PROMOTING DISRESPECT THROUGH CHILDREN’S TELEVISION

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the frequency and portrayal of disrespectful behaviors as they occur on popular children’s cable television shows. A content analysis of children’s shows appearing on The Disney Channel and Nickelodeon was conducted. Disrespectful acts were organized into three categories: non-verbal, verbal, and physical. A total of 468 acts were recorded across the 18 episodes sampled for this study. Disrespectful acts that were classified as verbal in nature were the most prevalent, with 73% of the 468 identified acts falling into the verbal category. Fourteen percent of the acts were physical in nature, and 13 percent were non-verbal. The findings showed that on average, there is one disrespectful act shown per minute. Some shows contained over two times the amount of disrespectful acts than others, and there were very few attempts to correct disrespectful behaviors. Implications of the findings are discussed.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Rationale

The subject of children’s media is one of great interest to many scholars, politicians, advocacy groups, and parents. Social science research has shown that children tend to repeat the behaviors of others by imitating (Bandura, 2002). Additionally, there is a correlation between the amount of television viewing and perceptions of social reality (Gerbner, 1972). This being the case, television shows and other forms of children’s media, which are in some cases viewed excessively, are prime examples of sources that children can learn behaviors from and that affect them in other ways.

Not all forms of media that are targeted towards children include positive behaviors. Many parents struggle between wanting to allow their children to partake in the many forms of popular entertainment that their friends are into, and disapproving
of the content of much of it. One of The Disney Channel’s own actors seems to agree that children’s programming does not always exhibit the most positive messages. Miley Cyrus, star of a popular children’s show called Hannah Montana, hosted Saturday Night Live (Season 36, Episode 17) on March 5, 2011. One of the skits on the show was called “Disney Channel Acting School”. Miley was a coach who was providing lessons to students who wanted to be successful actors on the Disney Channel. “Lessons” that Miley was teaching the students, reflective of elements of the shows perceived to be common, included Loudness, Pause then Dis, Eating then Freezing, Reacting to Stinky Feet, Spying in the Doorway, Entering on a Scooter, Dress the Part, and, most relevant to the present study, Disrespecting Authority. The sketch ended with a phone number and the statement “parents’ permission not needed.”

For many children, television is a big part of their lives. A study done by the University of Michigan Health System (Boyse, 2009) found that TV viewing among kids was at an eight-year high. The study found that on average, children between the ages of two-five spent 32 hours per week in front of the television and for children ages six-eleven the average was 28 hours per week. Excessive television viewing was shown to have a negative effect on a child’s health in that the children who watched a lot of television were more likely to be overweight, more likely to develop health problems as adults, more likely to have sleep problems, more likely to use alcohol, and more likely to smoke, among other things (Boyse, 2009). Another study found that children in homes where the TV was on “almost all” or “most” of the time found that the children
appeared to read less than other children and to be slower to learn to read (Rideout, Vandewater, & Wartella, 2003).

The Disney Channel and Nickelodeon, two well-known television channels with shows primarily targeted towards children, are among the most highly rated. According to Radio & Television Business Report, as of December 1, 2009, The Disney Channel was ranked as TV’s number one network in prime-time for the 57th consecutive month for kids six to eleven and for the 56th for tweens nine to fourteen. The Disney Channel delivered the top three series for tweens nine to fourteen and three of the top four for kids six to eleven. Nickelodeon, coined as the first American television network aimed at children, claimed basic cable’s top spot in total day viewing with kids two to eleven and persons two+ for the second quarter of 2010 and claimed its 61st straight quarter as the top basic cable network with kids two to eleven and total viewers (Gorman, 2010).

There have been numerous results from studies that show excessive television viewing has a wide variety of negative consequences for children. The more television children watch, the greater the chance of these consequences. Despite the widespread research that has already been performed, there is a lack of research on children’s television concerning the portrayal of behaviors that are disrespectful towards both adults and other children.

1.2 Purpose

From an observational standpoint, many of the popular children’s cable television shows seem to be littered with frequent instances of rude and disrespectful
behaviors. The intent of this research is to document characteristics of "disrespectful behaviors" that are depicted in popular children's television shows to determine if this is truly the case. These behaviors along with associated characteristics were coded for in a content analysis of popular children's cable television shows.
CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND REVIEW OF RELEVANT RESEARCH

Several theories of media effects are informative to the present study in understanding potential effects of rude and disrespectful content on children’s television. Evidence from prior studies that focused on media relative to effects that have focused on the receiver and the source have provided a rationale to perform content analyses of certain variables in media messages. Although revealing effects is beyond the scope of this study, given its focus on content, effects theories will help make a case for the importance of studying the content selected for this research. With that goal in mind, two classic theories will be focused on in this section: Social Cognitive Theory, and Cultivation.

2.1 Social Cognitive Theory

Albert Bandura’s Social Cognitive Theory of Mass Communication (2002) suggests that depictions of liked characters experiencing either rewards or punishments
for their actions will influence viewers to be either more or less likely to perform those behaviors themselves. A vast amount of information about human values, styles of thinking, and behavior patterns is gained from the extensive modeling in the symbolic environment of the mass media (Bandura, 2002). People tend to use personal as well as vicarious experiences (i.e., what they have viewed on television) to evaluate outcomes instead of going into new situations blindly, using trial and error to learn. According to Bandura, this is known as "vicarious capability".

This theory describes four subfunctions of observational learning: Attentional processes, retention processes, production processes, and motivational processes. During the first subfunction, we go through a process that involves many personal variations between the modeled events and observer attributes to determine what we will view. Step two involves what we ultimately retain. Retention involves an active process of transforming and restricting information conveyed by modeled events into rules and conceptions for memory representation (Bandura, 2002). In step three we take what we have observed and retained to help us later determine the appropriate course of action. The individual then decides whether or not to use the learned action based on what the individual assumes the outcome will be.

Research on the role of mass media in the social construction of reality carries important social implication (Bandura, 2002). If viewers grow to expect protagonists to "bounce back" despite negative experiences, the persuasive impact of negative behavioral reinforcement may be undermined, potentially resulting in behavior
modeling, regardless of the valence of consequences displayed (Nabi & Clark, 2008). If, however, the act being viewed results in a negative consequence, the viewer should be less likely to repeat the behavior. The viewer is constantly utilizing information they are gaining vicariously to measure rewards versus punishments and determine appropriate actions.

Morality also plays a role in an individual’s decision-making process. Beyond making decisions on how to act based on extrinsic factors, we also typically think through whether or not we would act a certain way based on what our personal morals are. However, social cognitive theory of mass communication posits that how behavior is viewed can vary based on the circumstances and the situations surrounding them. We tend to act on moral imperative by using self-justification, by minimizing the harm our actions will cause, or by placing blame for our actions on others. The massive threats to human welfare stem mainly from deliberate acts of principle rather than from unrestrained acts of impulse (Bandura, 2002).

