanged information about the game tactics and moves, about the steps leading to the present
situation, the technicalities of the game and the like. Interpretation and evaluation of all these issues were integrated parts of the discussion.

(3) Character-related Information. Opinions about particular characters in the episodes viewed, usually were flavored and modified by personal feelings viewers had for these characters. The following examples illustrate this very point:

Female student: He never opens up his mouth when he talks. He talks like this (imitates). 38
Female student 1: No one can be so stupid.
Female student 2: That is pretty dumb.
Male student: She has an authentic dumb accent. 39
Female student 1: Oh, oh! He is disgusting.
Female student 2: He makes my skin shiver. 40
Male student: She is a bitch, but she is sly. 41
Female student: Oh, poor Laura. (mockingly) 42
Male student 1: He is the guy his wife hired.
Male student 2: He sure is sloppy. 43
Female student: Idiot. What a stupid idiot. 44
Female student: How can she kiss that bloody mouth! 45
Female bartender: She doesn't look that hot with this dress. It's the wrong length. 46

Comments were very personal in nature, similar to the kinds one would make about real acquaintances. Characters' appearances and actions were discussed, as well as their personalities and motives. In a similar fashion, sportsmen, astronauts, presidents and their
family members, newsmen and others were described and evaluated while viewing their actions on television. During the Inauguration ceremony, for instance, Mrs. Reagan and Mrs. Bush, as well as Barbara Walters, were central conversation themes. Their appearance in particular, attracted many comments, as well as their relationships to the other central characters.

(4) **Guessing.** Guessing and stipulating about further plot development was a fourth type of conversation focus, often involving rewards when the guess proved correct, such as compliments and cheers by other viewers and personal satisfaction. Guessing differed from plot related conversation, in that no additional source of information was employed. Participants depended totally on their imagination, common sense and past experience with similar programs in making references to possible future development. Some of the guessing was verbally supported by a line of argumentation offered by the guesser, while at other times, it seemed to result spontaneously from tension build-up. The following are illustrative:

Female student: Oh, what’s going to happen.

Male student: She is probably going to get mugged. 47

Male student: I think she is going to shoot Jeff accidently because he is going off the show.

Female student: Oh, that will be perfect. 48

Female student: I wonder how long is this going to go on.

Male student: I have the feeling it's going to be quite a while. 49
Male student: It's so predictable! All they need now is that the doorbell will ring (which indeed it does and everyone burst into wild laughter; the student grins with pleasure).50

Male student 1: Probably they'll get it on Friday.

Male student 2: Maybe, eh.51

Male student: I think she is going to die, or she'll say something vital, and they'll have to figure out what she meant.52

Male student: You know who he is! He is the policeman from (unclear). (The guess turns out to be correct.) What a memory! (Full of pride.)53

Female nurse: They'll lose him.

Female student: You think so?54

Male student: I bet they will have both hostages released and swearing in together, see who they'll cover.55

During sports events, guessing focused on score predictions, tactics the coaches might take and the effect of the score on other teams or the entire season of that particular sport. During special events, most of the guessing resulted from efforts to elaborate on the interpretation provided by television and to suggest possible implications for the United States and other parts of the world. Possible lines of action that the President might or should take as a result of the hostage release and how would-be assassin of the President was going to turn out to be part of a revolutionary conspiracy, were two examples of such topics of conversations.

(5) Reality-application. Finally, in the program related conversations, there were exchanges applying television information to personal reality. Television content was verbally limited to one's personal knowledge of the social world around him/her in everyday life.
The expectations voiced were for television reality to coincide with everyday reality and to be evaluated according to similar criteria.

Not many incidents of this type were observed:

An actor talks about a 4th of July picnic scheduled for the following television day. Female student: Yum, but tomorrow is only the third of July.  

An actress is involved in planning a murder. A male student talks to two female students next to him: The only thing you girls think about is killing.

A boy actor is going to work with his nurse mother. Male student: I can just see my mother if I told her I wanted to go to work with her!

Loud laughter at actress pointing a gun: Look at Laura! Like Patty Hearst!

Actors decided to go to a fancy restaurant on the spur of a moment. Female student: What a life! Who goes to a restaurant for dinner like this in the middle of the week?

Responding to the English Prince and Princess exchanging marriage vows, including "for rich and for poor," male shopper: Sure, poor.

Male store associate: Wouldn't you like to be in her (Lady Diana) shoes?

Female shopper: Oh, no.

Male store associate: With all the money and fame?

Female shopper: She has no privacy.

Female patient: God, she can't sing, this girl.

Male patient: Huh?

Female patient: She's Miss Ohio.

Male patient: My daughter was. No, not Miss Ohio, Miss....

Female patient: She's going to compete for Miss America. That's her talent. I could sing better when I was a year old.
In all the above illustrations, viewers applied the television story to their realm of experience. The 4th of July in a television script was expected to coincide with the real 4th of July, and the way actors spent their leisure time on the screen is compared to one's own. A television killer represented "you girls" of the real audience, and an actress with a gun was associated with a real person in a similar scene.

These incidents, suggestive as they may seem, represented a very small portion of the verbal output observed and recorded during this study.

B. Television Related Conversations

This second group of conversation topics consisted of interactions focusing on television in general, even though they were held while viewing a specific program.

(1) Television programs in general. Discussion of a program as a totality, regardless of specific episodes in it, fell under this category. For example:

Male student: What's the matter with you girls, you can't get it right!
Female student 1: I missed that one.
Female student 2: You miss one program and you don't know what's happening.
Male student: Or sometimes you watch for a week and nothing happens.
Male student: Someone has to advertise General Hospital is on and everyone goes "pssssss." (Imitates)65
Male student 1: They are all watching soap operas.
Male student 2: They should sell tickets to this place.66
Male student: On, no. Not these two again.

Male student: This story is as the same they used in (unclear name of program).

Female student: And what happened?

Male student 1: Pretty good.

Male student 2: Nods in disagreement.

Male student 1: You don't like it?

Male student 2: Eh.

Male student 1: Do you like Dallas?

Female student 1: You know, I don't think I've ever seen him.

Female student 2: I haven't either.

Female student: After the whole summer!

Male student: The whole summer we had to put up with this. Really, it lasted the whole summer.

Female visitor in hospital: Here is a TV, your own TV. You can watch it until the soap operas come on.

Girl: Dad said we can watch TV.

Mother shopper: Right here.

Male shopper 1: Oh, God, oh God!

Male shopper 2: That's the end of another year for Cincinnati.

Male shopper 1: Oh, God!

Male in bar: It's all game, all game, all game, it's all play--Is that better?

Businessman: What soap opera do you have?

Female bartender 1: General Hospital.

Female bartender 2: (to me) Don't ask me, I don't know any of their names. Have you seen this Maximillian show? It's new. I don't remember what time it's on... I lose track of time
when I get home.  

Boy: I woke up at 4:30 to see the whole wedding.

Mother shopper: Yes, you really did.

Boy: Yes, I woke up at 4:30.

Male shopper: These men! They got to look more and more like women. I can understand the clothes, but the hair.

Mother shopper: They are going to live it up with commercials tonight.

Commercials aroused comments too, often humorous, as did previews for television and theater movies. Some of the comments such as the last one, expressed a certain degree of sophistication in understanding programming decisions and exploitation of program type. Therefore interactants discussing television programs in general, presented themselves as viewers capable of making inferential leaps from a particular point in time and place on the screen to the larger world of television programs.

(2) Television as a medium. The realization that television is a medium of communication and that another life exists behind the screen world, was manifested by comments such as the following:

Male student 1: She said they shot 3 days a week.

Male student 2: It may be different for different shows.

Male student 1: That is terrible to get.

Male student 2: They got their $25 a day.

Female student: I wonder how much Leslie Webber got paid to lose weight.

Male student: And she's hardly on.
Female student: Continues talking about actress's salary and "Beverly Hills" requirements.  

Male student: I will make a good soap opera writer.  

Female student: Is Alex really dead?  

Male student: Yes.  

Female student: Unless they find a way to defreeze them.  

(giggles)  

Male student: I heard they wanted them off the show.  

Female student: I really didn't like Alex. I did like Tony, however.  

Viewers were therefore capable of both understanding and expressing a variety of considerations operating in the making of a television program. They seemed to be aware of the existence of writers, directors, and other professionals behind the final product viewed and had at least some grasp of the financial and hiring constraints on it. In reviewing this category, it is of special interest to note that such comments went often hand in hand with deeply involved plot or character related conversation (such as the one emerging at the end of the last illustration). Many times conversations maintained both lines of interest flowing in a parallel manner, manifesting the viewer's ability to distinguish between television as a fantasy world and as an industry.  

(3) Set related conversation. Finally, there were isolated comments, rather than conversations, in regard to the television set itself, the quality of the picture, the volume and the like. On rare occasions, a viewer might ask loudly: "Will someone turn up the volume?" and someone sitting close to the set would usually respond.
Set related exchanges were more frequent in stores:

Male store associate: You are not supposed to touch it. Yes, you need to fight over it.

Female shopper: Yes, but then you'd throw us out.86

Female shopper 1: Should we turn it down?

