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# CARTOONS AND THE AUTOCRATIC CREEDS OF THE CULTURE INDUSTRY: VIOLENT AFFECTS AND EFFECTS IN CHILDREN'S ENTERTAINMENT

Jan Raen Carlo Mijaro Ledesma[1*] and Aldrin Enciso Manalastas[2]
[1,2]University of Santo Tomas, España, Manila, Philippines
jmledesma@ust.edu.ph[1] and aemanalastas@ust.edu.ph[2]
*correspondence: jmledesma@ust.edu.ph
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**Abstract**
This paper asserts that operations and patterns of violence are present in Hanna-Barbera's Tom and Jerry, Butch Hartman's The Fairly Oddparents, Thomas Edward Warburton's Codename: Kids Next Door, and John Kricfalusi's Ren and Stimpy. Cartoons are meant to be enjoyed by children. However, the incorporation of violence in cartoons can leave imprints in the impressionable minds of the children. With the media and reception of the children's audience in the foreground, the notion of false happiness can be deduced as the comedic and entertaining modes of representation in the cartoons do not just make the audience laugh but can also possibly penetrate their attitudes and behaviors. The cartoons and their violent features can be a springboard to engage media effects which can include aggression, agenda-building, and cultivation. As a framework, the discourses on violence and false happiness are supported by the critical claims of Adorno and Horkheimer on the culture industry and offshoots of immersing oneself in television. The analysis of the cartoons presented a typology of violence affirming that organized entertainment becomes synonymous with the displays of organized violence. These include blatant and forceful physical violence, subtle familial violence, violence of structural differences and tensions, and the aestheticization of violence.

**Keywords:** culture industry, false happiness, media effects, television studies, violence in cartoons

## Introduction

Cartoons play an essential role in the media space allotted for children. Animated cartoons have occupied a significant domain in the development of the various aspects that underlie the varying dispositions and personalities of children. In this case, they have markedly become a considerable commodity in the media space of children. In the 21st century, this is a clear indication that media has become an essential means used in the dissemination of information intentionally or unintentionally. The easy exposure of children to cartoons is a testament to the fact that people are strikingly living in a media-concentrated society. This is an affirmation that television can be a commanding teacher and influencer (Wright &



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Huston, 1995). A remarkable offshoot as well of living in the age of social media is the fact that children can be uninterrupted by other forms of media, not just television, but also movies, comics, Netflix, YouTube, Facebook, and computer games. Cartoons, being commodities that can be accessed through television, understandably serve as a source of entertainment. They are not just mere sites of entertainment and a prominent pastime for children. They are also educational tools that can also play a vital role in the academic formation of children. Children can acquire skills from cartoons and popular culture, in general, being propagated by television. Television, in general, is a pliant avenue to witness the cultivation of children. According to Bandura (1977), television is considered one of the leading means and enablers of the socialization process moving in consonance with the key players in the process such as the family, teachers, classmates, and other peer groups. This cultivation plays an important part in determining their behavioral patterns as well as their needs mentally, socially, and emotionally (Odukomaiya, 2014). Taking into consideration the juvenile dispositions of the intended audience of these cartoons, one can support the notion that these cartoons become remarkable sites that can unveil the ubiquitousness of the power of television and its ability to seduce children who are evidently and relatively not cognizant of the contents being conveyed by these cartoons. Aware of the children's attraction to the animation, dynamism, and graphical images of these cartoons, they become distinctly attracted to the child being the target audience and can generate a colossal influence on the formation of their personalities inciting emotional response and even the desire to be like the characters of their liking (Akca & Cilekciler, 2019).

In examining the effects of cartoons on children and the ideo-affective formations being stirred within them, it is essential to note that media, cartoons in particular, are observed, consumed, and scrutinized by children differently as compared with adults. This is where the concept of identification enters the hermeneutic process. Identification occurs when people experience reception and construal understanding of the text beginning from the inside as if such things were happening to them (Cohen, 2001). Taking the cue from the notion of the audience's effect, children can regard cartoons to be a positive avenue that can be utilized for the cultivation of themselves. They develop skills in gradually watching television affecting at the same time as well their physiological and mental dispositions and developments. Exposure to cartoons can significantly affect the stances, mental attitudes, and behavior of children. It can even have a strong effect on their linguistic formation and development, even their way of eating and dressing (Hassan, 2013).

In a study titled "Standpoint: Violence on Television: The Cultural Indicators Project, Nancy Signorielli, George Gerbner, and Michael Morgan (1995) said that in the United States, "violence appears in two-thirds to three-quarters of all television plays at a rate of between six and ten incidents per hour in primetime, and at rates three or four times as much in children's programming (mostly cartoons)." In this case, violence becomes ubiquitous in cartoons leaving marks on viewers (Muhammad, 2019). This can be further supported by the findings of Steven J. Kirsh (2006) in his study titled "Cartoon Violence and Aggression in Youth." He stated that the play-acts of violence, cruelty, and aggression in cartoons are minimal and "sanitize the outcomes." Kirsch recognizes the minimal structures and operations of violence in cartoons. In her thesis titled "The Cartoon Effect:

Rethinking Comic Violence in the Animated Children's Cartoon", Julia L. Staben (2018) affirms the "comic vs. authentic" debate about animating the cartoons created by Hanna-Barbera. It is a debate that is anchored on the principle of effect and affect. The comic vs. authentic debate focuses on further problematizing the two-way means by which one can make sense of the violence being projected by cartoons. On one hand, the comic perspective affirms that viewers view cartoons as just mere cartoons. It is not real and was created only for comic purposes and for the enjoyment and delight of the viewers. On the other hand, the authentic perspective espouses that if one takes a closer look at these cartoons, there lies the great structure of violence animating the overall patina of the cartoons. In the study conducted titled "Cartoon Network and Its Impact on Behavior of School Going Children: A Case Study of Bahawalpur, Pakistan", the proponent Ali Hassan further supported the impacts of the exposure and the changes in the behavioral patterns of children who had been greatly exposed to cartoons. In the study, it was revealed that there were correlations between the behavior of children in the classroom and the time they had allotted for watching cartoons resulting in them further imbibing the violence present within their impressionable minds (Anderson & Bushman, 2001). The findings of Hassan can be further correlated with the results of the study conducted by Clara and Marian (1980). Clara and Marian showed that instructors believe that cartoons and their attendant violent images have a strong influence on the behavior of students inside the classroom. They execute violence-motivated behaviors such as cruelly hitting their classmates with objects such as rulers and other sharp objects, bad-mouthing, clumsiness and even talking in an ungainly manner. Anderson accentuated further the lucid and distinct nature of violence presented in video games and television programs. Such content can conspicuously increase the aggressive and violent behavior of young people in both short-term and long-term contexts (Anderson, 2003).

