

CARTOON CRAZY?
CHILDREN'S PERCEPTIONS OF 'ACTION' CARTOONS

A Report by
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Animation has been around for a very long time. Most parents grew up watching cartoons like *Tom & Jerry*, without any ill effects. Recently, however, some have argued that children are becoming addicted to a diet of cartoons, and that such a diet could be harmful. Concern has been expressed about the nature of some of the imagery contained in cartoons, particularly the action-packed ones. Morality tales of good versus evil have been a principal ingredient of children's literature and film for generations, so what if anything is different about modern cartoons?

Perhaps one of the key differences is their execution. As production techniques have become ever more sophisticated, so cartoons have become more realistic. In addition, the style and content of cartoons these days are influenced by computer and video games. These games frequently challenge the player to pit his or her skills against all kinds of violent or gothic characters. Does the replication of these images in cartoon format lead to the introduction of a greater degree of violence in children's television?

Some parents have registered their disquiet about material in modern cartoons that they perceive to be too violent, or sinister, or frightening for younger children to watch. In the past, the Independent Television Commission (ITC) has received complaints from parents about *Gargoyles* and the computer-generated cartoon *Reboot*.

But what do children themselves think? Are adults simply out-of-touch with modern children's tastes, or do children find some of these 'action' cartoons frightening or upsetting? The ITC decided to conduct some research amongst groups of children to find out, and to examine the role cartoon viewing plays in children's lives.

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AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- To look at children's viewing of cartoons within the context of the rest of their television viewing, and also their other interests and activities.
- To evaluate what children think about cartoons in general, and in particular 'action' cartoons.
- To look at the differences among key groups:
 - boys and girls;
 - different school years (age range 5-9 years);
 - social classes;
 - cable/satellite homes versus terrestrial-only homes.
- To determine whether children find cartoons scary.
- To find out mothers' views of 'action' cartoons and compare them with children's.
- To assess any parental concerns about 'action' cartoons.

The research took the form of qualitative groups. Over 60 children, aged between 5 and 9 years, were shown clips from a range of twelve different 'action' cartoons. The clips were selected on the basis of the action they contained, for example, sword fighting, shooting, explosions, confrontations between 'goodies' and 'baddies', general mayhem, etc. Each clip lasted between two and six minutes and, as far as possible, was edited for sense, and resolution of action. Every attempt was made to ensure that the material was not presented out of context. As a means of checking for any bias that might be introduced through examining clips, rather than whole cartoons, half of the children's groups received a pre-placed video containing full length versions of three of the cartoons used in the study. The children in these groups were asked to watch the cartoons prior to participating in the study. The presentation order of the clips was rotated throughout the groups.

All the children were asked to complete an activity diary for four days before attending the groups. The diaries included two weekdays, and a Saturday and Sunday. Each day was split into three sections: morning, afternoon and evening. The children were asked to fill in what they did during each part of the day, and to state whether the activity was performed indoors or outdoors, alone, or in the company of others. (A copy of the diaries can be found at Appendix B.)

Picture stills, or video grabs, of the characters from the cartoons were used as stimuli for mapping purposes. The children were asked to sort the pictures according to which cartoons they felt were similar, and to explain their reasoning.

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SAMPLE

- Children's Groups** A total of 48 children took part in the main groups (six children per group - see Charts 1 and 2 at Appendix A). The groups, which took place at different locations around the country, were split by sex, social class, and school year. Each group included a number of children with cable/satellite at home, and a number without. They lasted approximately one and a half hours.
- Children's Depths** Eight depth interviews were conducted with friendship pairs; that is, a moderator interviewed pairs of same sex friends. These 'paired depths' lasted around one and a quarter hours (see Chart 2 at Appendix A).
- Family Group** The research included one family session with two families, each with two children aged between five and nine years. This group was moderated by two people. The parents and children were interviewed and shown the clips in two separate rooms. They were then brought together so that their views could be compared.
- Mothers' Groups** In addition, four groups of eight mums with children aged between 5 and 9 years, unrelated to the children in the groups, were interviewed. The groups were split by social class and each included some mothers with cable/satellite at home, and some with terrestrial television only (see Chart 3 at Appendix A).

- Children take part in a wide range of different activities. Much of their leisure time is spent watching television, but it has to be fitted around other things, such as playing on a computer or games console or with friends, reading, sport, and after-school activities.
- Children are not addicted to a diet of cartoons, but cartoons have a particular role to play within children's television viewing.
- Children's favourite cartoons are ones containing humour, especially slapstick comedy. They are less keen on 'action' cartoons because they get less out of them.
- The core viewers of 'action' cartoons are 5- to 7-year-old boys; others only watch them if there is nothing else on. Action cartoons are not popular with younger girls; they find them noisy and think some of the characters are 'scary', nor with older girls, who find them boring. The exception is *Jumanji*, which is liked by girls generally, possibly because it features a strong, girl character, and it has an on-going storyline, which gives it more meaning.
- Children are not usually scared by cartoons because they know they are not real and that everything will turn out alright in the end. They make a distinction between 'good scary' and 'bad scary'. Good scary is exciting and involves enjoying the suspense. Bad scary can be upsetting.
- Older children can feel uncomfortable with storylines which they can relate to real life situations. Younger children tend not to pick up on scary concepts; they go right over their heads, but they are sometimes scared by the stimuli in 'action' cartoons, such as the music, or images.
- Mums found some of the cartoons too violent and aggressive. They were concerned, especially, with cartoons which featured real people in animated form, as they thought these had a greater potential to confuse and disturb children.

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HOBBIES AND ACTIVITIES

Before attending the groups, all respondents were asked to complete an activity diary over four days. The following charts illustrate what types of things children are doing during the week, before school, after school and in the evening. The boxes containing ticks indicate what activities they are doing, while the boxes with crosses indicate the things they are not.

Weekday Morning

Before going to school, 50 per cent of the children interviewed watched television, either on their own, or with brothers or sisters. Half watched television while having breakfast. Around 20 per cent said they listened to the radio, and around 20 per cent found time to read in bed, particularly the older girls. At this time of the day, children are not playing on computers or consoles, playing sport, playing games, watching videos, or practising musical instruments.

WEEKDAY	
Morning – before school	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	watching TV – on own or with siblings 50%
	eating breakfast and watching TV 50%
	listening to radio 20%
	reading in bed – particularly older girls 20%
<input type="checkbox"/>	playing on computer/consoles
	playing sport
	playing games
	watching videos
	playing musical instrument

Weekday Afternoon The first thing most (75 per cent) children do when they get home from school is put the television on (and raid the fridge, according to mums). One in five attends after-school activities, such as brownies/cubs, swimming, etc. Nearly a third play on the computer or games console after school, and a quarter choose to play with friends. One in ten of the younger ones are painting, drawing, or making something, an identical proportion say they play sport, and eight per cent practise a musical instrument. Straight after school, children tend not to listen to the radio, watch videos, listen to music, or read.

WEEKDAY																											
After school – before dinner																											
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<table border="0"> <tr> <td>watching TV</td> <td>75%</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2"><hr/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>after-school activities, eg, brownies/cubs, swimming</td> <td>20%</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2"><hr/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>playing on computer/ games consoles</td> <td>30%</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2"><hr/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>painting, drawing or making something (younger children)</td> <td>10%</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2"><hr/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>playing with friends/ siblings</td> <td>25%</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2"><hr/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>playing sport</td> <td>10%</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2"><hr/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>musical instruments</td> <td>8%</td> </tr> </table>	watching TV	75%	<hr/>		after-school activities, eg, brownies/cubs, swimming	20%	<hr/>		playing on computer/ games consoles	30%	<hr/>		painting, drawing or making something (younger children)	10%	<hr/>		playing with friends/ siblings	25%	<hr/>		playing sport	10%	<hr/>		musical instruments	8%
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<input type="checkbox"/>	<table border="0"> <tr> <td>listen to radio</td> </tr> <tr> <td><hr/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>watch a video</td> </tr> <tr> <td><hr/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>listen to music</td> </tr> <tr> <td><hr/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>reading</td> </tr> <tr> <td><hr/></td> </tr> </table>	listen to radio	<hr/>	watch a video	<hr/>	listen to music	<hr/>	reading	<hr/>																		
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watch a video																											
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listen to music																											
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Weekday Evening

During weekday evenings, 40 per cent of the sample are watching television, usually in the company of their family, brothers, sisters, mums and dads. Again, 20 per cent play on the computer or games console, 45 per cent read before bed, a quarter play with their siblings and 15 per cent listen to the radio. Activities that are not occurring at this time include watching videos, playing sport, painting, drawing, etc, and playing a musical instrument.

WEEKDAY	
Evening	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	in front of the TV with siblings, or with mum and dad 40%
	computer/ games consoles 20%
	reading – before bed (homework) 45%
	eating dinner
	playing with siblings 25%
	listen to radio – before bed 15%
<input type="checkbox"/>	painting, drawing or making something
	playing a musical instrument
	watching videos
	playing a sport

**Weekend Morning
(Saturday
and Sunday)**

On Saturday mornings, children tend to be up early watching television (50 per cent). Some are involved in other activities, such as reading (15 per cent), playing their own made-up games (12 per cent), painting/drawing, etc (10 per cent), and playing football in the case of the boys (10 per cent). They appear not to be on the computer or playing outside, although no doubt this changes during the summer months.

Children tend to be up slightly later on Sunday mornings. Fewer watch television (20 per cent), possibly because they are less aware of where to find children's programmes, for example, on BBC2 rather than BBC1. Sunday mornings are when kids are most likely to amuse themselves with made-up, imaginary games (28 per cent). Again, 20 per cent play on the computer/games console, while some, especially the older girls, listen to music (15 per cent), 8 per cent draw/paint, and a small proportion (5 per cent) watch videos. Sunday mornings are not spent playing sport, playing a musical instrument or reading.