Female shopper 2: I think so.87

Set related exchanges were usually of managing type. While focusing on the technical aspects of viewing, they were underlined by certain agreements, later referred to as rules of viewing.

C. Para-social Interaction

The third category of interactions was that of the para-social kind, i.e., viewers engaged in a one-way interaction with television characters (see Horton and Wohl, 1956). In public places, this was exhibited by direct talk to the television set, cheering, giving advice, evaluating performance of actors, and the like:

Female patient: You can't sing, girl!88

Girl responds to a question on a quiz show: Red Nile?89

Female student: Move quickly, Heather.90

Male student to a group of actors in danger: You are all crazy!91

Male student to actor: Shut up.92

While quite rare during most programs, talking to television characters was very common during sports events, where real people were known to be playing in a real event:

Male in bar: Come on Harold, are you at the other end?93

Male shopper: Come on Cleveland, come on you guys, come on pals, you can do it.94
Male in bar: Get in, get in!^95

Male in bar: Oh, yeah! Come on! Now get him! Oh my... beautiful pass!^96

Other forms of encouraging cheers included:

- Go, go, go!
- All right!
- All the way!
- Come on! Get that sucker! Come on!

Whoos and boo sounds accompanied unfavored characters with disappointed yells of:

- Oh, damn it!
- Shit...
- No way, no way...

As the above illustrations suggest, para-social interactions consisted of single utterances directed to television. Other viewers present refrained from responding, making clear their understanding that television was the one addressed and not themselves. Lack of verbal response from television seemed to be compensated by interpretation of behavior as a form of response. For example, a comment was directed to a football player, who on his part "responded" by a certain game-related move. The viewer completed the "conversation" by evaluating that "response" as being a "beautiful pass" or as "shit." In this manner, an apparently satisfying conversation sequence had taken place.
D. *Unrelated Conversation*

A fourth and final category of conversations held during viewing television in public places were unrelated ones which had no obvious content relevancy to television in general or the program in particular. It was impossible to judge whether these conversations were even somehow inspired by television. Of the more interesting unrelated conversations were the ones interwoven with related ones, where viewers moved smoothly, with no effort and without an interactive cue from one topic to the other. Here are a few examples of this ability:

Female student 1: Where are you from?
Female student 2: Pittsburgh.
Female student 1: Oh, really? I swear to God, I can't understand (the program).  
Male student: Do you have an extra quarter?
Female student hands him one, saying: What's happening to her?
Male student: I really don't know.  
Male student 1: Probably they'll get it on Friday.
Male student 2: Maybe, eh.
Male student 1: What are you doing this quarter?
Male student 2: ...Going to do some bicycling (continues unrelated conversation until program resumes and adds:) Who is he?
Male student 1: Private detective.
Male student 2: For who?
Male student 1: For Monica.
Male student 2: Monica Quartermain?
Female student: She is the devil.
Male student 2: What are you doing in the Fall?
Male student 1: Be here.
Male student 2: Here? She is a bitch, but she is sly.
Male student 1: He got it.
Male student 2: So now we are going back to base one.
Male student 1: I am sick of this Ice Princess.
Male student 2: I am too. So you are not coming home for the holiday? (unrelated conversation continues)

So far, social interaction during viewing television has been broken down into four major categories. While organizationally convenient, the above discussion may lead the reader to incorrectly perceive of this social process as being composed of numerous exchanges of mutually exclusive, pure conversation types. This was not the observed case. The different conversational categories were linked to each other, forming naturally flowing conversations. Most noticeable were patterns initiated by information requests: responses often encouraged plot and character related conversations which, in their turn, set the stage for guessing and reality application ones. Therefore, it seemed that conversations escalated in degree of personal exposure and investments. Information requests were low risk utterances which also served to check the communicative-intent pulse of other viewers. When respondents were cooperative, the opportunity rose for greater investments in the exchange of information. As the conversation thickened, interactants were apparently more able and willing to expose personal aspects of themselves, by making reality application comments and guesses about potential future developments.
Of great interest are also conversations cutting across the four major categories: program related, television related, para-social and unrelated conversations. Interactants' ability to maintain involvement on different levels at once manifested itself in the interchange of related and non-related conversations, of social and para-social ones and of program and television related ones. Such flexibility on the viewers' part provided further evidence for their ability to maintain relationships with the television world, their personal world and the contextual circumstances in which the communication was taking place. In order to illustrate how this social puzzle is patched together, two complete transcripts of analyzed conversations are presented as Appendices A and B. Both had been unobtrusively recorded for a full hour during one particular soap opera—General Hospital, broadcasted every weekday between three and four on the local ABC station. While transcripts may seem long and detailed, their careful examination will hopefully prove helpful in advancing an understanding of the phenomenon.

Stranger Avoidance

An opposite, sometimes complementary, social function of television is that of stranger avoidance. A discussion of subway riding behavior (Levin, et al., 1973) is especially illuminating here: the affording of "civil inattention" to others, complete absorption in "subordinate involvement" giving a "non-show," respecting taboos against physical contact and the like, which serve to protect the mutual vulnerabilities of the passengers.
...We have found that regulations regarding behavior in subways aim primarily at protecting unfamiliar individuals from accessibility to each other during periods of suspension of main involvement, or when main involvements are passive. It should be noted that, in similar situations, as in the waiting rooms of doctors and dentists, the proprietors provide seating arrangements that are unconducive to eye contact between patients and to the beginnings of face engagements, as well as reading material that permits the establishment of subordinate involvements as a means to keep people apart and protected from each other. (p. 216.)

The function of television in the efforts for stranger avoidance dominated the hospital setting. Television in the hospital lobbies, and sometimes in the other locations, was used to privatize the public space in an efficient manner. Sometimes, a viewer would orient himself/herself to the television set and highly concentrate on the screen. In this way, he/she protected his/her eyes from being caught by others, as an introductory move, forcing him/her to open up for interaction. At other times, viewers were observed to use television to conceal their own investigative tactics: they would glance around curiously and intensively, stare at other participants to a degree of presenting a threat to their privacy, yet, they quickly, almost naively, resorted to concentrating on the television set every time any of the people observed tried to respond in a social or defensive stare.

When an individual finds that his action may be construed as an encroachment or threat of some kind, he often provides gestural evidence that his intentions are honorable—illustrated in the use of scanning to cover staring... (Goffman, 1971, p. 132.)

This form of 'circumpection gloss,' to use Goffman's term (1971), was often used by me in order to avoid store personnel or to provide an alibi for staying around for too long. A third form of avoidance,
was the use of television to fill in dead conversation minutes between groups of people, such as visitors with patients.

All three avoidance functions presented very little opportunity for serious and attentive viewing. The viewers' behaviors suggested that they were too preoccupied with avoidance strategies to actually get involved with the program.

The discussion above concentrated so far on the communicative functions of viewing television in public places as determined, to a great degree, by the physical aspects of the viewing context and the presence of others. A complementary discussion that needs attention is that of the psychological aspects of the context, to which the discussion now turns.

The Psychological Aspects of the Context

The psychological aspects of viewing in public places are greatly interwoven with the social ones and therefore difficult to extract. Their examination, however, reveals and highlights additional angles for understanding the phenomenon at hand.

It was suggested in the first chapter, that some attributes of behavior vary less among individuals than they do across settings. Viewing television seems to be one form of behavior for which this theorem applies.

Gratifications of Viewing in Public

Viewers' television-related uses and gratifications were studied in this research in a variety of ways: self-report, analysis of behavior,
analysis of unobtrusively collected verbal output, and informants' reports. Overall, the three major uses categories established in the literature emerged in this study quite clearly: viewing in public places was done for a particular content, for the exposure per se and for its context. What is of interest, however, is that certain viewing contexts were dominated by a certain viewing gratifications category, regardless of the program viewed or the viewers' personal characteristics. An examination of each group of locations reveals this point.

1) Content gratifications. Viewing soap operas in student locations was mostly dominated by a personal attachment, whether habitual or not, to a particular television program. Here too, the social context added a new dimension to the viewing experience, as well as the satisfaction of exposure per se needs. But overall, the students' locations provided the perfect outlet for content preference functions. This was in particular true in the Sports Lounge with its highly predicted routines, no authoritative control and the grouping of other program attached viewers.

2) Exposure gratifications. Viewing in stores and the hospital was highly sporadic, mostly serving exposure per se functions: waiting (for a patient, a visitor, a shopping wife, a car being fixed), passing time, relieving boredom, relaxing for a brief time and the like. Little concern was therefore payed to the content, attention span was limited and viewers were easily willing to give up viewing and satisfy these needs in any better way that came along (including being interviewed for research).
3) Context gratifications. Viewing sports in bars was first, and above all, gratified by the social context. Naturally, most viewers were also highly interested in the particular content and were also trying to relax, to "let off steam" and pass the time. However, all of the above functions could have been gratified at home too, yet, only the bar context provided the desired satisfying social context.

This picture of three types of contexts, satisfying three separate groups of needs, is of course over-simplified, as can be easily demonstrated in the case of television content with strong appeal—such as special events, when the interest in the particular broadcast overrode all other needs.