The Social Cognitive Theory of Mass Communication therefore suggests that because we often learn new behaviors through mass media and because of our ability to justify acting in ways that we would normally feel are immoral, excessive television viewing in which chosen shows are depicting various forms of inappropriate actions would very likely result in some of these inappropriate actions being repeated by the viewer. In the case of disrespectful behaviors, social cognitive theory would predict that if children are viewing liked characters frequently on their favorite television shows, and
the characters are rarely experiencing punishment for their disrespectful behaviors, children will be more likely to perform the disrespectful behaviors themselves.

2.2 Cultivation Theory

George Gerbner (1972) introduced a concept known as Cultural Indicators, which was an ongoing research project to document how television content affected viewers' perceptions of the world. Cultural indicators involves institutional process analysis, message system analysis, and cultivation analysis. Institutional process analysis focuses on how media messages are selected, produced, and distributed. Message system analysis measures the most frequent images in media content. A methodology began to take shape through Gerbner’s collaboration with Larry Gross (Morgan & Shanahan, 2010). Cultivation analysis proposes that ideas and acts portrayed on television become social reality to the viewer. Research that was performed to determine cultivation effects included the amount of television viewed. Gerbner and Gross (1976) argued that heavy viewers (those viewing on average of four or more hours per day) were more likely to give the “television answer” than the light viewers (those viewing an average of two hours or less per day). Those who spend more time “living” in the world of television are more likely to see the “real world” in terms of the images, values, portrayals, and ideologies that emerge through the lens of television (Morgan, Shanahan & Signorielli, 2009).

Research performed by Shrum (2004) looked at on-line versus memory-based judgments as they relate to cultivation. On-line judgments are ones that are formed as
the information is encountered and memory-based judgments are constructed based on the recall of information from long-term memory (Shrum, 2004). His research posits that the cultivation effects of television viewing can be both immediate, made at the time the content is being viewed or immediately thereafter, or long-term, recalled sometime long after viewing.

Other research that evolved from the initial research by Gerbner targets the genre that a particular viewer chooses most often when watching television to determine if genre choice results in varying effects. Research tends to demonstrate that the amount of violence shown on television far exceeds that which occurs in the real world (known as “Mean World Syndrome”). Gerbner and colleagues argued that heavy viewing cultivates exaggerated perceptions of victimization, mistrust, and danger, along with numerous inaccurate beliefs about crime and law enforcement (Morgan & Shanahan, 2010). Cultivation theory argues, therefore, that repeated, cumulative exposure to television teaches viewers that crime is prevalent and common (Riddle, 2008). It could also apply to other viewed behaviors, such as of the prevalence of disrespectful behaviors.

2.3 Conceptual Definition of Disrespectful Behavior

Before performing a content analysis of disrespectful behaviors in children’s cable television shows, a list of disrespectful behaviors needed to be created. Each of the behaviors or acts that are listed in the codebook (Appendix A) as “disrespectful” fall under the following definition for disrespect according to Dictionary.com:
noun

1. lack of respect; discourtesy; rudeness

verb (used with object)

2. to regard or treat without respect; regard or treat with contempt or rudeness.

This conceptual definition was the basis for the operationalization of disrespectful behaviors, the presence of which were coded for as used by children and adult characters.

2.4 Conceptual Definition of Youth

“Youth” in this study will refer to individuals who are playing the role of a character under the age of 18. Related terms such as “kids” and “children” will also refer to this age range. By extension, “children’s television” and similar phrases will refer to shows designed for audiences in the defined age range.

In general, the term “youth” in this study will encompass children plus groups that might be called “tweens” and “teens” in other investigations or in market segmentation. This study has no theoretical or practical reason for getting into such fine distinctions and therefore uses “youth” and related to terms for all actors playing the role of a character who is under the age of 18. “Adults” and related terms will refer to anyone playing the role of a character age 18 or older.

2.5 Violence/aggression

Many studies about media have focused on violence and aggressive behaviors. However, the majority of them have not specifically targeted children’s media. By the
time a typical child finishes elementary school, he or she will have seen approximately 8,000 murders and more and 100,000 other acts of violence on TV (Huston et al., 1992). Children’s cartoons have been documented to be one of the most violent TV genres, showing more violent acts on average than shows not targeted toward children (Wilson et al., 2002). Wilson and colleagues performed research of violence on television by breaking down programs into two categories: those that were targeted towards children under 13 and those that were not. A content analysis was performed on 2,543 hours of programming, 483 of which were classified as children’s programming and the balance as non-children’s programming. They determined that 69% of the children’s shows coded contained some form of violence while only 57% of the non-children’s programming contained violence.

Further research on violence in children’s programming was performed by Signorielli and colleagues by performing a content analysis Saturday morning children’s programs. Signorielli broke the programs into three genres: adventure programs, teachy-preachy programs, and teen scene programs. Results from coding data gathered on 147 programs, including cartoons, showed that as many as 23 violent acts were shown in one hour of adventure programming. Although the research found that the violence in the children’s programs that were coded were somewhat sanitized and there was little, if any, graphic violence, the violence was often presented as intentional and immoral in nature (Signorielli, 2008).
Another example of research performed on children's television was a two-year longitudinal study conducted by Ostrov, Gentile, and Crick (2006). They found that media exposure predicted various subtypes of aggression and pro-social behavior. Parental reports of media exposure were associated with relational aggressions of girls and physical aggression for boys at school.

Two of the largest studies that were performed on television violence are the Cultural Indicators Project (Gerbner & Gross, 1976), discussed above, and a three-year study called the National Television Violence Study (NTVS). The NTVS (Wilson et al., 1998) analyzed over 6,000 hours of television from 23 different television channels. They found that nearly three-quarters of violent scenes contained no remorse, criticism, or penalty for violence, and "bad" characters went unpunished in 40% of programs. Programs that had an anti-violence theme were extremely rare, averaging 4% of all shows. Overall, the percentage of programs that were found to contain some violence was 61% for two of the years that were analyzed and 58% for the third. The research performed for the NTVS also determined that violence was more sanitized and trivialized in children's programming.

2.6 Indirect Aggression

Other studies have focused on more subtle components of children's programming. Coyne and Whitehead performed a content analysis of Walt Disney films to identify the number of instances of what they labeled as indirect aggression. Indirect aggression was operationally defined as any behavior that intended to hurt another
person by using psychological or social means (Coyne & Whitehead, 2008). It is a manipulative form of aggression that is often initiated as non-verbal behaviors. Victims of indirect aggression have been shown to experience a host of problems, including having a lower self-esteem and feelings of self-worth. Extreme cases have even led to suicide (Coyne & Whitehead, 2008). The research that they performed is similar to the research that was done for the current study; however, one main difference is that in the Coyne and Whitehead study, cartoon characters and non-human characters were included for coding purposes. Another difference is that their study looked at films, while the research in this study was performed using television sitcoms. Coyne and Whitehead counted 9.23 indirect aggression acts per hour in the Disney films that they coded.