WEEKEND													
Saturday Morning													
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<table border="0"> <tr> <td>watching TV</td> <td style="text-align: right;">50%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>painting, drawing, etc.</td> <td style="text-align: right;">10%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>football</td> <td style="text-align: right;">10%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>reading</td> <td style="text-align: right;">15%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>playing own games</td> <td style="text-align: right;">12%</td> </tr> </table>	watching TV	50%	painting, drawing, etc.	10%	football	10%	reading	15%	playing own games	12%		
watching TV	50%												
painting, drawing, etc.	10%												
football	10%												
reading	15%												
playing own games	12%												
<input type="checkbox"/>	<table border="0"> <tr> <td>watching video</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>playing a musical instrument</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>computer/games console</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>outside playing</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	watching video		playing a musical instrument		computer/games console		outside playing					
watching video													
playing a musical instrument													
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outside playing													
Sunday Morning													
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<table border="0"> <tr> <td>watching TV</td> <td style="text-align: right;">20%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>made-up game</td> <td style="text-align: right;">28%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>computer/ games console</td> <td style="text-align: right;">20%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>listening to music (older girls)</td> <td style="text-align: right;">15%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>drawing, painting, etc.</td> <td style="text-align: right;">8%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>watching video</td> <td style="text-align: right;">5%</td> </tr> </table>	watching TV	20%	made-up game	28%	computer/ games console	20%	listening to music (older girls)	15%	drawing, painting, etc.	8%	watching video	5%
watching TV	20%												
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<input type="checkbox"/>	<table border="0"> <tr> <td>playing sport</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>playing musical instrument</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>reading</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	playing sport		playing musical instrument		reading							
playing sport													
playing musical instrument													
reading													

**Weekend Afternoon
(Saturday
and Sunday)**

Weekend afternoons are not generally spent watching television, mainly because there is little on at this time for children. On Saturdays, children often get taken shopping (20 per cent), or they play sport (20 per cent), go on the computer (20 per cent), make up their own games (15 per cent), or watch a video (20 per cent). Sunday afternoons are pretty similar, although the younger ones will often do some drawing or painting (10 per cent).

WEEKEND											
Saturday Afternoon											
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<table border="0"> <tr> <td>may watch a video</td> <td style="text-align: right;">20%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>computer/ games consoles</td> <td style="text-align: right;">20%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>playing sport</td> <td style="text-align: right;">20%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>shopping</td> <td style="text-align: right;">20%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>playing own games</td> <td style="text-align: right;">15%</td> </tr> </table>	may watch a video	20%	computer/ games consoles	20%	playing sport	20%	shopping	20%	playing own games	15%
may watch a video	20%										
computer/ games consoles	20%										
playing sport	20%										
shopping	20%										
playing own games	15%										
<input type="checkbox"/>	<table border="0"> <tr> <td>not generally watching TV</td> </tr> <tr> <td>listening to music</td> </tr> <tr> <td>playing musical instrument</td> </tr> </table>	not generally watching TV	listening to music	playing musical instrument							
not generally watching TV											
listening to music											
playing musical instrument											
Sunday Afternoon											
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<table border="0"> <tr> <td>computer/ games console</td> <td style="text-align: right;">25%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>watching video</td> <td style="text-align: right;">15%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>playing own games</td> <td style="text-align: right;">15%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>drawing, painting, etc.</td> <td style="text-align: right;">10%</td> </tr> </table>	computer/ games console	25%	watching video	15%	playing own games	15%	drawing, painting, etc.	10%		
computer/ games console	25%										
watching video	15%										
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<input type="checkbox"/>	<table border="0"> <tr> <td>not much on TV to watch</td> </tr> <tr> <td>listening to music</td> </tr> <tr> <td>playing musical instrument</td> </tr> <tr> <td>reading</td> </tr> </table>	not much on TV to watch	listening to music	playing musical instrument	reading						
not much on TV to watch											
listening to music											
playing musical instrument											
reading											

**Weekend Evening
(Saturday and
Sunday)**

Around a third of children are watching television on Saturday and Sunday evenings. One in ten mentions having take-away dinners over the weekend, and one in ten spends time on the computer, or watching videos. Sunday evenings are the times when kids say they are bored.

WEEKEND			
Saturday Evening			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	watching TV	30%	<input type="checkbox"/>
	family 'take away' dinner	10%	<input type="checkbox"/>
	watching video	10%	<input type="checkbox"/>
	computer/ games consoles	10%	<input type="checkbox"/>
			<input type="checkbox"/>
			<input type="checkbox"/>
			<input type="checkbox"/>
			<input type="checkbox"/>
Sunday Evening			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	watching TV	35%	<input type="checkbox"/>
	listening to radio/charts	10%	<input type="checkbox"/>
	watching video	10%	<input type="checkbox"/>
	family dinner	10%	<input type="checkbox"/>
	BORED!		<input type="checkbox"/>
			<input type="checkbox"/>
			<input type="checkbox"/>
			<input type="checkbox"/>

Computer/games consoles

Most of the children who took part in the research had personal computers (PCs) or games consoles at home, and were able to distinguish between these two forms of technology. The PCs tended to belong to their parents. The younger children could not use them without permission and often didn't know how to turn them on. The older children were allowed to use them as and when they wanted. The PCs were deemed to be for educational purposes in the main, but also they were regarded as fun.

The games consoles belonged either to the respondents, or to their older siblings. These were regarded as pure entertainment. The types of console most frequently mentioned were:

- Playstation;
- Sega mega drives;
- Gameboys;
- Nintendo 64 (a select few).

Popular games amongst the sample included:

- Doom (although some said they were not allowed to play this game because it was too violent);
- Crash Bandicoot;
- Mario;
- FIFA 97/98;
- Tomb Raider.

Children's primary source of entertainment was television, whereas computers and games consoles came into their own when they got bored, or decided they had had enough of television. Also, they tended to turn to computers/games consoles when there were no programmes on television they wanted to watch. Playing on computers and games consoles was seen to have playground currency or credibility with their friends. It is something they talk about at school, and they often play on the computer or games console with their friends. Sometimes they will play with brothers or sisters or parents (more usually dad), but they are just as happy to play on their own.

Awareness of the Internet amongst the sample was low. The younger children were completely unaware, and whilst a few of the 9-year-olds had heard of the Internet, they were not yet interested in it.

In the playground

The most popular games are perennial:

- 'tag' games;
- kiss-chase (younger children, 5 to 7 years);
- football (older boys, 7 upwards);
- pretending/acting out:
 - Spice Girls;
 - Batman & Robin;
 - Spiderman.

'I like to play Mighty Ducks. They are kind of fighters and are really strong, especially Muscle Duck.' (Boy 5, North)

The only games they are not allowed to play at school because they always ended in tears are:

- wrestling;
- Power Rangers.

'It's best to be the goodies and pretend there are baddies.' (Boy 5, North)

'The boys pretend they're Batman and they only do up the top button on their coats.' (Girl 5, North)

'We pretend we're Spice Girls and sing their songs.' (Girl 8, South)

Magazines and comics

For children under 9 years, the reading of magazines and comics tends to be an extension of their television viewing, or of the toys they play with. Parents are often the ones to initiate buying comics, to encourage reading. They are usually bought on an occasional basis. Some of the younger girls said they pinched their older sisters' comics and magazines, especially *Girl Talk*.

The most commonly mentioned magazines and comics read by boys and girls are:

BOYS	GIRLS
Sonic: The Comic	Barbie
Disney	Girl Talk
Tots TV	Beano
Beano	Dandy
Dandy	Disney
Football magazines: Shoot Match	Tots TV

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TELEVISION VIEWING

WEEKDAYS

Mornings

If allowed to, most children will watch television as soon as they wake up. Mornings are always a rush during the week, so television has to be fitted in around what they are doing. Many watch while they are having breakfast. Some are permitted to watch before they get dressed for school, even though mums complain about how hard it is to drag them away from the screen to get dressed. Others are allowed to watch only once they are in their school uniform.

At this time of day, children need programmes they can dip in and out of:

- short items;
- short cartoons.

During weekday mornings, because of time constraints, children pre-select what they want to watch. In other words it is 'appointment television'.

After School

During the winter months, most switch the television on the minute they get back from school. Mums are unaware of what they are watching because they are busy doing household chores, preparing the tea, washing up, etc. In the summer, other activities may take precedence, such as playing outside. Nevertheless, even during winter, television has to fit around a number of other things.

Early Evening

The evenings are likely to be family viewing times. Respondents said they usually watched with their parents and brothers and sisters. The sorts of things they watch together include:

- soaps;
- nature programmes;
- films;
- news (maybe).

WEEKENDS

Saturday Morning

Saturday morning viewing is similar to a weekday afternoon. Kids like to 'veg out' (relax) in front of the television. Typically they are watching:

- *Live and Kicking*;
- cartoons on The Cartoon Network/ITV;
- Nickelodeon;
- Sky Sports (older boys).

Mum and dad are in bed (Saturday mornings are their time) unaware of what kids are watching.

- Saturday Afternoon** Most children are watching less television. They take part in more active pursuits, such as:
- football;
 - swimming;
 - out with friends;
 - shopping with parents.
- Saturday Evening** Saturday evenings are family viewing time when brothers, sisters and parents gather together to watch programmes such as:
- *Gladiators/Ice Warriors*
 - *Blind Date*
 - *Casualty*
- Sunday Morning** On Sunday mornings children are watching television, but not as much as on Saturday mornings. They wake up later on Sundays, and may get bored with television and turn to computers/games consoles instead. The programming on Sunday mornings appears to be less appealing for kids, or possibly they have just had enough by the time Sunday comes around.