During the launch and landing of the Space Shuttle, shoppers and store associates alike stopped all buying and selling activities and devoted their complete attention to the program's content, ignoring all other purposes for their presence in the location. The question why they were watching it there was almost irrelevant. They would have watched it in any other place, in any other social and physical arrangement. Similarly, students watched the Presidential Inauguration and hostages' release in the Sports Lounge regardless of their usual viewing habits. This exception to the rule only serves to illustrate the rule, that certain contexts seem better suited to satisfy certain television needs.

The explanation to this phenomenon lies in the contextual differences between the three location types. Bars in their very nature invite sociability. The presence of television seems to only
magnify this expectation. Stores, on the other hand, discourage grouping. As a matter of fact, excessive social interaction between shoppers endangers the efficiency in which salespersonnel can handle their job. In a sense, television-centered social interaction in stores happens despite the nature of the location rather than as a result of it. The Sports Lounge is a recreational location. Television is there to serve the students with a minimum set of obligations on their part. No wonder viewers in this location, more than any other one studied, were so content oriented. Their viewing circumstances were the most favorable for content gratification.

**Home versus Public Viewing Gratifications**

When a comparison of viewing at home to viewing in public places was made, an interesting line of responses emerged, providing further support for context-gratifications suitability.

1) **Content gratifications.** Viewers in content-specific contexts, (such as university locations) were not able, in general, to make an imaginary choice between home and public viewing, and claimed they would probably view the same program at home anyway. However, they all admitted, that while the content needs of viewing would be probably equally gratified, satisfaction of the two other uses groups would differ greatly. They stipulated that (1) exposure per se would be more enjoyable due to existing control over noise level, ability to engage in a wider range of secondary activities, and to relax more, etc., and (2) the context would be less enjoyable, in this manner acknowledging the social dimension of the viewing in public.
2) **Exposure gratifications.** Viewers in contexts which specialized in satisfying exposure per se needs (such as stores and hospitals), almost always preferred the home situation, where they could choose programs of their liking, and could enjoy privacy and comfort. In short, "passing the time" viewers, would rather be home, where they can satisfy needs of content or context in nature.

3) **Context gratifications.** Viewers in context of social desirability, such as the bars, made a specific choice. They would rather be where they chose to be than at home, mostly due to the social context and the freedom of behavior they enjoyed in that context.

The context of viewing, therefore, seems to facilitate certain uses and gratifications of television viewing on one hand, and to diminish other functions of television on the other hand. This is not to deny that an occasional viewer of a soap opera was just relaxing after class, and that a viewer in the bar cared less about the Super Bowl. Nevertheless, over all, the context of viewing television seems to play a fundamental role in the viewing experience.

In conclusion, the physical, communicative and psychological aspects of viewing were presented in this chapter in order to demonstrate how multifaced the phenomenon of viewing television is and how dependent on particular contexts. Context, however, plays one additional role for viewers. It dictates the rules of viewing in public, to which the following chapter is devoted.
FOOTNOTES

1 Interview with female bartender, VC bar, October 19, 1981.
2 Interview with female bartender, A bar, August 10, 1981.
3 Interview with female graduate student, TR, Sports Lounge, August 12, 1981.
4 Interview with male undergraduate student, Sports Lounge, August 10, 1981.
5 Interview with female undergraduate student H, Sports Lounge, August 10, 1981.
6 Interview with male store associate, LW department store, August 12, 1981.
7 Interview with male store associate, SM department store, July 24, 1981.
8 Observation notes, Sports Lounge, July 2, 1981.
9 Observation notes, Sports Lounge, December 30, 1981.
10 Observation notes, Sports Lounge, November 17, 1981.
11 Ibid.
12 Observation notes, Sports Lounge, August 10, 1981.
13 Ibid.
14 Observation notes, Sports Lounge, August 5, 1981.
15 Ibid.
16 Observation notes, Sports Lounge, June 10, 1981.
17 Ibid.
18 Observation notes, Sports Lounge, July 1, 1981.
19 Ibid.
20 Ibid.
Observation notes, LM department store, July 14, 1981.
Observation notes, LM department store, September 6, 1981.
Observation notes, SM department store, September 6, 1981.
Ibid.
Observation notes, A bar, January 25, 1981.
Ibid.
Observation notes, SH department store, July 24, 1981.
Observation notes, Sports Lounge, January 20, 1981.
Observation notes, Hospital, August 24, 1981.
Observation notes, Sports Lounge, July 1, 1981.
Observation notes, Sports Lounge, July 13, 1981.
Observation notes, July 16, 1981.
Observation notes, August 8, 1981.
Observation notes, August 19, 1981.
Observation notes, Sports Lounge, September 15, 1981.
Ibid.
Observation notes, Sports Lounge, September 22, 1981.
Observation notes, Sports Lounge, July 2, 1981.
Ibid.
Observation notes, Sports Lounge, July 29, 1981.
Observation notes, Sports Lounge, July 1, 1981.
Observation notes, Sports Lounge, August 3, 1981.
Observation notes, Sports Lounge, August 4, 1981.
Observation notes, Sports Lounge, September 22, 1981.
Observation notes, A bar, August 11, 1981.
Observation notes, Sports Lounge, July 2, 1981.

Observation notes, Sports Lounge, January 26, 1981.

Observation notes, Sports Lounge, August 10, 1981.

Observation notes, Sports Lounge, January 22, 1981.

Observation notes, Sports Lounge, July 1, 1981.

Observation notes, Sports Lounge, July 13, 1981.

Observation notes, Sports Lounge, July 6, 1981.

Observation notes, Sports Lounge, September 8, 1981.


Observation notes, Sports Lounge, July 2, 1981.


Observation notes, Sports Lounge, September 15, 1981.

Observation notes, Sports Lounge, September 19, 1981.

Observation notes, Sports Lounge, July 29, 1981.

Observation notes, SM department store, July 14, 1981.

Ibid.

Observation notes, R hospital, August 24, 1981.


Ibid.


Observation notes, Sports Lounge, September 15, 1981.

Observation notes, Sports Lounge, September 19, 1981.

Observation notes, Sports Lounge, September 18, 1981.

Observation notes, Sports Lounge, September 22, 1981.

73 Observation notes, LM department store, September 6, 1981.
74 Observation notes, SH department store, September 6, 1981.
75 Observation notes, A bar, January 25, 1981.
76 Observation notes, A bar, August 11, 1981.
77 Observation notes, SM department store, July 29, 1981.
78 Ibid.
79 Observation notes, LM department store, July 29, 1981.
81 Ibid.
82 Observation notes, Sports Lounge, September 5, 1981.
83 Ibid.
84 Observation notes, Sports Lounge, September 22, 1981.
85 Observation notes, Sports Lounge, February 2, 1981.
86 Observation notes, LD department store, July 22, 1981.
87 Ibid.
88 Observation notes, R hospital, August 24, 1981.
89 Observation notes, R hospital, September 7, 1981.
90 Observation notes, Sports Lounge, January 26, 1981.
91 Observation notes, Sports Lounge, August 10, 1981.
92 Observation notes, Sports Lounge, September 22, 1981.
93 Observation notes, A bar, January 25, 1981.
94 Observation notes, SM department store, August 1, 1981.
95 Observation notes, A bar, January 25, 1981.
96 Observation notes, L bar, September 26, 1981.
97 Observation notes, Sports Lounge, July 2, 1981.
Observation notes, Sports Lounge, August 4, 1981.

Observation notes, Sports Lounge, July 1, 1981.
CHAPTER V

THE RULES OF VIEWING TELEVISION IN PUBLIC PLACES

Social interaction among viewers in public places uncovered
a great deal of common knowledge shared by the participants. One
realm of knowledge, that which concerns the content of television
viewing experiences was discussed in chapter IV. In this chapter,
the focus will shift to a second realm of knowledge, that which
concerns the form of the television viewing experience. In other
words, what knowledge do viewers bring with them to public places
and share with other participants about the appropriate range of
behaviors; the how of viewing television in public.

When persons engage in regulated dealings with each other,
they come to employ social routines, or practice, namely
patterned adaptations of the rules—including conformances, by-
passings, secret deviations, exclusable infractions, flagrant violations, and the like—these variously motivated and
variously functioning patterns of actual behavior, these
routines associated with ground rules, together constitute what
might be called a "social order." (Goffman, 1971, p. x.)

This knowledge of the social order is organized here under statements,
or rules of viewing. These rules are central to what and how tele-
vision viewers do in different contexts, and can serve as a case study
of the rule perspective in human communication. According to this
perspective, communication rules are:

Sets of common expectations about the appropriate responses
to particular symbols in particular contexts...In general, rules
function as guide posts to direct and indirect shared patterns
of expectations. Rules provide criteria for choosing among
alternatives. (Cushman and Whiting, 1972, p. 225-227.)

Rules maintain two constant structural characteristics: they
indicate 1) the circumstances in which the rule applies, and 2) the
action to be taken. A transactional process of understanding and achieving consensus on rules allows an aggregate of individuals to share a common set of rules and expectations. The rules emerging help create "order and regularity in the communication process by governing and guiding the communicative transaction." (Ibid, pp. 228-229.)

In the present study, rarely were rules explicitly volunteered by participants. Rather, they were observed being regularly acted upon. At other times, the knowledge of rules incidentally surfaced in conversations and interviews.

The following may be regarded as an unspoken, yet shared, code of viewing television in public places.