2.7 Gender roles/stereotypes

Other children’s television research targets gender roles and stereotyping depicted by favorite characters. One study in particular examined favorite characters for girls versus boys. Prior content analyses have indicated that male characters have an advantage over female characters. A study was done of children’s self-reports of favorite television shows to gather more information (Calvert, Kotler, Zehnder, & Shockey, 2003). Findings suggested that typically girls choose female characters and boys choose male characters as their favorites. However when a female character is perceived as acting nontraditionally, gender does not play as great of role when it comes to preference. The implication is that what characters do may be more
important than their gender as a gauge of audience interest (Calvert, Kotler, Zehnder, & Shockey, 2003).

Another similar study by Powers looked at shows on the same television networks (Disney, Nickelodeon and the Cartoon Network) and determined that overall, girls are portrayed more positively than boys across a number of behavioral, appearance, and physical characteristics (Powers, 2010). However, there still seems to be parity between men and women characters when it comes to overall and “star” characters.

How minority characters have been depicted on children’s television has also been a topic of interest to some researchers. Content analyses have been performed to examine this. One such study found that in comparison to real-life population numbers to star characters, Hispanics were severely underrepresented, African-Americans and Asians were slightly underrepresented, and Caucasians were overrepresented (Powers, 2009).

Research on media portrayals thus far has focused much more on all televised shows in general in comparison to just those directed towards children. Much of the research on children’s television has focused on physical aggression and violence; however, other, more subtle forms of aggression occur quite frequently in various forms of children’s media, as shown in previous studies. This research pulls many of the behaviors that have been analyzed previously into one category, “disrespectful behaviors”.

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2.8 Female “Princess” Characters

Other research on children’s media has found that Disney’s portrayal of the Princesses they create help to foster unrealistic views of life by young children who begin reading and having these stories read to them at an early age. In an article entitled “How Disney Damages Fairy Tales and Historical Folklore” (2007), Marie Jones argued that Disney stories are...

...instead of being told by a female point of view and being about women, as many fairy tales are historically represented, Disney projects a patriarchal view on the story and makes it obvious to his viewers that a woman’s life is meaningless without a man to guide her. Disney’s characters all understand the importance of waiting around for their prince to arrive and “save them” from the life that they so torturously endure. Instead of the bright, intelligent, and witty women that are evidenced in such tales as Italo Calvino’s The False Grandmother and Lasair Gheug, the King of Ireland’s Daughter, Disney’s heroines appear to be lacking not only spine, but brains as well.

Another example of the idea that Disney consistently made women appear to be the weaker, dominated sex is reflected in an examination of Disney’s The Little Mermaid. The author’s opinion is that depictions of the Princess (Ariel) and the Prince (Eric) are status quo. Ariel simply leaves one strong male (her Father), to be with another when she ultimately ends up with Prince Eric (see Baron, 2007). Male dominance remains a main theme of the plot.

Adversely, there is the opinion that although prior depictions of Princesses that Walt Disney created played a subordinate, patriarchal role, things
have changed. Today's Princesses are making their own choices, and are no
longer dreaming of the day when their Prince would come and make everything
better (see Do Rozario, 2004). It has been noted by some that not only has the
role of the typical Princess been changing, so has the role of what used to be the
“alpha male” character that was a main part of many Disney movies. Disney
cinema, one of the most effective teaching tools America offers its children, is
not yet converting its model male protagonist all the way into a slacker, but the
New Man model is quite clearly emerging (Gillman & Wooden, 2008).

2.9 Research Questions

The main goal for this research is to determine the frequency of acts of
disrespectful behaviors on popular children's cable television shows. Research to
answer research question 1 was performed mainly to determine if findings indicate a
solid foundation for further experimental research that could be performed to analyze
effects that may be linked to television viewing:

RQ1: How frequent are instances of disrespectful behaviors depicted by various
characters portrayed on shows that are geared towards younger audiences?

Data was also gathered to determine which types of disrespectful acts are
viewed most, if some shows contain higher amounts of disrespectful acts than others,
and if children act disrespectfully towards adults:

RQ2: Of the disrespectful behaviors that occur, which are the most prevalent and which
are least prevalent?
RQ3: Do some shows have more disrespectful behaviors on average than others?

RQ4: What is the frequency of acts where children are being disrespectful to adults?

Many studies have shown that children imitate prosocial behaviors such as rule adherence, altruism, helping, delay of gratification, persistence in task performance and high performance standards after observing live or filmed models performing those behaviors (Tan & Kinner, 1982). If there is a negative consequence for an action, there is a chance to learn either from personal experience or vicariously. If many of the disrespectful acts that occur are followed up by punishment or some attempt to correct the behavior, it may be possible that the viewer learns a valuable lesson. Therefore, the following research question was also asked:

RQ5: How often is there an attempt to correct the disrespectful behaviors?
CHAPTER III

METHODS

3.1 Sample

To determine which shows are categorized as children’s shows, shows were judged according to their content, marketing, scheduling and the channel(s) they were shown on. Once it was determined which were the shows targeted towards children, a content analysis was performed on a random sampling of the selected shows to determine how often disrespectful behaviors occurred.

A random sampling of some of the highest rated children’s television shows was selected by pre-recording the shows using a digital video recorder. Six of the top rated children’s shows were chosen from a list that provided the top 53 cable shows for week ending March 8, 2009 according to 2009 Nielson ratings data posted on tvbythenumbers.com. The rankings were determined by number of viewers. The list
contained both shows that were geared towards children and those that were not.

Shows that were created for children and shown on either Nickelodeon or The Disney Channel were chosen since these two networks are specifically youth-focused.

For this research, animated shows were excluded and only sitcoms that use real actors were included. Research has shown that people relate more to “real” characters vs. cartoon characters. For example, Tom Van der Voort studied 314 children aged nine through twelve in 1986. He found that although children can easily distinguish cartoons, westerns and spy thrillers from reality, they often confuse realistic programs with the real world (Freedman, 2002). Other researchers, such as University of Laval professors Guy Paquette and Jacques de Guise, specifically exclude cartoon violence from their research because of its comical and unrealistic presentation (Freedman, 2002).