CHANNELS THEY WATCH

All the children in the study watched Children's BBC (CBBC) and Children's ITV (CITV). CBBC often was more popular with the older children, while CITV was favoured by the younger boys because it was thought to have more and better cartoons. The older girls and boys watched Nickelodeon. The younger boys liked The Cartoon Network, and the older girls would watch it when bored. 5- to 7-year-old boys specifically enjoyed Fox Kids because of all the action cartoons it offered. Older boys, especially those who followed or played football, liked watching Sky Sports.

WHAT THEY'RE WATCHING	
Weekdays	
am	pm (continued)
<i>Rugrats</i> (Nickelodeon) <i>Teletubbies/Blue Peter</i> (CBBC) <i>Hey Arnold!</i> (Nickelodeon) <i>Dexter's Laboratory</i> (Cartoon Network) <i>Cow & Chicken</i> (Cartoon Network)	<i>The Really Wild Show</i> (CBBC) <i>Hey Arnold!</i> (CITV) <i>The Ward</i> (CITV) <i>Animaniacs</i> (CITV)
pm	evening
<i>The Wild House</i> (CBBC) <i>The Demon Headmaster</i> (CBBC) <i>Grange Hill</i> (CBBC) <i>Fudge</i> (CBBC) <i>Art Attack</i> (CITV)	Soaps: <i>EastEnders</i> <i>Coronation Street</i> <i>Pet Rescue</i> <i>Animal Hospital</i> Sky Sports/nature programmes

WHAT THEY'RE WATCHING

Weekends

Saturday am

Live & Kicking (CBBC)
Rugrats, Spiderman
Jumanji (CITV)
Scooby Doo (CITV)
Sabrina (CITV)
 Nickelodeon & Cartoon Network

Sunday am

Jonny Quest (CBBC)
Grange Hill (CBBC)
The Wild House (CBBC)
 Nickelodeon & Cartoon Network

Sunday pm

The Simpsons (BBC2)
EastEnders (BBC1)
 (If watching TV)
 videos
 cable/satellite
 children's channels

Saturday pm

(If watching TV)
 videos
 cable/satellite
 children's channels

Saturday evening

Casualty
Blind Date, etc

Sunday evening

Films
Coronation Street

THE ROLE OF TELEVISION

Television plays a number of different roles for children. It is a means of relaxing and unwinding after school: they see it as entertaining and fun and it relieves boredom; it is part of their lives, providing them with company; it is a fun way of learning; and it provides them with things to talk about in the playground with their friends.

Parents view television as a babysitter. It pacifies their children and allows them to relax, while at the same time keeping them occupied and out of parents' way. Mums feel that children are entitled to relax after coming home from school.

CONTROL OF TELEVISION

Often, whoever gets to the television first decides what is watched and who is in control of the remote. This tends to be older siblings who could be called pre-planned schemers. Sometimes they will allow younger brothers and sisters some control, but this is usually when there is nothing on they themselves want to watch. They trick them by saying, for example, 'You can watch *Rosie & Jim* and then it's my turn'.

If dad is home, he is generally in charge of the remote control, particularly if sports and news programmes are on.

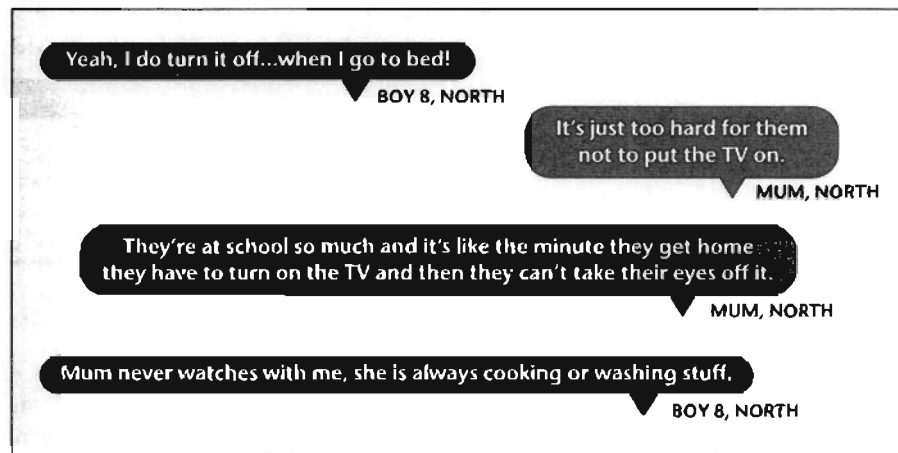
Over a third of the sample had televisions in their bedrooms. Some six-year-olds had been given sets as Christmas presents. When watching in their own rooms they have far more freedom to make their own viewing choices. The children admitted to trying to watch programmes that are not targeted at them. These are possibly the more violent/scary programmes.

Parents do, however, seem to try to enforce strict rules about what children can and cannot watch in their rooms.

Programmes which parents mentioned they preferred their children not to watch in their bedrooms included:

The Bill;
Casualty;
films – too old;
some soaps – too controversial.

These rules applied also to general television viewing in the home. Parents are aware, however, that they cannot control what their children watch at their friends' houses.



Children will watch cartoons at any time of the day. The amount varies in relation to the age and sex of the child.

Boys between the ages of 5 and 7 years are the core watchers of 'action' cartoons. If allowed, some would watch from morning to night.

Older children (those aged between 7 and 9) will watch 'action' cartoons when there is nothing else on. Although they do have some cartoons in their favourite repertoire of programmes these tend to be the older classics, or the funnier cartoons such as:

- *Rugrats*;
- *The Simpsons*;
- *Loony Tunes*;
- *Tom & Jerry*.

The above are the kinds of cartoons that children make appointments to see. When asked why they liked these cartoons best, the children said it was because they were:

- *funny*;
- *bright and colourful*;
- *exciting*;
- *likeable characters*.

'Cartoons are good and cool.' Boy 6, North.

Children tend not to watch cartoons with their parents. Mothers rarely watch cartoons, but some children view with their dads at the weekend.

'My dad and me watch Wacky Races on Saturday morning.' Boy 6, North.

None of the children mentioned not being allowed to watch certain cartoons, except for *Power Rangers*.

CHILDREN'S DEFINITION OF 'SCARY'

When asked generally whether they ever found cartoons scary, most of the children said they did not. But the issue was found to be more complex than this. When shown specific images from cartoons (the video grabs) and after watching the actual clips, the children started to talk in more detail about some of the things in or about cartoons that can make them scary.

When discussing 'scary', children talked about good scary (or 'scary good' in their terms), and bad scary ('scary bad'). Good scary was exciting and involved enjoying the suspense and a good atmosphere. Bad scary was frightening or upsetting and left a lasting impression, possibly even causing nightmares. Bad scary made them want to switch off or switch over. This rarely happened with cartoons, but some of the younger girls (5 to 6 years) did ask the researchers to turn off a couple of the clips because they disliked the imagery in them.

GOOD SCARY	BAD SCARY
exciting	horrible – frightening/can't watch
'makes you jump'	want to switch off/over
don't want to miss it	sad
bright/colourful	dull
sometimes funny	can be upsetting – especially if can relate to
fun	real life situations (older kids)
involving	leaves lasting impression
good atmosphere	bad atmosphere/darkness gives kids
enjoy suspense	nightmares

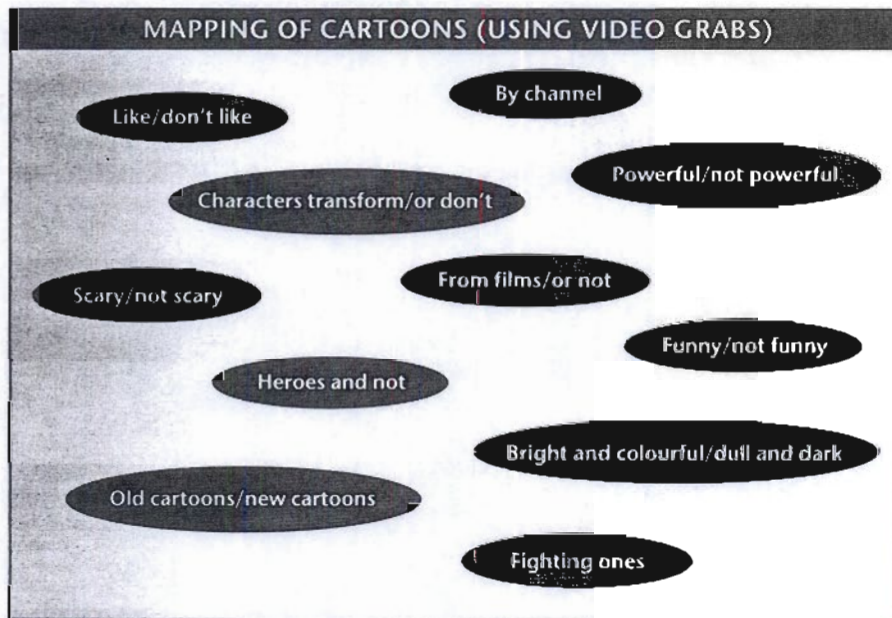
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MAPPING OF CARTOONS USING VIDEO GRABS

Picture stills, or video grabs, were taken from the twelve cartoons used in the study and the children were asked to sort them into groups of cartoons that were similar. The younger children simply grouped them according to cartoons they liked and those they didn't, or according to which channel they were on. Some of the older children sorted them by more sophisticated categories, such as those with characters who transformed into other beings, such as *Spiderman*, *Batman & Robin*, and *The Incredible Hulk*, and those with characters which did not.