In this related literature on cartoons and their concomitant violent effects further shaping the cognitive, affective, and performative layers of the viewer's dispositions, one can see the hallmarks of the cultivation theory under the banner of the powerful effects tradition in communication theory clearly at play. Heavy exposure to media conveying violence can aid the viewers in developing their perceptions of reality, patterns of behavior and dispositions, set of beliefs, mental attitudes, and reality frames based on the most recurring and consistent messages of a specific medium (Lester, 2023). In examining the violent content of cartoons, the powerful effects model becomes the fitting tradition that must be invoked because of television's uniquely pervasive and repetitive nature. In light of this theory from communication studies, watching a great deal of television will be instrumental in the formation of one's disposition moving by his picture of reality that may or may not correspond to the actualities of life (Hanson, 2011). In this paper, we recognize the weight of the comic vs. authentic debate that has been affirmed by Julia L. Staben further intellectualizing violence in cartoons in the light of the latter as opposed to the former. The discourses on the effects and affects of violence can be rendered as an operational structure that crystallizes into a salient feature that is repeatable, identifiable, and calculatable. One can endeavor to interrogate and scrutinize further the structures of power and violence placed within cartoons.

In interrogating the communicative patinas of violence, this paper attempts to qualitatively examine the contents of selected episodes from prominent cartoons such as Tom and Jerry, The Fairly Oddparents, Codename: Kids Next Door, and Ren and Stimpy placing a premium on their violent contents and rendering them as significant operations and tenors that are recurring in the selected cartoons. The analysis additionally focuses on unveiling images, cases, and actions of violence in the selected samples. They are to be further intellectualized as well taking into consideration the views that children can inculcate these violent and aggressive behaviors being presented on television most especially if the violence is merited or justified. An offshoot of the analysis is to provide as well as a discourse on the aggressive imagings posited by these cartoons as children can further develop the acquisition of aggressive and violent behaviors through these cartoons even resulting in the notion of desensitization on the part of the target audience. This is an indication of the fact that the more violence children witness in cartoons, the greater the insensitivity that they can have when speaking of violence and aggression in theory and practice.

### *Operations and patterns: Identifying and discoursing violence in selected cartoons*

Operations and patterns of violence and cruelty are present in Hanna-Barbera's Tom and Jerry (Cartoon Network), Butch Hartman's The Fairly Oddparents (Nickelodeon), Thomas Edward Warburton's Codename: Kids Next Door (Cartoon Network), and John Kricfalusi's Ren and Stimpy (Nickelodeon). Tom and Jerry, an American animated media franchise, was created by Willian Hanna and Joseph Barbera in the year 1940. Up until recent times, Tom and Jerry is considered one of the classics successfully creating its niche in the genre of slapstick comedy. The show is also noted for its presentation of comic skirmishes within the same storyline in every episode. It is from these comic encounters or scuffles that the violence is highlighted and markedly augmented. In this animated franchise, Tom the Cat is always seen trying to keep the household free from the mouse Jerry. He does this by the orders of the owner of the house where he is residing, and sometimes, he does it by his own will and determination to get rid of the pest mouse in the house. But every time Tom chases Jerry or when the latter saves his life from the former, it is always seen that there are clear intentions to hurt each other and sometimes even commit acts that can certainly kill the two characters engaged in a scuffle. Despite these violent brawls between the cat and the mouse, it is evident from the franchise that there was no portrayal of bloodshed found in any of the episodes of Tom and Jerry created by various directors (Islam et al., 2021).

The Children's Television Act of 1990 was an important conditioning factor that launched Butch Hartman's The Fairly Oddparents. This act obliged every U.S. broadcast television station to air only strongly didactic programs—serving only the informational and scholastic needs of children (Federal Communications Commission, 2021). The act also adamantly affirmed that addressing the educational needs of children is truly a significant endeavor as it can lead to the positive formation of the impressionable minds of children. The marketing strategy of the network Nickelodeon prominently known as "kids rule" was the springboard that they had greatly utilized in further departing from the educational template