_Rule Number 1_

A Public Viewer of Television Should Adjust to the Setting.

The need to adjust to a setting creates a general social rule to the study of which the field of sociology is devoted. In this particular case, it had been suggested that viewers adapted to the viewing settings on a variety of levels including their clothing and general appearance, the range of behaviors manifested during and around the viewing time, and the form and content of their social interaction. A recognition of the major function of a location—be it the function of selling, of viewing, of eating or of relaxing, dictated this adaptation to a large degree. Viewers accepted the local authority of bartenders, store associates and nurses, and compromised over their viewing behavior accordingly. For example,
viewers in stores attempted to stay out of the selling territory and to keep noise level down. Bar visitors accepted the rules of program selection practiced in the bar. Violations of the rules were sometimes sanctioned directly: security guards were called to restrain rowdy kids in the department store and students yelled at another student to shut up. More often however, sanctions were more indirect, like a disapproving stare of a store associate at an eating viewer, a discouraging response for a request for a channel switch in the bar, or an overly polite gesture of a store associate offering to help a customer obviously just playing with a set. A certain degree of negotiation of rules was also allowed and practiced. Such as in the case where two ladies humorously arguing with a store associate over control of program choice, or when customers negotiated having television turned on in the bar for a soap opera. Some developing rules had been assumed to be acquired, such as in the case of a male store associate reporting the following:

We used to have lots of people bring their kids, we'll be like a babysitter, especially on Saturday mornings. That gets in the way of selling. They don't do it too much anymore. They understand, I guess, that it's not the right thing to do.

Overall, adjustment to the setting was practiced as the most obvious of all rules, as part of the learned repertoire of human behavior in any social encounter.

Rule Number 2

A Public Viewer of Television Should Adjust to Other Viewers.

In a similar manner to the norm to adjust to the physical arrangements of a setting, so was the demand to adjust to the social
arrangement. This form of adjustment was manifested in four complementing ways: by physical adjustment, fitting in requirement, sanctioning of deviant behaviors, and negotiation of program selection.

Physical Adjustment

Viewers were expected to demonstrate a concern for each other's physical needs: not to block the view of the screen; not to violate private space by physically approaching too close; not to move vacant chairs, ash trays, newspapers and the like without asking permission; not to make too much noise, etc.

Fitting in Requirement

Viewers were expected to fit in, not to be too obtrusive or too noticeable. One such example was reported by a male store associate during conversation on potential problems viewers might present during a football game:

I notice that for them (television department associates) it is (a problem) because it's hard to tell who the customers are and they, after a while, you get maybe 50 people there, and they all look like they are watching the game, but there might be someone there that is really looking for a set, that wants to buy the set, but you'll never know, and of course, I'm sure they probably feel self-conscious, if there are these people watching the set and that person is interested in buying the set, he is going to feel awfully self-conscious asking questions about that set with 50 people around there watching him. When you have 50 people standing behind you, it makes you feel self-conscious. It's packed here when people watching the football game, you hardly ever sell anything for that period. It basically knocks off that business hour otherwise.

This might be an extreme case of adjusting to group consensus on the expense of one's personal interests and desires, in particular
since purchasing interests were indeed the most legitimate in this setting.

Sanctioning

Sanctioning of deviant behavior was not done by an authority, rather, by group behavior, most often in a form of angry looks at a noisy disturbing viewer. On the presidential inauguration morning a male student was talking loudly and was leaving the Sports Lounge in the middle of the prayer, while the group was generally quiet, paying their respect to the occasion. On his way out, the student was followed by dozens of eyes, conveying a disapproval message and at the same time confirming and re-establishing the sense of group consensus on the appropriate behavior for that occasion. In another incident, an older nurse (a fact that from the start made her vulnerable to the student-group scrutinizing) got up during a commercial break and completely shut the volume off saying "Let's not listen to the commercials." While no one bothered to argue with her, the viewers surrounding her exchanged glances and giggles as if saying "What a weirdo."

Program Selection

Control over television programs was a most interesting focus of the social adjustment rule. While in some settings program choice was pre-determined by local authority and sometimes negotiated, in other settings, control was totally in the hands of viewers. Yet, in contrast to what one might expect, a very simple rule seemed to be followed: First come, first served. When joining a group of viewers, one was expected to accept the choice made by them earlier.
Channel switching was permitted only when approved or ignored by all viewers. One viewer described the process as the following:

Question: Is it on channel 6 here? All day?

Female student: No, not all day, sometimes people will, it depends on how many people are in the room— but they'll turn it on to channel 4 to watch As the World Turns, I think and I watch things like Barney Miller—I don't know if they are on this channel or not.

Question: Was there any, like fights, over what to watch? Let's say somebody turned it to 10, or something.

Female student: No, usually the person will ask if somebody is watching it, if they say no, they'll turn it, if they'll say yes, they'll leave it alone.

Question: So there is never a problem, like somebody wants to watch something else?

Female student: No.

Question: Is it like understood that channel 6 is being watched?

Female student: During this time, like from 12 to 4.5

Initiations like these were always observed to take place when it was almost guaranteed to receive a positive response. Namely, when it was obvious that almost no one present was seriously watching the program. The risk of being turned down was therefore minimized.

An interesting case is the one observed in the Sports Lounge during the usual broadcast time of the most popular soap opera. The Lounge was crowded as usual, with many permanent soap viewers present. Yet, instead of General Hospital on channel 6, the set was turned to channel 4 for a baseball game that started two hours earlier. No one in the room, including loyal jealous viewers of the soap, made any attempt to negotiate the channel or to suggest impatience or
anger. As a result, a very established habit, that of viewing a particular program every day was sacrificed for the apparent need to respond to the "first come, first served" rule and to adapt to other viewers.

Rule Number 3

A Public Viewer of Television Should be Open for Interaction at Any Time.

The demand of accessibility for interaction in public is strongly tied with the second rule, since it requires adjustment to other viewers. Viewers in public took the other's right to approach them for granted, making always at least some effort to respond. In that sense, viewing television in public was recongized as a public act that one could not totally claim to him/herself. Not only was the television set a public property, but its content was as well, as one female student suggested:

Question: Does it happen often, that people you don't know approach and ask you something about the program?

Female student: Oh, yeah. (laughs)

Question: Yeah, does it bother you?

Female student: No, they kind of have a right to find out.

Other viewers had the right to request information, and one had the obligation to provide that information. This right-obligation relationship among viewers was most noticeable during special events, when information concerned matters of national importance and its sharing was treated as a civic duty.
While an openness for interaction was assumed, it was to be handled in an accepted manner: appropriate introductory cues (eye gazing, smile, hand gestures and the like) established the readiness of the interactants, followed by a comment or information request. As the ball was thrown to the second interactant, he/she had the choice of providing brief responses and terminating the interaction, or responding in a manner which encouraged further turn taking. The openness for interaction was also not to be taken advantage of, as one teenager said blatantly to his friend: "You talk too much man. I want to watch. You talk too much."\(^8\)

A viewer was also expected not to request information or voluntarily participate in conversation unless he/she had a strong knowledge base and a relevant frame of reference. The following example may illustrate this point:

A female student walks in the Sports Lounge and says: Oh, General Hospital! Then turns to two seated unfamiliar female students: Is he after the Ice Princess too? The question revealed that she had not watched the program for at least two weeks. In response she received nodding heads implying: no point in bothering to explain to her, she is not a serious viewer.\(^9\)

Similarly,

On the day of the inauguration, a male student who has been present for at least half an hour in the crowded lounge, turns to a female student next to him and asks: What is this? She responds briefly: Reagan is going into office. Male student: Oh yes, today is the day. When is it? He receives no further response from the female student or anyone else. Obviously this student was looked upon as not very tuned in to such a major national event, and did not deserve serious attention.\(^10\)

The two above examples, illustrate that when a viewer violates the being-involved expectation, a doubt is cast over the sincerity
of his/her social demands. In this manner the violater deprives his/her interactants of a potentially advantageous position of exhibiting expertise. As a result, eagerness to cooperate seems to diminish and viewers shake off their responsibility to treat a violater according to the rule.

The demand of openness for interaction was even respected in stranger-avoidance situations. Viewers whose behaviors made it very clear that they were lacking communicative-intent were still approached on occasions. They, on their part, followed the rule as unenthusiastically as they were about it. In one such incident, two male patients were sitting next to each other in the hospital lobby, watching a sports-news item. Suddenly, as if out of the blue, with no communicative "foreplay" or any introductory clue, one of the patients turned to the second one: "How are you feeling?" The second patient, caught off guard while involved in viewing answered with great surprise, "What?" and the first patient responded: "How are you feeling today?" to which he answered very impatiently: "Pretty good."

After that, the second patient turned back to the television set, clearly signaling the end of this undesired conversation. Apparently, forcing oneself on other viewers by exploiting the expectation for interaction was socially unacceptable.

Rule Number 4

An Operating Television Set Should be Treated Respectfully.

Regular behavior patterns observed in this study, suggested that viewers somewhat humanized the television set. First, an
operating set was acknowledged as central to the setting in various ways: viewers sat or stood oriented towards the set even when not watching, as if sitting with one's back turned to an operating set would be rude. Throughout the whole research period, incidents of completely turning back to a set were extremely rare (no more than a handful). Non-viewers passing by (e.g., on their way to the escalator in the store, or to the pop machines in the lounge) very often made shallow comments about the program, as almost feeling obliged to acknowledge its presence.