Those aware of the films from which some cartoons had been derived, suggested that one category should be cartoons from films, for example *Men In Black*, *Jumanji* and *Batman & Robin*.

Another category was scary cartoons, put forward by the younger children, particularly girls aged 5 to 6 years. Within this category they placed *Street Sharks*, *Jumanji* (sometimes it was scary), and *Batman & Robin*. *X-Men*, *Gargoyles* and *Reboot* were others that children mentioned could go in the scary category. More often than not, however, *Reboot* ended up in a category on its own because nearly all the children felt it was unlike any of the other cartoons.



WHAT MUMS AND KIDS HAD TO SAY ABOUT CARTOONS

Cartoons are good for your imagination.

BOY 9, NORTH

Sometimes when my boy is watching cartoons you can ask him something and he'll completely ignore you.

MUM, NORTH

I think cartoons just fill a gap for my kids when nothing else is on.

MUM, NORTH

The cartoon people, they're only opening their mouth and the person who's speaking through the microphone makes the noise of them.

BOY 6, NORTH

I think you have to be very careful with cartoons because you just assume they are harmless and some of them are far too grown up for young children, some are quite sophisticated and aimed at older children.

MUM, SOUTH

After school the kids are winding down. They like to be able to laugh at cartoons. I think my son sees it as silly.

MUM, NORTH

A lot of cartoons, if you did sit down and watch you'd think yes it's quite violent, but because it's a cartoon my children don't realise.

MUM, NORTH

I think with my little ones when they're watching cartoons they just look at the pictures...they don't understand. It goes over their heads.

MUM, NORTH

JUMANJI

The key characters are involved in a new game called Bradford, where they have to solve the riddle: 'Knowledge is key to this illusion, ignorance is no solution'. In attempting to solve the riddle they enter the library. It is portrayed as a maze, and there is some eerie music. As they pick up books, wild animals jump out of them, including a lion, a crocodile and a large dinosaur. They then come across a hunter with a gun who starts shooting at them. He is attacked by the lion and they escape from the library.

This was one of the most popular cartoons shown. It is an 'appointment-to-view' cartoon for some, especially boys and girls under the age of 8 years. The on-going storyline possibly gives it more meaning to children. They understand that the characters are taking part in a game. *Jumanji* was the only cartoon out of the three on the pre-placed tape, which the children who watched the tape could recount later when they attended the groups.

Likes

- Bright and colourful
- On-going storyline
- Film supports recognition
- Exciting
- 'Good' scary
- Animals
- Easy to follow and understand
- Easy to watch

Dislikes

- Some of the younger girls found parts of the clip a little scary (when the wild animals jumped out of the books).

Mums generally think *Jumanji* is a good cartoon. Some had seen the film with their children. Mums with younger kids were concerned that they might find some of the animals frightening.

'The elephant who had sharp teeth would scare my son who's three. He thinks of them as peaceful animals.' Mum, North.

X-MEN

Mutant children with special powers are being looked after at an orphanage. A man called Mr Kilgrave is adopting them and brainwashing them to obey him. One child, Rusty, has run away from Mr Kilgrave and tells Scott (one of the X-Men) that he is afraid and doesn't want to go back. He is ignored and forced to do Mr Kilgrave's bidding, who commands him with blazing eyes.

This was not a particular favourite for any group of children. The younger boys (under eights) would watch if it was on but they don't make an appointment to view. Most of the children thought *X-Men* was not scary, but a few of the older ones felt uncomfortable with the story about children being kidnapped.

Likes

- Bright colours
- Transformations

Dislikes

- Possession (of children)
- Lack of action – slow paced
- Evoked bad feelings in some children
- Eerie music
- Dark/dull pictures
- Not exciting

Mums reacted negatively to this clip. They particularly disliked the fact that a young, frightened boy is handed over to a bad man by the people who were supposed to be looking after him. The police are seen to be on the side of the bad man. The mums thought this reversal of the hero/baddie roles might confuse children. They were disturbed also by the 'blazing eyes' during the scene where the children are being brainwashed. They thought this depiction of possession could scare younger children.

Mums felt the storyline was too complicated, although they believed much of the sinister overtones would be lost on younger children, they felt quite strongly that featuring human characters made it too realistic and they worried that older children might not be able to tell the difference. To some extent, they are right. The more realistic cartoons are, the more blurred the edges become between what is real and what is not. Older children have a better understanding of concepts such as threat, danger, fear, and they can relate to these on a personal level. Cartoons with people, especially children, who are threatened in some way can make them feel uncomfortable. It is different when the characters are not human.

X-MEN

I don't like it, it's scary. What are they doing to their eyes?
GIRL 6, NORTH

That's what got me, because they were with an adult and still let the child go away. Adults are supposed to protect children aren't they? But if it had a happy ending my son would be OK.
MUM, SOUTH

It seemed to go a bit over the top somehow.
MUM, NORTH

This cartoon made me feel weird actually.
MUM, NORTH

It would be difficult to distinguish the goodie from the baddie in this and that would send funny messages to kids.
MUM, SOUTH

It's boring, and we don't really know what's happening and there's not much going on.
BOY 6, SOUTH

STREET SHARKS

The Street Sharks are involved in a fight with some other sharky-looking characters. The scene takes place in a dockyard. There are a lot of explosions, falling scaffolding, use of radar guns, etc. Several of the Street Sharks are stricken down with some sort of virus and end up on the floor with breathing difficulties.

This was well liked by the younger boys (the under-8s) and familiar to most. It was perceived by girls as a boys' cartoon. The older boys (8- to 9-year-olds) clearly felt it was not for them.

Likes

- Characters (boys) – reinforced by merchandising
- Fast exciting action (boys)
- Suspense
- Humour

Dislikes

- Violence (younger girls)
- Characters (girls)

Some younger girls (under-7s) were unhappy about some of the scenes in the clip. They didn't like the fact that the baddies were trying to kill the Street Sharks. They thought it was too violent and wanted to turn it off.

The boys, particularly the under-8s, were excited and involved by the cartoon. They were mesmerised by it.

Mums believed *Street Sharks* to be a violent cartoon. But the characters are not real life (they are sharks or half-sharks, not humans) so they felt this would have less impact on children. They too thought it was a boys' cartoon and felt it had no storyline.

The mums found it difficult to distinguish the goodies from the baddies in this clip, and the children who were unfamiliar with *Street Sharks* had the same problem.

There was a backlash against the merchandising of the cartoon amongst mums:

'It's all the marketing stuff that bugs me. Once they produce stuff like figures, everyone starts watching it.' Mum, South.

EARTHWORM JIM

The fish and Earthworm Jim are arguing and calling each other names. They are in some sort of spaceship, which gets eaten by a metal fish. They escape via a manhole, which sends them back in time to prehistoric Earth. Here they encounter a huge dinosaur, which Earthworm Jim manages to overcome and push back down the manhole. The fish berates him for blocking their only chance to escape back to their own time. He calls the worm a 'moron'.

This was popular with both girls and boys, although some of the younger boys (5 to 7s) thought it was stupid, perhaps because they did not understand the storyline, and they felt there was not enough action. Some of the older girls thought it was not for them because it was aimed at younger children and they too thought it was stupid.

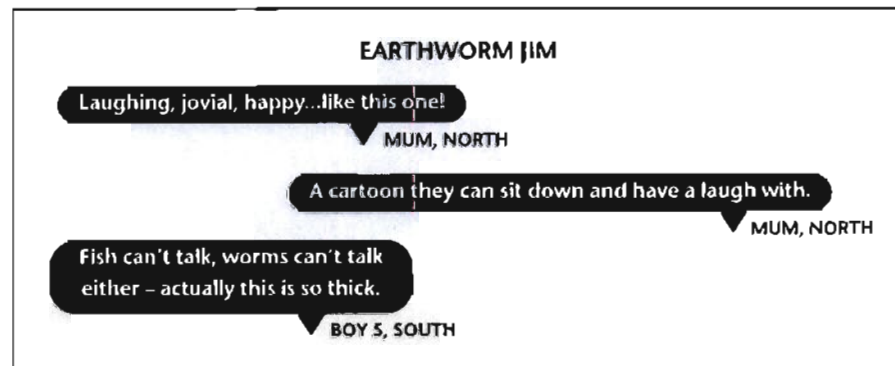
Likes

- Funny
- The fish and worm were well liked
- Bright and colourful
- Some likened it to *Loony Tunes*

Dislikes

- Stupid
- Confusing

The mums liked this cartoon more because it had animal characters and seemed more colourful. None of the mums picked up on the use of the word 'moron' in the clip. It was perceived to be more humorous than the other 'action' cartoons. Some felt it to be more like *Loony Tunes*.



BATMAN & ROBIN

Batman has been temporarily blinded in an attack by a ray gun. He is using some sort of battery-charged device, which provides him with infra-red images to see by. He is shot down in his flying Batmobile and, while escaping the flames, he snaps the cable linking this device to its energy source. With his sight rapidly fading, he staggers into a factory, followed by the Penguin and his sidekick. The guard follows Batman up on to a conveyor belt where he attacks him with a metal chain. The Penguin goads him with the metal tip of his umbrella, but Batman manages to rescue the situation despite being blind.

EXTREME GHOSTBUSTERS

The ghostbusters are hunting down an energy source. The scene opens with a runaway lorry which knocks down one of the characters (the one in the wheelchair). Most of the rest of the action takes place on a building site, high up on a scaffolding tower. The ghost they are pursuing causes a tool gun to start firing nails at them, a crane crashes into them and their lift cable snaps. Eventually, they believe they have zapped the ghost, but it reappears at the end of the clip to let us know it's still around. The clip is mostly shot in grey tones.

