

THROUGH THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE:
THE EFFECTS OF FICTIONAL VISUAL MEDIA CHARACTERS ON
CHILDREN'S SOCIAL COGNITIVE LEARNING



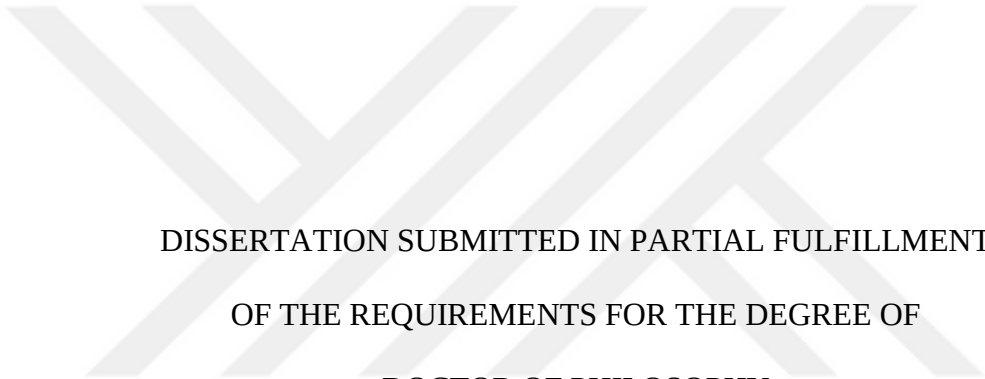
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BY

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PLAGIARISM

I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.

11.08.2021

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ABSTRACT

This research focuses on the effects of the fictional characters that are presented in the visual media, mainly television, on the social cognitive learning of children between the ages 6-9 from an anthropological perspective. First part of the research was conducted in Mehmet Akif Ersoy Primary School in Ataşehir, İstanbul, and second part was conducted in an English course in Ataşehir for children between the ages 6 – 14 during 2019 Fall Semester. For the theoretical background, the literature on globalization, media anthropology, media studies and sociology; and for the Analysis of the effects of fictional characters on children and their behavior Social Learning and Social Cognitive Theories were utilized. Presenting the methodology, and field experience in a self-reflexive manner, the findings are presented and analyzed through the given theoretical perspectives. In conclusion, this research, by presenting the examples and analysis, claims that the fictional characters in visual media are quite effective on the social cognitive learning of children, and calls attention to the importance of present and future researches of the media and children relationship.

Key words: Anthropology, Media, Social Learning Theory, Social Cognitive Theory, Children, Visual Media, Television, Fictional Figures, Media Anthropology, Media and Children

ÖZET

Bu araştırma, televizyon temel alınarak, görsel medyada sunulan kurgusal karakterlerin 6 – 9 yaş aralığındaki çocukların sosyal-bilişsel öğrenimi üzerindeki etkilerine antropolojik bir bakış açısıyla odaklanmaktadır. Araştırmanın ilk kısmı İstanbul Ataşehir Mehmet Akif Ersoy İlkokulu’nda, ikinci kısmı ise İstanbul Ataşehir’de 6 – 14 yaş aralığındaki çocuklara yönelik bir İngilizce kursunda 2019 Güz Döneminde gerçekleştirilmiştir. Araştırmanın teorik altyapısı oluşturulurken küreselleşme, medya antropolojisi, medya çalışmaları ve sosyoloji edebiyatından; kurgusal karakterlerin çocuklar ve onların davranışları üzerindeki etkisi analiz edilirken Sosyal Öğrenme Kuramı ve Sosyal-Bilişsel Kuramdan faydalanılmıştır. Kullanılan metodolojiyi ve elde edilen saha deneyimini özdeşünümsel bir biçimde ortaya koyarken, bulgular yukarıda bahsedilen kuramsal bakış açıları kullanılarak sunulmuş ve analiz edilmiştir. Sonuç olarak bu araştırma çeşitli örnekler ve analizler üzerinden görsel medyada sergilenen karakterlerin çocukların sosyal-bilişsel öğrenimi üzerinde büyük bir etkiye sahip olduğunu ortaya koymakta ve medya ile çocuk ilişkisinin günümüzde var olan ve gelecekte kullanılabilecek araştırmaların önemine dikkat çekmektedir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Antropoloji, Medya, Sosyal Öğrenme Kuramı, Sosyal Bilişsel Kuram, Çocuk, Görsel Medya, Televizyon, Kurgusal Figürler, Medya Antropolojisi, Medya ve Çocuk

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Problem

The main purpose of this study is to analyze the effects of fictional characters presented in visual media on children's social cognitive learning from an anthropological perspective. The visual media, mainly the medium of television, is focused on for its capacity of being exposed to, even unwillingly in numerous situations and its central place in children's lives, compared to other forms of media. Therefore, the objective of this research is to determine the effects of the fictional characters that are presented in the visual media on children's social cognitive development from an anthropological perspective. Social and cognitive functions are focused mainly to analyze the modeling process and its influence and effects on children.

Social and individual effects are both taken under observation as they are quite intertwined when it comes to the modeling process and its effects on children's lives and their development. Social environment holds a crucial role in child development. (Bandura & McDonald, 1963) Although school, clubs, friends and family are all good examples of a social environment, today's world has an important addition to the list; media. Among several forms of media, visual media holds a crucial role (Vossen, Piotrowski, & Valkenburg, 2014). The use of social and visual media in everyday life increases with each passing year, and the effects on social and cultural parts of people's lives increase with it. Technological advancements, especially in the field of daily media consumption mediums such as mobile phones or personalized computers bring change to the daily routines of people, social and individual. New ways of communication laden with original styles of emotional expressions in specific formats

like texts or message delivery programs, and “emoji” can be considered an on-point example on this subject. This chain reaction, with its own digital ecosystem, generates new opportunities, platforms, discussion groups and important personas with its own digital eco system. The ability to listen to music on a smart phone brings a variety of applications, or programs to the lives of the consumer that creates its own ecosystem. Style, list, listener and follower groups, famous users and favored musicians are all parts of this new experience. Thus, one single advancement creates a ripple effect that touches not only the social, but the cultural areas of life as well.

Children too are exposed to this advancement, as expected. Smart boards in schools, television and computers at home, mobile devices and visual media platforms in every part of their lives from social activities to the electronic billboards in the streets. Even though researches concerning the effects of the media in children’s identificatory, cognitive and emotional development are still ongoing as the media advances (Johnson, Cohen, Kasen, & Brook, 2007; Obel, et al., 2004), major results can be simply listed as; loss of skills in empathy, lack of communication with family, hardships in social communication with peers, setting their concept of what is “normal” to what they see in the visual media, adopting the behaviors and perspectives of the figures they see as role models. (Tobin & Henward, 2011; Bandura A. , 1969). These crucial aspects of child development and acculturation, as well as the formation of the social and individual persona, puts emphasis on the role and effect of the media from social, cultural and developmental perspectives.

1.2 Aim of the Research

The main objective of this research is to conduct a field research on the effects of visual media on children’s social cognitive learning and its effects. The main focus

is centered on the television and its products since it's the most common medium among different income groups. Main question of the research is “do fictional figures that are presented in the visual media affect the social cognitive learning of the children between 6-9 years?”. The research is limited within a certain place and time period, therefore reflect the results gathered of that specific time and space. It aims to provide a micro example that can be applied to a macro version to gather a more detailed data on the topic.

In order to conduct a clearer and more manageable research, the limitations were set to the figures that are presented in the visual media, and their effects on aforementioned aspects of children's lives. Due to the extensive range of the effective areas, there are several different theoretical perspectives that can be benefitted from in this research. However, to be able to set a main perspective and limit the framework of the theoretical analysis, Albert Bandura's “Social Learning Theory” and “Social Cognitive Theory” are used as the main theoretical perspectives to focus on the effects of the television on the modelling process of the children. Research aims to apply the Social Learning Theory and Social Cognitive Theory to the anthropological media studies and conduct an analysis of the gathered data to determine the effects of the figures from the visual media on social cognitive learning of children between 6-9 years of age.

1.3 The Structure of the Thesis

Thesis is divided into three different main chapters. Introduction part deals with the problem, aim of the research and the theoretical framework. The theoretical framework is included in detail to provide fundamental theoretical knowledge of the field and to familiarize the reader with the previous prominent works on the topic.

“Cultural Globalization and Visual Media” depicts the effects of the global media on the culture, and individual to an extent. It sets the tone of the work and establishes the first (theoretical) part of the anthropological perspective. Second section of the theoretical framework extends the anthropological perspective to the mass media and includes the previous works conducted on the subject as examples and guides. As first two parts of the thesis deals with the necessary anthropological, as well as sociological theories, third part solely deals with the theories of Albert Bandura.

Social Learning Theory is detailed in the third section to familiarize the reader with the necessary pedagogical as well as psychological terms, and theories, as their existence is crucial to the work itself. Although Bandura’s theories might be added to the methodology, as their function is to analyze the gathered data and comment on them, they are added to the theoretical framework to form a unity in the chapter. All the necessary theoretical, as well as literary information are presented in the theoretical framework.

Second chapter, Methodology, includes the methods used in the thesis, as well as the personal experiences, and perspectives of the writer to establish self-reflexivity in the process. First section of the chapter deals with the pre-field issues as well as the personal experiences and mistakes of the researcher. Field is also included in this chapter, including two fieldworks and surveys that were conducted in the field. In order to keep the self-reflexivity intact, the field is presented without theoretical analysis, but includes researcher’s personal opinions at the time. As the inclusion of the theoretical analysis shapes the presentation of the field to fit in an “analyzable” form, the theoretical analysis of the field is briefly presented in the last chapter of the thesis.

Last chapter of the thesis, Discussion, includes the analysis of the field in relation to the theoretical framework and discusses the overall results of the work and proposes possible adaptations, as well as applications of the research. As the necessary theories are cited in the theoretical framework, this chapter only includes in text citations that are necessary.

1.4 Theoretical Framework

1.4.1 Cultural globalization and visual media

There are various definitions of Globalization. These definitions vary based on the perspective and the field that such definition comes from. Nonetheless, the basis of globalization and its essence seems to remain steady from the cultural perspective. Robertson defines globalization as a concept of both “compression of the world” and “intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole” (Robertson, 1998, p. 1) . Robertson’s definition is based upon the spatial and temporal advancements that eased the previous hardships. The idea of a “global market” or “World Wide Web” can be presented as an example for Robertson’s arguments. Although there are different opinions on globalization being harmful or not in some cases, the main reason it is included here is to basically explain the cultural globalization and its relation to visual media in different areas. In his work “Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture” (Robertson, 1998), Robertson argues that globalization is not a new concept, only the debates on it are quite recent. He claims that globalization has been an active phenomenon for quite some time but not under the phrase “globalization”. As a noun, globalization is a quite recent term, but as an event it was already present.

As Lechner and Boli claims “globalization means different things to different people” (Lechner & Boli, 2015, p. 1). Their explanation of globalization, derived from different perspectives, is quite detailed as there are various factors based on cultural, economic, social or international elements. Even from a single perspective it would not be possible to call globalization a simple process, and consider its growth equal in every part of the world.

Globalization process is not a brief event that can be perceived evenly wherever it touches. Just as Robertson states, the globalization is “a very long, uneven and complex process” (Robertson, 1998, p. 8).

Implications of globalization vary from one perspective to other. Appadurai states that the globalization does not always necessarily imply “homogenization” or “Americanization”, as one of the main arguments of globalization is being “westernization”, or “Americanization” at some point (Appadurai, 1990; 2007, p. 17). From this perspective, the complexity of the phenomenon makes it impossible to label it as “westernization” or “Americanization” for Appadurai.

However, there are also opposite opinions on globalization being the continuation of western imperialistic expansion, especially when the cultural connotations are considered. According to Tomlinson, globalization also carries an assimilation process with it (Tomlinson, 1997). World trends are set by the major players/forces, and those who do not adapt tend to disappear from the global arena. As the major player in the global arena was America and western world at that point (and it can be argued that they still are the major players), it would be natural to see the process as “Americanization” or “westernization”. If the products are distributed by a single cultural force, and based on that cultural force’s perceptions of the world itself,

it would not be wrong to assume them as the “center” of the cultural globalization as they were the so called “pioneers” of the modern world. Yet, this point of view somewhat disregards the major results of globalization, and focuses on a single issue to determine the major source. The effects of cultural globalization, however, are not limited only with the center-periphery dichotomy.

Giddens define globalization as a “stretching process”. In his work “The Consequences of Modernity” he calls globalization “the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa.” (Giddens, 1996, p. 64). His focus is the spatial effects of globalization on the worldwide social relations and localities, which, is also crucial from the media perspective. Media in the age of globalization, considering the definitions of the concept itself, is one of the biggest contributors to linking communities without the hardships of spatial distance. Any event that occurs in a local area can be shared with the other parts of the world instantly. Thus, it can be argued that with the advancements in the communication, the possibility for cultural diffusion enhanced drastically. The interaction improvement affects every aspect of the daily life, as well as the interactions between cultures, sub-cultures and members of the same culture. The spatial and temporal distance loses its hampering effect with the developments in the communication technology. As a result, it can be argued that the communication is, as Giddens states, “intensified”.

The intensification process has other effects on the global world. Previous statements implied that the process of globalization is somewhat homogenizing, as it reduces down the spatial and temporal distances between cultures. However, this reducing down process is not only limited between the cultures but also among the

cultures itself. Therefore, while the globalization transparentizes and homogenizes the boundaries between cultures, it can also be argued that it somehow heterogenizes them too with the help of facilitated communication opportunities. Featherstone, as many others do, agrees that the globalization process is not a simple one. However, he claims that it is not only a fully homogenizing process but also a heterogizing one. Featherstone rather sees globalization as a process of two sides, homogenizing and heterogenizing, culturally integrating and culturally disintegrating (Featherstone, 1997, p. 1). This process is directly linked to the spatial distancing and re-distancing aspect of mass media and global cultural diffusion. The ability of mass media to link the societies creates an opportunity for cultural elements to travel through great distances and find themselves a home in different places. In a way the spatial distancing also results in heterogenized groups in different locations. Situations that would previously result in a process of assimilation might produce a heterogenized resistance with the reduction of spatial distance. A migrant, for example, might carry his own culture with him, find groups that share his culture or people from his homeland with the help of mass media and advancements in communications technologies.

From cultural perspective, with the help of mass media, globalization can be considered as a process of deterritorialization. A concept, cultural element or even a cultural trope that once linked to a place, can now be “unlinked” from that place and became unbounded. Giddens argues that, with new global relationships, society can no longer be seen as bounded (Giddens, 1996, p. 14). Surely mass media is the greatest contributor to this cultural-spatial unbounding process, as the distribution and circulation of mass media, especially in the digital age, caused a significant acceleration in “globalization” (Rantanen, 2005, pp. 28, 108). This

detritorialization of culture, however, shall not cause an idea of a “floating culture”, as culture is always reterritorialized in the end. Physical example for this can be given as special cultural districts in different locations, like Turkish District in Germany, Chinatown in USA and so on (Inda & Rosaldo, 2002, p. 11). A culture, previously bounded to a “specific” place, becomes detached and reterritorialized in a new setting. As previously stated before, it never stays floating. From a mass media perspective, it can be argued that the previously spatially bounded concept is detrterritorialized with the help of mass media, and communication advancements, as it removes the spatial challenges. Even time is not an issue when mass media is considered, thus it does not remove only spatial obstructs but also temporal ones in a way. There are several options, variety of visual media platforms that one can witness an event from far away, after hours or years it happens. Thus, the previously detrterritorialized cultural event/aspect/trope is reterritorialized in the end, creating a “global village” considering the media perspective (McLuhan, 1962; McLuhan, 1994, p. 93).