More significantly, viewers manifested certain mannerisms toward the television, suggesting that television was perceived as a communicative partner and not merely as a physical object. For example, viewers would very rarely leave the viewing area in the middle of a segment. One may argue, of course, that they were involved in the program, or exhibiting respect to other viewers, yet on the outside, an observer could not avoid the impression that viewers perceived leaving in the middle as being rude and inconsiderate. This form of behavior was even true for passing by viewers who stopped for a few minutes only: they would wait for a shift of scene, change in news story or a different anchor person to appear and would refrain from leaving in the middle of a sentence.

Commercials, naturally provided the outlet for all the inconsiderate behaviors: viewers stretched, changed positions, got up to buy a snack or go to the bathroom, talked loudly or left completely. Commercials carried about them a sense of breaking the spell of the
program, of an a-social situation, when one was free from all obligations toward television as a social world. It is interesting to note that the most involved viewers, often remained attentive during commercials too, and reacted to them as to any other program segment.

Another aspect of respecting the television was the "party breaking" routine, where television was treated as a host/hostess. This routine was most strongly observed during special events, when there was no clear cut end to the broadcast (in contrast to the soap operas or sports). Viewers hardly ever left the setting alone. Most commonly the following pattern emerged: a couple of familiar viewers would make gestures of preparing to leave (get up, pick up packages, smooth clothing, etc.) and suddenly, a crowd which was silent and immobile for a while would start moving and a large portion of it would walk out together. I chose to call this observation the "party breaking" routine, since it most vividly reminded me of parties where an initiative on the part of one couple will bring a whole party to an end, as if everyone had been waiting for a cue, or an excuse to leave. In this manner respect was paid for other viewers as well as for the television set.

The mannerism toward television seems to suggest that there is more in operation here than the mere activity-punctuation or low-involvement versus high-involvement periods inherited in the medium. It is tempting to interpret the observations discussed above as additional incidents of the adjustment to other viewers. Yet, they held true even when viewers were alone in the setting and under no
social obligations. On the contrary, lonely viewers were often the most engaged ones, out of boredom, perhaps, but also, according to them, as a form of social involvement relieving them from the awkwardness of the situation. Therefore, the interpretation that seemed most true to the spirit of the observations was as follows: respect toward television in public does not assume the freedom of choice of behavior as one would have expected from home viewing. Rather, it more closely resembles other dramatic forms, such as theater and movies, where suspense of disbelief is maintained. As social beings, viewers respect the presence of others on the screen even when they are known to be incapable of reciprocal relationships.

Once again, viewers in public manifest an ability to handle two levels of perception at once: they realize that television is fantasy, unreal and not directly relevant to them, yet they enjoy immersing in the television world and treat it as a social world for the viewing period.

The four rules described above represent a code of viewing behavior in public. They suggest the dynamics behind behaviors concerning settings, the people in them and the television set around which they focus.

Lull (1980c), who made a first and preliminary effort to apply the rules perspective to the study of mass communication phenomenon, adapted four rule-types for a continuum of rules ranging from causal to reflective ones offered by Cushman and Whiting (1977). These types are helpful in typologizing rules of viewing in public places.
as well:

1. Habitual behavior: "Habitual rule-based behaviors are firmly established and regularly repeated instances of broad classes of human activities undertaken with little or no negotiation" (Lull, 1980c, p. 7). Some of the adjusting made to the public setting, such as choice of clothing are habitual in nature, as are consideration gestures toward other viewers, such as not blocking other's view of the set.

2. Rule-governed behavior: "Rule governed behavior...refer to human interaction which is characterized by a loose set of rules that permit variation within boundaries" (Ibid, p. 8). Such are the rules of program choice in public places, including the strategy of "first come, first served," or the use of commercials to punctuate social behavior, "rhythm of viewing" in Lull's terms.

3. Rule-conforming behavior: "Rule conforming behavior is interaction which has a highly developed normative character" (Ibid, p. 9). Incidents of sanctioning violation of rules serve as instances of rule conforming behaviors.

4. Rule-following behavior: "Pragmatic means to-ends strategies devised by interactants with an emphasis on functional efficiency" (Ibid, p. 10). This form of behavior is best illustrated by the use of television for social interaction independent from viewing.

Habitual rule-governed, rule-conforming and rule-following television related behaviors are presented here to suggest that viewing television in public places is not merely a phenomenon consisting of
an aggregate of individual viewers with nothing in common. Rather, it is an established phenomenon through which communication rules in general and specific public viewing rules in particular are created, molded and practiced.

Rules were many times negotiated, such as in the cases of bar visitors who asked to watch a soap opera, shoppers who adjusted set tuning to their liking and students who asked permission to violate the "first come, first served" rule. Newcomers were apparently socialized into conforming with rules, in three ways: modeling, direct information requests and sanctioning cues. Maintaining an acceptable noise level or choosing an appropriate seat are two examples of obvious modeling after other viewers present. Direct questioning was a second form of learning. Viewers asked store associates whether they minded their presence or challenged bartenders about turning on particular programs. Often used inquiry about rules as a naive conversation-starter. One of the most efficient tactics was to ask other viewers in stores whether it was acceptable to switch channels, turn volume up, or sit and watch a particular program. Respondents indirectly spelled out the rules as well as established their familiarity with the setting.

Verbal and non-verbal cues were a third way of preventing out of line behaviors of the ignorant (as well as the deviant). A stare, a hush, a sudden quiet, a head nod, and the like were efficiently used by viewers to express dissatisfaction over a particular behavior and to socialize a newcomer to the existing group consensus.
Negotiation of rules and socializing new members provide evidence for Goffman's (1971) argument: that deviation from the rules is not the issue at stake, rather the flexibility required from the social order.

...In the realm of public order it is not obedience and disobedience that are central, but occasions that give rise to remedial work of various kinds, especially the provision of correction readings calculated to show that a possible offender actually had a right relationship to the rules, or if he seemed not to a moment ago, he can be counted on to have such a relationship henceforth. Obviously, of course, this arrangement introduces flexibility; did it not exist, public life would become hopelessly clogged with the commission of minor territorial offenses and their adjudication... (p. 108.)

The existence of viewing rules and the flexibility with which they are handled is an important aspect for the role of context in viewing television. The how of viewing television in public revealed by the rules establishes this phenomenon as a legitimate form of television consumption.
FOOTNOTES

1 Interview with male store associate, PM department store, July 23, 1981.

2 Interview with male store associate, LW department store, August 12, 1981.

3 Observation notes, Sports Lounge, January 20, 1981.

4 Observation notes, Sports Lounge, September 8, 1981.

5 Interview with H female undergraduate student, Sports Lounge, August 10, 1981.

6 Observation notes, Sports Lounge, October 19, 1981

7 Interview with H female undergraduate student, Sports Lounge, August 10, 1981.

8 Observation notes, SM department store, August 1, 1981.

9 Observation notes, Sports Lounge, July 2, 1981.

10 Observation notes, Sports Lounge, January 20, 1981.

11 Observation notes, R hospital, September 15, 1981.
CHAPTER VI
SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

The present study of viewing television in public was grounded in an understanding of the role of context in the viewing experience. The sociological and psychological aspects of context were studied as well as the nature of the viewing phenomenon itself.

Viewers were studied mainly in shopping locations, university locations, bars and a hospital. Each setting was characterized by its physical and social attributes. Viewers were typified as shoppers (the single man and woman, the neighborhood worker, children, the "gang" and the "aimless time killer"), students (the leader, the follower, the observer and the challenger), bar customers and employees. Their viewing behavior and television uses, as manifested in these particular settings, were described. Soap operas, sports and special events were discussed as the three program types most often viewed for a host of reasons grouped under: content, exposure and context preferences. The role of context in viewing television was highlighted throughout the preceding chapters. The physical, communicative and psychological aspects of context were discussed, as well as the rules of viewing television in public.

Some of the descriptive findings about television use in public places provided evidence for what many popular media channels have been acknowledging. The following are three examples of incidents encountered second hand, through the media, during the course of
A furniture store advertised special discounts for "Super Bowl Widows," encouraging the husbands to join and watch the game in the store's large screen television.¹

A CBS weekly news report summarized the events of the Presidential inauguration and the hostages' release. The report included segments on viewers watching television at work and a film strip of viewers crowded in the television section of a department store.²

A West Coast newspaper had a report on public viewing of soap opera: Soap opera fans ducked out of work, threw parties and crowded into appliance stores to watch the star-crossed wedding ... From colleges to courthouses, "GH" addicts were buzzing about Tuesday's episode in ABC's top rated soap and wondering what would happen next...

"At first I hated to tell people that I watched (GH)," said... "But now it's become acceptable to take classes in the morning and watch your soap in the afternoon..."³

The crowd of 60 students watching the wedding Tuesday at... was quiet at first, but there was whistling when Luke removed Laura's bridal garter, groaning when Miss Taylor's character put a curse on the couple, and screaming and applause when Luke punched Laura's ex-husband...