This cartoon was disliked by most of the girls who thought it was a boys' cartoon. The 5- to 8-year-old boys liked it though.

Likes

- Ghosts (some funny, some scary)
- Weapons (boys)
- Atmospheric music

Dislikes

- The grey colours (it was seen to be black and white, something which the children associated with old films for grown ups, which made it boring). This was the fault of the actual clip, rather than the cartoon as such.

MIGHTY DUCKS

The ice hockey duck team are kidnapped and forced to play a special game of ice hockey, using weapons instead of hockey sticks. It is a bit like a gladiator contest, with an alien emperor presiding over the event. One of the Mighty Ducks has the chance to kill a guard but he shows him mercy.

Mighty Ducks was well liked by younger boys (5 to 7s), but the cartoon was dismissed by other groups.

Likes

- Fast-paced action
- Like duck characters – some had *Mighty Duck* toys

Dislikes

- Girls described it as a boys' cartoon
- Boring (older girls)

GARGOYLES

The clip shows a fight scene in a graveyard between the old Gargoyle and Demona. Demona has a machine gun, while the old soldier draws his sword. They attack each other incessantly and Demona threatens a number of times to kill her opponent. Just as she is about to claim victory, the dawn breaks and they turn back into stone.

Gargoyles was well known by the children and by some of the mums. Although it was not a favourite cartoon, it was generally liked by the boys and also by some of the girls. Many had Gargoyle figures – a popular Christmas present.

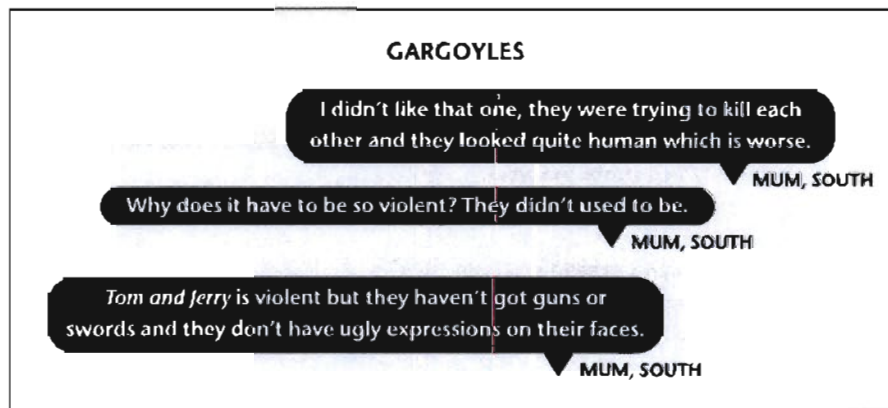
Likes

- Gargoyle characters
- Fast-paced action
- 'Girl' and 'boy' characters
- Humour (although not in clip shown, known from other episodes)

Dislikes

- Uneasy atmosphere for younger girls (under 7s) and some of the boys
- Cemetery
- Weapons
- Thunder/lightning
- Many had seen the episode from which the clip was taken and found it boring a second time around
- Girl character (boys disliked her and also some of the girls because she was nasty)

Again, the mums reacted negatively to the violence depicted in the clip. They disliked the 'dark' nature of the violence and commented on the anger and aggression shown on the faces of the characters.



Some felt that younger children (under 6 years) could find it frightening.

'If the younger one (aged 4) was watching it on his own, he wouldn't like it, but with big brother he would be all right.' Mum, South.

REBOOT

Reboot has computer-generated graphics and looks completely different from other cartoons. The characters are taking part in a game. During this part of the cartoon they have strange, white eyes. Reboot Man is after them with a chainsaw. The clip contains a scene about which the ITC upheld complaints. Megabyte's dog is shot by Reboot Man. Megabyte and his sister run into a wooden hut and try to hide from Reboot Man behind a piano. Reboot Man starts cutting everything up with his chainsaw, including the piano. They succeed in getting rid of him and the game is over. The clip is extended beyond the scene with the chainsaw, to show that once the game is finished the characters return to normal, the colours lift and it all gets brighter.

This was well liked by most of the children. Those who had never seen it before were immediately impressed by the graphics.



Most understood that *Reboot* was a game and hence knew that it was not 'real'. They made comparisons with other computer games. The cartoon was seen as having two parts – the white-eyed horrid part, which was the game, and the rest, where the characters were normal.

It was particularly liked by older boys and girls (8- to 9-year-olds) who understood the humour.

'He's trying to be like Michael Jackson.' Boy 8, North.

Although the younger boys (5- to 6-year-olds) did not understand the humour, they were transfixed by the graphics.

Likes

- Computer graphics
- Unique 'wow' effect
- Brightness
- Exciting
- Fast action
- Humour (older kids)

Dislikes

- Unnecessary violence, ie:
chain saw (mums)
dog being shot
- Mums disliked female character's skimpy outfit
- Aggressive music (mums)
- Skeleton bit
- Man with chainsaw

'Reboot Man is scary. You can't see his pupils.' Boy 9, South

The first scene featuring the man with the chainsaw was thought too violent by mums, but the children did not find this scary.

Mums were unsure of the relevance of the female character's low cut dress, but this was not something the children noticed.

'It's kids that would be watching this ... not teenage boys.' Mum, North.

'My younger kids would definitely find that scary.' Mum, South.

Some of the younger girls (5 to 6) saw *Reboot* as two different programmes. They did not understand it was a game and they liked the second part, but thought the first part was horrid.

'The faces in the first one were horrible, but in this one the faces are nice – I like the green people better.' Girl 5, North

The clip shown caused concern amongst almost all of the mums. Most mums believed it to be a cable or satellite programme and that it was for older children, possibly teenagers, or even adults. One mother who had seen a number of episodes of *Reboot* felt that the scene with the chainsaw was by far the worst that had appeared in the series.

SPIDERMAN

Peter Parker (alias Spiderman) is attacked by a man with a gun, who believes he is really The Green Goblin. He has Parker up against a wall, but Parker escapes on The Green Goblin's flying machine. There are missiles fired at him, and he narrowly misses the blades of a helicopter. When he lands, The Green Goblin reclaims his flying device and Parker turns into Spiderman.

Of slightly wider appeal than the core group of 5- to 7-year-old boys, it was liked by younger girls and older boys, but rejected by older girls.

Likes

- Fond of character
- Well established
- Backed up by comic, merchandise, etc
- Playground hero for some younger boys
- What he does – for example, when he throws his web

Dislikes

- None in particular

THE INCREDIBLE HULK

The clip features a blazing skull on a motorbike, who calls himself The Truth. He initially believes The Hulk is bad, and is out to hunt him down. In the process, he discovers a captain who has been attacking The Hulk over a long period of time. This captain manages to shoot The Hulk with a strong tranquilliser dart when he is in his human state. This will kill him unless he can turn back into The Hulk. His friends make him mad so that he turns in to The Hulk and is saved.

This was liked by younger boys (5 to 7s) but it is not a favourite. It was rejected by all the girls and older boys.

'I don't like him because he's green.' Girl 5, North.

Likes

- Transformation to Hulk
- Action
- Powerful
- Strong

Dislikes

- Boring 'seen it before'
- Unexciting

Children are engaged in a wide range of different activities. Although television fills most of their leisure time, computers and video games also are important, as is sport and children's own imaginary games. Television has to compete with children's other activities and interests – it has to fit into their lives:

'I watch Dennis the Menace, I play Lego.' Boy 6, South.

After school, television is seen as something which helps children to relax and unwind. It keeps them entertained without their having to make much of an effort. It is entertainment for children on weekend mornings, keeping them company while mum and dad are still in bed.

Cartoons have a particular role within children's television viewing. They are short, easy to dip in and out of, fun, funny (they make children laugh), and exciting (the thrill of 'scary good'). For some, there is the link with merchandising (they enjoy collecting the characters and playing with them). Children find cartoons both stimulating (action, colour and music), and relaxing (they require little effort to watch). They have a simple content which is easy to follow.

There is the feeling that there are more cartoons on cable/satellite channels, due to a literal semantic link with The Cartoon Network, for example, but children still think there are plenty on terrestrial television.

Children, as well as adults, are able to distinguish between 'toons' and 'action' cartoons. Toons include *Tom & Jerry*, *Bugs Bunny*, *Scooby Doo*, *Flintstones*, *Rugrats*, *Hey Arnold!*, and *The Simpsons*. These are children's favourites, primarily because they make them laugh, but also because they are bright and colourful.

Action cartoons include *Gargoyles*, *X-Men*, *Street Sharks*, *Batman & Robin*, etc. They are less popular because children get less out of them. They do not make them laugh, and some of the storylines are hard to follow. Since they tend not to be 'appointment-to-view' cartoons for most, children are less likely to watch them in the first instance, or continue to watch if they happen upon them by chance, while channel flicking, although they will watch them if there is nothing else on.

The core viewers of action cartoons are 5- to 7-year-old boys. These are the viewers who enjoy goodies (in whatever form) beating the baddies. They would watch action cartoons all day long if permitted.

Mums have problems with some of these cartoons. They see them as being too violent, aggressive/angry, and too adult. The mums in the study were shocked by the material in some of the clips, especially *X-Men* (because of the blazing eyes and sinister storyline) and *Reboot* (the scene with the chainsaw, the scene when the dog was shot, and the female character's scanty outfit). There was disappointment about the high level and type of violence depicted in some of the clips, for example, *Gargoyles*.

Some mums, especially those with younger children, objected to what they perceived to be over-use of violent weapons (laser guns and swords). There was concern also that their children (particularly younger girls) would be frightened by some of the scenes.