Three episodes of each show were randomly selected out of the samples that were gathered, for a total of 18 half-hour episodes. The shows chosen to be coded were (shown in order of popularity ratings, from highest to lowest) iCarly, True Jackson, VP, Hannah Montana, Sonny with a Chance, Suite Life on Deck, and Wizards of Waverly Place. A brief description of each show follows, along with which rating spot the show was in out of the 53 shows that were rated:

1) iCarly is a show about a young girl who lives in Seattle and is being raised by her older brother while their father is in the military, stationed elsewhere. She and her two best friends have their own web show that is broadcast from an apartment in Seattle called iCarly. The show focuses on their live tapings of
their extremely popular web show, as well as all of the trials and tribulations that
that they go through in their personal lives. Rated number 1 out of 53 by
Nielson.

2) True Jackson, VP features a young teenage girl who is “discovered” by a
successfully clothing designer and is made the Vice President of his company’s
youth apparel division. She hires her two best friends to assist her, and the three
teenagers face many challenges as they report to the office each day after
school. Rated number 4 out of 53 by Nielson.

3) Hannah Montana is about a young girl who is living a double life. She is a huge,
iconic pop-star by night, and during the day she is living the life of a regular girl
who goes to school and faces challenges similar to those of a typical teenager.
She lives with her father and brother and has two best friends who are with her
every step of the way. Rated number 5 out of 53 by Nielson.

4) Sonny with a Chance is about a young teenage girl who is chosen to be a part of a
live comedy show called So Random. She faces many challenges as trying to fit in
and find her place within the cast, and a jealous cast member does not make it
easy for her. Rated number 8 out of 53 by Nielson.

5) The Suite Life on Deck depicts a group of high school students who are going to
school at sea. The show is actually a spinoff of The Suite Life of Zach and Cody.
While attending school on the cruise ship, the students also hold various jobs on
the ship. Rated number 12 out of 53 by Nielson.
6) *Wizards of Waverly Place* is about a family of wizards who own a sandwich shop in New York City. They fight to keep their wizard statuses a secret, but find themselves in many peculiar situations because of it. The family of wizards consists of a father, a mother, and three children. Rated number 16 out of 53 by Nielsen.

### 3.2 Units of analysis

The coders used the attached codebook (Appendix A), that included a compiled list of all “disrespectful behaviors” in three separate categories: non-verbal behaviors, verbal behaviors, and physical acts. A list of “disrespectful behaviors” was created using a combination of behaviors previously coded in a study entitled “Talking Smack: Verbal Aggression in Professional Wrestling” (Tamborini, Chory, Lachlan, Westerman, & Skalski, 2008), a list of verbal aggressive message types identified by Infante and Wigley (1986), as well as some additions made by the researcher upon observing additional forms of disrespectful behaviors on the specific shows chosen for coding. Each category contains a list of behaviors that are associated with the category. Non-verbal behaviors were those that did not result in any physical contact and did not involve speech, for instance sticking one’s tongue out at another person, crossing their arms while rolling their eyes and tapping their foot in annoyance, or stealing something from someone. Stealing was not placed under the physical acts category because it was determined that physical acts would be any act that involved human contact and were considered to be disrespectful (i.e., hitting someone, tripping someone, pulling someone’s hair). Verbal
behaviors were anything that was spoken to or about another character in a
disrespectful manner. During the initial coding that was done for the training and the
inter-coder-reliability check, it was identified that some actions/behaviors that were
exhibited on the shows being watched were missing from the codebook and the list was
updated.

3.3 Training and Reliability

The coders had to first be educated on the shows that they were coding,
particularly on who the characters were so that they could determine if they were a
main character and use the proper character ID, or if they were a non-main character, in
which case a general ID code was used. By printing pictures of each main character off
of the Internet and providing the characters’ names, this task was accomplished. The
biggest challenge for character identification was due to the fact that the main
characters on “The Suite Life on Deck” are identical twins. Based on knowledge of the
personality differences between the twin’s characters by the researcher, the coders
were trained to identify which character was performing the disrespectful act as
needed.

Once the coders were able to clearly identify the characters, they worked
together to select three episodes to be coded and these episodes were used for an
inter-coder-reliability check. After selecting episodes to be used for reliability, the
coders worked separately to code the shows. After each reliability episode was
independently coded by the two coders, the researcher met with them to discuss
findings. It was determined in the first few attempts that further training was needed to
due to quite a few inconsistencies between what the coders had determined to be the
primary act that had occurred. It was also determined during the first few coding
samples that more acts needed to be added to the codebook, along with further
instructions to help coders understand what to do in certain situations.

For instance, coders were asked to try and refrain from using subjectivity, events
surrounding an act, or opinion to determine if an act should be classified as a
disrespectful behavior. One coder may have determined that a certain act was
disrespectful “in their opinion” for those acts that were more subtle in nature. One
example is an instance where a character “snatched” a piece of paper from another
character’s hands. One coder personally felt that that this was a disrespectful act and
the other did not. Coders were therefore advised to focus on acts that were specifically
listed in the codebook and those that were more obvious or not questionable.

Instructions to not code a single act as more than one of each category were also
given to help maintain consistency. There were more inconsistencies between the two
coders when this instruction was not given. For example, one coder might code an
instance where a character is yelling loudly that he/she will punch another character in
the face as two different verbal behaviors (yelling and threat) while the other just
considered it be a threat, and did not focus on the yelling. They were instructed to
choose the main verbally-disrespectful act that had occurred, and if they also identified
a non-verbally disrespectful act and a physically disrespectful act occurring in the same
instance to code those as well. In this scenario, “threat” would be the main verbally
disrespectful act occurring since it is typical that while threatening, it is very likely that
one would be raising their voice. For some of the verbally disrespectful acts listed in the
codebook, “with or without yelling” was added to keep this instruction more clear as
well as further instruction (see Appendix A).

If a character was putting someone down for what they were wearing (physical
appearance attack) while pointing and laughing at them, one coder may code for the
attack on the character’s physical appearance while the other may just consider the act
to have been one character laughing at another in an attempt to ridicule them. It was
determined that there was more consistency when the coder was asked to use the
behavior within a certain category that was the “best” choice when only one choice
from that particular category was an option. Coders could, however, choose from more
than one category per act. For example, if a character pushed another character while
threatening to beat them up the coder could code that one act as pushing someone and
as threatening someone. Once further clarification was provided as needed via both
verbal and written instruction in the form of additions to the codebook, the rest of the
coding, which consisted of 15 half-hour episodes, was completed.

3.4 Variables

Variables were the type of action, who initiated the act, who the target was, who
the recipient was, the role of both the recipient and target, and whether or not there
was an action to correct the behavior. The target was identified as whomever the
disrespectful act was about or intended for. The target was the person who was
witnessing or listening to the character who was exhibiting the disrespectful act. Most
of the time, the act was witnessed by and/or presented to the person who was intended
as the target. There were times, however, when the target was not present when the
act occurred. For instance, a character may be talking about another character behind
their back. The initiator would be the person who was talking about another person in a
disrespectful way behind their back. The recipient would be the person whom the
initiator was speaking to, and the target would be the person whom the initiator was
speaking about.