fashioned by the Children's Television Act of 1990. In the early 2000s, the said strategy became their foundation to place the images of children and their interests in the limelight. Sarah Banet-Weiser, Distinguished Professor of Communication at the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg School for Communication, said in Kids Rule!: Nickelodeon and Consumer Citizenship that the network had greatly capitalized on the themes of child rebellion and activism in coming up with cartoons catering to its new children audience. According to Banet-Weiser in her introduction to Kids Rule!, Nickelodeon had started to market the idea of empowerment in the same way that it sells programming and merchandise (Banet-Weiser, 2007). Furthermore, Banet-Weiser said that this led to a contradiction between the very desire and objective of fashioning the children as "agents of change" and their "brainwashing into corporate consumers." The very marking and labeling of empowerment had an essential downside as it also raised the discussion on power and agency. Grounded on power and agency, kids in their cartoons were presented as encouraged to take their actions but only on the grounds of their social positions (Staben, 2018). Whether this is viewed as a controlling tactic or a necessary evil, it becomes evident in their cartoons that the child's means of governing himself greatly discourages social development or transformation. The Fairly Oddparents is one of the perfect examples of a cartoon of post-government regulation that substantially frames violence—mental and physical violence in particular. This can be seen in the affective foreground of the cartoon. Apparent in The Fairly Oddparents are the subject matters and themes of absent parenting moving in consonance with the formation and imaging of the childhood market and the disbanding of the family because of neglectful parents. As stated in the opening jingle of The Fairly Oddparents, "Timmy is an average who no one understands" is already indicative of the kind of immanence and inwardness that Timmy is experiencing as a ten-year-old boy. Centering on Timmy Turner's life as a ten-year-old boy, viewers will markedly notice the disposition of his parents who are often more interested in pursuing their happiness than parenting their one and only son. This neglect understandably makes possible the suffering of their son Timmy. Icky Vicky, the abusive babysitter of Timmy, is also a great factor that bolsters his physical and mental suffering. This animated franchise by Hartman significantly presents Timmy Turner as one of the greatest miserable children in the world. This misery is what makes him eligible for keeping "Fairy God Parents." The possession of two powerful fairies renders him not so typical indeed. The show highlights his magical escapades considered his means of escaping his miserable life. It is from here that the themes of fantasy and escapism are further unveiled. These are two important themes that can be used in framing the notions of physical and mental violence in this animated franchise by Butch Hartman.

Thomas Edward Warburton's Codename: Kids Next Door is an animated franchise that is also famous for its incorporation of violence in its episodes. The show centers around a group of elementary pupils who are members of a global organization known as the titular Kids Next Door. The organization is regarded as an activist group boldly working to preserve the rights of children in society. Codename: Kids Next Door is noteworthy for how it represents adults influencing the lives of children. The franchise depicts adults as either illiterate, inconsiderate, oblivious, malevolent, or in some occasions as from the episodes, they are seen as insurrectionists. They are also represented as the principal reason for the suffering

of children in society. Very strong at the surface of Codename Kids Next Door is the strong depiction of the child and adult binary. The circumstances that make possible such animosities take their cue from the structural differences and tensions that produce the "becoming adult" as opposed to the adults themselves (Deleuze, 1992). The child/adult binary significantly launches the tenors of violence in the cartoon. The said binary also ushers in more problems rather than leading to the solutions to the problems. The various conflicts between children and adults are teeming with codes and categories that move by the notion of violence. Zeroing in on the notion of violence, Codename: Kids Next Door is also apparently different from The Fairly Oddparent when it comes to its very structure, particularly its plot. In Codename: Kids Next Door and The Fairly Oddparents, the plots are presented in episodic mode. In this episodic kind of plot, a conflict is presented and is resolved at the end of the episode, and the world will be in one way or another reset to normal in the ending (Staben, 2018). In every ending of an episode from The Fairly Oddparents, Timmy Turner and his godparents Cosmo and Wanda celebrate the return with relief and epiphany. At the end of the day, there is recognition on the part of Timmy—a recognition of morale or an important lesson as well as the appreciation of the return of the status quo (living his miserable life as a ten-year-old boy) regardless of the challenges and dangers that had transpired. This is a feature that is markedly absent in Codename: Kids Next Door as it is one of the cartoons that is seen to reverse such a feature of an episodic plot in cartoons. Codename: Kids Next Door projects the image of the normal as violent, cruel, and harsh. Stalen further augments this view in cartoons. To quote Stalen:

> A typical children's cartoon may present the following formula – peace, conflict, peace. Superhero shows use this formula, allowing its viewers to rest in the comfort that the day is saved (Staben, 2018).

In Codename: Kids Next Door, viewers can recognize that violence is part of the status quo. Instead of the conflict and peace with the former being addressed and the latter being the theme celebrated at the end of the day, Codename: Kids Next Door lays down the image of an episodic plot animated by conflict, resistance, aggression, and hostility.

John Kricfalusi's Ren and Stimpy is an American animated television series centering on the everyday engagements of Ren, a short-tempered, demented, deranged Chihuhua Dog and Stimpson "Stimpy" J. Cat, a happy-go-lucky cat. The roles being played by Ren and Stimpy vary from episode to episode. The adventures of the two protagonists include nature escapades, outer-space adventures, and living life in the Old West. The series became controversial because of its shocking employment of violence, adult humor, dark humor, and jokes on sex and shock value—with characters seen drinking from the toilet bowl, eating human feces, and swallowing nasal and ear discharges. With the shocking employment of such hallmarks in the cartoon, Ren and Stimpy is seen to have significantly and violently transformed the conventions of cartoons. This is a remarkable departure from the Children's Television Act of 1990. Ren and Stimpy altered the image of the children's cartoon thereby challenging the oversaturation of optimistic and encouraging feelings in children's cartoons when speaking of the effect and the

creation of positive ideo-affective formations within the impressionable minds of the children (Rocket to Nowhere, 2016).

## Method

### *Critical foundations: The culture industry correlated with media effects in communication studies*

With these patterns and operations of violence in these selected cartoons, we posit that violence in these cartoons can be analyzed resulting in the experiencing of a false kind of happiness on the part of the target audience of these cartoons. Animated franchises like the aforementioned cartoons are meant to be enjoyed by children. However, the direct and subtle remarkable incorporation of violence in these cartoons can certainly be cultivated in the impressionable minds of the children. In light of the cultivation theory in communication theory, viewing such cartoons for a long period will compel the audience to see what is shown as a reality in their perception. With the media and the reception of the children's audience in the foreground, the notion of false happiness can be essentially highlighted as the comedic and entertaining modes of representation in the cartoons do not just make the audience laugh but can also possibly penetrate their minds, beliefs, attitudes, behaviors, and affects. In communication theory, these can be examined in the light of media effects. The cartoons and their salient violent features can be a fertile springboard to engage various media effects which can include aggression, agenda-building, cultivation, direct effects, imitation, priming, and social identity. Taking into consideration the view that violence in these cartoons can significantly engage individual-level media effects on a negative scale, we, therefore, attempt to intellectualize such violent features and patinas from the vista of critical theory and establish close connections with communication studies and theories.