At this point it is possible to argue that mass media is a major player in cultural globalization and distribution of chosen cultural elements through the world. However, mass media is not a natural element that can be found naturally in global world, but a commercial force that aims to “sell”. Thus, mass media can be defined as a force that aims to improve its finances through the marketing of its products, that include/consists of cultural elements, to the global world. The elements that are chosen to be represented, including the way they are represented, therefore, is picked for their probable value of profit making. Schiller calls this situation as “transnational corporate dominion” (Schiller, 1991, p. 15). The global aspect of the corporate is not solely tied on cultural expansion but mainly focused on the financial profit. True, the similarity of culture might prove useful when dealing in products that are culture

specific, but in reality, it is rather easy to adapt the product to the culture to ease in the process and to reduce the reaction that might result in loss of profit. Big corporations like Coca-Cola, McDonald's, and Netflix are all adapting to the culture they intend to sell. Coca-Cola adjusts its cans and bottles to the situation like world cup, religious holidays, summer, winter, worldwide popular movie release (this alone is a great proof of the power of visual media) or any other event. Coca Cola Company produces several different advertisements in different styles, for different occasions; girls in bikini, playing volleyball with muscular males in summer, pious family portrait (appropriate clothing for the regional regulations) for Ramadan, or a happy Christian family around the dinner table for Christmas. For McDonald's it is the product that is specifically designed for a specific country/culture. In every country one can find a different product of McDonald's that is based on the cultural cuisine, even the side products change accordingly. All of these commercial representations also control the image of the represented group, therefore can control the stereotypes or social imaginations of the groups (Davila, 2002, p. 265). Same with Netflix as they produce shows based on the language and culture of a specific country, or sometimes a specific group. It is possible to find a culture/country specific show that is filmed in that country itself with native actors and actresses. But as mass media depends on self-sustainability through financial gains, it can be argued that every representation, and the way they are represented, is chosen by their profit value for the mass media corporation, since mass media is not an art form but a financial industry.

The arguments on media being an art form or not is discussed in Adorno and Horkheimer's essay in detail. In "Culture Industry" Adorno and Horkheimer state that the mass media does not pretend to be "art" and openly accepts that it is an industry with its actions. At this point it must be underlined that the mass media in 1947 was

mainly television, radio and newspaper. Therefore, the arguments Adorno and Horkheimer made are not all encompassing when it comes to today's worldwide media, or digital media forms and mediums (including internet). But their critique is on point, as television is still one of the most consumed media mediums, and the arguments they presented are still relevant at this point.

Adorno and Horkheimer's critique are based on the "the top not even trying to conceal their monopoly" (Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002, p. 94). Reason for this open acceptance resides in the relationship between the culture industry and the public attitude. The products are superficial and designed to promote cheap entertainment, therefore, to make profit. Adorno and Horkheimer claim that the attitude of the public is also a part of the culture industry. In relation to arguments of Baudrillard that there are only needs because the system needs them (Baudrillard, 1981, p. 82), it is possible to comment that the need is created by the industry itself, and the attitude towards it is produced in relation to that need. Therefore, the attitude of the public is a part of the industry, as the need and the satisfaction are both given by it. Especially the viewer's acceptance of the low-quality media products. Considering this, Adorno and Horkheimer stress that the behavior of the public is not an excuse for the culture industry, as it is a part of it (Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002, p. 95). As the demand is also created by the culture industry itself. Working for long hours, being bombarded with advertisements and the constant messages presented by the media products create the public desire to consume those products.

Adorno and Horkheimer state that the industry aims to sell its products and gain money. As a result, it is possible to argue that the products are directly designed for a specific purpose, to sell. In many cases the mass media products are similar in many aspects. Adorno and Horkheimer focuses on this sameness and comment that

the reason for this sameness is derived from the need to prevent audience from spending effort to experience entertainment, thus, improving the chance to achieve success (Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002, p. 104). For them, this low-risk high success scenario is created to provide an easy entertainment, which prepares the audience for the next day's labor, which in turn, prepares the audience for the next day's easy entertainment. And with the television, the imagery and sounds are constantly in motion, so that the audience continue to consume the media product in alertness, even when they are in distraught. Interestingly, even when the consumers are aware of the true nature of the product, they still feel the urge to buy and consume them (Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002, p. 118). And this consumption of the similarly styled product is what keeps the culture industry alive. With the mass media being able to reach vast places and across cultures, the transnational corporations hold the key to the culture industry and its distribution, Schiller's previously stated argument on "transnational corporate dominion" can be taken into consideration even years before the internet.

From this perspective, with the inclusion of mass media, transnational corporates seem to depend on the "consumption" of their products. As Baudrillard states, it does not start from an objective need (Baudrillard, 1998) but the need itself is created by those who produce and sell the product. According to Friedman, the act of consuming is an act of self-identification (Friedman, 1994, s. 103-104). Therefore, creating a need for consumption means also creating a need to use different forms of self-identification. In the most basic sense this means to create "new selves" for people to consume. Corporates in the globalized world create new selves, and with them, new culturally heterogenized and homogenized groups derived. In a way, it is possible to debate that corporations, which create products that are suited for different

types of customers, are also creating different types of consumers that are suited to buy their products.

As a result, those who hold power to produce and distribute also holds dominion over the cultural diffusion through products in the globalized world. The discussion of globalization being more than west and rest dichotomy (Inda & Rosaldo, 2002) does not mean that the west is not more powerful in this process. It means that the elements of the cultural representation, and receiving the message through the medium of mass media, is much more complex than a simple “give and take” process. With the aid of mass media, the power of the west became less rigid, as the “rest” is also able to produce its own content. It is highly debatable, however, if the “rest” is powerful enough to create matching content or distribute it to everywhere in the digitalized world. Still one thing is certain; the power of the mass media on cultural globalization is undeniable.

Mass media has contributed to the acceleration of the process of cultural globalization (Rantanen, 2005). But it is not a process that is done overnight, and it does not only consist of broad casting a message to the mass audience. The reception of the message is as crucial and effective as the message itself. Although the vitalism of it is accepted by different views, its nature and function are proved to be quite polemical. There are several approaches on how consumers receive, or decode this message as Stuart Hall states (Hall, 2006, pp. 163-164). Decoding, or receiving the message and “understanding” it, creates diverse results on different audiences. However, this argument on homogenized decoding is rather new in the field. One of the earliest arguments was the *Hypodermic Needle Model* that was based on the propaganda system that was popular in the beginning of 1900’s.

Hypodermic Needle Model is based on the direct and total delivery of the message to the consumer without any loss of meaning. In this model the consumer is open to any message or “direction” that is injected with the message. The consumer does not reject or adapt (in the sense of changing the meaning for himself) the message in any way, rather accept it and internalize it.

Second argument, *Glocalization*, has a different approach to the decoding process. Unlike the Hypodermic Needle Model, *Glocalization* does not assume that the message is “fully” delivered, or rather “internalized” by the receiver, but adapted according to the several variables of the receiving end. Instead of injecting the idea to the consumers, *Glocalization* focuses on the “localizing aspect” of the message and the adaptation process of the cultural tropes that are not present in that local culture.

Hypodermic Needle Model and Glocalization

Hypodermic Needle Model is created by Laswell in his work “Propaganda Technique in the World War” (Lasswell, 2013). This model considers the viewer as a passive recipient when exposed to a media content. The passivity of the viewer (or audience, as it encompasses any media medium) enables the message to be delivered exactly as it is intended without any resistance. Therefore, the receiver or the viewer absorbs the message in full and all of its effects with it. With the absorption of the message and its contents, the receiver is “directed”, as desired. This does not imply that the audience is just a puppet awaiting its commands. This model only assumes that the message is delivered as intended, without any major changes or adaptations.

As the Hypodermic Needle Model is based on the assumption of audience being passive, any indication of an active, or adaptive audience results in failure. Also, the model depends on the delivery through a single source of information, as it

must not be challenged by other sources of the same magnitude. In a global world with several different major media sources where the information streams tend to clash with others on a daily basis, the effectivity of the model diminishes entirely. It can still be argued that the model can be applied under specific circumstances, but its application to the daily media consumption stays ineffectual.

In contrast to the idea of direct absorption, Glocalization theory argues on the possibility of “adaptation” during the consummation process. When a mass media product is presented to the public, the main aim is to simply sell the product to the audience/viewers. The product, however, in part or as a whole might include elements that are foreign to the audience. Therefore, the audience “adapts” the foreign elements, or elements that are too different from their culture to be accepted into their own culture and life. This adaptation of the global product into the local mind is called “Glocalization”.

Glocalization is a combination of globalization and localization, both universal and particular, a hybrid (Robertson, 1998). Glocalization indicates an adaptation of the exposed element into the culture that is presented, which in a sense, results in a “hybrid” version. Same strategy is used by the big global corporations. Corporations that do business in a culturally different local market tend to create products that seem local to the area. A multinational corporation might (and usually do) have different products in different locations. The example of a transnational fast-food chain creating a sushi-burger for Japanese customers might be taken under consideration. Hamburger is not a Japanese cultural dish, but sushi is. Therefore, creating a product that includes both culture’s prints (although one might debate this being a fusion dish, but in spirit it is the same principle) is a great way to ease into the local market and create a culturally-friendly face. Adding a couple of local décor, utensils and music

enables the corporate to create an atmosphere of a globalized yet local place, a “specifically tailored place which shows respect and acceptance to customers culture”.

The above process is similar for consumers in the field of mass media. They consume the product, adapt it to their own culture or belief, and have a “glocalized” result in the end. However, if a media product is too different, it might be rejected altogether by the audience. In some cases, the difference between the cultural elements might be so vast that the native audience (the culture that the product is newly presented) might consider it as an attack to their culture and belief system. If a media product is too different, or include elements that might not be accepted by the receiving audience it might be rejected altogether or invoke a negative reaction in the audience. As a result, the product cannot enter the new market and gets rejected entirely. To avoid this problem, media corporations glocalize their own products. They tend to change the “heavy” cultural elements, turn them into small nuances or remove them entirely to create a product that feels more acceptable and understandable to the audience. “Pokemon Animated Series” is a great example for this glocalization process. USA version of Pokemon does not have the cultural and religious elements of the original Japanese version. This alteration of the different elements, or auto-glocalization¹, was carefully tailored by the company, before the presentation of Pokemon to the USA market (Katsuno & Maret, 2004).

It is crucial to underline that such auto-glocalization process does not prevent the glocalization in any way. The exposure to the media product, no matter how well tailored, might not entirely cancel out the audience’s adaptation process. The audience

¹ Although Iwabuchi calls this process “deodorizing” (Iwabuchi, 2004); like changing the heavy Japanese odor with a more American one, the process itself can be argued as an auto-glocalization as it localizes its own elements to be more presentable and acceptable by the desired, culturally different market.

interprets the message, media or cultural elements into its own cultural codes. In their research “Interacting With Dallas: Cross Cultural Readings of American T.V.” Liebes and Katz shows that the audience is not passive, but rather an active adaptive figure when it comes to decoding the message (Liebes & Katz, 1990). Related to that, Hannerz, in his work “Notes on the Global Ecumene”, argues about the transnational cultural goods being alien at first, but in the end, people will tinker them, tamper with them and use them in their own way. In the end what was alien will be local to some extent (Hannerz, 1989, p. 6). However, this does not alter the fact that the production of mass media products is under the dominion of media corporations. Wagnleitner argues that the American domination in the cultural arena, mainly in television programming and distribution, presents a danger of Americanization, or in Wagnleitner’s term “Coca-colonization” (Wagnleitner, 1994).

Glocalization of a media product enables the receiver culture to keep its base values and traditions in some sense. But this form of hybridity does not mean “core culture plus new cultural forms”, it means a new hybrid form that consists of both old and new. The elements of the new culture, with its values and traditions, can create a balanced hybrid only if both cultures are absorbed in an even way. But it is not possible to do this in reality. Hybridity in a personal level is different for each person, depending on the background of the person. And it is also connected with the exposition “dose”, more a person is exposed, more chance to tip the scales towards the culture that is presented by the media. There is no certainty, no exact formula to decipher this process beforehand. Theoretically one can claim that the cultural affection might not even occur, but in practicality there is always an accumulation, as media is both powerful and consistent in every part of people’s lives. Considering this, it is possible to argue that the concept of hybridization in real life seems to be

closer to the process of assimilation (Block & Buckingham, 2007, p. 22). Spivak's opinion on global inequality and its adaptation to the idea of media related cultural hybridity can explain this cultural balancing problem to an extent. Spivak states that if the difference is too great (either power or cultural difference) between the cultures, then the "different" culture cannot be "read" by the other (and there cannot be a proper exchange) (Spivak, 1987). As a result, the different culture, even in its own borders, is not represented properly. It is only represented from the dominant culture's perspective. As previously argued, the mass media production companies aim to sell their products. So, the representation of the "different" culture in a media product also aims to "sell" it to the audience. The main objective of this process is not the correct representation of a culture, but financial gain. Gupta and Ferguson also state this fact:

"The production and the distribution of mass culture - films, television and radio programs, newspapers and wire services, recorded music, books, live concerts - are largely controlled by those notoriously placeless organizations: multinational corporations. The "public sphere" is therefore hardly "public" with respect to control over the representations that are circulated in it."

(Gupta & Ferguson, 2002, p. 76)

As Gupta and Ferguson state, the representational aspect of the media is held by the big corporations. Representational aspects, or the ability to depict a representation of one's own culture is to have one's own voice in the worldwide media. The ability to change the representation for any reason, such as creating a more beneficial representation for the corporation, is to change the image of that group in a mass media product. Therefore, it means altering/changing the image in the eyes of the audience, to a point, as well. To explain further, in this argument it is the media that creates the image of the group, person or culture. The image might not be

even true to the original in some ways. As long as the dominion over the image persists, the image of the so-called group is decided by those who hold dominion over mass media. The spatial distance is still an issue in today's world, and the main element that overcomes the spatial distance is mass media. Therefore, mass media is the only source of information for many groups and places, and acts as the only representative of distant cultures and people. This cultural representation ability has the power to form a cultural image to the consumers of that media product, both foreign and native.

In conclusion, when the acculturative powers of television are taken under consideration (Gerbner & Gros, 1977), controlling the image and its representation in a popular mass media product becomes an issue that affects several areas of human life. In the “modern global world”, where the temporal and spatial differences are reduced to a minimum, mass media becomes a dominant force that shapes the human life, both actively and passively. As Ginsburg says: “We live in a world where people learn their own and other cultures through visual media.” (Ginsburg F. , 1994, p. 5) Therefore, any discipline that focuses on the cultural, social, economic or communicative aspects of human life should also focus on mass media studies and its effects, which brings the topic to the relationship between the mass media and anthropology.