Role of the target and recipient were identified to determine first if the recipient
or target was an adult or a child, and then to narrow it down even further. For instance,
if the recipient or target was an adult, was it a parent, guardian, teacher, boss, etc.? If it
was a child, was it a co-worker, classmate, friend, sibling, etc.? The coders also
documented whether or not there was action taken to correct the disrespectful act that
occurred. This was determined based on whether or not the character who had
initiated the disrespectful act had been punished, reprimanded or any other attempt
was made by another character, adult or youth, to try and advise the initiator of the
disrespectful act that what they did was not acceptable. Lastly, the coders documented
the name of the show that was being coded by numbering the show (see Appendix D,
Master List of Episodes), the time the act being coded had occurred, and any comments
that they had.
To determine if an initiator was a child or an adult, character ID's were created (Appendix C). Only those considered to be “main” characters were given their own character ID, and all other characters in the show were coded as a “non-main character”. The main character ID’s not only provide who the initiator was, but also the initiator’s sex, ethnicity, and whether they are an adult or a child.
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

4.1 Reliability Results

A reliability check was performed on the first three shows that were used to gather coding data, representing 17 percent of the sample. The three shows used as a reliability check were also used as part of the total results. Two coders, after being trained extensively, coded the same shows independently. The instances of disrespectful acts they identified were subjected to an initial check for reliability of unitizing. This revealed consistency on 68 of 72 cases (94%), which was deemed acceptable. Results for the coded variables were then run through PRAM (Program for Reliability Assessment with Multiple-Coders, Neuendorf, 2002). Cohen’s Kappas for all of the variables were fairly high, ranging from .90 to .98, with the exception of one variable, which had a Cohen’s Kappa reliability coefficient of .66. Reliability statistics for
each variable are shown in Table 1. Overall, the coding instructions and coder training seem to have been effective, given that reliability coefficients of .90 or greater would be acceptable to all (Neuendorf, 2002), and all but one of the variables in this study had a Cohen’s Kappa in that range.

Table 1

*Intercoder Reliability Statistics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Percent Agreement</th>
<th>Cohen’s Kappa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type of Action</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiator ID</td>
<td>99%</td>
<td>.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recipient ID</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of Recipient</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target ID</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of Target</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action to Correct</td>
<td>99%</td>
<td>.66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2 Research Question Results

RQ1 asked about frequency of disrespectful behaviors in live action cable shows for children. Results were computed using descriptive statistics, starting with a basic count. A total of 468 acts were recorded across the 18 episodes sampled for this study.
This translates into 19.5 disrespectful acts per episode, on average. Assuming approximately 22 minutes of non-commercial time per episode, this means there was almost one disrespectful act per minute!

RQ2 inquired about the prevalence of specific disrespectful behaviors in cable shows for young audiences. These results are shown in Table 2. As the table shows, the most frequent disrespectful behavior coded for was name calling, occurring 75 times and representing 16 percent of all acts. The next most frequent behaviors were demand or commanding another to do or not to do something (N = 48; 10 percent), arguing in a “snotty” tone (N = 44; 9 percent), lying (N = 28; 6 percent), and attacking the physical appearance of another (N = 27; 6 percent). It should be noted that these were all verbal in nature, and indeed, verbal attacks represented the vast majority of coded behaviors.

**Table 2**

*Frequencies of Specific Disrespectful Behaviors.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>216 – Name-calling (not in a teasing manner)</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>210 – Demand (with or without yelling): commanding another to do or not do something</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>219 – Arguing with someone in a “snotty” tone and/or raising voice (shouting/yelling) or yelling at someone</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>212 – Lying: not being truthful about something or one’s intentions or promising that one will do something but they do not, or won’t do something when they</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>intend to or already have</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>204 – Physical appearance attack: expressing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dissatisfaction with or making fun of the way one physically looks, dresses, appears, etc.</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>207 – Sarcasm: saying one thing but meaning another</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>202 – Competence attack: criticizing another’s capabilities or way of thinking</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>305 – Hitting someone or something in anger/annoyance</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>105 – Rolling eyes at someone/about someone/behind someone’s back</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>288 – Other verbal</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>206 – Dislike: verbally expressing hate or dislike for or towards another</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>388 – Other physical</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>208 – Threat (with or without yelling):</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>intimidation of another, threat to harm someone</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>113 – Making faces at someone or behind someone’s back</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>306 – Grabbing someone</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>114 – Moving towards someone or motioning at them as if you are going to hit/kick/slap them (etc) but not actually doing it</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>301 – Pushing someone</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>188 – Other non-verbal</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>211 – Mocking: imitating another in a mean-spirited way</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>215 – Teasing (name-calling, etc.)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>110 – Ignoring</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>217 – Gloating/Poor sportsmanship</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>220 – Laughing at someone in ridicule</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>221 – Making fun of someone or something</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>about someone</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>101 – Crossing arms in annoyance</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>115 – Stealing</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>302 – Throwing something at someone or something</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>303 – Tripping someone</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>116 – Throwing something at someone or something (does not make contact)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>209 – Malediction (with or without yelling): saying one hopes something bad will happen to another</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>307 – Pulling someone’s hair</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>104 – Glaring at someone</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>109 – Refusal to comply</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>205 – Rejection: disagreeing with another in a rude or disrespectful way</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>213 – Intent to lie: expressing intent to lie about something, but ultimately not following through</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>218 – Refusal to comply</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>102 – Tapping foot in annoyance</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>103 – Sighing in annoyance</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>107 – Cheating on someone or something</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>108 – Spiteful/Revengeful action</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>111 – Stomping feet</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>112 – Sticking tongue out at someone or behind someone’s back</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>201 – Character attach: saying unfavorable things about another’s character, morality, ethics, etc.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>214 – Using profanity in any way</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>301 – Kicking someone or something in anger/annoyance</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>308 – Spitting at someone or something in anger/annoyance</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comparing the three umbrella categories of nonverbal, verbal, and physical actions, findings show that 62 coded disrespectful acts were nonverbal (13 percent), 341 were verbal (73 percent), and 65 were physical in nature (14 percent). These findings are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3**

*Frequencies of Disrespectful Behaviors by Category*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verbal</td>
<td>341</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-verbal</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RQ3 asked about differences in the frequency of disrespectful behaviors on specific shows. Results are summarized in Table 4. As shown, *The Suite Life on Deck* was found to have the most disrespectful behavior—it had a total of 121 acts in just three episodes, equating to over 40 acts per episode. Using the 22 minute formula used in RQ1 and assuming 66 minutes of content across the episodes, this means a disrespectful behavior happened on this show almost every 30 seconds! The show with the next most acts was *iCarly* (total N = 105 disrespectful behaviors, or 35 per episode), followed by *Hannah Montana* (total N = 87 disrespectful behaviors, or 29 per episode), *True Jackson, VP* (total N = 55 disrespectful behaviors, or more than 18 per episode), *Sonny with a Chance* (total N = 52 disrespectful behaviors, or more than 17 per episode), and *Wizards of Waverly Place* (total N = 48 disrespectful behaviors, or 16 per episode).