In critical theory, the German philosophers and members of the Frankfurt School Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer had advanced the prominent notion of the so-called “culture industry.” In The Culture Industry, Enlightenment as Mass Deception, Adorno and Horkheimer refer to the culture industry as the mass production of commodities under the light of capitalistic ideology. They posited an image of society that is continuously barraged with products it does not need but is forced to accept. This happens because culture has been standardized, and as an offshoot of this standardization, cultural products are now based on predefined prospects. As a result, the audiences are now obliged to veer away and have no imagination or even the capacity to think, comprehend, and ruminate on what is being provided for them. The people simply have to enjoy the things being offered to them by the culture industry. Furthermore, for Adorno and Horkheimer, the culture industry powerfully dampens and discourages the capacity of people to think. It also kills the ability of the people to act critically further leading to the demolition and diminishment of the collective imagination of the people. Part of the culture industry is the people’s experience of cartoons. With violence being a powerful animating element in people’s entertainment through cartoons, Adorno and Horkheimer declare that there is only one lesson that can be deduced from the violence that the characters in the cartoons experience. For them, this is “the breaking down of individual resistance” (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1944). To quote the passage from The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception, Adorno and Horkheimer declare:

> Cartoons were once exponents of fantasy as opposed to rationalism. They ensured that justice was done to the creatures and objects they electrified, by giving the maimed specimens a second life. All they do today is to confirm the victory of technological reason over truth. A few years ago they had a consistent plot that only broke up in the final moments in a crazy chase, and thus resembled the old slapstick comedy. Now, however, time relations have shifted. In the very first sequence a motive is stated so that in the course of the action destruction can get to work on it: with the audience in pursuit, the protagonist becomes the worthless object of general violence. The quantity of organised amusement changes into the quality of organised cruelty (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1944).

To further support these statements, another important notion that can be underscored by Adorno and Horkheimer is their affirmation of the idea and feat of violence suffered by the characters being a scenario that can turn into violence against the spectator, or at least the ones engaging the violence in the cartoons—the children being the more specific target audience of cartoons. According to Adorno and Horkheimer, the distraction being laid down by the themes and motifs of violence can be translated into exertion. Put simply, the notions of violence can be brought to the level of praxis. With these scenes of violence being a powerful enlivening element in the cartoons, it is certainly possible to witness "the breaking down of individual resistance." In the more specific area of communication theory, this can be further intellectualized in the light of media effects. The individual can succumb to the comic and dynamic representation of violence in the cartoons and further assimilate the messages in real-life experiences. A cognitive media effect can be seen occurring as the human mind absorbs the messages and representations of violence through familiarization and memorization. Going beyond memorization, the information can even be transformed into knowledge. The human mind can also cluster these messages into various ways to come up with many possible meanings and further assimilate them within real-life experiences. It can also generalize beyond media messages to generate principles about real life (Potter, 2012). Cartoons, being a part of the culture industry, can also affect the beliefs of the people as they can incessantly create and fashion their attitudes. These cartoons can show more of the things that are happening in the world than the audience can see directly for themselves. Attitudes can also be formed by watching cartoons. As they present issues, events, and people with a special emphasis on the violence transpiring among them, the audience can be led to make their judgments and rationalize the place of violence in their lives. Despite the comic patina of cartoons, emotions, and moods can also be triggered as the audience gets exposed to violence. Lust, anger, fear, desire, yearning, hatred, and rebelliousness are just some of the possible emotions that can lead to the absolute imbibement of violence in their lives. This is where one can underscore the magnitude of the effect as these people get exposed to the violence being projected by the cartoons. The explicit and apparent actions of the audiences of cartoons can also be examined (Albarracin, Zanna, Johnson

& Kumkale, 2005). In media effect studies, this is known as behavior (Potter, 2012).

In assimilating Adorno within the ambit of communication theory, we posit that at the foreground of Adorno and Horkheimer's assertion of "the breaking down of individual resistance" are the aforementioned media effects that can be further explored on a micro level—the individual in particular—the target audience of the cartoons. In the essay titled How to Look at Television published in The Quarterly of Film, Radio and Television, Theodor Adorno further accentuates and discourses on the totalizing effects of television implicitly underscoring the various aspects of the self that can be molded positively and negatively as people gets exposed to the manifold contents shown by television. To quote Adorno:

> The effect of television cannot be adequately expressed in terms of success or failure, likes or dislikes, or approval. Rather, an attempt should be made, with the aid of depth-psychological categories and previous knowledge of mass media, to crystallize a number of theoretical concepts by which the potential effect of television-its impact upon various layers of the spectator's personality could be studied. (Adorno, 1954)

Capitalizing on a descriptive-analytical approach, we lean on the critical ideas of Adorno particularly the endeavor of systematically investigating the possible stimuli from the cartoons. These are the potent stimuli that also lay down the foundation for the investigation of psychodynamics in the transaction transpiring between the audience (children) and the cartoons. The reference to psychodynamics makes fertile ground for the discourse on the effect and effect beginning with the salient violent codes from the selected cartoons. In this paper, we focus only on certain episodes from the selected cartoons zeroing in on the messages and themes of violence and cruelty. These are episodes that can also accentuate the so-called media-influenced functions further animating effect and affect. This entails looking at the operations and patterns of violence that possess the capability to fashion the very character of the effect in the psychodynamic groundwork of the transaction between the audience and the cartoons. These functions include acquisition, triggering, modification, and reinforcement (Potter, 2012).