1.4.2 Mass media and anthropology

“Are we to ignore the blaring radio in the kitchen or the stereo? Are we to ignore the four, six, eight and even ten hours per day that the family may watch television? Can we afford to ignore media's possible influence if we

wish to do a complete and accurate ethnography?” (Eiselein & Topper, 1976, s. 114)

Mass media is an integrated part of the human society. By definition, it consists of audial and visual massively distributed products that can reach massive audiences. From the printed newspaper, to the television program there are several different mediums and versions of mass media that people are exposed in their daily lives. With the advancements in technology, mass media can now be defined as any form of media including physical or digital form that is widely distributed. Although there are different definitions of mass media in anthropology, the basic elements are the same. Spitulnik defines mass media as the electronic media of radio, television, film, music, newspapers, magazines, popular literary products and she states that the mass media products are politically driven and linked to technological advancements (Spitulnik, 1993, p. 293).

Sarah Dickey, on the other hand, gives a definition that is based on its communicative aspects. She defines mass media as “communications media that are, or can be, widely distributed in virtually identical form” (Dickey, 1997, p. 413). Her definition does not include only television, radio, film and print forms, the forms that are most common when discussing “media” but also lithographic prints, advertising billboards and the internet (Dickey, 1997, p. 413). By definition, mass media has the ability to reach mass audiences, therefore its communication element creates a global network that can be considered as a penetrating force in people’s daily lives. As a major part of the global communication element, especially with its various forms, it is quite impossible to avoid exposure to mass media entirely.

As all publications that are aimed to be delivered to a type of audience can be considered as mass media products, anthropology too has, and should have, an important relationship with mass media. Anthropologists have been utilizing mass media, publishing their researches, writing articles in magazines, making documentaries and even attending to radio or television shows. Discipline's approach to media, at first, was solely focused on utilizing it for dissemination of knowledge. Eiselein and Topper, in their article "A Brief History of Media Anthropology" give a brief summary on anthropology and its utilization of media in several forms, including books, films, documentaries, television or radio shows and so on. Eiselein and Topper argue that, although anthropologists use media, most do not consider it as a valid area to study on. (Eiselein & Topper, 1976, p. 131). Therefore, the first approach to mass media by the discipline was severely limited and based on the utilization of media as a tool to publish and talk about the researches. The relationship, for some, is not established until the first studies on mass media were conducted.

The relationship between mass media and anthropology has always been there, but focus on mass media as a research topic, or a cultural element, was a polemical issue. As Eiselein and Topper stated, many anthropologists did not consider media as a "respectable" field. As the notion of mass media was quite new, and the mediums, mainly television, were seen as a tool that wastes time, and the approach to studying it was quite controversial. Hannerz even commented on this issue, said that the anthropologists thought studying on media as "gimmickry". Hannerz added his dislike towards this attitude by saying that it was unfortunate that the anthropologists thought media was not a proper field to conduct a research on as it could yield notable information (Hannerz, 1971, p. 186). Dickey claims that this attitude is based on the

mass-media and popular-culture connotation. Dickey's argument rests on the presumption of mass media producing lowbrow, or popular, culture, which has an air of non-intellectuality. However, Dickey also emphasizes that the productions of mass media also include several "high culture" products (primarily in print form). However, the implications of popular or lowbrow culture productions tend to make anthropologists shy away from the mass media as a topic (Dickey, 1997, p. 413). Therefore, the impression of mass media being academically not worthy creates/created a negative approach. At this point, it is important to remember that an approach like this would also prevent funding and academic acceptance of a researcher as most researchers were still dependent on their sponsors and universities. So, it was not only about the dislike of the topic but also about the funding and permissions given by the authorities.

Nevertheless, the importance of mass media as a cultural element to study on has not been overlooked by all scholars. Among the different approaches to the mass media, most of the earlier ones were solely focused on the theoretical perspective and disregarded the application of it. Yet, there were also few anthropologists that appreciated the importance of mass media and did already utilize it in their fieldwork. Major example to this might be Ruth Benedict's "The Chrysanthemum and The Sword" (Benedict, 2006).

As one of her most famous works, "The Chrysanthemum and The Sword" consists several important field observations on Japanese culture. Benedict herself emphasizes her usage of mass media products to gather more information on the culture and people which helped her research and improved her understanding of the Japanese culture and people (Benedict, 2006, p. 5). She studied several mass media products like movies, books, novels, magazines and others to gain more information

and a better understanding on the Japanese people. Another important work on media in the anthropology discipline would be Margaret Mead and Rhoda Metraux's "The Study of Culture at a Distance" which they dedicated to Ruth Benedict (Mead & Metraux, 1953). "The Study of Culture at a Distance" is a book that focuses on the media utilization when it is possible to study a culture in person. Although the media is considered as a secondary tool to study a culture, it is still considered as an important element. Book consists of several different theorists and their respectable theories that are relevant to the topic. Although the book does not consider media as a field itself to study on, it still created a focus on the topic and provided valuable theories. Gary Granzberg's study on the Algonkian Indians is another major example. His work focuses on the Algonkian Indian's relationship with the television, and their perception of it as a modern-day storyteller and a conjuring device, and argue on the necessity of the critical television viewing skills (Granzberg, 1982).

It is understandable as the media technologies were not advanced as it is today, and the exposure to mass media content was quite limited in comparison. After the invention of television and its widespread usage, the intrusion of mass media in people's lives, combined with the previous prowess of radio and print media, increased drastically. As the exposure increased, its effects on the audience increased with it. However, as one of the apparatuses Althusser depicts, mass media has an unignorable effect on the cultural aspects of the population (Althusser, 2006). Echoing Dorothy Zinn, the forms that are presented by the television themselves can be considered as potent apparatuses (including its naturalization of realism) (Zinn, 1994, p. 89). Yet, the effects are not limited with the perception of the domestic, or national territory, as the mass media also possesses the ability to form the image of the "other".

Ginsburg states that we live in a world where people learn about cultures, both their own and others, from visual media (Ginsburg F. , 1994, p. 5). This indicates an enculturation function of mass media in a regular basis, as well as an acculturation process if the mass media product is based on a different culture. Ginsburg stresses the importance of mass media on culture, especially when the mass media's ability to reach a wide audience is taken under consideration. It is even possible to assert that mass media, especially television, as it is still the most frequently used medium, has an immense amount of cultural influence on the public. It is even possible to claim that it is one of the main sources of public enculturation (Gerbner & Gross, 1976, p. 176). However, as mass media companies are "companies" and their major aim is to gain profit, this enculturation process with mass media creates a problematic situation as it is based on financial goals, not cultural ones. At least for privatized networks that have no ties with the relevant governmental branches that aims to preserve culture. Since the basis is financial, the desired results should also be financially profitable for the company. Therefore, the product should also be crafted (specifically) for this purpose. Mass media's ability to control the image via public enculturation and knowledge dissemination becomes a dire issue at this point. As a "massive" product by the global media, with the financial ability to reach mass audiences, and its ability to create and control, "the image²" (that is based on its own financial goals and desires) is quite dangerous. Especially when the mass media holds the power to create a monopoly on the image/s through the representation. Image, in this sense, means any representational aspect/s of the so-called group, event or culture in general. One can even argue that the most powerful media companies have the representational aspects of various cultures at their disposal, and they can bend it to their own desires

² Image of the represented culture, group, event etc.

(which are based on profit value). True, the temporal and spatial re-distancing enabled the people to learn about the world easier, faster, and in more detail than before. However, they are still bound to the medium to acquire the information, and that “medium” has the ability (and the tendency) to temper, remove or even change the information according to its own agenda, thus creating a reality that benefits itself. As a result, the “reality” is multiplied in this context as the information reaches to a vast majority and has the ability to create an alternate version if desired. To clarify it, one can quote Poster to explain the situation better: “The culture is increasingly simulational in the sense that the media often changes the things that it treats, transforming the identity of originals and referentialities. In the second media age “reality” becomes multiple” (Poster, 2000, p. 85)

This multiple reality also includes the multiple representation of different images. Poster’s argument can also be applied in different representations and their value of truth in the eyes of the public. As there are multiple mass media companies, even for a single medium like television, conclusively there are multiple realities. Furthermore, in this argument, the power of the company also means the power of the representation it creates/delivers to the audience. When the majority of the public believes in a single representation, it becomes much more powerful, and harder to change. Another important part here is that there is a link between media companies, business owners and even government agencies, therefore creating a massive and complex relationship between the mass media and the audience (and the reality). One should not oversee the fact that a huge mass media company is just a branch for a bigger one that usually includes several other media platforms and mediums. Therefore, reinforcing a message is possible, and easy, to create a more acceptable reality. Conglomerate power in the global arena is quite effective when this

enculturation and knowledge/information dissemination is considered from the public's point of view.

It is quite possible to apply Gramsci's argument on the behavior of the dominant class to depict a clearer picture for the ideological hegemony on mass media information control. Gramsci argues that the supremacy of a social group shows itself in two ways. First one is dominance, or any form of "subjugation" in any way. It can manifest itself as physical subjugation through force, or any other physical version of forceful subjugation. The second one, that is quite applicable at this point, is the intellectual and moral leadership, which means to control the intellectual and moral stand of the subjugated group for the benefit of the dominant group (Gramsci, 2006, p. 14).

The ability, or the tendency, to control the image is a form of subjugation through intellectual/moral means. Therefore, mass media can be argued to be a force, of domination, change or manipulation in cultural aspects, in addition to shaping the identity of the audience and the identity of the represented group (in the eyes of its audience). In other words, the reality becomes whatever the mass media corporation consistently presents. This multiple reality creation, considering the technological advancements and improvements in mass media in later years, has become a considerable force in acquiring information on culture, both for one's own and others. It is quite possible to claim that in contemporary mass media, screen media is the most effective type of medium as it includes television but as well as computers and smart phones. The ability to consume cross-culturally creates a possibility to a wider spread for the mass media companies. Smart televisions that enable users to browse internet/ media platforms, web sites that provide access to television channels and platforms that give access to television products create a multi-platformed "dish" for

the audience to consume the media products. Television is still the most frequently exposed medium, as it has become a part of the households in many countries for quite long and it is still the most frequently used medium to gather information (Trent, 2010, p. 74) .

It is possible to echo Fisherkerkeller's research on adolescents and television to depict the frequency of television exposure (Fishkerkeller, 1997). Fisherkerkeller claims that the television affects the identity building process of the adolescents who consume it on a regular basis (as she conducted her research on adolescent individuals). It is possible to argue that the exposure of the adolescents, as well as children, are not on the same level as the adults. However, as the main argument is the enculturation process, and as the enculturation through television is more effective during the earlier years, it is important that the mass media has the power to affect the formation adolescent's identity formation process. In addition to that, when the time of exposure is considered, children are the primary consumers of television, which makes them more susceptible to its effects (Newton, Elizabeth, & Woelfel, 1986). Television has already been in the lives of the children for quite some time, as there is an idea of a "family television" that is positively advertised by media companies to boost the image of the television and increase the consumption of it (Livingstone, 2009).

The invention of television created a distinctive change in the daily lives of the people; therefore, the lifestyle and daily activities has also changed accordingly. By controlling the information flow, and requiring minimal effort from the consumers, television rapidly became a primary source for information gathering and knowledge dissemination. It is true that there were, and are, different media mediums like radio, newspapers, or books. However, for the majority of the population television can be

considered as the primary source for information gathering as it has easier accessibility and entertainment capacity compared to the others. Bourdieu comments on this as;

“If I stress this point, it’s because everyone knows that a very high proportion of the population reads no newspaper at all and is dependent on television as their sole source of news. Television enjoys a de facto monopoly on what goes into the heads of a significant part of the population and what they think.”

(Bourdieu, 1998, p. 18)

Bourdieu’s statement depicts the importance of television in a society, as it plays an important role in shaping how people think, and as a result, act. Therefore, one can debate that television has become an important part of the social and cultural life, and claim that it is an important element to understand the social group that is exposed to it. Eiselein and Topper also underline that the media is an important part of culture and should be an important area of research if one wants to study the culture itself. It cannot be possible to understand man and culture without including media in the equation (Eiselein & Topper, 1976, s. 119). In addition to the enculturation abilities, mass media is an important part of intercultural visibility and representation. The ability to be represented in the mass media creates a global visibility, therefore giving a chance to have a voice of one’s own. Since the media production is quite expensive, this ability was only limited with the big mass media companies, or those who had the financial means to it.

However, with the advancements in technology and rapid expansion of mass media in several areas of life, the ability to produce media content became easier. People started to create their own videos, channels and even their own

servers/networks for different purposes. This gave a chance to present their own image, which is quite crucial especially for indigenous groups (Ginsburg F. , 2002). This made an additional content flow to the representation of indigenous cultures in mass media that sometimes challenged what mainstream media presented. However, the main representational force was, and is, still with the mainstream media as the big mass media corporations have the means to distribute their products more successfully than small indigenous groups or companies. Financial power in this context creates a considerable gap between any form of mass media source. Ability to reach greater audiences makes a big difference when it comes to “set the image” as it is the majority that decides the accepted, or mainstream, image of the certain group or individuals. Going global creates a distinctive power gap between big companies and small ones. However, the ability to dominate the local also creates a possibility to manipulate the image, even if it is in a limited area. It is impossible to define the best possible form of image control as it depends on the acceptance of the audience. There are various dynamics that should be taken under consideration when it comes to the audience’s acceptance of a mass media product. The topic itself requires a research on its own, therefore its involvement is quite limited in this research. However, its crucial to emphasize the mass media’s ability to control and manipulate the image, and the identity through it. Additionally, this manipulative power is not limited to a sub-group but also applicable to a much greater population.

Thailand is a great example for this; it was not possible to see the king in person before the implementation of a special channel which created an opportunity for the king to address his own people and for his people to see him. In 1996 Thai televisions broadcasted the king’s funeral that created a feeling of unity and

empowered the “Thai” image as a unified nation that mourns for the loss of their king together. Hamilton states the even as:

“During the spectacular funeral ceremony in Bangkok in 1996 for the present King’s mother, all television channels screened nothing else for the entire day. The half-million mourners dressed in black were “joined” by the rest of the nation as co-participants in a rite that effectively recovered and restaged Royal funerary rites of the distant past. Official participants were dressed in versions of costumes of earlier dynasties, and some were mounted on elephants that passed slowly through the streets. The television cameras were present throughout the ritual and able to provide both panopticon views of the entire space as well as intimate close-ups, such as the image of the King’s face as he personally lit the funeral pyre. Many commented that television meant people viewing in the far provinces had a much better view than did those at the actual event. The monarchy’s revival of various elements of “ancient Thai rites” has been part of an assertion of distinctive identity.” (Hamilton, 2002, p. 154)

Funeral being a great spectacle that can be viewed by television boosts Thai identity and image that respects the monarchy and traditions. This sense of involvement and familiarity, combined with the great spectacle, creates a national bond, a feeling of community through the event they experience. Now the people can see their king and hear him address to them directly, which enhances the bond between the king and its people by putting the king in the center of the national community, creating a sense of involvement by it (Hamilton, 2002, p. 163). With the

introduction to the specific royal channel, Thai media fortifies the national identity, creates an image for the King that is closer to his people and addresses them directly on the matters of the nation as well as draws an image of a unified people that respects the monarchy and traditions. Similarly, in 1989, Malaysian government restricted the pan-asian image in commercials, and only allowed actors that represented the Malaysian ethnic groups, to promote a national identity (Goldstein, 1986).