**Table 4**

*Frequency of Disrespectful Behaviors by Show*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Show</th>
<th>Disrespectful Behaviors</th>
<th>Average per Episode</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>iCarly</em></td>
<td>105</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>True Jackson, VP</em></td>
<td>55</td>
<td>18.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Hannah Montana</em></td>
<td>57</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Sonny with a Chance</em></td>
<td>53</td>
<td>17.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Suite Life on Deck</em></td>
<td>121</td>
<td>40.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Wizards of Waverly Place</em></td>
<td>48</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
RQ4 asked about the frequency of acts featuring children being disrespectful to adults. This question was addressed using two chi-square tests. The first compared children and adult main characters only in terms of disrespectful behaviors against other children and adult main characters. Results are shown in Table 5. The number of acts committed did not differ by main character perpetrator type, \( \chi^2 (1, N = 167) = 1.33, p = .25 \). However, as the table shows, the vast majority of disrespectful behaviors were committed by kid main characters against other kid main characters (\( N = 126 \)).

Table 5

*Crosstabulation of Disrespectful Acts by Perpetrator Type and Target Type*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perpetrator Type</th>
<th>Child Main Character</th>
<th>Adult Main Character</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child Main Character</td>
<td>126 (75%)</td>
<td>21 (13%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult Main Character</td>
<td>19 (11%)</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To look at the results another way, a second chi-square test investigated how often the child main characters of popular children’s shows (versus all other characters) engaged in disrespectful behavior toward authority figures (versus all other characters). Authority figures included parents, grandparents, teachers, babysitters, coaches, and bosses. Results of this comparison are shown in Table 6. The number of disrespectful acts committed by main character children against authority figures did differ significantly, \( \chi^2 (1, N = 468) = 12.80, p < .01 \). As the table shows, few (\( N = 27 \)) of the disrespectful acts were committed against authority figures; however, of those, the vast
majority (N = 25) were committed by child main characters instead of other characters (N = 2).

Table 6

*Frequency of attempts to correct disrespectful behaviors*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perpetrator Type</th>
<th>Authority Figure</th>
<th>Non-Authority Figure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child Main Character</td>
<td>25 (5%)</td>
<td>255 (55%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Other Characters</td>
<td>2 (0%)</td>
<td>186 (40%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Finally, RQ5 asked about the frequency of attempts to correct disrespectful behaviors on popular children's shows. This is a notable non-finding: Only 2 out of the 468 acts coded were associated with an attempt to correct the behavior!

Demographic information was also collected on each main character. There were 14 child female main characters, 15 child male main characters, eight adult male main characters, and only two adult female main characters. The majority, 72% of them were Caucasian. Ten percent were black, 10% Hispanic (all in one show, *Wizards of Waverly Place*), 5% Asian and 2.5% were listed as “other” in ethnicity.
CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

5.1 Discussion of Findings

The purpose of this study was to determine the prevalence of disrespectful behaviors depicted on popular children’s shows. The results indicate that shows made for children have many incidences of disrespectful behaviors depicted by multiple characters throughout each episode. This goes along with other research that has been performed centering around various behaviors and themes depicted in children’s television shows and movies that are not positive in nature (Coyne & Whitehead, 2008, Gerbner & Gross, 1976, Huston et al., 1992, Signorielli, 2008, Wilson et al., 1998, Wilson et al., 2002). If children tend to repeat viewed behaviors (Bandura, 2002), and higher television viewing can affect a viewer’s perception of the real world (Gerbner, 1972), these finding would indicate that there is a chance children may repeat the disrespectful behaviors depicted on the shows they are watching. For children who watch more
television on average than other children, there is a chance that their perception of what is common in terms of respectfulness to both adults and peers may be skewed.

Each of the six shows is highly popular among children, and each of them depict many disrespectful acts per episode, which is alarming since studies have shown that children can learn and copy behaviors (Bandura, 2002). If a “Mean World Syndrome” can occur from frequent viewing of violence-related media, then certainly a “Rude World Syndrome” as a result of frequent viewing of disrespectful acts in the media is a possibility as well. It is a common opinion that children today seem to be more disrespectful than in years past. Could it be that it is not so much the fact that punishment tactics have changed over the years, but the cultivation effects have created a misperception for many children as to what are and are not acceptable and common behaviors?

The main topic of interest for this research was to sample the frequency of the occurrence of disrespectful acts. The first research question relates to this. The findings, which indicate about one disrespectful act per minute on average, show that children are inundated with disrespectful behaviors by watching shows on Nickelodeon and the Disney Channel. This suggests that it would be worthwhile to look further into the depictions of these types of acts as shown by popular actors on children’s television shows, and to investigate their effects.

Out of the 468 acts total, the majority were verbal in nature. This study shows that 73% of all disrespectful acts were verbal in nature, with name-calling being the
most frequent. Physical acts and those that were non-verbal in nature were almost tied, at 14% and 13% respectively. Verbal acts clearly dominated in this sample of programs. Historically, the tendency among researchers, parents, and policy makers has been to focus on physical acts of aggression in the media, but this study suggests that increased attention should be paid to verbal aggression in the newer media environment. Potter (1999) suggests that inhibitions preventing the imitation of aggression are considerably weaker for verbal aggression than physical aggression.

Verbal aggression is often linked to physical aggression in that the two quite often happen in conjunction. Typically, physical aggression is combined with physical aggression and the two happen in the same instance. However, physical aggression does not always lead to verbal aggression, and verbal aggression is an attempt by the initiator to make the receiver feel less favorable about self (Infante & Wigley, 1986). There is cause for concern about the imitation of disrespectful acts in general. However, based on the results of this research, there is a specific cause for concern about the imitation of verbally aggressive acts, especially among children.

The third research question looked at each of the six shows in terms of highest to lowest number of disrespectful acts. Four of the shows were fairly similar with around 50 total acts in three episodes. Two of the shows, iCarly and The Suite Life on Deck, had about double the number of disrespectful acts in the three episodes that were looked at for each. This shows that there is some variation in disrespectful behaviors between shows, but that all shows contain a hefty amount of it.
This research also looked at how often disrespectful acts that were identified occurred between adults, or authority figures, and children. Although there were instances of children being disrespectful towards adults, the majority of the disrespectful acts were done by children and directed at other children. However, there were far more children in the main character roles than adults in the shows chosen (74% of the main characters were children). Because of this, it is likely that the numbers of instances of disrespectful acts would be directed towards other children, since there are few adult main characters present in most of the shows. Regardless, media violence research shows that acts committed by similar others are more likely to be imitated (Potter, 1999), and this study reveals that young viewers of popular children’s shows are frequently observing models for behavior who are very much like them.

