

Content analysis (cartoon)



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The Scenes of Aggression depicted by Non-adult Character Versus Adult

Character on prime-time cartoons Operational Definitions: Non-adult

character: A character in the show that is below the age of majority. (e. g., a person who is below or in the high school age).

Adult character: A character in the show who has reached the maturity. (e. g., a person who has son or daughter, a person who is legally responsible for his or her act).

Verbal aggression: is defined as a verbal attack that attempts to inflict psychological pain to others. This includes, spreading malicious gossip, cursing, yelling, and screaming.

Threat of physical aggression: is defined as using words, gestures, or weapons to communicate the intent to cause injury or physical harm to others.

Unarmed physical aggression: is defined as any intentional use of physical force with the potential for causing injury or physical harm to others but does not involve weapons or other objects. This includes, punching, scratching, biting, slapping, shoving, poking, and hair-pulling.

Armed physical aggression: is defined as any intentional use of weapons or objects with the potential for causing injury or physical harm to others.

Sample:

I selected three cartoons, two episodes each, which air during prime-time on Fox and Cartoon Network. Each episode airs for 25 minutes (excluding commercial time).

Show: The Simpson

Network: Fox

Date Aired: Sunday 8: 00 pm 10/14/07 and 11/04/07

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Show: Family Guy

Network: Fox

Date Aired: Sunday 9: 00 pm 11/04/07 and 11/11/07

Show: South Park

Network: Fox

Date Aired: Wednesday 9: 30 pm 10/31/07 and Tuesday 9: 30 11/13/07

Unit of Analysis

The number of aggressive scenes

Discussion

In the 150 minutes of prime-time cartoons analyzed, there were a total of 63 scenes of aggression, an average of 4.2 scenes per 10 minutes. Among 4 different types of aggression, scenes of verbal aggression were most frequently presented in the show. Also, of 22 scenes of verbal aggression, 15 scenes were depicted by a non-adult character. To summarize, 1 scene of verbal aggression by non-adult character will be viewed by audience every 10 minutes. The results also show that there is no significant difference in the number of aggressive scenes depicted by non-adult versus adult characters, except in verbal aggression.

These three cartoons' stories frequently revolve around family issues, with one or more non-adult characters, like Bart in The Simpson, Stewie in Family Guy, and Stan in South Park. Despite producers' assertion that these shows are for adults, they attract children during prime time viewing hours, due to young age of characters, family-based story lines and animation. As my sample size is relatively small, I cannot conclude that other prime-time cartoons contain similar levels of aggressive scenes, as in the sample.

However, for further research, I will view as many samples as possible and

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extend my research to include Prime Time Drama, to determine whether a specific genre contains more scenes of aggression than another.