Traditional image in the mass media is another element that emphasizes its cultural effects. The traditional texts and mythologies are occasionally adapted to the screen. Purnima Mankekar, in her “Epic Contest: Television and Religion in India” work, researches on the television show “Ramayana” and its effects on the Indian people (Mankekar, 2002). Mankekar states that the show was liked by Hindu people as it contained religious content and delivered it with traditional narrative and representational strategies as well as with traditional music (Mankekar, 2002, p. 137). In a way, Ramayana fortified and represented the Hindu identity, and created a common work that had an accepted and approved content by all. Mahabharat was the second television show after Ramayana and both were well liked by the Hindu people. At first glance, both the religious aspects and the traditional qualities of these television shows seem to be a fortifying element between people in India. However, as Mankekar depicts, aside from the above qualities, the television shows also created a sense of “otherness” at the same time, even among the Hindu people. Non-Hindu people were naturally the others since the myths were based on Hindu religion. However, the depiction of Hindu women was quite problematic. Women were depicted as either disloyal or something that can be stolen, taken advantage of, and

cause “dishonor”. And non-Hindu people were demonized, shown as lustful people that steal the women and “dishonor” them.

“The political significance of representations of demonized others who steal or dishonor “our” women becomes clearer when we place them in the context of communal discourses on sexuality, according to which women must be protected from the other because their sexual purity is metonymic of the honor of communities. Therefore, “true men” must protect their women and avenge any assaults on them” (Mankekar, 2002, p. 139)

Mankekar points out that there were different views on the television show. On one hand the show was promoting Hindu religion and the depictions were well liked. And there were some that appreciated its contribution to Hindu movement in India at the time. On the other, the otherness that the show presented created a problem for those who were depicted as “others”.

Although Mankekar’s article contains several important points on politics, gender and the politics of the gender, the main focus in this research is the rift created by the mass media. Even among male Hindu population the show stirred up some trouble, as the show was based on the Northern version of the myth, and as a result there were arguments from the Southern part, claiming that the show was disregarding their version of the myth and promoting the Northern version (Mankekar, 2002, p. 146). In conclusion the television show Ramayana, watched by hundreds of thousands, created several conflicts even among the non-other audience (Mankekar, 2002, p. 146). As the television show was liked and accepted by several people, the image it depicted became the most well-known³. Therefore, those who acknowledged

³ As it can be seen in this case, television as the power to reinterpret the history, or myth, or configure the collective memory as it was seen in China example (Cai, 2016).

another version of the same religious content objected the image that was created, as it was not only creating a different image, but also suppressing their own version. There is also an issue of representation in the global scale as it promotes a single version of the myth, it creates the image accordingly.

As previously argued, mass media also has the power to “create” an image. Just as the religious programming on Ramayana caused problems in India, and among Hindu people, Indian films also caused turbulence in Nigeria, among Hausa people. Brian Larkin’s research on Hausa people in Nigeria shows that the media easily affects the social lives of people who are even not exposed to the content. Larkin, in his work “Indian Films and Nigerian Lovers: Media and the Creation of Parallel Modernities” focuses on the effects of Indian media and soyayya love stories on the Nigerian youth on marriage and expectations (Larkin, 2002a). In his research, Larkin states that the behavior and expectations of the young girls on relationship has shifted towards what they were exposed in films and books. Larkin interviewed several people, especially about the youth and marriage in the city Kano, and found out that the behavior of the girls has changed according to what they read in the soyayya books, and see in the Indian movies.

Larkin explains that the previous version of Islamic marriage would require a middle person for genders to interact, and the romantic aspect was not a major part of the marriage before. Soyayya books were focused on that issue and presented a different version of gender relationship, courting and idea of love, which would not be received well by the society before. Larkin states that all these depictions in the books are relevant to the social problems as they are derived from the writers’ own lives and experiences.

“Soyayya books dramatize the problems of contemporary sexual relations, criticizing forced marriages and the increasing material demands of both lovers and parents. Many authors claim a didactic purpose for their writing, arguing that they are educating young people and their parents against the problems that beset contemporary youth. The fact that many authors begin writing as a direct result of a personal experience underscores the close relation between the stories and perceived social problems”

(Larkin, 2002a, p. 363)

This natural behavior of informing the youth on the problematic aspects of the social life, as well as the aim to change these problems with the help of the publications clearly shows that mass media is used as a tool to affect the social life directly. As previously argued, there are results of mass media on the social life, but on situations like this, the major aim is to create a change in the social life with mass media. Just as Appadurai claims, in this context the fantasy is a part of the social practice and clearly enters into the fabrication of social lives (Appadurai, 1990, p. 21).

Larkin also explains the complaints from those who disliked Soyayya books, mainly young boys, about the behavior of the girls. Especially the behavioral change in girls, demanding more material things or expecting men to be more assertive like kissing her on the second date (which would cause so much trouble before, a girl would scream and call for her brothers) created problems for them (Larkin, 2002a, p. 370). The new behavior was not “applicable” to the traditional ways, and created a problem among the relationships of the youth. However, as it can be seen in the Larkin’s researches in Nigeria (Larkin, 2002a; 2002b), this opposition to the

traditional culture did not eliminate the media influence but changed the cultural behavior itself, which can be argued to prove mass media's effect on culture.

Lila Abu-Lughod's "The Marriage of Feminism and Islamism in Egypt" also focuses on the effects of mass media, television and television series in Egypt. She states that the most television series set a form of an ideal marriage, and what to expect from it, which is based on the accepted forms of society. However, there are also progressive ones that present a different perspective on those topics (Abu-Lughod, 2002a). Abu-Lughod's researches on Egypt proves that the mass media has the ability to set the parameters for the normal by shaping the expectations of the audience in different ways (Abu-Lughod, 2002b). As another form of manipulating the image, the television in this context aims to create an ideal image of marriage that is accepted by the "society". However, as previously argued, mass media has the representational and distributional control. As a result, the so called "socially accepted" form of marriage is what mass media repeatedly represents to its viewers presents. Mainstream image is created by the media as it has the power to create the image of the "normal" and the "marginal". This creation does not, however, mean that the media creates norms out of thin air. It fortifies the already existing ones that has potential or has achieved a "consensus" (Hall, 2005) to become the mainstream.

Although there are debates on the mass media's ability to create a national identity (Boyd-Barrett, 2005, p. 186), it is evident that the ability to repeatedly represent an image through content also brings the ability to fortify, or even create the idea of "normal" among the audience, as the severe exposure to similar media content creates an idea of "normal" for the exposed.

Despite the fact that there are different affiliations of mass media, it is important to keep in mind that it is a business and like all kinds of businesses, it needs permits to function, laws to obey and most importantly, it has to make profit. This dependency for governmental license has been used to control the media, and prevents its freedom according to the current ideology of the government. Media responds to this by lobbying political candidates, and forming political relationships (Herman & Chomsky, 2006, p. 265). Media also needs the support of its government to enter into different cultural regions.

“The Reader’s Digest, Time, Newsweek, and movie- and television-syndication sellers also depend on diplomatic support for their rights to penetrate foreign cultures with U.S. commercial and value messages and interpretations of current affairs.” (Herman & Chomsky, 2006, p. 266)

It must not be forgotten that mass media corporations usually have financial agendas, as their existence depends on it. When this aspect is considered, the ability to represent the image and set the “normal” makes mass media powerful and dangerous, as its agenda(s) might not be in favor of any other than its own self-preservation. Even in politically challenging situations or outright problematic political turmoil, mass media still holds its representational power, which might be argued as somewhat “problematic”. And as the media is closely tied to the governmental policies, its representation “might” be affected by the present government perspective at the time.

“Whilst it might be tempting to argue that such irrational forces play no part in modern political processes, recent experiences preclude any such sanguine conclusion. The treatment of Jews in Hitler’s Germany; the Moscow show-trials of the 1930s; the persecution of communists in the McCarthy era;

Powellism—all of these are contemporary instances which may be cited”
(Bennett, 2005, p. 295)

Bennet’s words depict a clear image about the power and function of the relationship between the mass media and politics. Considering that the examples Bennet gives are not from far ago, the direness of the situation can be seen clearly. Bennet’s example on news is another aspect of this politics-mass media relationship, as the news claim “neutrality” and “impartiality” in most cases. The symbiotic relationship of media and government creates a media that might not be “impartial” in some ways. And it is crucial to remember that there are other factors that might affect the impartiality of the news.

“In sum, the dominant media firms are quite large businesses; they are controlled by very wealthy people or by managers who are subject to sharp constraints by owners and other market-profit-oriented forces; and they are closely interlocked, and have important common interests, with other major corporations, banks, and government. This is the first powerful filter that will affect news choices.” (Herman & Chomsky, 2006, p. 266)

Herman and Chomsky focus on the “other” relationships a media company has and outlines the possibility of non-impartial perspective in those areas (as they are mutually dependent on each other). Every relationship media has, has the possibility to affect the impartiality and the political, as well as the financial perspective of the media company, therefore creating a “biased” information flow. When one includes the audience of the news into this equation, the result would be quite challenging. The range and the number of viewers that a television news program can reach is far greater than a newspaper medium can. The reliance of television for one’s source of

news is quite increased, and compared to newspaper or radio, it has an astonishingly greater audience which might perceive television as an impartial and trustworthy source. As an example, if a news network has a mutual relationship with a giant corporation, the possibility of that network to make a negative story about the corporation would be low. Therefore, when a crisis occurs, network might choose to “be blind” or “skip that part quickly” to avoid problems with its partner. There is a possibility that the network can take a stand with the corporation and try to clear the acquisitions.

“Perhaps more important, as the Annan Committee again reported, an increasing percentage of the public has come to rely on television as its primary source of news and, according to surveys conducted by Professor Himmelweit, both the BBC and ITN news bulletins are widely regarded as being more trustworthy and impartial than newspapers.”

(Bennett, 2005, p. 302)

Bennet’s statement defines the perceptive issues of the audience about the impartiality of the news. However, the dependency to the necessary government branches and most importantly to the sponsors/advertisers, creates a questionability on the impartiality of the mass media products, including the news itself. It is not new for mass media to follow the advertiser’s leads and create content according to their profit. An example for this would be the genre “soap opera” which was originally sponsored by soap producers that aimed to sell soap but transformed into a genre itself (Straubhaar, 2006, p. 690). Soap companies had sponsored for radio and television shows to increase their sales, and with the help of the mass media companies, and

advertisements, their success was far greater than anticipated. The product placement, as well as the advertisements between the shows (and during the shows) created an excellent opportunity for advertisement.

Soap opera, as a genre, reached a global audience and created its own style while promoting its own values, as it can be seen in previous examples. In Brazil, soap opera created a liberalized image for race and women issues (Kottak, 1991; Straubhaar, 2006). In the example of Brazil telenovelas, a name they use for soap operas, major issue was the American domination on the values that were presented. Although the actors were Brazilian, the values and lifestyle had strong American influence (Schiller, 2006). Mass media corporations aim to sell two things, the product it creates, television show in this example, and the product it advertises. Through the values mass media set, it creates a positive image of the products it advertises, not only with advertisements but also integrating them into its own products like television shows, movies etc.

In some cases, the mass media products are used directly to shape the behavior of the audience, as well as to engender a new economic area to sell the products by creating a demand for the supply. Ruth Mandel's work on *Crossroads*, a soap opera that was aired in Kazakhstan, is a great example for this.

"Crossroads aimed to teach economic literacy to the Kazakhstani population, incorporating issues such as privatization, banking, entrepreneurship, and market reform into the story lines. In addition to the transmission of these ideological messages, issues of ethnic pluralism and technology transfer also have been important components of the project. One aspect of the technology transfer effort was teaching the fine art of attracting corporate funding, because

the project was committed to raising matching private sector funds. Thus, British American Tobacco products (in the incarnations of Kent and Lucky Strike), Wrigley's gum, and Smirnoff vodka all found their way into the episodes via product placement from an early stage in the series." (Mandel, 2002, p. 214)

As Mendel's statement shows, the soap opera in the Kazakhstan example is just a tool to inform the people and sell them products they do not need or knew about. It is evident that with the soap opera, several corporations were aiming to infiltrate the Kazakhstan market and create a demand for the products with the help of the media.

Schiller claims that cultural domination today cannot be measured by being exposed to American programming only (Schiller, 2006, p. 297). Westernization is a better name for the televised domination, however even that is not the whole truth. There are several different non-western products that achieved trans-national success, as in Hindu cinema and Nigeria, or Chinese mytho-historical shows in Thailand (Hamilton, 2002, p. 164). The mainstream productions might still be based on the western values as the biggest companies are still western and the products, what they aim to sell are mostly westernized products as they did in the Kazakhstan's "the Crossroads" example. The central economic system is still dependent on the periphery, as the purchasing power of the periphery is required to "sell". Therefore center, in this context multi-national mass media production companies that dominates the field, cannot suffer periphery to lose its purchasing power altogether (Hannerz, 1989, p. 75).

Mass media is not always under the big corporations' control. There are different forms of it, as previously argued, indigenous media helps people to produce and spread their own image in their own truth. Especially with the help of the social media, producing any form of media got relatively easy. Indigenous media, migrant media that helps people to keep in touch with their "home", and with their culture in that sense, or platforms that present people with the opportunity to express themselves, to be heard. Benefits are nowhere limited to these, naturally. However, considering the nature of the mass media production, same rules still apply. Every platform is tied to another corporation, which is not always apparent to the consumer. The ability to reach a vast audience depends on the resources of the producers. Regulations, permits, and limits must be followed, as well as the dependency to the platform and its own rules. Ginsburg's Faustian Contract (Ginsburg F. , 1991) is applicable at this point. There are benefits but it is arguable that they can outweigh the negatives. Power still resides in big corporations.

Latest advancements in technology created new fields for the media. Previously single-platformed companies transformed into multiple platforms and devised new strategies to increase their profit or their control. The aim is to sell consumers to the advertisers, and in order to differentiate the consumer types, mass media is using different products, shows, platforms, games and other mediums to determine the best target consumer/audience for the advertisers. In other words, media corporations are selling, or marketing consumers to advertisers. Networks and advertisers aim to find appropriate customers to buy their products, therefore the major aim is to attract and categorize the customers to match them with the most opportune advertisements. This customer type is defined as "bona fide customers" by Meehan and explained as "Bona fide consumers had the disposable income, access,

and desire to loyally purchase brand names and to habitually make impulse purchases” (Meehan, 2002, p. 314). She argues that the more bona fide consumers watch the program, more valuable it is; therefore, the media company charges more for advertisements (Meehan, 2002, p. 315). More advantageous time slots draw more profit and, in this sense, the most attracting media products are presented in those time slots to get more profitable audience.

After the introduction of the internet, the world of mass media has adapted into the new terrain with new tactics. Jenkins, in his article, “Quentin Tarantino’s Star Wars?: A Digital Cinema, Media Convergence and Participatory Culture” explains this new digitalized mass media by giving examples from the Star Wars franchise. Short version of the media convergence is the idea of one media product flowing into several platforms/mediums, like Star Wars franchise having films, comics, books, video games and so on.