Lastly, coders documented whether or not there were attempts made to correct disrespectful acts when they occurred. This very rarely happened. In fact, of the 468 acts there were only two attempts made to correct the perpetrator. Research guided by social cognitive theory shows that unpunished violence is significantly more like to be imitated than punished violence (Bandura, 2002); therefore, the likelihood of these acts being imitated by young viewers seems particularly strong.

5.2 Additional Findings

An interesting initial finding was that only two of the six shows coded depict the characters’ TV parents as being a regular part of their lives. In the other four shows, the parents are very rarely mentioned and in some cases never shown. This was
determined simply by examining online information about the regular actors on the shows and determining which (if any) played parents.

As noted, some shows of the six chosen for this research had more adult main characters than the others. *True Jackson, VP* had the most with 50% of the main characters being adults and this show had the highest number of disrespectful acts by children towards adults (26%). This shows that the majority of the disrespectful acts found on this show were still child-to-child. This result remains consistent for the other five shows in that *Wizards of Waverly Place* has the next highest number of adult main characters and the second highest number of disrespectful acts by a child targeted towards an adult. *iCarly, Hannah Montana, Sonny with a Chance* and *Suite Life on Deck* each had one adult main character, and these shows have the four lowest number of disrespectful acts by a child targeted towards an adult (ranging from 9.8 % to 0%). *Sonny with a Chance* was the show that did not contain any child-to-adult disrespectful acts; however the sample was fairly small, with only three episodes used. This number could change based on a larger sample.

Although this study focused on the frequency and types of disrespectful behavior on popular children’s cable television programs, it would be interesting and fruitful to examine breakdowns by sex, race, and other differences in future investigations, given that effects may be strongest when similar others are engaging in behaviors or behaviors are targeted toward dissimilar others.
5.3 Limitations

The sample used for this research was relatively small, limited to Disney Channel and Nickelodeon shows. However, this is because those are most popular children's shows. Future research would benefit from a broader sample of shows fully reflecting children's television today. It could also include animated shows, reality programs, and other genres popular among young people today.

A content analysis such as this is not able to predict or determine the impact that viewing shows depicting numerous acts of disrespectful behaviors may ultimately have on a child. However, content analysis is a first step to establish the prevalence of certain types of content. Based on prior studies on media and potential negative effects (Bandura, 2002; Gerbner & Gross, 1976), a content analysis such as this one takes an integrative approach to a logical link between content studies and studies on potential effects to determine actual effects (see Neuendorf, 2002). This research shows that this type of content is worthy of further investigation given its frequency of instances.

5.4 Conclusion/Future Directions for Research

This research shows that various forms of behaviors that are either verbally disrespectful, non-verbally disrespectful, or physically disrespectful in nature are a frequent part of children's programming today. Verbal disrespectfulness is by far the most highly depicted of the three categories. Based on these findings, it would be beneficial to move forward with experimental studies that would measure for effects of children who viewed shows such as these chosen for the current study. It would be
interesting to compare children who are not exposed to these types of television shows to children that are to see if these types of behaviors are repeated by either group, and if the behaviors are repeated more so based on the number of hours a child watches television.

As mentioned, this study included data that was not specific to the current study, and could be used for further research. For instance, character-specific data was collected for each character on sex, ethnicity, and whether the character is an adult (18 or over), or a youth (under 18). One example of research that could be performed based on this ancillary info would be to determine if sex or ethnicity plays a role in the frequency of depicted disrespectful behaviors. If research were to be done using the data collected on each character, it was recognized during data analysis that the “other” categories should be narrowed down further. A suggestion would be to have an “other: female, Caucasian, youth”, “other: female, Caucasian, adult” and so on so that ethnicity, sex, and other identifying details can be collected on non-main characters as well.

It was also noted during examination of findings that it may have been beneficial to document each “other” act that was identified in the comments section of the code sheet if research was to be done to further investigate the specific types of disrespectful acts that occur. Between the three disrespectful acts categories, 12% were coded as “other”. Although most of the acts coded as “other” most likely were specific events that occurred only once or twice, it may be necessary to narrow this category down further to get a more complete picture of types of acts.
Overall, this study advances knowledge of the content of popular television programs created for and viewed by young people. Findings indicate that these shows contain a troubling amount of disrespectful behavior, mostly verbal in nature, and that there are rare attempts to correct the behavior. The findings of this study not only provide a foundation for future work, but they may also be informative to non-academics. It calls industry attention to the content of the programs it produces and suggests ways in which shows could be made more beneficial to society, such as by including more consequences for disrespectful behavior. This thesis also suggest to parents that caution should be used in deciding what shows to allow their children to watch, or at least that active mediation should be a part of their children’s viewing experiences, to reduce potential harm.
REFERENCES

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Gorman, B. (2010). Nickelodeon scores its most-watched second quarter ever. Retrieved from TV by the Numbers:


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APPENDICES
Analysis Coding Sheet Instructions for Children’s Shows

Unit of Data Collection is any character who exhibits any form of disrespectful behavior to any other character. The character being coded for the behavior can be any character that appears in the show, regardless of age, sex, or role in the show.

Date:

Please write the date the coding is being completed

Name of Show:

iCarly=1
True Jackson, VP=2
Hannah Montana=3
Sonny with a Chance=4
Suite Life on Deck=5
Wizards of Waverly Place=6

Coder ID:

Connie=1
Nicky=2

Incident number:

Number each incident in the order in which they were identified

Action:

Code for disrespectful behaviors displayed by any character. Each instance of disrespectful behavior should be coded separately, even if the same behavior is repeated by the same character more than once in the same episode. It may be possible that more than one code applies for one display of disrespectful behavior (one event). When this is the case, please use all codes applicable to the particular act (but not more than one from each category per act).

For each behavior category (Nonverbal, verbal, physical), only choose 1 from each category. In other words, one instance may include a nonverbal behavior, a verbal behavior, and a physical behavior, however one instance should not be coded as 2 nonverbs and a verbal. Choose the behavior within each category that best matches the main behavior(s) being displayed. EX: character is yelling at another character “I’m going to punch you” while raising fists towards the person. This is not a physical behavior if the punch did not occur. The nonverbal behavior would...
be raising fists at the other or in the air in anger. The verbal would be Threat: intimidation of other, but not yelling as well. The threat is the main verbal behavior that is occurring and it is the one that should be coded.