"I told my boss that I had to go to a wedding" ... said, as she and about 80 other people watched GH Monday on 39 TV sets on display in the department store.

Office workers at the ... County Courthouse in ..., found a TV set perched on a witness stand in a lounge for prospective jurors, so on Monday they joined the 15 people in the room.

"Pretend you're a juror," a young female courthouse employee said, nudging another. "We're not supposed to be here," another said.

About 1,000 people came to a punch-and-cake party in an ... hotel Tuesday sponsored by .... radio station... and television station ..., which broadcasts GH locally...³

These examples, from a variety of geographical locations, are very colorful. However, the present study's contribution to theory and research go beyond the documentation of the obvious, as important
as this task in itself is. Overall, the relationship between context and television viewing documented in the present study was a reciprocal one in nature. On one hand, the environment seemed to coerce viewers' behavior so it varied less among individuals than it did across settings. On the other hand, public settings seemed to have changed by virtue of the presence of television. The major advances of the present research to the study of television are highlighted in the following pages: 1) the role of television in social interaction; 2) home versus public viewing; 3) the nature of viewing television phenomenon; 4) contextual viewing gratifications; and 5) methodological advances. A discussion of the study's limitations and implications for future research conclude this chapter.

1. The Role of Television in Social Interaction.

Viewing television was studied in public situations, specifically under conditions of the co-mingling of strangers. As Goffman argues:

...persons present together are not engaged together in talk, nor members of the same with, can still, of course, interact quite significantly with each other. The notion that a person is alone when he is in a crowd, an anonymous atom, has a literary truth, but this is not the truth that actual street scenes are made of. (1971, p. 137.)

In contrast to many other public situations, the presence of television in particular seems to be most appropriate for interaction. Adapted to the three considerations discussed by Lyn Lofland (1973, pp. 169-173), the following may be concluded:
1) Desirability—an encounter focusing on television has attractive attributes for the individuals involved. It satisfies personal needs for exhibiting knowledge on one hand and for receiving it on the other hand; it gratifies the need for social contact and provides a sense of belonging in a potentially threatening strange situation.

2) Legitimacy—it is assumed that most participants agree that viewing television constitutes proper circumstances for interaction and therefore minimal personal risk is involved in initiating and responding to interaction.

3) Appropriateness—it is understood that the presence of television converts a public setting to an appropriate one for social interactions; that is, it becomes the "right" place and the "right" time.

The contribution of the data and insights on television interaction gained in the present study is two fold: First, it establishes the existence and nature of such interactions, bridging mediated and interpersonal communication processes. In this manner, the data provide additional support to ethnographic studies of home viewing. Similarly to the social uses of television in home settings described by Lull (1980a), television viewing in public places served as communication facilitator, as well as an affiliation with others and with the situation function, and as an opportunity for the display of personal and intellectual competence. These three functions, facilitation, affiliation and competence, were all manifested by
means of interaction. Hence, television viewing in public was interwoven with a variety of complex interpersonal processes.

Secondly, the data document the role of television in altering the nature of public places. On the most elementary level, places set aside for purposes of selling/buying, or for drinking and eating, were transformed into viewing-television-and-talking places. Yet, on a higher level, coping with strangers by means of privatizing public spaces, and by exhibiting lack of communication intent--typical behaviors in public places--were activities largely displaced in the presence of television by openness for interaction and social involvement. In this manner, television transformed not only the range of accepted behaviors in a public location, but its social order as well.

The previous chapters presented detailed data in order to establish the frequency and richness of the phenomenon of social interaction while viewing television in public places. The variability among the different public contexts themselves is worth noting too. While it was stated that as a general rule, the public context seemed to enhance interaction, the magnitude of the phenomenon varied greatly from one location type to the other. Bars and the student Sports Lounge were the most social locations. Both shared the following characteristics: viewers had come often to the location with the specific purpose of watching television in mind, and if they did not, most of their potential interactants did. The audience as a group was in a captive situation--the television dominated
the physical space, it was fixed, there were crowded seating arrangements, and very few compatible behavioral alternatives were available. Stores, on the other hand, were less social locations. The physical arrangements and the non-recreational purpose of these settings discouraged grouping of viewers.

Not only the magnitude of interaction, but the types of interaction most common and acceptable in bars, would have probably alerted the security personnel in the stores.

2. Home versus Public Viewing.

When making comparisons between the public context of viewing television versus the private context of viewing television, one cannot but wonder, whether such social interaction is indeed unique to public places. Very little is known from first hand observations on home viewing behaviors. Public locations on the other hand, have a tremendous methodological advantage in this regard, since no entry permission is required from individual viewers, and observations are basically unobtrusive. Yet, a few fundamental differences between the two situations need to be considered:

(1) Magnitude. It is very unlikely that home viewing is commonly done in a big group (except for instances of viewing parties planned ahead for a major sports event, a special soap opera episode or the like). Most home viewers probably watch alone or in the company of a few other members of their family, close friends and neighbors. There-fore, when interaction does take place, it is at least limited in the
potential number of participants and the diversity of interaction.

(2) Relationships between viewers. Most public viewing is done in the presence of strangers, sometimes with vaguely familiar faces, and at best, with work colleagues. Home viewing is probably never done in the presence of complete strangers. The role television serves as bridging communication channels among strangers may therefore be studied in public places.

(3) Nature of relationships. The phenomenon of strangerhood between viewers suggests much more than the mere descriptive characteristics. Viewers at home share certain world meanings, history, ways of life and the like, while public viewers have to sense the unfamiliar social order in which they find themselves and to create the appropriate meanings. At home, television may serve as one additional resource in the shared world, while in public, television may well be the center of that shared world. In reviewing the discussion on social interaction, it is very clear how little personal knowledge was assumed in these conversations, and at the same time, a very elaborate television-related knowledge held by participants was being taken for granted.

3. The Nature of Viewing Television Phenomenon

The most consistent finding regarding the nature of the viewing television phenomenon was viewers' dependency. This dependency manifested itself on two levels:
1) Physical dependency—viewers had to adjust to physical arrangements in the setting, including in particular, program choice made by others.

2) Social dependency—viewing in public places proved to be a social affair engaging viewers in a variety of social obligations, expectations and potential gratifications. Viewing television, at least in public, is therefore not an individualized, privatized activity. Rather it entails involvement in three different social worlds: the social world on the screen, the social world of the setting, and the social world emerging from their meeting.

Once more, this finding is in contrast with the general understanding of the nature of viewing television at home. Home viewers are assumed to have a great degree of control over their viewing experience: they have freedom of program selection (or at least negotiation power); they can adjust the setting to their needs (e.g., move the set to the bedroom or eat their supper in the living room); they can come and go as they please, and their ease with the social setting demands minimal social-investment on their part. As a result, home viewing is assumed to be largely passive in nature. Comstock et al. (1978) in summarizing time budget studies and leisure time activities of Americans, concluded that "These data suggest that to a large degree television viewing in America is largely passive activity where acceptance rather than enthusiasm is the rule" (p. 171).
Based on the findings of the present study, it seems appropriate to challenge this "total control" over the situation assumption and the passive viewing one. Viewing television in public was neither an individualistic form of behavior, nor was it a passive one. Public viewers were greatly involved both with the context of viewing and with viewing itself. Involvement with the context was manifested by means of liveliness to the situation, namely, participating in the creation and sharing the sense of the social order and conforming or challenging the rules of viewing. Involvement with the set, on the other hand, was expressed both verbally and nonverbally. Viewers talked about television as well as to television with great enthusiasm and interest. They took for granted certain reciprocity and seemed to be compelled to respond to it as a social world.

Home viewing studies, such as Lull's ethnographies (1980a and 1980b) and Comstock et al.'s research synthesis (1978), have not provided specific evidence regarding the context and set involvement phenomenon. Even Lull's discussion of the rules of viewing television at home (1980c) is not context oriented and considers the set-involvement only in terms of the "rhythm of viewing," dictated by commercial breaks (p. 9). Of great interest in future studies will be data from home viewing dealing specifically with such issues as the rules of viewing television: does the demand to treat television with respect as a social entity exist at home too? Is the expectation of openness for interaction in operation, or does the home context
satisfy avoidance functions more favorably?

These are just two issues that can be fruitfully addressed in future television studies.

4. Contextual Viewing Gratifications

Findings about the role of context in viewing television cut across the three results and analyses chapters. Overall, soap opera viewing in student locations was highly content oriented, while shoppers were more often than not satisfying exposure per se needs. Bars seemed most successful in gratifying social needs. Of special interest are those contextual elements—physical, communicative and psychological that differentiate viewing gratifications. It has been argued in the uses and gratifications literature that one particular program can satisfy different needs for different individuals. In other words, uses sought and gratifications derived cannot be inferred directly from television content. Rather, what the viewer himself/herself brings to the situation should be taken into account. The present study suggests that contextual differences may offer a complementary explanation. Context can affect uses and gratifications of viewing in two complementary ways. First, certain contexts seem to facilitate certain uses and gratifications of television viewing and to discourage others. Fantasy content, such as soap opera, can turn into a lively social event in the right context rather than serving as an escape from life's pressures. Similarly, a televised crisis event can strengthen a group's identity and unity under the
appropriate contextual conditions rather than implant fear and loneliness. Secondly, the context of viewing itself can be gratifying as in the case of the sports viewing in the bar regardless of the particular program viewed. The context of viewing is therefore as important to the viewing experience as is the program viewed and the individual viewer.