“According to the “high concept” logic which has dominated the American cinema since the 1970s, production decisions privileged films with presold content based on material from other media (“books”); simple, easily summarized narrative “hooks”; and distinctive “looks,” broadly defined characters, striking icons, and highly quotable lines. Initially, this “books, hooks, and looks” approach required the ability to construct ancillary markets for a successful film or television program. Increasingly, however, it becomes difficult to determine which markets are ancillary and which are core to the success of a media narrative. The process may start with any media channel, but a successful product will flow across media until it becomes pervasive within the culture at large – comics into computer games, television shows into films, and so forth.” (Jenkins, 2006, pp. 552-553)

This convergence of mass media production and consumption forms a link between multiple platforms/mediums which fortifies the products in several aspects and encourages the audience to consume it in various mediums, from television to comic books. Once the product becomes popular, it is adapted to different mediums to create more visibility and to continue to yield profit. This multiplicity is favorable, as it presents new content to the audience, therefore bringing more profit to the company. A movie that becomes popular might be adapted into a video game, comic book, book or television series and continue its journey towards new audiences.

This convergence also creates a possibility for the participatory culture by giving the audience a chance to use different platforms for different forms. Especially as internet became more and more popular, companies and studios started to shift multi-platforms more.

Presented by Jenkins, Lucas Arts is a great example for this. There are several different forms of Star Wars, movies, books, games, comic books and soundtrack albums. Participatory part of it can be seen on the internet as the studio has a specific place for fans to create and publish their content on the condition that the intellectual rights would belong to Lucas Arts when they are published in the forums (Jenkins, 2006, p. 559). Seemingly innocent, there are multiple layers under this opportunity. First of all, giving the necessary tools to produce content (game master mods for video games, video creators, music makers, game designing programs) creates an influx of people who wants to create their own story, therefore increases the audience. Those who create a product share it with their close circle, and advertise their own, and the main product, “for free”. Forums, new products, changed stories and products adapted into new platforms create an opportunity for the company to gather feedback from the audience and the chance to have original ideas without spending resources,

while increasing the visibility and creating an additional way of advertising. The effort invested by the audience also creates a flow of feedback for the producers in addition to other profitable elements. This makes mass media producers to be more attentive to the interests of the audience which studios use the internet to track and determine (Jenkins, 2006, p. 553). At this point, the feedback of the audience is utilized to create a content more likely to be popular with the public, and therefore to be sold thereto, creating a cycle that aims to improve their mass media consumption. This creates a relationship between the media and people, enabling them to join the production process as well as commenting on the products. At the same time shifting the image of the media corporation into a more audience friendly image that “listens” to its fan base and gives them “chance” to create. The relationship between the consumers and mass media is reciprocal in this sense. However, the mass media still holds the monopoly on representation and the ability to produce, adjust and disseminate as it wishes. Therefore, the qualities and the representation of the “image” is still under the mass media’s control.

The problem that lies in the image of mass media is not only the impartiality but the medium that presents it, as the audience obtains the knowledge about media, from the media. Therefore, the transparency is quite a problem. In addition to that, the technological advancements are represented quite positively. Martin-Barbero criticizes this attitude;

“Technology is made to appear spectacular and innocent at the same time. From the robot who is always so pleasant and good natured, or at least working with “the good guys”, we pass to the embellishment of war machines as beautiful as they are deadly. In the films with brilliant special effects and visual beauty or, in their cheapened version, in the thousand cartoons for

television, the “image of the new technologies” educates the popular classes of Latin America in a way that is most convenient for the producers of the technologies, a fascination with the new fetishism ” (Martin-Barbero, 2006, p. 654)

As with the various examples, the image presented here is controlled by the media, for the media, with the media. This self-beautification of media also attempts to form an inculpability for the technologies used, as they are presented as positive or neutral in the most basic sense. By technological advances media shifts its own image into a likeable one, and urged the audience to follow the advancements. Which, by chance, enables mass media to reach the audience easier. One might argue that there are various examples that depict mass media as manipulative and dangerous so the image of the mass media is not always positive or neutral. This would be a correct statement but the medium that depicts the image is a part of the mass media. Therefore, the equilibrium is not changed, and “power” still lies with the mass media. However, as the human agency is ever-present, the application of this power differs individually. In order to analyze the effects of media on different individuals (considering the individualities), to give a tangible explanation to the affection from the media, as well as the differences in its effects, Social Learning Theory and Social Cognitive Theory are presented in the next chapter.

1.4.3 Social learning theory, social cognitive theory and modeling

Albert Bandura’s Social Learning Theory proposes that the learning process, as well as the social behavior is closely tied to the observational and imitational process of the individual. Through imitation and observation and their results, the individual gains a preliminary knowledge on the possible behavioral outcomes. This

preliminary knowledge creates a conscious selection of the most profitable behavior/action for a given situation. The importance of the Social Learning Theory for this work rests on its observational and imitational focus and their functions on behavioral, as well as developmental processes. Bandura claims that previous ideas that base the major determinants on the needs, drives and impulses disregard the human responsiveness (Bandura A. , 1977, p. 2). The human responsiveness is a major element that regulates the human behavior.

A major discussion about responsiveness includes the idea of consistency. For Bandura, consistency is not the stable act as everyone thinks, rather it is quite unstable to behave in every situation and environment (Bandura A. , 1977, pp. 8-9). In social learning theory, Bandura explains the psychological functioning as a continuous reciprocal interaction of personal and environmental determinants (Bandura A. , 1977, pp. 11-12). It is the responsiveness of the individual that creates the behavioral tendencies. In other words, the interaction between the individual and his environment (including other people) shapes his behavior, as the individual aims to gain the most positive result for himself. Therefore, the responsiveness of the individual is the key element that shapes his behavior. In addition to that, the response function also creates a behavioral variety between individuals, as none of them share the “exact same” social and environmental setting⁴. For Bandura, the behavior is shaped by the accumulated knowledge that is gained by observation. In his terms, the observational learning is the key element for the social learning theory. Bandura states that the observational learning is crucial for both development and survival aspects of the human life as the trial-and-error method cannot be applied to every situation.

“For this reason, one does not teach children to swim, adolescents to drive automobiles, and novice medical students to perform surgery by having them discover the appropriate behavior through the consequences of their successes and failures. The more costly and hazardous the possible mistakes, the heavier is the reliance on observational learning from competent examples. Apart from the question of survival, it is difficult to imagine a social transmission process in which the language, lifestyles and institutional practices of a culture are taught to each new member by selective reinforcement of fortuitous behaviors, without the benefit of models who exemplify the cultural patterns.” (Bandura A. , 1977, p. 12)

The observational learning bypasses the majority of the perils of learning hazardous activities by providing competent examples from role models. Observing the role models also enables the observer to gain information on the results of the actions. Therefore, the observer gains the opportunity to observe the result of the action. Same applies to the cultural patterns as Bandura states. The ability to see the positive examples of the models that perform fortified actions encourages the observer to adopt that behavior in similar situations. Bandura calls this “vicarious reinforcement” as the reinforcement is made by someone else’s positive results.

Bandura claims that the individual is not born with the inborn repertoires of behavior, therefore they need to learn them by either direct experience or observation⁵ (Bandura A. , 1977, p. 16).

Most basic form of learning is the direct experience form, where the individual acts in a certain manner, and discards it or adopts it for the future occasions depending

⁵ Bandura states that the biological factors (genetics and hormones) also affect the behavior acquisition process, as they affect physical development (Bandura A. , Social Learning Theory, 1977, p. 16)

on the result of the behavior. Basically, the individual gathers information about behaviors and consequences, gains motivation through anticipation for future occurrences, and might reinforce the behaviors that produce desired outcomes if the individual is aware of the reinforcing function (Bandura A. , 1977, pp. 17-19).

Bandura states that most human behavior is learned through modelling (Bandura A. , 1977, p. 22). Therefore, apart from the direct experience, observational learning is a vital part of human development. There are four processes in observational learning: attentional processes, retentional processes, motor reproduction processes, and motivational processes (Bandura A. , 1977, pp. 24-29).

Individual's attention determines which models he will observe and learn from. Attentional processes are the first step of the theory as it would be highly impossible for an individual to learn from the model if he does not pay attention. The models chosen to pay attention differ from person to person, as some models do possess more intriguing qualities than the others. Models that are not pleasing for the individual are majorly ignored or rejected (Bandura A. , 1977, p. 24). Bandura states that some forms of modeling can hold the attention of people for extended periods, and therefore they are more advantageous. Mass media, especially television is a perfect example for this, as it can hold the attention of the observers from different age groups for a long duration, with a diverse selection of models (Bandura A. , 1977, p. 25). The effectiveness of television, especially its ability to capture the attention of the audience effortlessly, creates a process where the observer can learn from televised modeling easily, without any special incentives to do so (Bandura, Grusec, & Menlove, 1966).

Retentional Processes is linked with the memory function and the ability to remember the modeled behavior that was previously exposed to. Retention process is not only limited to the remembrance of the behavior. Imagery, either visual or verbal, and behavior correlation is also included in the process discussion (Bandura A. , 1977, p. 25). Either visual or verbal, symbolic coding is vital to the observational learning. Bandura states that the observers who use verbal or visual coding learn and retain the behavior better and that the rehearsal is also a crucial part of the process (Bandura A. , 1977, pp. 25-26). Individuals who practice the observed behavior mentally or physically are less likely to forget it, as they become more proficient and better at remembering it due to practice (Bandura & Jeffery, 1973, pp. 29-30). Bandura states that especially mental rehearsal is frequently adopted, as the physical imitation of the behavior might not always possible (Bandura A. , 1977, p. 26). The immediate imitation is easier as the behavior is guided externally at that instant. However, the delayed form of imitation requires a good retention function to avoid mistakes. Therefore, the retentional processes are quite valuable in the delayed form of imitation, as the individual relies only to his memory of the behavior to guide him (Bandura A. , 1977, p. 27).

Motor reproduction processes can be summarized as “converting symbolic representations into appropriate actions” (Bandura A. , 1977, p. 27). Bandura states that an analysis of the ideomotor mechanisms or performance is needed to understand this process. To reproduce the behavior, organization of the responses are required, which should be in accordance with the modeled patterns (both spatially and temporally). In the most basic sense, this process covers the physical ability to reproduce the behavior successfully. There must not be any missing components to achieve a successful reproduction. Bandura also states that the first attempts of this

reproduction process usually fail, and it is quite normal. However, by self-corrective adjustments through feedbacks, modeling and trial, individual successfully learns, and refines, the new behavior (or skill) (Bandura A. , 1977, p. 28).

In Motivational Processes, Bandura discusses the motivational aspects of observational learning. He states that people do not adopt every behavior they see. They adopt the ones that result in positive, or desirable outcomes for themselves, and avoid the unrewarding or punishing ones (Bandura A. , 1977, pp. 28-29). David Hicks state that this motivational aspect of the observational learning is a decisive factor in behavioral adoption, as people tend to reproduce behaviors that they find self-satisfying, and reject, or ignore the ones they disapprove (Hicks D. J., 1971, p. 146). Related to this motivational aspect, the limits of the individual should also be taken under consideration. Especially in children, the ability to imitate the modeled behavior is quite limited in the early years. Bandura discusses the developmental aspects of the observational learning and modeling process and states that children, in their early years, usually imitate instantaneously. As the child's cognitive competency improves, his ability to understand and imitate delayed modeling, as well as his ability to comprehend complex behaviors increase (Bandura A. , 1977, p. 30). Another important factor in children's imitative process is the motivational aspect. Children imitate if encouraged with positive results, however such imitation decreases when they see that others do not show interest regarding how they behave (or when they respond alike to both good and bad performances) (Bandura A. , 1977, p. 32).

Bandura states that "people guide their actions by prior notions rather than by relying on outcomes to tell them what they must do" (Bandura A. , 1977, p. 35). These prior notions are gathered through observation from models that perform the behavior. The individual observes the model's behavior, and its results, then adopts or

discards the behavior in relation to its result and its compatibility with the individuals own. Through reinforcement, the behavior observed is integrated and performed by the individual in appropriate situations, either instantly or in a delayed fashion. However, Bandura states that the role of reinforcement is rather an antecedent one, and not a consequent influence. The reinforcement is not “required” to have an observational learning, as once the capacity for observational learning is fully developed, the process becomes a continuous one. Reinforcing or informing the observer about the rewards would not affect the process in a major way (Bandura, Grusec, & Menlove, 1966; Bandura A. , 1977, pp. 37-38).

1.4.3.1 Models

Main function of the modeling influence is the transmission of information to the observer. The observer, in a way, hybridizes the information according to his previous data and personality. In the final stage observer adopts the final behavior and starts to mimic it. Modeling in this process holds an important place as it is the primary point of origin for the information. Model figures in the close environment are great examples, however Bandura stresses the rising influence of the mass media in symbolic modeling becoming dominant in observational learning. Especially the televised modeling is effective on both adults and children to acquire new forms and behaviors. He claims that future developments in mass media technologies may create more prominent role models than traditional ones (parents, teachers and other traditional role models) (Bandura A. , 1977, pp. 38-39). This is a cumulative process. People can only contact a small portion of the society in their daily lives, so the broad range of mass media modeling creates a common ground for information spreading. Bandura comments on this as:

“A major significance of symbolic modeling lies in its tremendous multiplicative power. Unlike learning by doing, which requires shaping the actions of each individual by repeated experience, in observational learning a single model can transmit new behavior patterns simultaneously to vast numbers of people in widely dispersed locations. There is another aspect of symbolic modeling that magnifies its effects. During the course of their daily lives, people have direct contact with only a small sector of the environment. Consequently, their perceptions of social reality are heavily influenced by vicarious experiences-what they see, hear, and read in the mass media. The more peoples' images of reality derive from the media's symbolic environment, the greater is its social impact.” (Bandura A. , 1977, pp. 39-40)

The influence of modeling does not only have the ability to spread the behavior but also the ability to alter the previously learned behavior (Bandura A. , 1971, p. 240). For example, the exposure to problematic models can alter the moral judgement of the observer. However, as previously argued, the observer does not instantly adopt the behavior but filter it. Therefore, the observer adopts different attributes of different modes, and creates a hybrid result in the end (Bandura A. , 1977, pp. 46-50). For developing children, the situation is somewhat different. The televised modeling presents different moral and behavioral examples, and therefore, to a developing child it becomes an important source of learning “what is acceptable and what is not” in the society (Bandura A. , 1977, p. 44). Nevertheless, the process of combining the influences and creating new amalgams still functions, and can be observed in situations such as siblings having different personalities (therefore having different behaviors). Although the influencing power of the model is not absolute and

flawless, it still has the ability to instruct, inhibit/disinhibit, facilitate, enhance stimulus and arouse emotions (Bandura A. , 1977, pp. 48-49).

Bandura states that there is a common pattern in diffusion of a new behavior⁶ in a society; “it is introduced by prominent examples, adopted at a rapidly accelerating rate, and it then either stabilizes or declines upon its functional value” (Bandura A. , 1977, p. 50). Mass media information exposure creates the first adopters of the behavior and therefore can be considered as a primary tool for behavioral and informational diffusion. Public displays are another important source, as it enables the observers to learn the behavior and its consequences. People either adopt or discard the behavior after observing the responses and consequences⁷. The popular behavior continues growing, and in the end loses its status-conferring value as it becomes commonplace. The cycle, after that, resets with a new idea or behavior (Bandura A. , 1977, p. 52).

1.4.3.2 Anticipation

Bandura states that the anticipation of probable consequences and the regulation of behavior accordingly are required for people to function effectively. (Bandura A. , 1977, p. 58). As most social situations require proper handling, and most of them are quite vital in modern life, the anticipatory functions of the individual are required to function properly if he aims to survive. As previously stated, humans interpret the stimuli, and do not simply and directly respond to it.

