

TELEVISION SHOWS ANALYSIS

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### INTRODUCTION

Children today have many television show viewing options. Past and present shows are available on basic and cable television channels, internet websites, and multiple media formats such as DVD, VHS, PSP, and Blue-ray Discs. According to Fisherkeller (2002), “Because of steady increases in the cable and network programming and consumer ‘zapping’ via remote and pointer controls, [content producers] now compete fiercely for consumer’s attention-especially that of young consumers” (p. 4).

DVD sales is an extremely successful market. CNNMoney.com (2006) reports that the “The popularity of DVD players has surpassed VCRs in U.S. homes, according to a survey released by Nielsen Media Research” (DVD Players overtake VCRs, para. 1). The increasing popularity of DVDs may be a result of the viewing freedom they provide and the unique content made available for it. However, with this freedom comes the issue of controlling the messages drilled into the minds of viewers when they sit down to watch their favorite content over and over again.

Fisherkeller (2002) believes that in order to “... capture and maintain consumer’s attention, and ultimately their product and brand loyalty, creators are forced to deliver media goods that are formulaic and cheap” (p. 4). I believe that content producers must also deal with the always changing interests of their target groups. Additionally, content producers may find that content originally produced for one group is also being watched by individuals outside of their initial target group.

One outcome caused by the situations discussed above is the development of content designed and developed for children as well as adults. Children are a target group of viewers whose interests constantly change. As children become more sophisticated viewers, the content

they wish to view also changes to include more sophisticated material. Wikipedia's (2007) *Batman: The Animated Series* page indicates that "...in their constant quest to make the show darker, the producers pushed the boundaries of action cartoons: it was the first such cartoon in years to depict firearms being fired..." (Overview section, para. 2). There are also instances where shows originally developed for children grow to include an adult audience as some adults find themselves interested in the newly sophisticated shows.

Furthermore, there may also be times when the adult audience members are simply loyal fans who have continued to enjoy a show that they original watched when they were younger. Rajiv "rajiv thatsme" from New York, N.Y. purchased the *Disney's Ducktales* DVD and writes "'Ducktales' was one of my favorite shows as a child." (Amazon.com Spotlight Reviews: Ducktales woo hoo! section, para. 1, September 15, 2005).

The remainder of this paper introduces five animated shows targeted and viewed by young viewers ages 6 and older that contain material that may be found entertaining by older viewers. Each title was also chosen because they are or will soon be available for purchase on DVD.

### **Duck Tales**

According to Wikipedia (2007), *Disney's DuckTales* originally aired on local broadcast television from September 18, 1987 to May 6, 1990. It follows the story of Scrooge McDuck and his grandnephews Huey, Dewey, and Louie. Wikipedia (2007) describes Scrooge McDuck as a "... very serious businessman, often shown to be a tightwad, who managed to earn a fortune so vast that he became the richest duck in the world." (Characters section, para. 1). Amazon.com (2007) indicates that *Disney's DuckTales* is rated TV-Y, therefore its intended audience is children ages 6 and older (Editorials Reviews section, para. 2). Educational possibilities include

lessons about valuing family. According to Wikipedia (2007) “Despite his harsh business ethics, Scrooge has shown that he is also a caring man to his family.” (Characters section, para. 1).

### **Batman: The Animated Series**

*Batman: The Animated Series* originally aired on local broadcast television from September 5, 1992 to September 16, 1995 (Wikipedia, 2007). It follows the adventures of Batman as he battles villains while preserving his secret identity as billionaire playboy Bruce Wayne. It is rated TV-Y7, therefore it is directed toward ages seven and above (Wikipedia, 2007). Educational possibilities include lessons about conflict resolution and personal internal struggles.

### **The Proud Family**

Wikipedia (2007) indicates that *The Proud Family* originally aired from September 15, 2001 to August 19, 2005 and currently airs reruns on cable television channel *The Disney Channel*. *The Proud Family* follows the story of a young girl named Penny Proud. Disney.com (2007) states that Penny “knows her parents love her – even if they do sometimes treat her like a little kid.” (Characters’ Penny section, para. 1). Educational possibilities include everyday life lessons that many teenagers learn through common struggles. Wikipedia (2007) states that this show is “...geared towards pre-teens and teenagers.” (The Proud Family section, para. 1).

### **Justice League Unlimited**

*Justice League Unlimited (JLU)* aired on cable television channel *Cartoon Network* from July 31, 2004 to May 13, 2006 (Wikipedia, 2007). It follows the adventures of a team of superheroes who combat evil villains. Educational possibilities include lessons about teamwork and group dynamics. My only indication of an intended audience comes in the form of Eric Burns (2005) who writes “The fact that JLU is programmed at ten thirty at night is, to me,

indicative of the projected audience. They're just one half hour away from 'Adult Swim,' and obviously Cartoon Network isn't pushing the show to 12 year olds." (Websnark [http://www.websnark.com/archives/2005/06/spoilerific\\_ana.html](http://www.websnark.com/archives/2005/06/spoilerific_ana.html) message board, June 14, 2005)

**Avatar: The Last Airbender**

Wikipedia (2007) indicates that *Avatar: The Last Airbender* premiered on Nickelodeon on February 21, 2005. It follows the adventures of Aang and his friends Katara and Sokka "...in their quest to save the world from the ruthless Fire Nation" (Wikipedia, Avatar The Last Airbender section, para. 1). Educational opportunities include lessons on character development. Wikipedia (2007) states that "All the main characters are displayed as 'marvelously flawed human beings'..." (Main Characters Section, para. 1). Nick.com (2007) indicates that this show is rated TV7-FV, indicating that it contains fantasy violence and is appropriate for ages seven and above.

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