## Findings and Discussion

### *Analysis*

Tom and Jerry have been one of the prominent cartoons viewed by children and adult audiences ever since its creation in the year 1940. In 2004, BBC News released a survey that declared Tom and Jerry to be one of the most popular cartoons around the globe (Tom and Jerry Top Cartoon Survey, 2004). Tom and Jerry also ranked third in the list of the best cartoons of all time. Despite its enormous reputation, Tom and Jerry has also been criticized for the many controversies which include the racial depiction of characters, the usage of colors in achieving these portrayals, and the stereotyping of the villain through color usage. According to Potter (1999), the content and projection of violence are truly distinctive and potent. The depictions of violence are powerful enough to sanitize and desensitize the audience resulting in them not seeing and being concerned anymore with the images

of violence in the animation. Morrison (1993) declared that if the violence from Tom and Jerry had been removed, there would have been nothing left to show for the entertainment of the people watching the cartoon. Gene Deitch's The Calypso Cat (1962) is one of the most prominent episodes in Tom and Jerry. It starts with Tom chasing Jerry on a ship (Caribbean Queen) on the way to the Caribbean Islands. The first scene also projects a clear instance of violence as Tom is seen to be running to catch Jerry with the former holding a thick piece of rope and getting hit on the head by a heavy bowling ball. It is also in this episode that Tom meets Toodles Galore. In many ways, Tom tries to win the heart of Toodles which Jerry does not like at all. With this, Jerry tries to get again the attention of Tom by setting the foot of Tom on fire. Tom, Jerry, and Toodles meet the Caribbean Calypso Cat in the end. Tom and the Calypso Cat become enemies as they both try to impress Toodles resulting in them forgetting Jerry. In the end, the Calypso cat beats Tom with the help of his drums in front of Jerry and Toodles.

Love Me, Love My Cat (1966) by Chuck Jones begins with Tom making some preparations to meet his beloved Toodles Galore. He has Jerry kept inside a box to be given as a gift to Toodles. But for some reason, Toodles does not want to eat Jerry. She tries to save Jerry every time Tom tries to eat him. Because of this, Toodles comes ahead and hits Tom with kitchen utensils such as a cooking pot and a plate. Having seen this, Jerry purposefully tries to make some tricks to make it appear that Tom wants to eat him compelling Toodles to even greatly punish the cat. At the end of this episode, Tom prepares a trap with a heavy iron to kill Jerry but unfortunately, the iron falls on Tom. Toodles Galore finally prepares her knife and fork to kill and eat Jerry.

A Mouse in the House by William Hanna and Joseph Barbera shows Tom asking assistance from Butch the Cat as they are both asked by the maid of the house to protect it from the mouse. As they both want to be the heroes in the eye of the maid and the owners, they start to execute their plans of capturing Jerry but they end up being enemies to each other. In one scene from the episode, when Tom and Butch were trying to look for Jerry inside the stove, Jerry decides to set the stove on fire to finally get rid of the two cats.

The patterns and operations of violence present in Tom and Jerry are presented playfully and can be summarized by the violent scenes present in the three sample episodes. In the light of slapstick comedy, Tom and Jerry has lucidly provided categories and images that can be rendered into "algorithms" taking the cue from Potter's definition of the term (Potter, 2012). From the three sample episodes discussed, the violent acts in Tom and Jerry can be seen as operationally present with the aid of the following tools being employed by the main characters crystallizing into categories: cutting tools, knives, kitchen tools, pieces of wood, sports equipment, cutting tools, tennis rackets, baseball bats and firearms. The operations of violence are further augmented by the acts of serious punching, hitting, tripping, and falling. Other remarkable instances in Tom and Jerry can supplement the fruition of the algorithms in it. Apart from the prominent tools that make possible the imaging of violence in Tom and Jerry, other acts are not fitting to be viewed by the impressionable and juvenile minds of the audiences. These violent acts evoke the worry of Adorno possessing the capability to fashion the very character of the effect in the psychodynamic groundwork of the transaction between the audience and the cartoons. These functions include acquisition, triggering,

modification, and reinforcement (Potter, 2012). These violent acts include drinking alcohol, unsettling a sleeping vicious dog, attacking someone with a gardening tool like a grass-cutter, and using other farming tools like spades and a forkhoe to gravely hurt someone. In the case of the juvenile minds of the children, and as a means of contextualizing the observations of Adorno on television, "templates" or "algorithms" (a string and a chronological sequence of mental codes according to Potter) can be heavily affected and animated by violence. The violent acts that they had witnessed can permeate mental models, schema, and cognitive maps. In the reception of a process with such sorts of violence projected, the filtering tasks on the part of the individuals can be governed by the violent algorithms coming from the contents of the cartoons.

In this case, the algorithms can be programmed by the exposure of the individual to the violent contents of Tom and Jerry (the media in particular) and his sequence of codes shaped already by violence. In communication studies, the algorithms employed in the endeavor of meaning-matching in the case of Tom and Jerry become a clear definition of how algorithms can be shaped by mass media and can even be internalized by the highly impressionable disposition of the audience. Taking the cue from Tom and Jerry, the algorithms at play in the construction of meanings become a tool to possibly internalize violent suggestive guides resulting in the construction of meaning being problematic.

The general storyline of The Fairly OddParents revolves around the concept that miserable children are assigned powerful and magical godparents who will be there always to grant them an unlimited number of wishes. These magical and immortal fairies stay with their godchild until they reach adulthood before they are assigned to new children. Butch Hartman's animated television series affirms the discourse on violence by lucidly reinforcing the image and plight of miserable children. In the TV movie from The Fairly OddParents titled School's Out: The Musical, Timmy makes a wish so that kids can rule the world. This wish of Timmy has a strong consequence for Fairy World as the fairies are driven out of business forcing them to sell Fairy World to a bigger corporate system known as The Pixies. In the directives stated in the Da Rules from Fairy World, should Fairies be forced to retire from their duties, the Pixies then are to be given absolute authority and control to grant wishes making the world based on their plans and desires. A result of this is that the fairies are drawn back to Fairy World. They have nothing else to do but chores now that the kids have full control in society because of the wish that Timmy Turner made. With the fairies rendered powerless and soon facing expulsion in the face of the Earth, they further leave a wide vacuum for the Pixies to take over. Regardless of the illogical and erratic nature of this rule, it asserts that the entire balance of magic itself is greatly dependent on miserable children. The fairies need the great miseries of children to activate their magic and to once again dynamically animate Fairy World. To stop the Pixies from taking over the world, Timmy must renounce the power he has acquired and submit again to the system of control and subjugation. The result of this is that Timmy Turner must return to a life of violence and neglect. With Timmy returning to the status quo, things go back to normal, and Timmy sacrifices his wish for the good of the world. The miserable life of the protagonist Timmy Turner is a constant theme and motif occurring in The Fairly Oddparents. To cite some examples from the episodes of The Fairly Oddparents, in the episode Kung Timmy, Timmy wishes for karate skills to exact