⁶ This pattern can apply to every kind of behavior. However, Bandura states that there is a greater time lag between widespread adoption of dissocial behavior and prosocial ones (Bandura A. , 1977, p. 55)

⁷ Modeling does not guarantee the popularity. Behaviors that are modeled might not become popular. Modeling only enhances the transmission of the behavior (Bandura A. , 1977, p. 54).

Through observation, people gather data, and through data they gain anticipation on situations and consequences they have not personally experienced. They regulate their behavior according to the data they gathered. Bandura explains the anticipation process;

“After people discern the relationships between situations, actions, and outcomes, they can regulate their behavior on the basis of such predictive antecedent events. They fear and avoid things that have been associated with aversive experiences, but like and seek those that have pleasant associations.”
(Bandura A. , 1977, pp. 58-59)

Bandura’s explanation not only explains the anticipation of an event but also the desire to seek an experience that is considered pleasant for the individual. This relationship between the anticipatory function and the related experience can passively direct the individual. Previous knowledge creates expectation, anticipation and desire to seek or avoid the oncoming experience. Thus, this function can also be considered as a guiding function for the individual. Bandura discusses this idea by providing an example with aversive experiences.

Aversive experiences create expectations of injury (physical or emotional), therefore it activates fear and defensive conduct. It does not matter that the experience is personally experienced, or vicariously⁸ learned, as it would invoke same defense mechanisms in the person and create a desire to avoid that experience. It is quite challenging to eliminate this defensive behavior. As once internalized, the individual would avoid that particular experience at all costs, therefore even the situation is

⁸ Learned by observing other people’s experiences. Vicarious experiences are the key elements of Observational Learning Theory.

changed and the danger is not present, he would not know it (Bandura A. , 1977, pp. 61-62).

Anticipatory functions can also trigger emotional responses in the individual as the emotions are linked with experiences, either personal or vicarious sort. As Bandura states, it is also possible to create this link between the stimuli and emotion through pictures, as James Geer did in his work⁹ “A Test of the Classical Conditioning Model of Emotion: The Use of Nonpainful Aversive Stimuli as Unconditioned Stimuli in a Conditioning Procedure.” (Geer, 1968).

Bandura states that emotional responses are also learned through observation. Personal experiences are not the only determinants as many fears are acquired from seeing others respond fearfully or get hurt. This vicarious learning from modeled behavior also encompasses the emotional approach to places, persons or things, as they create an anticipation of an emotion in the individual through vicarious experiences (Bandura A. , 1977, p. 65). For example, seeing others in anxious situations, failing or responding in fear to threats, invoke vicarious emotional learning in the individual, and provides future anticipatory knowledge for similar situations (actions, places, people etc.) (Bandura A. , 1977, pp. 65-66).

However, this vicarious emotional learning enhances if the individual can form an emphatic link between himself and the observed situation. Ezra Stotland gives an example on this emphatic anticipation as:

“The soldier who receives an injection may wince in pain; the other soldiers lined up behind him to receive their injections become anxious just watching him. The boss comes to work in an obviously good mood; his workers look

⁹ Geer stated that the sex of the subject was an important factor in his research, as there were profound differences between male and female responses to the stimuli (Geer, 1968, p. 155).

forward joyfully to an easy day. The other's emotion then acts as a kind of signal of what is about to occur to the observer" (Stotland, 1969, p. 274)

As Stotland states, the emotional arousal is enhanced if the observer can imagine himself in the same situation and experience the same negative stimulation. On the other hand, personal experiences and observed situations (vicarious experiences that are gathered through observation) are not the only factors for this behavioral adoption. Quality of the threat, depiction of the threatening figure in folklore and other illustrations, fearful parental modeling are all important factors that shape the anxiety of the individual, or even society (Bandura A. , 1977, p. 76).

It is also possible that the learning process might produce dysfunctional associations like coincidental association or inappropriate generalization. In coincidental association, individual forms a correlation between a stimulus and a behavioral consequence which only has coincidental value. This is a dysfunctional association as the correlation is purely coincidental and exists in individual's mind. Individual's unpleasant experience about the stimulus cements this association and becomes a general association for the individual. Just like the coincidental association, inappropriate generalization is a dysfunctional association that arises from the defensive behavior through over generalizing the stimulus-consequence correlation. Bandura discusses the example of a boy who is mainly afraid of rats (through pairing them with sudden noises) generalizes his fear towards any furry object (Bandura A. , 1977, pp. 77-78).

As previously argued, anticipation can be derived from personal or vicarious experiences. In vicarious experience, major importance is still on the modeling, as it determines if the behavior is observed (and therefore adopted) or discarded. Modeling

process has three important elements: characteristics of the model, attributes of the observer and the consequences of the behavior (Bandura A. , 1977, pp. 88-89).

Characteristics of the model deals with the image of the model; more prestigious models have a higher chance to be observed. As behavioral adoption requires observation, prestigious models have an increased chance of their behavior adopted by the observers (Bandura A. , 1977, p. 88; Lippit, Polansky, & Rosen, 1952). If the model represents a prestigious example, even only through symbolization like clothes or possessions, he is more likely to be observed and his behaviors adopted (his behaviors can invoke a change in others in several areas) (Lefkowitz, Blake, & Mouton, 1955).

Bandura states that “Those who lack confidence and self-esteem, who are dependent, and who have been frequently rewarded for imitativeness are especially prone to adopt the behavior of successful models” (Bandura A. , 1977, p. 89). The characteristics of the observer, just like the model, is a determining force in observational learning. Both model and observer characteristics are effective, true. Still the result of the behavior is the determining force that decides whether the behavior is adopted and reproduced frequently because it proves to be successful, or discarded because it proves to be unsuccessful or unsatisfactory. In the cases that the behavior is discarded due to unsatisfactory consequences, the model’s future influence will also be diminished, as the observer would not continue to perceive the model as successful and prestigious (Bandura A. , 1977, p. 90). Therefore, consequences can be considered as the key element in observational learning and behavior adoption.

1.4.3.3 Consequences

“Behavior is, in fact, extensively regulated by its consequences. Responses that result in unrewarding or punishing effects tend to be discarded, whereas those that produce rewarding outcomes are retained. Human behavior, therefore, cannot be fully understood without considering the regulatory influence of response consequences” (Bandura A. , 1977, p. 96)

Anticipation of the result is a determining element in observational learning. However, as Bandura argues, consequences are the main determinants in behavioral reproduction. Satisfactory consequences, observed or self-experienced, reinforces the reproduction of the behavior in future occurrences. Unsatisfactory ones are discarded, and as previous stated, model’s future influence is diminished. Bandura explains the consequences in three regulatory systems: external, vicarious and self-produced (Bandura A. , 1977, p. 97; 1991). Among these three, external and self-produced reinforcements are the most common ones, as external ones are basically the profits/rewards gained from the environment for the reproduction of the behavior, and self-produced ones are the ones that create satisfaction in the person without outside incentives. Vicarious reinforcement, on the other hand, can be considered as a major function in observational learning.

1.4.3.4 Vicarious reinforcement

“People can profit from the successes and mistakes of others as well as from their own experiences. In everyday situations numerous opportunities exist to

observe the actions of others and the occasions on which they are rewarded, ignored and punished. There are several reasons why consideration of observed consequences is critical to the understanding of reinforcement influences. Observed outcomes can alter behavior in their own right in much the same way as directly experienced consequences. As a general rule, seeing behavior succeed for others increases the tendency to behave in similar ways, while seeing behavior punished decreases the tendency.” (Bandura A. , 1977, p. 117)

Vicarious reinforcement or punishment is experienced through the behaviors (and results of those behaviors) of others. Bandura states that people have several opportunities in everyday life to observe the consequences of other people’s behaviors, and to learn from their experience. If the consequences are positive, individual adopts the behavior for future occasions, thus the behavior is reinforced vicariously. If the consequences are negative, or if the observed individual is punished for the behavior, the observing individual avoids reproducing that behavior in future occasions, thus the observer experiences the punishment vicariously. Vicarious reinforcement also applies in situations where the negative behavior goes unpunished. In situations like these, the behavior is reinforced for the observer, as the individual who performs the prohibited behavior suffers no negative consequences. In a way, the performing individual is rewarded, as avoiding punishment can be considered a reward in this situation (Bandura A. , 1977, p. 119). Vicarious reinforcement increases the tendency of the observer to behave in similar ways as the observed, and vicarious punishment reduces it. Still the motivational aspects are quite important, as direct incentives also drastically increase the tendency to adopt the behavior (Bandura A. ,

1977, p. 123). If the individual is reinforced both vicariously and directly, the tendency to reproduce the behavior is greatly increased and perseveres longer than those who experienced only direct reinforcement (Bandura A. , 1971, p. 123).

Vicarious reinforcement has five major functions. It informs the observer through the observation of the consequences, it motivates the observer to reproduce the behavior that has positive consequences, it enables the observer to experience emotional learning by vicarious experiences, it evaluates the behavior if the observer sees the behavior is rewarded, and it influences the observer as they see not only the consequences but also the manner models respond to the consequences (Bandura A. , 1977, pp. 125-127). Of course, vicarious reinforcement is not the only determinant as self-reinforcement and personal standards also play an influential role in the process. Personal standards and self judgement are effective in determining the success of the consequence, as higher standard is harder to achieve. Bandura states that children judge themselves according to the standards they adopt from the models, and reward themselves only if they successfully achieve those (Bandura A. , 1977, p. 134).

Bandura also states that children might prefer peer standards when conflict arises, as the adult standards are higher, and would produce less reward for children (Bandura A. , 1977, p. 135). Therefore, the modeling, again, becomes the major element in behavioral reproduction, therefore making vicarious experiences quite valuable.

Although the theory itself is still considered as crucial in psychology, the lack of the cognitive functions made it disregard the human agency in behavioral reproduction. In the later years Bandura himself expanded his theory and added the cognitive processes to include the human agency in his theories, and naming it Social Cognitive Theory.

1.4.3.5 Social learning theory, social cognitive theory, and mass media

In 1986, Bandura expanded his Social Learning Theory into a broader one; Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura A. , 1986)¹⁰. Sharing the same foundation with his Social Learning Theory, Social Cognitive Theory includes the cognitive processes to explain the human behavior. Acting as a bridge between the behavioral and cognitive perspectives, Social Cognitive Theory focuses on the human agency and the cognitive processes that acts as a medium between the external influences and behavioral results. In addition to the steps of the Social Learning Theory (SLT), Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) also focuses the self-efficacy and motivation, and distinguishes the acquisition and reproduction processes, as people do not reproduce every behavior they see or learn. In addition to the motivators in the Social Learning Theory, Social Cognitive Theory stresses the importance of self-motivators as a determinant in the acquisition and reproduction of the behavior (Bandura A. , 1986). The compatibility of the social and self-produced sanctions increases the possibility of the reproduction of the modeled/observed behavior (Bandura A. , 2001, p. 274). Self-efficacy is a core element of the Social Cognitive Theory, as the human's self-belief of their own capability affects the very process of acquisition and reproduction of the behavior (Bandura A. , 2002). Therefore, the process of learning is not mainly limited with the external influences, but also depends on the cognitive elements/processes of the individual (Bandura A. , 1986). Bandura states that the self-efficacy effects every step of the individual change, as people do not only act but also self-examine (Bandura A. , 1997). The cognitive aspects, therefore the human agency, becomes a determining factor of the acquisition and reproduction of behavior.

¹⁰ In several instances the names of both theories are merged and used as "Social Cognitive Learning Theory" to emphasize the usage of both theories and their differences in the analysis.

The importance of the Social Cognitive Theory for this research rests within its mass media applications. Although the theory is an expansion of the previous Social Learning Theory, Bandura also focused on the mass media and applications of the Social Cognitive Theory with it. Starting with the idea of a collective agency Bandura focused on the possible effects of the symbolic environment media presents, and its great social impacts on the individual's images of reality through symbolic modeling (Bandura A. , 2001; 2000; Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur, 1976). Through symbolic modeling, new ideas, values, behavior patterns and social practices started to be distributed rapidly into the global world (Bandura A. , 1986; 2001). This "electronic acculturation" (Bandura A. , 2001, p. 271), as it (was) rapidly increasing, has a great impact on the individual. However, it should not be forgotten that the adoption of these new ideas depends on the cognitive skills, preconceptions, and value preferences of the individual, as humans do not automatically reproduce every behavior, they observe¹¹. Although it is quite challenging to avoid the electronic acculturation, the adoption of the behavior depends on the individual. Still, this does not mean that the individual is completely unaffected.

Individual refrains from transgressive behavior due to two major elements; personal internal sanctions and social sanctions/repercussions. Bandura explains that people do not commit transgressive actions until they morally justify those actions. Bandura states that the media has the power to alter perceived social sanctions, through the portrayals of different conflicts and solutions (Bandura A. , 2001, pp. 276-277). At this point, the media's frequent presentation of aggressive behavior for solutions can be given as a prominent example for media's justification of aggressive

¹¹ Although personal agency is present in the Social Learning Theory, in Social Cognitive Theory it became one of the primary elements that affect the adoption and reproduction of the observed behavior.

behavior (Ball-Rokeach, 2009; Goranson, 1970). The increased portrayal of the aggressive behavior, and its positive solutions, affect the perception of aggression for the individual, and justifies the use of violence to achieve the desired solution. The media representations of the human conflicts are rather solved through physical aggression. In addition to that, the observer tends to identify¹² with the aggressor if the aggressor is successful, even if he dislikes the aggressors' attributes (Bandura & McDonald, 1963). Bandura states as:

In televised representations of human discord, physical aggression is a preferred solution to interpersonal conflicts; it is acceptable and relatively successful; and it is socially sanctioned by superheroes triumphing over evil by violent means. Such portrayals legitimize, glamorize, and trivialize human violence. (Bandura A. , 2001, p. 277)

As the individuals usually act accordingly when their actions are validated by authorities, media here acts as an authority by distorting the relationship between actions and their consequences, and sanctioning aggressive behavior to overcome conflicts (Milgram, 2009). People tend to act more injuriously when the responsibility is not only onto their shoulders, and diffused, (similar to behaving more violent against a dehumanized victim), therefore, the depictions in the media's symbolic world can be argued to affect the real human relationships in the real world (Bandura A. , 2001; Bandura, Underwood, & Fromson, 1975; Diener, 1977).

The effects of television are not limited with violence but also includes the representation of certain people. The stereotypes in the television world causes

¹² There is a distinct difference between the identification and the imitation. In imitation, individual reproduces certain behaviors in certain situations. However, in identification the individual adopts the diverse patterns of behavior, and/or meaning systems of the model (Kohlberg, 1963) (Bandura & McDonald, 1963).

misconceptions in a collective scale, as the heavy exposure to television's symbolic world has the ability to make the presented images appear real (Bandura & Bussey, 1999). The symbolic world of television is not only limited with depictions of violence or stereotypes, there is also the effects of the models that are presented. By exemplification, it is possible to manipulate people's behaviors, as the dominant forms of models have a huge impact on the social and individual behavior. Which is quite similar to the power of the prestigious models used in the advertisement industry to make people buy products (Lefkowitz, Blake, & Mouton, 1955; Bandura A. , 2001). In addition to these, it is important to remember that the reproduction of the behavior is not limited with what media presents. When the individual adopts the behavior, he is able to apply it to different situations even if he has never observed the model in the same situation (Bandura & McDonald, 1963). Therefore, the effects of the observed behavior reach onto different areas of the observer's life.