The understanding of the role of context in viewing gratifications also serves to illuminate one of the problems of the uses and gratifications approach--the almost exclusive concentration on the psychological origins of the core constructs. Based on the findings of the present research, it seems inconceivable to ignore the social roots of viewing gratifications. Consequently, a shift in focus in home viewing studies to incorporate social aspects of viewing as well seems desirable.

5. Methodological Advances

Observation and interviewing of viewers and informants served as the major research procedures. These procedures contributed significantly to traditional self-report instruments in the following manners:

Observation. Viewers' behavior during viewing, in situ, was recorded unobtrusively. No entree permission was required and therefore behavior was not artificially altered. The advantages of these observations is two fold: first, very little research so far has documented from first hand observations what viewers actually do while they are viewing television. Secondly, observations served to
Interviewing. Flexible, unstructured interviews allowed viewers to describe their television consumption in their own terms, in the boundaries of their own frame of reference. They highlighted what was obvious and relevant to them personally rather than responded to an imposed set of categories. Observation data collected before each particular interview facilitated the use of relevant and appropriate prompts and challenges. Informants' interviews were particularly insightful: I enjoyed the luxury of repeated interviews and long informal conversations with them.

Recording of free conversation. My unobtrusive presence in the locations had one additional advantage: I was able not only to observe viewers' behavior, but to record free-conversations without any contaminating research effects. This proved to be tremendously insightful. Viewers often volunteered information about themselves, their personal likes and dislikes, their viewing gratifications, their other past and present experiences with television and the like, in a natural way that even in depth intensive interviews might not have been able to expose.

Limitations and Further Research

The advancements of the present research to the study of television viewing are not without their limitations. As a single investigator, my research activities were restricted: I was not able to be present at a variety of places at the same time in order to make
cross-context inferences. Similarly, I had to limit both the number of settings and the hours spent in each one to make the research effort manageable. Naturally, a greater variety of locations on one hand and a longer in depth study of each one can provide further insights to the phenomenon reported here. Of special interest would be a study in different geographical areas tapping at other populations and sub-cultures.

Originally, the present study also set out to concentrate on individuals' ability to compare their own home and public viewing gratifications. However, two obstacles surfaced: first, as data collection proceeded, the opportunity to achieve this goal became restricted. Conditions in most locations were not favorable for long, in depth interviewing that was required for such an endeavor. Secondly, the unexpected richness of data collected regarding social interaction in public places diverted research efforts from my original intentions. I still believe, however, that a tremendous advantage can be gained by detailing comparisons between home and public viewing of the same individuals. Such a goal can be pursued by gaining entry into homes of public viewers who have already been studied unobtrusively and documenting their home viewing. A multi-method approach wherein ethnographic data will be combined with diaries on home and public viewing may yield the desired comparative insights.

In conclusion, the study of viewing television in public places should be examined on three hierarchical levels:
1. As a study of the role of context in viewing television;
2. As a case study of the potential contribution of ethnographic studies to mass media research;
and
3. As a study of the everyday, taken for granted phenomenon.

Finally, on a personal note, I hope I was able in this report to share my fascination with the discovery process and my enthusiasm for contributing an additional building block in our understanding of the television phenomenon.
FOOTNOTES

1 Furnitu re store, January, 1981.


3 Independent Journal, November 18, 1981, p. D. 12. Title: ""General Hospital' addicts get fix as TV couple weds.""
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This transcript was unobtrusively recorded in the Sports Lounge on August 12, 1981. Around 15 viewers were present during most of the recording hour. The program viewed was General Hospital, a popular soap opera aired every working day from 3-4 o'clock on ABC. I was seated among a group of two black male students familiar with each other (from now numbers 1 and 2) and two white female students (numbers 3 and 4) who were familiar with each other but not with the male students. The group was seated on chairs in the primary viewing zone.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TRANSCRIPT</th>
<th>ANALYSIS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1:  How? they didn't do it man. It is funny, she always... Monica and the..</td>
<td>Plot related conversation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:  They don't mean that, they can always...</td>
<td>Television programs in General</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:  On that show she could (have children).</td>
<td>Character related information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:  Now she and Rick...she couldn't have (children). Producer says no kids for Leslie (laughs). The doctor may say...he probably may say to her that it is dangerous for her to have kids.</td>
<td>Television as a medium Guessing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...</td>
<td>General</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:  ...I like it, for example on Friday sometime I'll watch it...</td>
<td>Reality application</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:  This could kill anybody.</td>
<td>Television programs in general</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:  ...They should have done a study, if men didn't work and women worked, they'll have sports all the time. I can't understand how this could interest anybody.</td>
<td>Television programs in general</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:  Lots of guys watch it! I like it.</td>
<td>Television programs in general</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:  Some guys maybe, but not a lot of guys.</td>
<td>Television programs in general</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:  A lot of guys watch soap operas.</td>
<td>Television programs in general</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:  I don't. They could be doing something else. A lot of guys watch this?</td>
<td>Television programs in general</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:  This is good! A lot of guys watch it. I bet all the guys at ... watch it.</td>
<td>Television programs in general</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:  I don't know if cable TV has soap operas. (laughter for advertisement for movie)</td>
<td>Television programs in general</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2: Rick drinks tea all the time.

...  

1: He comes to work in jeans every day.

2: And turtle neck.

1: The only character in their life man, being a Quartermain, man.


1: He ought'a have married Jennifer Smith.

2: They had a ... for the show.

1: What do you want, the rich get rich and the poor get poor.

2: Everybody poor getting rich and everybody rich getting poor.

...  

2: He won't tell them a thing anyway.

1: Get him Rick!

...  

1: OH oo!

2: ...he would have told them...I was going to do that.

(Actor says: It won't be necessary)

2: Because I'm going to shoot you right here (laughs). He'll...his vest and pull out a gun.

(commercial break)

1: Steve Hardy...on about 19 years.

2: Looks like it. Steve Hardy and Jessie.
1: When I was a little kid my Mom used to watch it. I remember Jessie and Steve Hardy were together. I like soap operas, man. That was on...the best they ever had...I used to like the Dark Shadows back in about '68 (laughs) that was...I think they took it off about...it was on during school hours in...and the Vampires and Warlocks, and they make it realistic and it corrupted the mind of the young people. I used to rush home from school to see him. (laughs)

2: They take a lot of shows off...

1: They are becoming more educational now because, little kids looking at cartoons all Sunday all Saturday they got 50 shooting guns at people turning them pink and green and blowing them up and kicking people off building and they don't hurt themselves and they think if they do it to their friends it won't hurt.

2: unclear

(advertisement for Dynasty)

1: This night time soap opera here, when the new series come out, Dynasty is good.

2: And Dallas.

1: They are going to come with the new Dallas in September, aren't they?

2: I haven't seen it once in my life.

1: Not Dallas? That was good man.

... (I comment in a foreign language to a friend across the room.)

1: Oh?
I: Nothing, I was talking to her.

I: As long as you are talking to someone...it's all right.

I: Why, I could be talking to myself.

(laughs)

...

2: Won't tell you where your daughter is.

...

2: To kill Luke. One time he was supposed to kill Luke.

1: Kurt Willer. What was his name?

3: Duval.

1: Duval! Frank Duval.

3: Robert Duval.

1: Frank Duval?

3: No?

...

1: James Duval. (grinning with pride).

3: James!

...

2: She stole it from Cassadine, with her tombs and jewelry, and...

(actor: But the ship simply-)

1: disappeared. (laughs with pride)

3: This guy must have written it over there.

1: Oh, me and the producer grew up together. (laughs)
2: Sara is going to be the one to tell on Heather.
1: Sara is really crazy and the only one that can tell them - the only one that really knows the whole thing. Nobody else knows the whole thing.
2: The guy already identified her.
1: They already identified her but you have to have, I think, three of them, right? to verify, because one person can be wrong. You have to have more than a positive identification.
2: They need to find some evidence.
1: It's Celsi.
2: Celsi? What's Celsi?
1: unclear
2: Green Acres?
1: The county agricultural...(laughs)

2: Oh woo! They should have had a taperecorder right here to put it on tape.
1: It's illegal, you can't use it in court.
2: ...ask Monica (laughs)
1: Joe is still indecisive whether or not. He wants to believe, like 75 points.

2: I just hate...
1: I'll go there and take that job... how long ago was it?
2: unclear
1: Yeah, but how long?
2: They took the right ones off. Scottie was...
1: They are going to take Brian off and put somebody else
3: ...Jeff?
1: Jeff? Yeah, he was suspender king (laughs) everytime he seems to have suspenders.
4: He had a big role.
1: They ought to take Ann Logan off there, 26 year old virgin (laughs).
1: She needs to go visit Jeff, ha?
1: Yeah.
2: They make it believable but I don't see how is a 26 year old still a virgin.
1: There are a lot of 26 year old.
2: If they have a...
1: Ginny, on One Life to Live, she was a nun before she ever became a nurse.
3: She was?
(actor: We are on the same - )
1: boat
...
1: What about Leslie, she ain't god damn dumb.
2: You know.
1: Oh?