his revenge on Francis the bully in school. In the confrontation between Timmy and Francis, the former receives every fatal blow from the latter as he tries to exact his revenge because of the many times that he has been insulted and bullied by Francis. In The Grass is Greener, Timmy Turner decides to run away from home because of his parents not spending quality time with him further augmenting the miserable kind of life that he is living as a 10-year-old. In The Secret Origin of Denzel Crocker!, Timmy witnesses the history of his teacher Mr. Crocker who is the first and leading cause of the miseries of children in school. In Timmy's 2-D House of Horror, Timmy greatly experiences the domination of Vicky as his parents have decided to make them stay in the night because they are friendless in Dimmsdale.

The violence in Tom and Jerry is presented through the glaring employment of the hallmarks of slapstick comedy crystallizing into potent communicative algorithms. In The Fairly Oddparents, the violence is specifically affirmed through the miserable undertakings of Timmy Turner. In the case of Timmy Turner, the violence presented is more subtle as compared to the glaring violent elements present in Tom and Jerry. The patterns of violence are subtly represented concerning the selected episodes summarized in this paper. When speaking of the violent algorithms presented, audiences of The Fairly Oddparents can process such algorithms consciously. Throughout the many episodes of The Fairly Oddparents, the theme of absent parents and the dissolution of the family are reinforced. The Fairly Oddparents knows how to bolster such themes with the incorporation of magic in the series. With these themes strongly being reinforced in the cartoons, audiences can actively interact with such elements resulting in exercising some control over the processing of these subtle violent codes. This processing can happen on a partial to extensive processing concerning the weight and magnitude of the subtle violence presented in The Fairly Oddparents. As stated by Staben, The Fairly Oddparents is not the only cartoon of post-government regulation to frame physical and mental violence through the cartoon's affective performance (Staben, 1998). In her study, Staben further intellectualizes this claim through her general observation of violence in selected cartoons created by Nickelodeon, particularly The Fairly Oddparents:

> The cartoon "gag" that assumes a status quo that denies long-term consequence paired with the changing social relationship between children, parents, and the corporation creates certain conditions of violence in the children's cartoon whose representation in live-action would seem abhorrent or at the very least inappropriate (Staben, 2018).

These elements of violence can be viewed in the light of the transported state being espoused by the discourses laid down by Adorno and Potter. With the violence being normalized in The Fairly Oddparents, for example, audiences can experience the so-called "tunnel vision" with a very high level of intensity and absorption focused on the message of violence subtly framed in the narratives of The Fairly Oddparents. The glaring, slapstick, and subtle algorithms presented in Tom and Jerry and The Fairly Oddparents respectively can incite contingencies on experiencing the complexities of media exposure. This is to echo the concern of Adorno in "How to Look at Television": By exposing the socio-psychological mechanisms of television, often operating of fake realism, not only may the shows

be improved, important possibly, the public at large may be nefarious effect of some of these mechanisms (Adorno, 1954).

In his critical discourse on “How to Look at Television”, Adorno posits a remarkable warning regarding television and mass media. According to Adorno, when one investigates the improvement of television, one must not just see it being mostly done on the grounds of the artistic or aesthetic extraneous to present customs. A spinoff of this is that we must not take for granted the dichotomy transpiring between autonomous art and mass media. One must be judicious when it comes to the “inner consistency of the artifact” and the perceived effect of the art upon the audience and spectators. The vestiges of the aesthetic claim can conceal operations and patterns that cannot be separated from the object itself—"a world unto itself” and an “offshoot of commercialization” according to Adorno. The operations and patterns of violence present in Codename: Kids Next Door and Ren and Stimpy can validate and attest to these claims of Adorno.

Codename: Kids Next Door is prominently noted for its themes of childhood insurrection and adult cruelty. One of the remarkable episodes pulled out and revised by Cartoon Network was an episode that was meant to be a Thanksgiving special with features of a Noir-like mystery and the classic zombie horror film similar to the 1968 film titled “Night of the Living Dead.” This episode is a half-hour episode. The network feared that this was an episode greatly terrifying for the children. They also did not want to risk objections and grievances from parents of the children who support the show. The said episode was then reduced to 15 minutes typical for an episode with remarkable modifications in terms of the story. There were no complaints from the audience and network. Be that as it may, there were clear instances of violence in the episode. In the aired episode, one can see a young boy no older than eleven sitting at a table at a party. The Grandmother of the boy is with him. The old lady continuously drones on guests making them leave the table. When the host steps in and asks for a volunteer who would like to pick up the chocolate sauce, everyone volunteers except for the boy who hides himself in his very seat. The boy was requested to pick up the sauce. However, he is reluctant to do so because of his addiction to chocolate sauce. The audience can then witness the Grandmother picking up her metal cane. She proceeds to repetitively beat the boy until he obliges to the request.