There are different claims on children's imitative faculties and their preferred models. Whether children imitate their peers (Bronfenbrenner, 1962) or adults (Hicks D. , 1965) are debated. However, if the model shares similarities with the observer or is prestigious and has desired qualities by the population (and the observer), the adoption of the behavior and its reproduction increases (Lefkowitz, Blake, & Mouton, 1955; Bandura & McDonald, 1963). Considering the television's modeling capacity, exposure to the televised modeling can be argued to function just as well as observing a real model. Although the children are quite susceptible to the effects of modeling (televised or non-televised) (Baer & Sherman, 1964), the power of the televised modeling is not only limited with children, but also includes adults, as they are also frequently exposed to it (Bandura, Ross, & Ross, 1963). Therefore, it is crucial to include televisions symbolic world and its effects on the individual, without

disregarding the functions of the cognitive capacities of the individual, which directly affect the identification with the model and the imitation of the observed behavior in various settings. As the main scope of these theories are presented to give a better understanding of the children and media relationship, it is also important to give an overall introduction to the current situation regarding the mass media and children.

1.4.4 Children and mass media

Childhood, in its modern understanding, is a relatively new concept. Until the second half of the eighteenth century, it did not exist (Valkenburg, 2008). Children were expected to do what adults do, like acting like an adult, dress like an adult, or consuming adult media products (Ariès, 1962). However, with the emergence of new ideas on the childhood, the notion was established with “the vulnerable child¹³” archetype. This archetype considered children as innately pure and good (Tabula Rasa) and in need of protection from bad influences. Until the twentieth century and the emergence of the mass media, this notion reigned supreme in some circles. It is crucial to keep in mind that the positivist perspective of children is quite limited, as it perceives children as lesser-adults (Valkenburg & Piotrowski, 2017, p. 12). The perspective that proposes “children being more capable than what traditional psychology offers” was used against the classical positivist perspective in several debates (Steinberg, 2011, p. 5; Hengst, 2001). In the twentieth century, the concept of miniature-adult emerged. Real life situations and problems were introduced into the children’s media, and children were started to be seen as “consumers” of mass media products. With this re-branding of children as consumers, the media that entered the

¹³ There is no universal concept of childhood, as it depends on the culture, or even the finances of the family children born to. As when “the vulnerable child” archetype was dominant, the working-class children continued their harsh lives, unprotected and unsheltered (Vossen, Piotrowski, & Valkenburg, 2014).

lives of the children became shaped by commercial concerns, advertisements and monetary goals.

The youth market is a formidable economic power (Giroux & Pollock, 2011). The diverse range of the consumers create a lucrative and vast market for the producers. The needs of the consumers in this market change drastically according to the gender or the age. Girls, for example, usually prefer media products that are based on the real-life circumstances, while the boys prefer fantasy-based settings and products. A cartoon that is loved and preferred by a five-year-old might be perceived as “baby-ish” and not liked by a ten-year old (Schneider, 1992). This diverse and formidable market creates a diverse and formidable commercialization. By creating children-specific shows and programs, producers also create a zone that is not controlled or regulated by adult supervision (Steinberg, 2011, p. 20). Adults are caricaturized as clueless fools, made fun of or depicted as careless parental figures in these zones (Seiter, 1993; Goldman, 1992). Through the distorted reality, like the depictions of foolish parents, the parents’ prestige is also destroyed (Schramm, Lyle, & Parker, 1961). As producers also know that the parent’s disapproval enhances the appeal for children of certain age, the objections from the parents are not always helpful to their case (Kincheloe, 2011). Ironically, while on one hand the children are seen as “something to protect”, on the other they are exposed to adult knowledge, cultural and political content in their “protected” zones (Cook, 2005). As Linn calls it, it is “the hostile takeover of childhood” (Linn, 2004).

Advertisements that are targeted for children do not only aim to make children “buy” but also has the power to make children “nag” their parents to spend more, buy more (Spiegel, 1998). The effects of the advertisements are quite serious as they (argued) “nudge” the youth to consume harmful products (American Academy of

Pediatrics, 2006). The exposure to advertisement is quite vast as an average fourth grade student would be exposed to (and in most cases memorized) around 300 brands (Rideout, Roberts, & Foehr, 2005).

Major problem is that the self-expression and identification are tied to the paraphernalia, and as a result, what a child, or parents, can afford to buy (Giroux & Pollock, 2011). Toys and other items became more and more important for children, as it affects their own self-image and expression (Schor, 2004). Children's desire to own more items increase as they identify themselves with the character more. The lack of the paraphernalia, on the other hand, lowers the self-esteem (Pugh, 2009). Therefore, the parents are forced to spend more and more. This process can be traced even in infants, as the parents themselves tend to buy media products that they think helpful. However, even with the most productive and positive products, the time for free play is reduced for some children as the media exposure takes its place (Ginsburg K. , 2007).

Through the self-expression, companies force parents and children spend more. The multiplatform brands and franchises create a large network of products. Steinberg claims that the Barbie is a good example for this "Kinderculture", as it has several different products (Steinberg, 2011). The Barbie herself has different attires, accessories and even pets that are all purchasable, with buying a brand-new Barbie every time. She states that although in its first years the accessories were sold separately, later trend is that if you want to buy a new clothing for your Barbie, you are forced to buy a new one. There is also the "ethnicity" issue, as if the person desires to buy an "ethnic" Barbie, he/she has to pay more than the regular one. When the identification with the character is kept in mind, a child from a different ethnicity requires to pay more to buy a Barbie of her own race/color. The identification for her,

therefore, costs more than others. However, it is not only limited with the “toy”, as the Barbie exists in several different platforms like cinema, cartoons, daily clothing, school items, books for different ages, these are all invaded by the character itself. This invasion creates a problem, as it also carries the company’s representation of reality and its cultural, as well as political views. Just like Disney.

Disney Empire, or “The Empire of Consumption”, is one of the biggest multi-platformed companies that has the biggest number of child consumers in the world (Cohen, 2003). From Baby-Einstein to Pixar Movies, cartoons in television or even The Marvel Franchise, Disney serves to all ages, to several countries. It is quite possible to say that it is a global company that globally produce several different mass media (along other) products. A global company like Disney has the power to infuse its political views¹⁴ into its products (even use them as propaganda), or remove the political, or cultural elements that it desires (Block & Buckingham, 2007). As the globalization is not only an economic phenomenon but also a cultural one, Disneyfication of culture brings its own challenges into the people’s lives. Pokemon was an event that aimed (and partly succeeded) to create a global culture among children, and even that had quite visible differences between the Japanese and USA versions (Ohmae, 1995; Tobin J. , 2004). Disney, on the other hand, is greater, more powerful and has the ability to invade every part of the children’s lives. Its dominance grants the power to shape the children’s self-expression and identification processes through the products they create. Keeping the Social Cognitive Theory and Social Learning Theory in mind, the effectiveness of Disney on the lives of the children is quite visible. The personal experience is mostly shaped by the dominant power (Grossberg, 1995). Children’s personal experiences, and through that many other

¹⁴ Walt Disney’s far-right political ideas and using his media products to do a propaganda has been outed and criticized several times before (Roth, 1996).

aspects of their cognitive and social lives, are shaped by the mass media they are exposed to¹⁵. And the television is the most common medium that is used.

Researches show that children and adults respond similar to the stimuli that grab their attention (Siegler, 1998). However, the effects of the stimuli are quite different when it comes to children. Major difference is the perception of reality, as the children's ability to distinguish fantasy from reality is not as structured as an adult (Valkenburg, 2008, p. 27). Children might still consider what they see in television as real, even if it is not. For example, researches show that many children, even between the ages of 9-10 believe the sitcom families are real families (Wright, Huston, Reitz, & Piemyat, 1994; Howard, 1998). Temporary experiences are transformed and processed into permanent behaviors, and guides for judgement with the help of symbols. In relation to that, it is evident that the symbolic world that television provides, as argued in the previous chapters, has a strong effect on the cognitive development of the children. Media affecting the violent behavior was already argued in previous chapters. The acquisition of negative emotional content, however, is not limited with violence. As children can acquire negative emotions towards other objects/beings through their parents' stories, they can also acquire them from televised content they are exposed to. In other words, it is possible for children to acquire phobias through a work of media (Hoffman, 2000). Of course, the individual qualities of the children are crucial in this aspect (Valkenburg & Peter, 2013). Otherwise, the media would only work as a hypodermic needle or a magic bullet, and just insert the message into the observer's mind. Quite the contrary, the interpretation

¹⁵ It is also important to mention the Cultivation Theory, which claims that the repeated exposure to the similar message may shape the perspective of the exposed person towards the media (Gerbner G. , Gross, Morgan, Signorelli, & Shanahan, 2002). This is a different and prominent theory in the field that requires its own research/perspective.

of the media symbols, and individual's own personal qualities is the main determinant in acquisition of cognitive and/or emotional content.

Rationally, if the negative effects can be acquired through media, so can positive ones (Fisch, 2017). It is possible to learn good behavior like altruism or forming empathy with a previously prejudiced group are all possible (Mares & Woodard, 2010; Wilson, 2008). Researches show that children who are exposed to prosocial content (even in video games¹⁶) show prosocial behaviors in some cases (Vossen, Piotrowski, & Valkenburg, 2014). There are also arguments that media use in the childhood help the school readiness of the child as well as improve the core subject knowledge¹⁷. However, the crucial argument rests on the content, as it is the major determinant. As the children identifies with the televised character, the behavioral effects are all depend on the representation or the quality of that character. Children can suffer fear from it, learn the bad behavior and correct their own, or acquire a behavior that they see rewarded. Through the paraphernalia children fortify their identification with the character, as the act of consuming has a direct effect on the identity formation (Kincheloe, 2002). It is argued (and researched) that acquisition of certain commodities might invoke changes in the behavior, therefore the merchandise has a great importance in this sense (Punch, 2007). The consumed programs affect the social standing of the child (or the individual). Products a person claims he consumes has a direct definitive effect on his perceived personality in his social circle (Buckingham, 1993). To this reason, there are occurrences where children watch certain shows to be included in the social conversation, being

¹⁶ Children who were already showing prosocial behavior also continue it in the virtual world, for example, social media (Festl, 2020).

¹⁷ There is also the problem that even in the products that are created to fortify positive aspects, time spend with screen media reduces the time for free play considerably as researches show.

perceived as “cool” or rejecting / hiding that they watch certain programs to keep up the face (Block & Buckingham, 2007).

Integrated marketing, multi-platformed media content and rapid advertisement of the merchandise create a great web of consummation in the lives of children. The potential positive effects of the media are quickly “balanced” with the profit-making goals of the companies. The ideologies of the companies are integrated into their media products, as well as their commercial concerns. On one hand children are seen as something to be protected from the adult life, on the other hand they are directly exposed to the adult content in their own “kid-zones”¹⁸ or by watching adult targeted shows¹⁹. Although the agency of the children is quite important, as well as the personal qualities of their character, the media still remains a prominent factor in the social and behavior development. From perception of the reality to the acquisition of behavior, mass media plays an effective role in the children’s lives (Shapiro & Lang, 1991; Shrum, 2009). There are several different perspectives that the media-children relationship can be focused and studied on. For this reason, this research focuses on the effects of fictional visual media characters on children’s cognitive learning, related to Social Cognitive and Social Learning Theories, from the anthropological perspective.

1.5 Ethical Perspective of the Research

The researcher has proven his qualifications to perform this research to his supervisor, to the ethical committee of Yeditepe University, to the guidance counselor in Mehmet Akif Ersoy Primary School, and to the manager/owner of the English

¹⁸ For example, in the cartoon show Powerpuff Girls, which is about the girls’ empowerment also includes adult information/content. Buttercup, one of the main characters in the show, puts a condom in the Professor’s pocket before his date (Potts, 2001).

¹⁹ Or represented as evil, mischievous or wiseass characters in adult movies (Kincheloe, 2011).

course in Ataşehir. Researcher's background is presented in the Appendix x and the ethical committee approval from Yeditepe University is presented in Appendix z. The method, style and the potential questions to ask the children are examined by the ethical committee of Yeditepe University. As working with children might cause ethical questions, especially on the qualifications of the researcher in the field, the researcher provided necessary background information whenever asked. As similar researches are previously conducted by other anthropologists, researcher followed their ethical advices when necessary.

For ethical reasons no visual recordings were made. It was both prohibited by private authorities that researcher conducted his work with, and governmental regulations. Examples of the documents gathered from children that contained their names are presented without any names or indications of the child's identity. Names of the children and staff that attended to the research, as well as the names of the parents that were mentioned by children are changed to protect their privacy. However, the names of the YouTubers, television series, actors and actresses are given as they are to be able to conduct a clearer analysis.

2. METHODOLOGY

This research mainly uses qualitative research methods in a specific place that is chosen due to limitations and availability. The qualitative part of the research is performed during one academic semester in 2019, spanning four months from October to January. Participant observation technique is used for the research. The researcher worked in the English course as a teacher and recorded the events and conversations, as well as his observations regarding the students' behaviors in the classroom. Participant observation techniques attained from previous researches that are appropriate to school and course settings are carefully taken under consideration, especially the example where the researcher worked as a teacher himself to conduct the research (Burgess, 2006). Different discussions, chats and activities were had, both collectively in the classroom and individually during breaks. The aim was to gather detailed information regarding the effects of visual media on the behavioral and social lives of children and to explore their understanding and perspective toward their choices of visual media products.

Qualitative method is reutilized during random interviews with parents that were had in front of Mehmet Akif Ersoy Primary School and in the English course. This part of the research was simply performed to gain an understanding regarding the parents' perspectives of visual media products and their consumption process. There are no recordings and few field notes taken of this part of the research as the parents became quite hesitant to participate to the research in the presence of any recording device, even implied. Field notes that are presented in the research were written down after the interviews. Although the work has its own discussion part, major discussions on the field events are given right after, to present a better flow, and to provide a better reading experience for the reader. Therefore, the related analysis from the

researcher's perspective can be found, in detail, in chapter two, and summarized in chapter three.

A quantitative research, one test and one drawing exercise, is conducted in Mehmet Akif Ersoy Primary School in May 2019. The research was carried out in a total of ten classrooms (five second year and five third year) with a total number of two-hundred sixty-one students that were between the ages 7 – 9. Two-hundred sixty-one students attended the research in total. The research consists of two steps that were conducted in a forty-minute time limit.

Step one was conducting the Torrance Test of Creativity. Students were asked to complete the figures in the test as they desired, but only by using a lead pencil. All the students were given a Torrance test of creativity and expected to do as much as they could in 20 minutes of time. No clues, hints or ideas were given to the students about the figures and no questions about the figures were answered. Questions about the process and the researcher were answered individually and in a low voice if necessary. Students who finished their tests earlier than the estimated time continued with the second step.