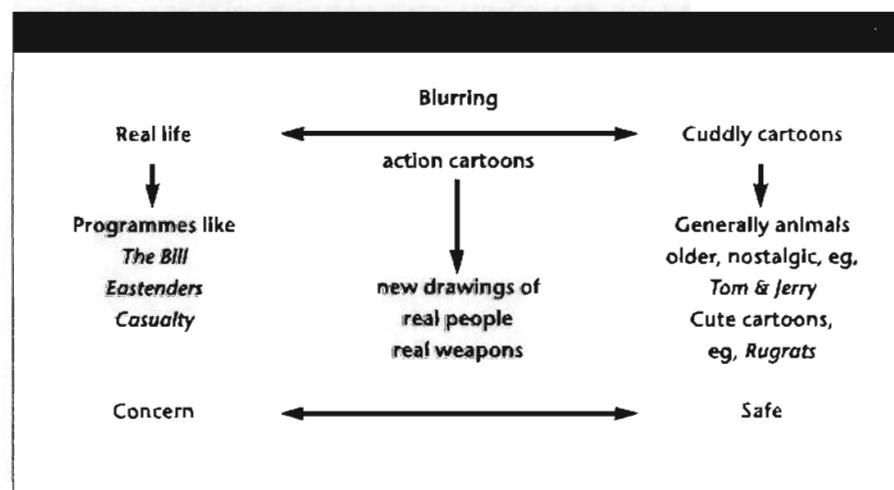
A few of the mums felt that some of the cartoon clips were too close to reality and their children would not be able to tell the difference (*Reboot and X-Men*).

When asked in general if they ever found cartoons frightening or scary, almost all the children said they were never scared by cartoons because they knew they were not real. Children are able to make the distinction between a cartoon and real life. They believe that baddies never kill or hurt the goodies, and that things always turn out okay in the end. None of the children was concerned about the dog being shot in *Reboot* because they knew it would be alright again.

But it is not quite as straightforward as this. When shown the video stills, and after watching specific examples of action cartoons in the clips, it became clear that children do find some cartoon imagery disturbing. They made a distinction between scary good (thrilling, exciting), and scary bad (frightening, makes them feel uncomfortable, want to switch off/over).

Girls in general, and older boys, do not particularly like action cartoons. Younger girls (5 to 6 years) find some of the imagery scary ('ugly' characters/monsters), and think they are noisy (loud music, too much fighting). Older boys (8 to 9 years) and older girls (8 to 9 years) sometimes feel uncomfortable or uneasy if the characters are too human, or if the storylines are to do with children being in danger.

Mothers spot that toons predominantly feature animals. Action cartoons sometimes involve people as main characters. Mums (and children) realise that violent and/or alarming scenes in programmes intended for older viewers, such as *The Bill* and *Casualty*, are more disturbing to children than cartoons. The closer cartoons come to reality, however, the more potentially disturbing they can become (see diagram below).



With the exception of *Jumanji*, the cartoons featured in the research were not appointment-to-view cartoons for the majority of kids. Mothers recognised this. However, the core viewers of action cartoons (5- to 7-year-old boys) counted a few of them as their favourites, for example, *Men In Black*, *Batman & Robin*, *Spiderman* and *Street Sharks*.

Those children who received the pre-placed tape with full length versions of *Batman & Robin*, *Jumanji* and *Men In Black*, could remember little of what they had seen, either good or bad. This seemed to be because they had not been engaged by the cartoons. Some of the younger children found the storylines in *Batman & Robin* and *Men In Black* complicated and hard to follow, while the girls found them simply boring. *Jumanji* was liked much better. They could recount more of what had happened in this cartoon, perhaps because it has an on-going storyline. Showing clips of the cartoons, rather than full-length versions, did not appear to affect children's judgements. Most of the children were familiar with all the cartoons shown in the study, with the exception of *Reboot* which was the longest clip shown.

Younger children (those aged 7 to 8 years) take in the 'here and now' when watching cartoons. They pay more attention to images and music than to the text/storyline. If there is a huge amount of dialogue in a cartoon most of it goes over the heads of younger viewers.

Older children have a greater ability to relate the story to real life and therefore can feel uncomfortable with some of the more life-like cartoons. This is particularly the case if they are able to relate what is going on to themselves, as might happen with children being kidnapped. If they are unhappy with what they are watching they will turn over or switch off. This is a function of children growing up and understanding their world, rather than a direct effect of action cartoons.

Previous children's television research has shown differences in socio-economic class. For instance, lower socio-economic groups are less strict about what their children can and cannot watch, and about them watching programmes such as soaps, *The Bill*, *Casualty*, etc. In this study, however, socio-economic status did not have a bearing on reactions to action cartoons, either between children, or between mums. This is because mums do not watch cartoons with their children. They are largely unaware of the different kinds of cartoons available, and so tend not to set rules about which ones their children can and cannot watch.

There were no strong differences found between cable/satellite homes and terrestrial-only homes. Although the children with cable/satellite channels probably watch more cartoons, and talk about a wider range, their tastes are no different from those with just terrestrial television. Their lists of favourites are virtually identical. This is not surprising, given that cartoons that used only to be shown on the cable/satellite channels are now broadcast on terrestrial channels, for example, *Rugrats* and *The Simpsons*.

APPENDIX A – DETAILS OF FIELDWORK

The fieldwork was conducted during January 1998. The interviews were carried out by Sue Chambers, Nicki Karet and Neil Samson from Broadcast Research Ltd.

Chart One

THE SAMPLE
8 x 1½ hour groups with children aged 5 – 9 years (by school year)
8 x 1¼ hour paired depths with children aged 5 – 9 years (by school year)
4 x 1½ hour groups with mums of children aged 5 – 11 years
A family group session consisting of two families each with two children between 5 – 9 years
All the children were viewers of cartoons
The mums groups were recruited to have either sat/cable or terrestrial TV only

Chart Two

KIDS INTERVIEWS	
Kids Groups	Kids Depth
1 Boys – Age 5/6; ABC1; Orpington	1 Boys – Age 5/6; C1C2D; Leeds
2 Girls – Age 6/7; C1C2D; Edgware	2 Girls – Age 5/6; C1C2D; Orpington
3 Girls – Age 7/8; C1C2D; Orpington	3 Boys – Age 6/7; ABC1; Orpington
4 Boys – Age 8/9; ABC1; Edgware	4 Girls – Age 6/7; ABC1; Leeds
5 Girls – Age 5/6; C1C2D; Altrincham	5 Girls – Age 7/8; ABC1; Edgware
6 Boys – Age 6/7; ABC1; Oldham	6 Boys – Age 7/8; C1C2D; Edgware
7 Boys – Age 7/8; ABC1; Altrincham	7 Girls – Age 8/9; ABC1; Orpington
8 Girls – Age 8/9; C1C2D; Oldham	8 Boys – Age 8/9; ABC1; Edgware

Groups 1, 3, 6 and 8 were all pre-placed with a video containing full-length versions of three of the cartoons used in the study. These were:

- *Batman & Robin*
- *Jumanji*
- *Men In Black*

Chart Three

MUMS GROUPS				
1	Eldest child 5 - 7	ABC1	Terrestrial	Orpington
2	Eldest child 7 - 9	C1C2D	Cable/Sat	Edware
3	Eldest child 9 - 11	ABC1	Cable/Sat	Oldham
4	Children 7 - 9 but with older siblings	C1C2D	Terrestrial	Altrincham

Fieldwork was carried out in January 1998

APPENDIX B – ACTIVITY DIARIES

Examples are given here of Activity Diaries for Saturday and any weekday. The Activity Diary for Sunday was the same as that for Saturday.

Saturday Diary

Saturday	Tick what you did	Were you at	If you were
Before Breakfast	Watching TV..... <input type="checkbox"/>	Home <input type="checkbox"/>	Playing on computer/ games consol were you.....
	Playing own made-up game..... <input type="checkbox"/>	Friend's house... <input type="checkbox"/>	By yourself <input type="checkbox"/> With friend <input type="checkbox"/>
	Playing on computer/games consols <input type="checkbox"/>	Outside..... <input type="checkbox"/>	With brother or sister <input type="checkbox"/>
	Playing sport..... <input type="checkbox"/>	At relatives..... <input type="checkbox"/>	With mum or dad <input type="checkbox"/>
	Watching video..... <input type="checkbox"/>		Watching TV or videos.....
	Playing a musical instrument..... <input type="checkbox"/>		By yourself <input type="checkbox"/> With friend <input type="checkbox"/>
	Painting / Drawing / Making something..... <input type="checkbox"/>		With brother or sister <input type="checkbox"/>
	Listening to music..... <input type="checkbox"/>		With mum or dad <input type="checkbox"/>
Reading..... <input type="checkbox"/>			
Breakfast	Reading..... <input type="checkbox"/>	Home <input type="checkbox"/>	Playing on computer/ games consol were you.....
	Watching TV while having breakfast..... <input type="checkbox"/>	Friend's house... <input type="checkbox"/>	By yourself <input type="checkbox"/> With friend <input type="checkbox"/>
	Listening to the radio..... <input type="checkbox"/>	Outside..... <input type="checkbox"/>	With brother or sister <input type="checkbox"/>
		At relatives..... <input type="checkbox"/>	With mum or dad <input type="checkbox"/>
			Watching TV or videos.....
			By yourself <input type="checkbox"/> With friend <input type="checkbox"/>
			With brother or sister <input type="checkbox"/>
			With mum or dad <input type="checkbox"/>
Morning	Watching TV..... <input type="checkbox"/>	Home <input type="checkbox"/>	Playing on computer/ games consol were you.....
	Playing own made-up game..... <input type="checkbox"/>	Friend's house... <input type="checkbox"/>	By yourself <input type="checkbox"/> With friend <input type="checkbox"/>
	Playing on computer/games consols..... <input type="checkbox"/>	Outside..... <input type="checkbox"/>	With brother or sister <input type="checkbox"/>
	Playing sport..... <input type="checkbox"/>	At relatives..... <input type="checkbox"/>	With mum or dad <input type="checkbox"/>
	Watching video..... <input type="checkbox"/>		Watching TV or videos.....
	Playing a musical instrument..... <input type="checkbox"/>		By yourself <input type="checkbox"/> With friend <input type="checkbox"/>
	Painting / Drawing / Making something..... <input type="checkbox"/>		With brother or sister <input type="checkbox"/>
	Listening to music..... <input type="checkbox"/>		With mum or dad <input type="checkbox"/>
	Reading..... <input type="checkbox"/>		
	Outside in garden..... <input type="checkbox"/>		