If a character states that they had done something disrespectful (ex. “I pushed him into a locker”), but it is not shown, do not code.

Tip: Do not try to determine if a certain action is or is not disrespectful based on the situation surrounding its occurrence. If any of the below actions occur within the episode, code them.

**Nonverbal behaviors:**
101. Crossing arms in annoyance
102. Tapping foot in annoyance
103. Sighing in annoyance
104. Glaring at someone
105. Rolling eyes at someone/about someone/behind someone’s back
106. Mouthing things behind someone’s back in attempt to make fun or show annoyance
107. Cheating on someone or something
108. Spiteful/Revengeful Action: Ex. Knowingly going against another’s wishes when the act will hurt/upset someone
109. Refusal to comply
110. Ignoring
111. Stomping feet
112. Sticking tongue out at someone or behind someone’s back
113. Making faces at someone or behind someone’s back
114. Moving towards someone or motioning at them as if you are going to hit/kick/slap them (etc.) but not actually doing it
115. Stealing
116. Throwing something at someone or something (does not make contact)
188. Other

**Verbal behaviors:**
201. Character Attack: saying unfavorable things about another’s character, morality, ethics, etc.
202. Competence Attack: criticizing another’s capabilities or way of thinking.
203. Background attack: saying unfavorable things about another’s family, race, age, geographical place of residence or origin, etc.
204. Physical appearance attack: expressing dissatisfaction with or making fun of the way one physically looks, dresses, appears, etc.
205. Rejection: disagreeing with another in a rude or disrespectful way.
206. Dislike: Verbally expressing hate or dislike for or toward another.
207. Sarcasm: saying one thing, but meaning another.
208. Threat (with or without yelling): intimidation of another, threat to harm someone
209. Male:ction (with or without yelling): saying one hopes something bad will happen to another.
210. Demand (with or without yelling): commanding another to do or not do something
211. Mocking: imitating another in a mean-spirited way
212. Lying: not being truthful about something or one’s intentions or promising that one will do something but they do not, or won’t do something when they intend to or already have
213. Intent to lie: expressing intent to lie about something, but ultimately not following through
214. Using profanity in any way
215. Teasing (name calling, etc.)
216. Name-calling (not in a teasing manner)
217. Gloatting/Poor Sportsmanship
218. Refusal to comply
219. Arguing with someone in a “snotty” tone and/or raising voice (shouting/yelling) or yelling at someone *
220. Laughing at someone in ridicule
221. Making fun of someone or something about someone. Use this when the action is not a character attack, competence attack, background attack, physical appearance attack, and when name calling and teasing or any other verbal action does not apply.
288. Other
*If the underlying reason for the argument is to attack someone’s character, competence, background or physical appearance or to threaten them, be sarcastic or anything else that is already accounted for as a verbal action, please do not use code 219. Use code 219 ONLY when all other categories under verbal actions do not apply

Physical Actions (must make physical contact in some way):
301. Pushing someone
302. Throwing something at someone or something
303. Tripping someone
304. Kicking someone or something in anger/annoyance
305. Hitting someone or something with anything
306. Grabbing someone
307. Pulling someone’s hair
308. Spitting at someone or something in anger /annoyance
388. Other

Initiator ID, code for character that was exhibiting the disrespectful behavior:

See character ID’s

Recipient ID, code for character that disrespectful behavior was directed towards

See character ID’s

Role of Recipient
Parent or Guardian=1
Grandparent=2
Sibling=3
Other Relative=4
Teacher=5
Babysitter=6
Classmate=7
Team Member =8
Coach=9
Friend=10
Son/Daughter=11
Coworker=12
Boss=13
Employee=14
Passerby/Unknown/Stranger=15
Student=16
Girlfriend/Boyfriend=17
Other =88
1000=Inanimate Object
1001=Group (2 or more) Use this any time more than one person was the targeted recipient or when a single recipient was the actual target but not around and/or aware they were being targeted and instead 2 or more people were present. When single recipient is present and aware do not use this...even if others were present as well.

**Target ID**, code for character that the disrespectful behavior was *about* (target):

See character ID’s

**Role of target:**

Parent or Guardian=1
Grandparent=2
Sibling=3
Other Relative=4
Teacher=5
Babysitter=6
Classmate=7
Team Member =8
Coach=9
Friend=10
Son/Daughter=11
Coworker=12
Boss=13
Employee=14
Passerby/Unknown/Stranger=15
Student=16
Girlfriend/Boyfriend=17
Other =88
1000=Inanimate Object
1001=Group (2 or more)
Action to Correct
Was there any sort of action taken to correct the disrespectful behavior at any point during the episode, from the time the behavior occurred?:
No=1
Yes, by target(s)=2
Yes, by recipient(s)=3
Yes, by other(s)(not target or recipient) – adult=4
Yes, by other(s)(not target or recipient) – youth=5

Time
List the exact time in the episode the action being coded occurred (minutes and seconds)

Comments:
Add comments if you are unsure that you have coded the behavior properly, if it is a behavior that a code is not available for, or if you feel you have coded the behavior properly, however a comment is needed for clarification.
## Appendix B

### Code sheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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## Appendix C
### Character ID's

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<th>Name of Show</th>
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### Ethnicity codes:
- a = Asian
- b = Black
- c = Caucasian
- h = Hispanic
- o = Other
## Appendix D

### Master List of Episodes

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<tr>
<th>Show</th>
<th>Episode</th>
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<tr>
<td>iCarly</td>
<td>11. iReunite with Missy. May 1 2010</td>
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<td>12. iRue the Day. Sep 27 7 PM</td>
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<td>13. iRock the Vote. Sep 27 4:30 PM</td>
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<tr>
<td>True Jackson, VP</td>
<td>21. The Hotshot. June 28</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22. True Magic. Aug 7 8 PM</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>23. Amanda Hires a Pink. Aug 14 9 PM</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hannah Montana</td>
<td>31. What I don't like about you. 5/1/10. Hannah Montana 4:00 pm Disney</td>
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<td>32. Come Fall Away. 8/29 6:30 pm</td>
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<tr>
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<td>33. Joanie B. Goode. Aug 30 5:00 pm</td>
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<td>Sonny with a Chance</td>
<td>41. The Legend of Candy Face. 6/21/10</td>
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<td>42. My Two Chads. Sep 26 8:30pm</td>
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<td>43. The Problem with Pauly. Sep 26 1:30 pm</td>
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<td>52. Seven Seas News. Sep 14 4PM</td>
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<td>53. Party On! Sep 14 6:30 PM</td>
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<td>Wizards of Waverly Place</td>
<td>61. Dad's Buggin Out. June 27</td>
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<td>62. Three Monsters. 9/19 5:30 pm</td>
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<td></td>
<td>63. You Can't Always Get What you Want. 9/20 4:30 PM</td>
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