In analyzing this episode from Codename: Kids Next Door, one must be meticulous in examining how the logic of this cartoon diverges from the very physics of the world. There is a clear pattern of violence and the violence of control present in this episode—a pattern that is always present in the cartoon. In this episode, the boy can survive the hard beating being done by the Grandmother with no lasting impact or permanent damage at all. However, he is seen to be conveying his irritation and indifference to the old lady graphically executing the violence in the scene. The renunciation of the experience of the boy is a way for the cartoon to deny the existence of trauma as triggered by the pain. Even if the violence presented is intangible, the episode still reinforces a strong message. The scene is an exemplification of the violence emanating from control with pain and fear employed to be able to effectively control the behavior of a child. It is also important to note that this is not just the encounter with violence present in this episode. In the said event, many people had witnessed the beating but they did not do anything to save the child being beaten. In children’s cartoons like Codename: Kids Next

Door, the pattern is clear that the lack of action represents greater violence than what we can recognize as violent action.

Another episode from Codename: Kids Next Door is titled Operation R.E.C.E.S.S. In this episode, the students enrolled in an elementary school had their recess taken away from them after they engaged in striking oil beneath the playground. The students were able to strike salad oil in this episode. The high officials of the school decided to take advantage of the situation as they had transformed the school playground into an oil rig and forced the students to use their time during recess to work. The imagery that the audience can see here is quite gloomy and depressing. Some seesaws pump large amounts of oil into the barrels placed beneath the jungle gym resembling an inhibition chamber. The salad oil is bottled by the children and sold. It is also essential to note here that this is free tax-paid labor resulting in the administrators having a great source of income. The episode ends with the kids destroying the plans of the school. However, at the end of the episode, one of the students struck prune juice beneath the grounds of the school this time resulting in them experiencing again the cycle.

In Codename: Kids Next Door, it is important to note that the challenges are always resolved at the end. Yet, the general structural conflict is just basically repackaged. This repackaging makes one realize that violence is certainly a part and parcel of the status quo in Codename: Kids Next Door. In the light of media effects such as agenda setting, powerful effects, alteration of dispositions, imitation, exemplification, framing, cultivation, and cognitive media effect, the operations and displays of violence in Codename: Kids Next Door can be read as an overemphasis on the conditions and experiences of childhood. This is done to deliver humor. However, in this exaggeration of conditions, the cartoon also makes visible the real workings of the violence of normalization imposed by a harsh society. In Codename: Kids Next Door, the conflict between the child's physical body, their labor, their time, and even what they consume are the major concerns of the show. They are all rendered as remarkable sites of contestation in the comic battleground between children and adults in Codename: Kids Next Door. This affirms the violent theme of children versus the oppressive forces of adult expectations (Staben, 2018).

The violence presented in cartoons can also crystallize into a certain kind of aesthetics. The Ren & Stimpy Show by Nickelodeon was a cartoon that distinctly renovates violence. According to Paul Sheehan, in Modernism and the Aesthetics of Violence, breaking conventions is part of the goal of awakening consciousness. An offshoot of this is the endeavor of "violent renovation" (Sheehan, 2013). The Ren and Stimpy Show brutally modifies the conventions of the conventional children's cartoon as a means of challenging the oversaturation and exposure of optimistic and encouraging feelings in children's cartoons. There is one episode in The Ren & Stimpy Show that can attest to this aestheticization of violence. Capitalizing on this kind of aesthetics, Kricfalusi's cartoon became forceful in manipulating emotions and censorship—elements that were conventionally found in traditional cartoons. The episode is titled Stimpy's Invention. In this episode, we see Stimpy creating a happy helmet that will make the wearer happy. Stimpy forces his friend Ren to wear this helmet leading to his eventual insanity. Kricfalusi markedly aestheticizes the disruption that the audience witnesses as there was clear and robust employment of mechanical sounds and violent images and parodying of

conventional music of children. In light of the modernist discourse of Sheehan, this genre subversion becomes successful and convincing in presenting the danger of children's cartoons neglecting all violent emotion.

When the happy helmet was first used in this episode, we hear the background music shifting from a light-hearted soft melody to menacing and portentous music. The scene becomes animated by a negative ambiance and tone. This is a clear violent departure from the happiness being affirmed by the titular “happy helmet.” The music becomes suggestive that the helmet forces happiness. Such a happiness is a despicable kind of happiness. The user Stimpy activates the helmet, and it makes the head of Ren turn upside-down. The machine makes Stimy’s mouth viciously. The said machine also suddenly forces Ren to smile although there was an attempt on his end to resist such oppression by the helmet. While these actions were happening, viewers could hear different mechanical sounds such as bones cracking and ratcheting. A clear violent spinoff can be seen in the end. The happy helmet succeeds in forcing Ren to smile. The whole smile of Ren now dominates his face with his eyes dislocated in the process. The unsettling art, as complemented by the disturbing sounds that one can hear in the foreground, clearly conveys the anguish and cruelty that one can experience from forced feelings and emotions. Everything becomes markedly superficial. The happy helmet violently forces happiness, and the result is that viewers can see the faulty replication of genuine happiness. As Ren wears the helmet, it becomes evident that he is not in control of his movements. He is no longer in control of his movements and emotions.

It was also in Ren and Stimpy where the song “Happy Happy Joy Joy” became prominent. It was Michael John Kricfalusi who had revealed the unsettling repercussions of the positive vibes that one can get in children’s songs. Ren finally reaches the point of breakdown as he continuously listens to the thoughtlessly happy song “Happy Happy Joy Joy.” Having persistently listened to the music, viewers can see Ren violently removing the helmet from his head to regain control of his movements and emotions. The chorus of the song is merely the repetition of the title of the song with no clear rationale as to why it is being repeated. The first verse of the song goes “I don't think you're happy enough. That's right, I'll teach you to be happy. I'll teach your grandmother to suck eggs. Now, boys and girls, let's try it again” (Reccardi & Kricfalusi, 1991). The first verse is delivered in a convincing and furious tone. There is a contradiction because happiness is originally inherent and it does not need to be taught at all. The song also has a troubling quality to it that it also has an attendant “or else” implication if the listener is not a willing participant in being taught how to be happy. The song gives an implication that happiness is forced on the children—the kind of happiness that they do not desire. The lyrics’ crescendos further affirm the violent nature of the song. To cite the verse from the song: If'n you ain't the granddaddy of all liars! Think of the little critters of nature... They don't know that they're ugly! That's very funny! A fly marrying a bumblebee! I told you I'd shoot! But you didn't believe me! Why didn't you believe me? (Reccardi & Kricfalusi, 1991) With these lines, the song is now animated with a much darker theme. The singer was murdered concerning the threat that he did not intend to keep. Instead of addressing his guilt, he decides to move towards it concealing it further through the blind and mindless repetition of happiness and joy to further divert his thoughts from reality. In the music video, the

actions and lyrics are markedly conflicting as happiness and joy are not the feelings associated with violently hitting one's head with a hammer.