Saturday	Tick what you did	Were you at	If you were
Lunch	Reading <input type="checkbox"/>	Home <input type="checkbox"/>	Playing on computer/ games consol were you.....
	Watching TV while having lunch <input type="checkbox"/>	Friend's house <input type="checkbox"/>	By yourself <input type="checkbox"/> With friend <input type="checkbox"/>
Afternoon	Listening to the radio <input type="checkbox"/>	Outside <input type="checkbox"/>	With brother or sister <input type="checkbox"/>
	Watching TV <input type="checkbox"/>	At relatives <input type="checkbox"/>	With mum or dad <input type="checkbox"/>
Afternoon	Playing own made-up game <input type="checkbox"/>	Home <input type="checkbox"/>	Watching TV or videos.....
	Playing on computer/games consols <input type="checkbox"/>	Friend's house <input type="checkbox"/>	By yourself <input type="checkbox"/> With friend <input type="checkbox"/>
Afternoon	Playing sport <input type="checkbox"/>	Outside <input type="checkbox"/>	With brother or sister <input type="checkbox"/>
	Watching video <input type="checkbox"/>	At relatives <input type="checkbox"/>	With mum or dad <input type="checkbox"/>
Afternoon	Playing a musical instrument <input type="checkbox"/>	Home <input type="checkbox"/>	Playing on computer/ games consol were you.....
	Painting / Drawing / Making something <input type="checkbox"/>	Friend's house <input type="checkbox"/>	By yourself <input type="checkbox"/> With friend <input type="checkbox"/>
Afternoon	Listening to music <input type="checkbox"/>	Outside <input type="checkbox"/>	With brother or sister <input type="checkbox"/>
	Reading <input type="checkbox"/>	At relatives <input type="checkbox"/>	With mum or dad <input type="checkbox"/>
Afternoon	Outside in garden <input type="checkbox"/>	Home <input type="checkbox"/>	Watching TV or videos.....
		Friend's house <input type="checkbox"/>	By yourself <input type="checkbox"/> With friend <input type="checkbox"/>
Afternoon		Outside <input type="checkbox"/>	With brother or sister <input type="checkbox"/>
		At relatives <input type="checkbox"/>	With mum or dad <input type="checkbox"/>

Saturday Diary, continued

Saturday	Tick what you did	Were you at	If you were
Evening meal	Reading..... <input type="checkbox"/>	Home..... <input type="checkbox"/>	Playing on computer/ games console were you.....
	Watching TV while having dinner/tea..... <input type="checkbox"/>	Friend's house..... <input type="checkbox"/>	By yourself <input type="checkbox"/> With friend <input type="checkbox"/>
	Listening to the radio..... <input type="checkbox"/>	Outside..... <input type="checkbox"/>	With brother or sister <input type="checkbox"/>
		At relatives..... <input type="checkbox"/>	With mum or dad <input type="checkbox"/>
			Watching TV or videos.....
			By yourself <input type="checkbox"/> With friend <input type="checkbox"/>
			With brother or sister <input type="checkbox"/>
			With mum or dad <input type="checkbox"/>
Evening	Watching TV..... <input type="checkbox"/>	Home..... <input type="checkbox"/>	Playing on computer/ games console were you.....
	Playing own made-up game..... <input type="checkbox"/>	Friend's house..... <input type="checkbox"/>	By yourself <input type="checkbox"/> With friend <input type="checkbox"/>
	Playing on computer/games console..... <input type="checkbox"/>	Outside..... <input type="checkbox"/>	With brother or sister <input type="checkbox"/>
	Playing sport..... <input type="checkbox"/>	At relatives..... <input type="checkbox"/>	With mum or dad <input type="checkbox"/>
	Watching video..... <input type="checkbox"/>		Watching TV or videos.....
	Playing a musical instrument..... <input type="checkbox"/>		By yourself <input type="checkbox"/> With friend <input type="checkbox"/>
	Painting / Drawing / Making something..... <input type="checkbox"/>		With brother or sister <input type="checkbox"/>
	Listening to music..... <input type="checkbox"/>		With mum or dad <input type="checkbox"/>
Reading..... <input type="checkbox"/>			

Saturday Diary, continued

WEEKDAY				
(WRITE IN DAY)	Tick what you did	Were you at	Tick everyone you were with	
Before Breakfast	Watching TV.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	Home..... <input type="checkbox"/>	Playing on computer/ games console were you.....
	Playing own made-up game.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	Friend's house..... <input type="checkbox"/>	By yourself <input type="checkbox"/> With friend <input type="checkbox"/>
	Playing on computer/games console.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	Outside..... <input type="checkbox"/>	With brother or sister <input type="checkbox"/>
	Playing sport.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	At relatives..... <input type="checkbox"/>	With mum or dad <input type="checkbox"/>
	Watching video.....	<input type="checkbox"/>		Watching TV or videos.....
	Playing a musical instrument.....	<input type="checkbox"/>		By yourself <input type="checkbox"/> With friend <input type="checkbox"/>
	Painting / Drawing / Making something.....	<input type="checkbox"/>		With brother or sister <input type="checkbox"/>
	Listening to music.....	<input type="checkbox"/>		With mum or dad <input type="checkbox"/>
Reading.....	<input type="checkbox"/>			
Breakfast	Reading.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	Home..... <input type="checkbox"/>	Playing on computer/ games console were you.....
	Watching TV while having breakfast.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	Friend's house..... <input type="checkbox"/>	By yourself <input type="checkbox"/> With friend <input type="checkbox"/>
	Listening to the radio.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	Outside..... <input type="checkbox"/>	With brother or sister <input type="checkbox"/>
			At relatives..... <input type="checkbox"/>	With mum or dad <input type="checkbox"/>
			Watching TV or videos.....	
			By yourself <input type="checkbox"/> With friend <input type="checkbox"/>	
			With brother or sister <input type="checkbox"/>	
			With mum or dad <input type="checkbox"/>	
After Breakfast	Watching TV.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	Home..... <input type="checkbox"/>	Playing on computer/ games console were you.....
	Playing own made-up game.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	Friend's house..... <input type="checkbox"/>	By yourself <input type="checkbox"/> With friend <input type="checkbox"/>
	Playing on computer/games console.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	Outside..... <input type="checkbox"/>	With brother or sister <input type="checkbox"/>
	Playing sport.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	At relatives..... <input type="checkbox"/>	With mum or dad <input type="checkbox"/>
	Watching video.....	<input type="checkbox"/>		Watching TV or videos.....
	Playing a musical instrument.....	<input type="checkbox"/>		By yourself <input type="checkbox"/> With friend <input type="checkbox"/>
	Painting / Drawing / Making something.....	<input type="checkbox"/>		With brother or sister <input type="checkbox"/>
	Listening to music.....	<input type="checkbox"/>		With mum or dad <input type="checkbox"/>
Reading.....	<input type="checkbox"/>			

Weekday Diary

		AT SCHOOL			
(WRITE IN DAY)	Tick what you did	Were you at		Tick everyone you were with	
After School	Watching TV.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	Home	<input type="checkbox"/>	Playing on computer/ games console were you..... By yourself <input type="checkbox"/> With friend <input type="checkbox"/> With brother or sister <input type="checkbox"/> With mum or dad <input type="checkbox"/>
	Playing own made-up game.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	Friend's house.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Playing on computer/games console.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	Outside.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Playing sport.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	At relatives.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	Watching TV or videos..... By yourself <input type="checkbox"/> With friend <input type="checkbox"/> With brother or sister <input type="checkbox"/> With mum or dad <input type="checkbox"/>
	Watching video.....	<input type="checkbox"/>			
	Playing a musical instrument.....	<input type="checkbox"/>			
	Painting / Drawing / Making something.....	<input type="checkbox"/>			
	Listening to music.....	<input type="checkbox"/>			
Reading.....	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Evening Meal	Reading.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	Home	<input type="checkbox"/>	Playing on computer/ games console were you..... By yourself <input type="checkbox"/> With friend <input type="checkbox"/> With brother or sister <input type="checkbox"/> With mum or dad <input type="checkbox"/>
	Watching TV while having dinner/tea.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	Friend's house.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Listening to the radio.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	Outside.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Evening			At relatives.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	Watching TV or videos..... By yourself <input type="checkbox"/> With friend <input type="checkbox"/> With brother or sister <input type="checkbox"/> With mum or dad <input type="checkbox"/>
	Watching TV.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	Home	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Playing own made-up game.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	Friend's house.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Playing on computer/games console.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	Outside.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Playing sport.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	At relatives.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Watching video.....	<input type="checkbox"/>			
	Playing a musical instrument.....	<input type="checkbox"/>			
	Painting / Drawing / Making something.....	<input type="checkbox"/>			
Listening to music.....	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Reading.....	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Weekday Diary, continued

APPENDIX C – INTERVIEW SCHEDULES

Children's Interview Schedule, p1

ITC - Discussion Guide

Kids Groups/depths

Warm up first:-

- ~ who they are
- ~ brothers/sisters
- ~ what they have been doing today etc.