2: How many times she ran away?

1: Who?

2: Laura.

... 

1: Laura has been to everything...she's killed someone...

1: raped.

1: Been raped...raped someone, had him all strapped up, pulled his hair out. (laughs)

2: He messed that girl.

1: What's that klutz, Brian? First class klutz.

2: Brian? I like him play certain TV.

1: Went to school for six years to be a sociologist, and does nothing really for the hospital.

2: I figure out a lot of them does.

1: She is mystery of the field as far as security and that kind of thing.

2: unclear

1: Keep the union together, make the...for people with low pay, and as far as...

... 

1: She got great taste. (mockingly)

2: It's probably the gun.

(laughter)

2: You don't use to be spit on, Heather.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Plot related information</th>
<th>Character related information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1:</td>
<td>She won't have to be her roommate again anyway.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:</td>
<td>Courtland.</td>
<td>Character related information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:</td>
<td>He is a sick man.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:</td>
<td>How long did you wait...he told his ex-wife not to tell his daughter...what he is...</td>
<td>Plot related information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:</td>
<td>Audrey? She is in charge of all the nurses.</td>
<td>Character related information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:</td>
<td>and...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:</td>
<td>Jessica? She is chief of...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:</td>
<td>And what's her name...</td>
<td>Information request</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:</td>
<td>Gail? She is in charge of the social aspects of the patient's life. A lot of time they'II be uptight and she'll mentally...it's like their priest in skirt. (laughs)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:</td>
<td>She is always leaving.</td>
<td>Information request</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:</td>
<td>Who, Gail?</td>
<td>Character related information and television as a medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:</td>
<td>They used to make Alan so ugly, now they make him so nice.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:</td>
<td>He came on a talk show. He said he wasn't happy with the person he was playing...somebody tried to kill him.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:</td>
<td>I used to watch the show when she was married to Jeff Webber.</td>
<td>Plot related information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:</td>
<td>Who was married to Jeff Webber?</td>
<td>Information request</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1: Monica.

3: Monica was married to Jeff Webber?

1: I wasn't involved, I wasn't deep into it then.

3: Why did she divorce him?

1: She was in love with Rick.

1: Yes.

3: So why did she marry Alan?

1. Alan said: "I want you! Here is two dollars, take a cab and come over to see me."

3: "I will have you!"

...  

3: She lost weight.

1: She just lost weight over the winter. They used not show her below the shoulders.

4: She lost it good.

1: Say, Erica, in All My Children – Erica has a baby there in real life.

...  

1: I say she is much better looking than Monica.

2: Mine - I'm in love with that character myself.

1: Monica used to throw a lot of dirt, she told Leslie one time that, she told her: "Rick told me how bored, how boring it is lying in bed with you." (laughs)

...
1: A rug doll or something.
2: A toy gun.
1: Joe is gonna put together and find out.
3: Oh look, a... (loud laughter)
4: That's it, they got her!
1: You'll see it tomorrow at 3:30. (loud laughter)
3: She must have done it on purpose.
4: Yeah, sweat Heather, sweat.
2: Put her back in.
1: unclear

End of program. Participants get up and leave.
APPENDIX B

INTERACTION TRANSCRIPT
This transcript was unobtrusively recorded in LH department store on July 14, 1981. Participants were store employees from other departments and from other stores in the shopping mall, all in their early 20s and familiar to some degree with each other. The program viewed was General Hospital, a popular soap opera aired every working day from 3-4 o'clock on ABC. I was standing behind the viewers who were sitting on little television platforms. Number 1 is a male, numbers 2, 3 and 4 are females.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TRANSACTION</th>
<th>ANALYSIS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2: What channel do you want, 4? 6?</td>
<td>Set related</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1: I am 10.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2 switches the set next to 1 to channel 6, and sits next to him to watch. They watch parallelly for a while.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2: Live scene here (about channel 6). She is pregnant. Didn't she tell him? (about channel 10)</td>
<td>Television as a medium and plot related conversation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1: She used to play the part of...</td>
<td>Television as a medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Conversation continues. 2 watching both programs back and forth.)</td>
<td>Plot related conversation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1: She found out he is having an affair so she left him.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3: (enters noisily) Where is it?</td>
<td>Set related information request</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 and 2: Right here! (point to set)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1: Jill, it's right here! (points to set)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2: I'll tell you.</td>
<td>Information request</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3: He is the Guiding Light?</td>
<td>Set related information request</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2: Did you turn it up?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3: Yeah, I turn it up when I come up here, I have to hear it.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3: It gets boring from time to time. (about channel 10)</td>
<td>Television program in general</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2: So does General Hospital.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3: When does General Hospital get boring? It hasn't been boring for years.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1: It's all Luke and Laura.</td>
<td>Character related</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3: Oh, good. (get comfortable position)

... 

3: There is probably a surprise. So what's her face, whatever happened to her? You should see Rick and Leslie dancing. That's a riot.

1: I'm turning it down, just a little.

3: I can't hear.

1: I'm going to watch somewhere else. (leaves to a different set)

3: (Turns 1's TV set to General Hospital too. She is very excited, talks loudly.)

3: Look at Rick, look at Rick. She is cute. He reminds me of my Dad, he looks like that. He loves Susan so much (with compassion).

... 

3: You know what's killing me. They are there for pizza, it is night time, and here Luke and Scorpio are outside and it is day time!

... 

3: I'm starving.

(A female store associate in her 40s watching The Guiding Light in a different corner updates the male store associate.)

3: She is cute, they are so cute together. Oh! I can't take it!

(I returns briefly)

2: What's happening?

1: Some friends you are! (returns to his seat)
3: That's a New York license plate!
1: (returns) Who is that?
   ...
1: Is that Luke's old girlfriend?
3: Oh, no.
(I updates the two females about channel 10 during the commercial break. Returns to his seat.)
3: Hey Frank! Have you seen the Other World lately?
1: (Yells back) No.
3: I saw it last Friday. Nothing new.
   ...
3: Look at them, she can't really dance. She is a riot though, I like her.
(Four black teenagers pass by one says)
General Hospital is on!
3: Hope they won't come here (glancing at the teenagers).
   ...
3: You know, she could be so much prettier if she'll do something with that hair on her. What is he doing? I don't know who that is. I wonder if that is the one Tony left for Alex. I'm starving. I work shitty hours. But at least I can come and watch this.

4: (joins) Where is (unclear name)?
3: She is not here today.
(1 and 2 leave to return to work)
(3 explains to 4 what's been happening.)
3: Poor Rick and Leslie, they have such a bad time with Laura.

... 

3: I was right! I was right! Wait till I see Julie! I told her that's the actress. Wait till Alex sees her, she will die.

4: Why?

3: Because that is the girl Tony went to. That's why she stole the Ice Princess in the first place.

4: You know who they haven't touched upon--Heather. Since last Wednesday. There is nothing.

(unrelated conversation during commercial. 3 talks about work, how many hours and taking full load at school too. Complains about what she is going to do with her work and life. Program resumes, they stop talking.)


...

3: Oh, that's so good!

(laughter)

3: Oh now, who is this? There must have been 5 people dropping in.

(a new couple of store associates pass by and stop briefly on the walk. Number 5 is a male)

3: (Yelling to the couple) They killed O'Reilly.

5: They did?

(Two female teenagers walk in, numbers 6 and 7.)
6: What time is it?
4: Twenty to four.
(6 and 7 sit by 3 and 4 and watch.)
3: This must be over on Friday.
5: Why?
3: Because I'm tired of it. I can't handle it anymore. I can't keep running here everyday. When I work a regular day I leave 25 to four. I fight for it. At least I see the last 20 minutes. I can't believe they killed O'Reilly!
4: Why did Scorpio call her Mom? Was she his Mom?
3: I don't think so. Maybe. She called him Sonny.

3: Poor Georgia.
(3 guesses a code number for the actor)
(5 leaves. His female partner, number 8 joining 3, 4, 6 and 7. 3 updates her.)
(4 leaves without a word.)
3: I can't wait till Alex sees her.

3: These two make me nervous.
6: I know.
3: How does he think they are going to do this?
(laughter)
3: Between the two of them! He is picking it up from Luke.
3: (Looks at watch.) Oh, God!

6: How much longer?

3: Ten minutes.

3: I like Tony better.

3: I'll get sea sick... I want to see that. I hope it happens today.

8: (Looking at watch.) Oh damn.

3: Five more minutes.

(another female store associate joins and tells the viewers about a talk show where the producer of the program was interviewed.)

3: Five more minutes. It's not easy. Oh, I can't wait till three o'clock everyday. Tomorrow I'm going to miss it.

3: Oh, shit. Poor Alan. He'll never find her.

3: Oh!

8: What! Look!

3: Alright!

3: Oh man, why can't that be me!

3: Where is Alex?
(laughter)

3: Hurry up! ...they go they ass holes.  

...  

3: Oh Robert!

8: Luke is going to get shot. They'll take him off General Hospital. The whole thing with the Ice Princess is going to be over soon.

(3 stands up.)

3: That's it. It's over. (Leaves in a hurry.)

Viewers get up and leave.