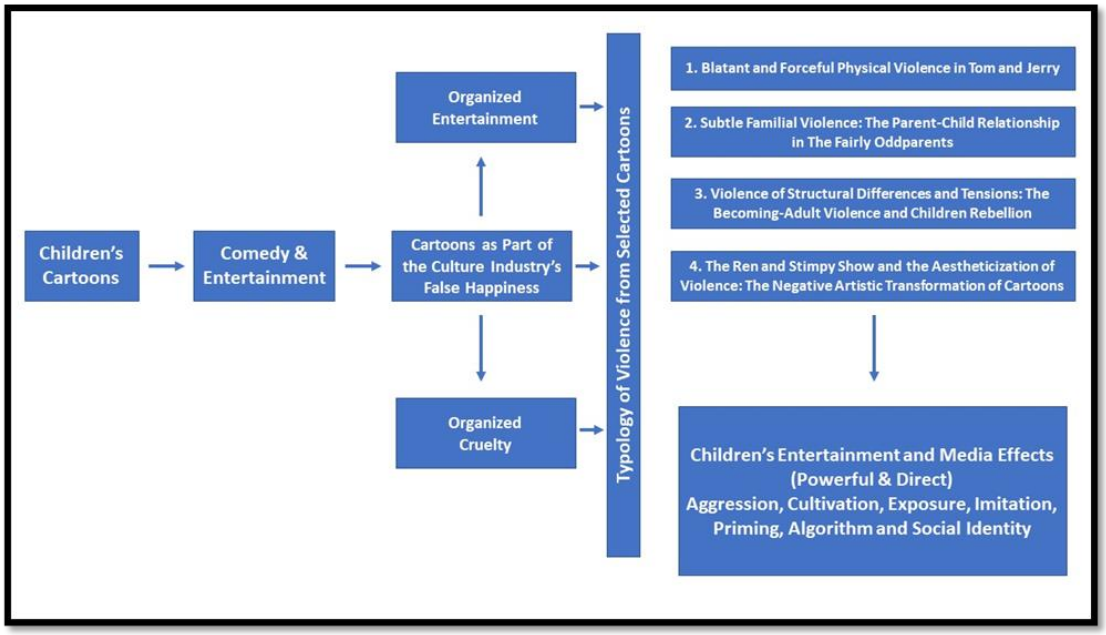



Figure 1. The typology of violence from selected cartoons: Tom and Jerry, the fairly oddparents, codename: Kids next door, and the Ren & Stimpy show

With these scenes incorporated in Ren and Stimpy, it becomes clear that violence has crystallized into a certain kind of aesthetics. Such is the kind of aesthetics and tactics as well that become compelling in corrupting complete unrelenting happiness found in typical children's cartoons from the 90s. The corruption that was done had successfully rendered Ren and Stimpy's cartoon aesthetics into something disconcerting and excruciating. Ren and Stimpy have provided a strong avenue to reevaluate and question positive and family-centered tropes from past cartoons.

## Conclusion

This paper is an attempt to recognize that there are patterns and operations of violence in selected cartoons namely Tom and Jerry, The Fairly Oddparents, Codename: Kids Next Door, and The Ren and Stimpy Show. Taking the cue from Adorno's discourse on the culture industry, we recognize that in these cartoons the "organized amusement" that they have to offer can be markedly translated into an "organized kind of violence" that can and irrevocably affect the dispositions and impressionable juvenile minds of its viewers. With the presence of the forceful tenors of slapstick comedy present in Tom and Jerry, the weight of the themes of child labor and rebellion against adults in Codename: Kids Next Door, the more subtle violence as seen in the theme of absent parents and the dissolution of the family in The Fairly Oddparents, and the aestheticization of violence in The Ren and Stimpy Show, the entertainment that one can deduce from the experience of these cartoons can lead to the experiencing of a false kind of happiness as they had animated entertainment with the scenes and tenors of the painful, disconcerting,

troubling and unnerving. With the reception of the children and their attendant impressionable juvenile minds, the critical concept of false happiness can be essentially realized from the experience of the cartoons as the comedic and entertaining modes of representation in the cartoons do not just make the audience laugh but can also possibly penetrate their minds, beliefs, attitudes, behaviors, and affects. In communication theory, these can be examined in the light of media-violence effects (Huesmann, 2007).

The cartoons and their salient violent features can be a fertile springboard to engage various media effects which can include aggression, agenda-building, cultivation, direct effects, imitation, priming, and social identity (Laughey, 2007). In the end, these cartoons were perused for how they had dynamically rendered the notion and images of violence. The changing images and presentations of violence in children's entertainment are an affirmation and validation of the critical dictum that violence can be subtly internalized and organized in these cartoons. With these scenes of violence being a powerful enlivening element in the cartoons, it is certainly possible to witness "the breaking down of individual resistance"—a concept espoused in the critical tradition. In the more specific area of communication theory and studies, this can be further intellectualized in the light of media effects. The individual can succumb to the comic and dynamic representation of violence in the cartoons and further assimilate the messages in real-life experiences. A cognitive media effect can be seen occurring as the human mind absorbs the messages and representations of violence through familiarization and memorization. Going beyond memorization, the information can even be transformed into knowledge, or in the case of these cartoons, into distinctive patterns and operations that can make these cartoons forces to be reckoned with in directly and subtly inculcating violence in the impressionable minds of the children.

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