Main discussion

Hobbies & other activities

- ~ what do you like doing after school?
- ~ favourite games, toys, activities?
- ~ do you prefer playing inside or outside?
- ~ which games do you play?
- ~ who do you play with most?
- ~ what do you do on your own/with friends/siblings?
- ~ do you have a computer at home?
- ~ what kind is it?

Children's Interview Schedule, p2

~ are you allowed to use it on your own?

~ who do you play with?

~ what do you use the computer for?

~ favourite computer games, and why?

-PC

-Consoles

-Internet etc.

~ when do you play on the computer?

~ which comics/magazines do you read?

~ best titles at the moment and why?

~ when do you read magazines?

~ when do you get them?

~ do you have any other hobbies

- brownies, guides, cubs etc.

- sport clubs

- music etc.

~ when do you do these activities?

- in school

- sports centre etc.

- ~ who with?
- ~ which are your favourites and why?
- ~ what do you play in the playground at school
- ~ favourite games
- ~ who do you like playing with and why?
- ~ do you ever pretend to be someone from TV when playing?
 - a cartoon character?
 - do you /your friends ever get hurt when playing these games?
 - if so how and why?
 - does it matter?
- ~ if so who and how do you play?

Background on TV watching

- ~ favourite programmes, cartoons and other programmes at the moment?
- ~ favourite channels at the moment and why?

- ~ when do you watch TV
 - go through the day
 - morning
 - after school
 - before bed
 - weekend viewing etc.
- ~ do you watch more/less at weekends?
- ~ do you have a TV. In your bedroom?
 - If so how often do you watch it?
- ~ what kind of programmes do you watch in your room?
- ~ where do you prefer watching TV and why?
- ~ who decides how much you watch?
- ~ who controls the TV remote?
 - does this vary?
 - if so how?
- ~ when do you watch?
- ~ who do you watch with?
- ~ any programmes you are not allowed or do not like watching? Why?

~ who stops you or does not allow you to watch these programmes?

~ have you ever watched these programmes anyway?

~ If so where were you?

~ are there any programmes that scare you, upset you

-why?

~ do you ever watch the news?

- does it ever make you unhappy?

- why?

Cartoons

~ which cartoons do you watch?

~ when do you watch them, how often?

~ what are your favourite cartoons & why?

~ what is it about cartoons that you like?

~ any cartoons you don't like & why?

~ are there certain cartoons for boys/girls?

- ~ which are the best channels for cartoons and why?
- ~ old cartoons vs. new cartoons - (do they know the difference if so which are better and why?).
- ~ are there any cartoons you're not allowed to watch? If so which ones?
- ~ why are you not allowed to watch these?
- ~ are there any cartoons that you ever find 'scary', frightening or that you don't like watching?
- ~ who are goodies, who are baddies?
- ~ what is the best way to get rid of a baddie?
- ~ is it okay to hurt/kill a baddie?
 - if so why is it?

(find out what scary means to them and if it is at all linked with cartoons).

Mapping exercise using the video grabs

- sorting spontaneously into any criteria they like/ dislike, ones that are alike and why. Let the children lead this

Then we will look at the 3 video tapes

- ~ if they like it, why/why not?
- ~ what they think of it?
- ~ are there any parts that are really good/bad and why?

(Looking for negative and positive words, actions, let the children take the lead and talk freely when watching and afterwards to get a feel of how they relate to the cartoon and any effects watching may have. It is important here that the moderator does not lead the discussion too much otherwise he/she may "put words into their mouths". If you want me to explain this further please give me a call).

Sum up thank and close

ITC - Discussion Guide

Mums group

Warm up first:-

- ~ who they are
- ~ brothers/sisters
- ~ what they have been doing today etc.

Main discussion

Hobbies & other activities

- ~ what do your children like doing after school?
- ~ favourite games, toys, activities?
- ~ do they prefer playing in side or outside?
- ~ which games do they play?
- ~ who do they like playing with the most?
- ~ what do they play on their own with friends/siblings?
- ~ do you have a computer at home?
- ~ what kind is it?

Mothers' Interview Schedule, p2

- ~ are your children allowed to use it on their own?
- ~ who do they play on the computer with?
- ~ what do they use the computer for?
- ~ do you know their favourite computer games,
 - PC
 - Consoles
 - Internet etc.
- ~ when do they play on the computer?
- ~ which comics/magazines do your children read?
- ~ when do they read magazines?
- ~ when do they get them and who gets/pays for it?
- ~ do your children have any other hobbies
 - brownies, guides, cubs etc.
 - sport clubs
 - music etc.
- ~ when do they do these activities?
 - in school
 - sports centre etc.
- ~ who with?

~ do they have favourites and why?

Background on TV watching

~ do you know which are your children's favourite programmes, cartoons?

~ do you know what their favourite channel is?

~ how much TV do they watch?

~ who decides how much they watch?

~ who controls the TV remote?

~ when do they watch?

~ who do they watch with?

~ do you ever watch with them?

- If so when and what do you watch?

~ differences during the week/weekend

- especially Sat/Sun mornings

- If not watching TV what are you doing at these times (going to Church?!!)

~ do they watch more/less at weekends?

~ any programmes they are not allowed or do not like them watching?

Cartoons

- ~ which cartoons do they like watching?
- ~ when do they watch them, how often?
- ~ do you know their favourite cartoons & why?
- ~ do you ever watch cartoons with them?
 - if so which ones
- ~ what role do cartoon play in your child's life?
- ~ are there any cartoons you prefer your child/children not to watch?
 - if so why?
- (probing for bad language, violence, copycat effect etc).
- ~ do your children ever get upset when watching cartoons or TV in general?
- ~ do they ever watch the news?
 - if so do they react/get upset?
 - when?
- ~ do your kids ever act out cartoons?
 - which ones?
 - how?

- ~ do your kids ever discuss goodles/baddies?
- ~ how do they react to the way problems are resolved in cartoons?
 - violence etc.
- ~ Is violence OK against 'baddies' in cartoons?

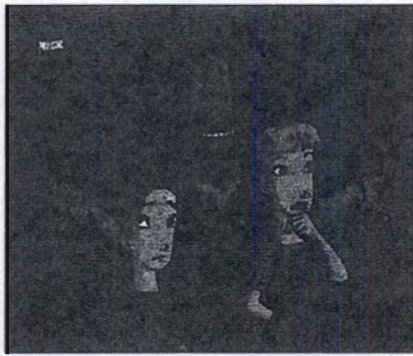
Then we will look at the 3 video tapes

- ~ If they like it, why/why not?
- ~ what they think of it?
- ~ are there any parts that are really good/bad and why?
- ~ what they think their kids would think
- ~ would they allow their child to watch these?
- ~ If not why not?

Also here as with the children we will let the mums take the lead to discuss anything about the cartoon that they like/dislike, or that concerns them.

Sum up thank and close

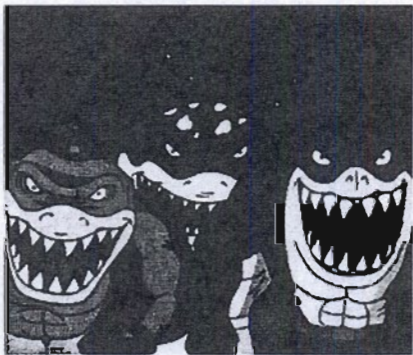
APPENDIX D – IMAGES FROM THE TWELVE ACTION CARTOONS



Jumanji



X-Men



Street Sharks



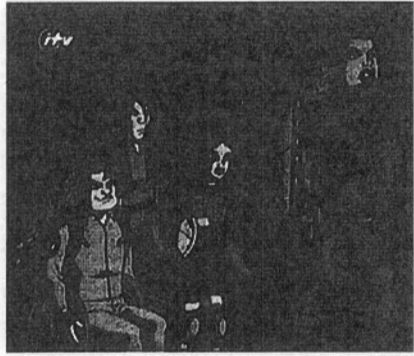
Earthworm Jim



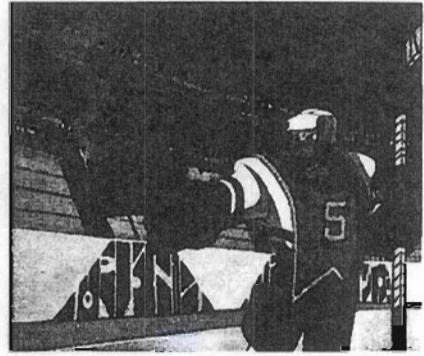
The Adventures of Batman & Robin



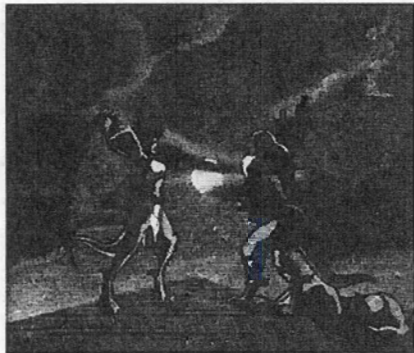
Men in Black



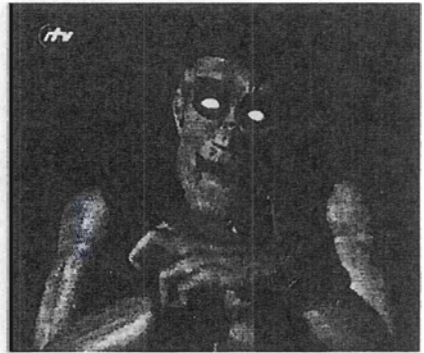
Extreme Ghostbusters



Mighty Ducks



Gargoyles



Reboot



Spiderman



The Incredible Hulk