Second step was a drawing process. Students were given a blank, A4 white paper and asked to draw their “favorite hero/heroes²⁰” in twenty minutes, with colored or lead pencils without any other directives. Colored pencils were provided to those who did not have any with them (or missing a color that they desired to use). The only specification asked from the students were to include their names and ages so as to match the drawing with the Torrance Test of Creativity, and to crosscheck

²⁰ It is crucial to explain the word Hero in Turkish language. The word “hero” is translated to “Kahraman” in Turkish and unlike its English counterparts “Hero” and “Heroine”, Turkish word “Kahraman” and its plural form “Kahramanlar” have no gender connotations. This difference is vital in the analysis of the gathered results.

that the age group was appropriate. Torrance test results are graded by the researcher and crosschecked by an expert pedagogue. Drawings are also analyzed from the perspective of their similarity to the original hero figure they were inspired from, and categorized by the medium they are gathered from, like television, YouTube, digital games (computer or mobile games) or books.

Pre-fieldwork was conducted to grasp the major connotations of the word “hero”. An internet survey was presented and no age restriction was set. The questions were prepared with the aim of understanding the participants’ perception of the word “hero” and the meaning they attributed thereto. Pre-Fieldwork is presented in chapter X with its own analysis and importance to the research itself. Minor surveys were conducted periodically to gather information on specific topics, especially on the popularity of the preferred television shows during the fieldwork period.

In conclusion the research is based on two different methods: participant observation and survey gathering. The detailed information, as well as the researcher’s personal experiences are presented in the oncoming chapters.

2.1 Pre-Field

2.1.1 Why and how

It is not possible for me to explain the reasoning behind my selection of research topic without explaining my connection with children. As soon as I remember I was surrounded by children. My mother had a kindergarten in Suadiye for 27 years. I worked there as a teacher, as a cook, as a cleaning personnel, and in the end as the owner. I had too much time to observe and interact with children as their teacher. I have quite an energetic nature which is combined with childish humor in

most cases. I like watching cartoons and have watched so many of them with children, listening to their comments, their identifications with heroes, joining their plays and activities. Throughout my life, I was teaching and taking care of children. Therefore, I had a real first-hand observation on the change of the behavior of children, as well as their preferences of heroes and their behavior. I believe that my personal background is directly tied to my desire to work on this field, and it helped a lot during my research.

As my BA and MA was from the literature department, my preliminary idea was to focus on the hero figures in the literature, and compare their effects on the young readers. Although it was a broad subject, I was aiming to limit the parameters and create a workable subject. This romantic notion got quickly extinguished with my own reminder to myself; books were not as popular as before, and the main initiator of change was the visual media. In addition to that, my desire to include my previous knowledge was for my own safety, not for the good of the research. After deciding on the medium, and miserably failing to limit and decide on the parameters, I first decided to do a research on fictional heroes and their effects. Again, I was quite mistaken to include my previous knowledge, as my MA thesis and my favorite subject was fictional and mythical heroes. Finding myself a thesis advisor was quite a challenge, as my area of research was a combination of different disciplines. The interdisciplinary nature of the research was quite beneficial for me, however balancing it was a nightmare.

I went to Prof. Dr. Servet Bayram, who had also worked with visual media and children, and his researches really helped me in my writing process (Bayram B., 1991; 2015). His background was perfect for me, as he studied Psychology, Psychological Counseling and Guidance, and did his PhD in Learning Technologies. He did his

thesis on Sesame Street and children; therefore, he knew what I was doing and could guide me. I got one tiny problem at that point, talking to my potential supervisor and asking him to work with me. As the institute manager of the Graduate School of Educational Sciences he was quite busy, and might not have time for someone from a different department. With the help of one of my instructors in Anthropology, Assistant Professor Arif Acaloğlu, I made an appointment and went to see him. To my surprise, he did not only accept being my advisor, but also gave me material, guidance, and most importantly freedom to choose my own perspective.

My first aim was to focus on the “effects” of the fictional characters, and my medium was the visual media, mainly television (as it is still the most frequently used medium in Turkey according to RTÜK researches given in this chapter). As a budding anthropologist, I wanted to include “everything”, from financial aspects to linguistics, from psychological anthropology to education anthropology. If it was not for my jury members, I would have tried to do so (and fail of course). After their crucial warnings, I decided to go back to the basics and go to the field without a solid plan. I was aiming to learn what the field required, and then decide on my perspective and my theories. This was the most basic approach to the field, and I was quite ashamed for not doing it sooner.

I went into the field, visited schools, talked to my teacher friends, talked to several children, went to movies and observed the children’s behavior, spent time in toy stores (which hurt my finances as I bought several toys to myself). To summarize briefly, I observed every occasion I knew. I decided to start working in an English course that gave classes to the primary school children. I had two reasons to do this; first, I needed money. I had no additional funding and my scholarship salary was not enough for me to do my research properly. Second; I needed contacts, a network.

After living in Suadiye for 20 years, I had moved to Ataşehir and did not have any contacts that could help me. As a male working with children, a good reputation and good connections are a must. Otherwise, the rightful suspicions of the parents would prevent me to do a proper research. I could not just knock on the doors and ask a chance to observe their children. I needed to have a status, and a safe place that was observed 24/7 with cameras so that my every step could be observed and suspicions could be removed. I knew that after a while parents would trust me and my research, as they could observe me in the class anytime they wanted. Therefore, in a way, the necessities to enter the field also determined my actual field. As I needed to work as a teacher in addition to my regular job, I had to find somewhere close. I could also not split my attention into two or more schools or courses, as one would already be challenging with many students. Therefore, the decision was clear, and mostly singular. So, I started to work in an English course, and after explained my aim to the owner and the manager²¹, I started my pre-field studies.

2.1.2 Choosing the theoretical perspective

After my enlightening pre-field experiences, I decided to remove the word “heroes” to broaden my focus. The hero is a difficult concept. It has its own mythology, structure and theoretical perspective, which would direct this work to an unnecessary path. After talking to my supervisor, we decided to use “the fictional figures” to encompass different visual media products, mainly the Turkish television shows. I had still not decided on the theoretical perspective of my research, as none of the anthropological approaches were suitable for what I desired to focus on. I could not use mass explanation theories, as my experiences with the children showed me

²¹ Details are given in the next chapter.

that every child has his own individuality, own preferences, own likes and dislikes. Suppressing the agency would only result in a generalized but not applicable theoretical perspective. I needed something that could explain the adoption and imitation of the behavior, learning of it. With the help of my supervisor, I chose Bandura's Social Learning Theory and Social Cognitive Theory to analyze the effects of the media on children, as both theories deal with observational learning and vicarious elements on behavior and cognitive acquisition. As the theory (they are more or less the same theory, details are presented in the relevant section before) they function quite well with the media studies. As Bandura had several researches that focus on children, learning and behavior, his theories were invaluable to analyze the effects of the media. The rest of the theoretical perspective is a mixture of anthropology and sociology literature that are focused on the globalization and media. As globalization is a crucial topic in all social sciences, it was not possible to not to include it, especially when the main focus is media, a global tool.

It took a year for me to finish my literature review. I studied necessary works of pedagogy and psychology to acquire the capacity to use Bandura's theories effectively, and when I felt I was adequately informed on them, I started working on globalization and media anthropology. As the distinction between the anthropology and sociology are quite blurry in some areas, especially in media studies, I also added important works from sociology into my work. As anthropology was my main forte, media anthropology and fieldworks related to it were quite easy to focus on. Media anthropology was not really popular when I was taking my classes. Therefore, I had no idea how well worked on it was. The works of important anthropologists, their experiences, and their analyses were invaluable for me. In most cases the media

studies combine sociology and anthropology together, and I did that too. Especially when dealing with children and media, a topic that several sociologists worked on.

Both of my jury members gave me immense help at that point, as Prof. Demet Lüküslü sent me a reading list on the subject and Assoc. Prof. Hilal Tuztaş Horzumlu gave me the necessary material on media anthropology and globalization. Theory-wise, I was quite capable and well informed. However, field-wise, I was a blank sheet of paper.

2.1.3 Choosing the field, the requirements and “real” requirements

Every field research has its own challenges, and mine started with my decision to do a research on children and media. As a male researcher I knew that the accessibility to the field would be somewhat problematic as people usually are reluctant to let you, a total stranger, near their children, for a good reason. Still, I was confident that I could access the field easier than other possible researchers as I have been teaching to kids between the ages 0-15 for quite some time.

My mother had a kindergarten in İstanbul Suadiye for 27 years. I worked there day and night, until we permanently shut it down in 2016. I worked there with children from various ages every day. Even in college I spend my afternoons working with kids, teaching them, or cooking for them (and cleaning after). I have been teaching English for kids since I was twelve years old. When I graduated from high school I started to teach in different kindergartens and schools as a part time English teacher. I got used to give a short summary of my past experiences during my fieldwork.

I knew that accessing the field would require several different contacts, good relationships and good reputation. As I had moved to Ataşehir, I did not have any contacts, relationships or any reputation as an English teacher for kids. I had to start from scratch, which might be arguably better for an objective research, but quite challenging as a male teacher.

My first step was to gather information on the primary schools around the area. I needed to be able to go to my field physically and still continue my job as a scholarship student in the university where I was required to be in the office for three days a week as I had no funding for my research. Therefore, I limited myself with Ataşehir district, which was considerably huge for just one person to conduct a detailed pre-field work. It took me two months to get a basic information on the schools and courses in the area, which was considerably more than I had imagined.

First thing I planned to do was to send my CV to necessary places. But before I was able to do so, an English course contacted me through a friend, asking me to work as a part-timer. I started to work there immediately and, in the end, I conducted my fieldwork in there. After a brief working period I explained my research to the owner and the headmaster, and explained my desire to conduct my fieldwork there. They responded positively as I had already doing well, and my work would not disrupt the order in any way. Still, their reaction was similar to my previous encounters, they wanted me to work there for a while and prove myself first, then I would be able to conduct a research if the parents agree on it. Still, both the owner and the headmaster explained that there would be strict rules to follow while conducting the research no matter what. They were simple, I could take notes as much as I want without disturbing the class work, but there would be no audial or visual recording and the use of any personal information of the staff or the students was

forbidden. I was quite comfortable with those rules as they were necessary and rational from an ethical perspective.

As I would be working there as a part time teacher, I was responsible from my classrooms and needed to follow the curriculum. As it was a branch for a big English course franchise, the curriculum, books and the class levels were all set. There were six different levels/classes in the course: starter, A1, A2, A2+, B1, B2. Both the level of English and the age group were an important factor for determining the students level/class. I was assigned to three different classrooms, a starter, an A1 and a B1. My first semester was a success as all of my students came to the classroom with a smile. Parents started to visit me after or before our lessons to have a chat. All of my students passed their final exams, and all of my students in the B1 level did remarkably well in their TEOG Exam.

I continued to work there and form connections with parents, students, other teachers and the government inspectors that visited the place which, later on, helped me to conduct my fieldwork. I worked in different courses during my pre-fieldwork period. I chose the one in Ataşehir as it was the only one that was especially for kids (and did not accept adults). I formed necessary connections, proved myself as a valuable member and conducted my fieldwork there. After some time, I was given a “coordinator” status, as I was the most experienced teacher they had. Although it was just an honorary title that brought several responsibilities, it also meant that I could observe other classes. I was in charge of preparing the yearly program and such. For my fieldwork I chose four classes: an A2 that I had already been teaching for a year, a brand-new beginner class, and two A1 classes that was mostly formed by new students from Mehmet Akif Ersoy Primary School in Ataşehir. I had conducted the Torrance test of creativity and drawing exercise in there and met those students during

that time. To my surprise, most of them registered to the course, specifically to my classroom after our brief meeting. I will give details about this event later on, as it is quite important for my research and shows the power of the media in social and educational situations, especially with children.

Last part, which was not really the last part of my preparations was to gain information on the programs, cartoons and any other media products that children were fond of during that period. I had to know what was popular and needed to be able to hold a conversation with the children when the situation demanded it. I knew that children responded quite well if I had an in-depth knowledge of the cartoons and the characters they liked. Due to my past, I usually watch cartoons and fantasy movies/television series, but I hadn't watched the kids shows and cartoons of that period as I was too busy with balancing my life between university, my readings, my personal life and my responsibilities in the English course. I watched several cartoons, television shows (both kid and adult shows) and read about them when I had no time to watch them. Children usually get frustrated when an adult is misinformed about their favorite cartoon. Being labelled as a clueless adult would prevent me to have an open conversation with them as they would not believe that I would understand. In some cases, the children try to explain the cartoon to the adult, however at least knowing some of the shows/cartoons would bring me an acceptable image. At least that was what I had thought at that time.

I had also conducted several different Torrance tests and drawing exercises as a pre-fieldwork experience. There is also an online survey that was aimed for an adult participation to have a basic understanding of the word hero and its connotations in today's world. Mostly university students participated in the survey, and the results are presented in the appropriate chapter. After I had finished my courses and got my

Ethical Committee Report from the university, as well as the approval from my supervisor and two of my jury members, I aimed to start my research. With the help of that approval, my documents were sent to the District Directorate of National Education in Ataşehir to get permission to work with schools and courses. Theoretically, the process would be simple. My documents would be examined, I would be summoned and the permission would be granted (or rejected). However, reality was quite different.

Throughout my life, I had many dealings with government offices. Therefore, this was not a surprise for me. I went there personally and learned that my documents did not arrive. I asked Yeditepe University to send them three times, which they did (and proved to me with an official document). As my documents did not arrive “three times”, I decided to follow a different approach. I went to the District Directorate of National Education in Ataşehir, and talked to the officials there to solve my issue. To my surprise, all of them got really interested in my research topic, told me their own ideas, experiences and gave me their blessings with my thesis. Only thing left was for me to get the actual permission to start my research officially. I talked to two different chiefs, one for private schools and educational establishments and one for governmental ones. Both of them told me that the possibility of me getting a permission was zero. However, the law states that if the owner or the manager of the establishment agrees to work with me, I was free to conduct my research within the limits of regulations of course. Rules were quite simple, no personal documents of the students could be copied, no visual recordings, and no audial recordings. Chief of the private educational establishments also advised me to work in an English course to have access to the students. As I had already been working with one, I was quite happy with her advice. I was ready to start my fieldwork. Still, I was quite

overwhelmed, as I needed to work as a teacher, a real one, in the English course, I had to visit the District Directorate of National Education in Ataşehir again to be sure that I was not breaking any rules or regulations, and I had to work in the university as a scholarship student to keep my scholarship and to continue my education. Although, I personally think that the result is pleasing, I had not forgotten the mistakes I made on the road, especially the curse of the thesis student: writing.

2.1.4 The result and mistakes on writing

After the end of my fieldwork, I took my time to start writing my thesis. As all previous researches would say in an instant, that was a big mistake. Still, finishing my fieldwork was a sad event for me, and I had to part my ways with the course in a not so nice way, as they still wanted me as a teacher there. On top of that, worldwide pandemic broke out and shook the very grounds of the society we lived in. As I was trapped at home, I immediately started working on my field notes to secure my experiences. I have a really good memory. I remember almost every detail in a medium period of time, and can remember the major ones even after years later. Nonetheless, I believe that memory is a fickle thing, and the personal perspective and preferences blurry the subjectivity of our experiences quite subtly. I had two copies of my field notes, one digital and one physical.

After securing them I started to read on additional material on globalization, media anthropology, media studies, pedagogy, behavioral psychology, and cognitive psychology. I immediately got lost in all of my readings, messed up my previous plan, and shifted the tone of my thesis from anthropology to something else. I was constantly being warned by my supervisor to not to read more, and to start writing.

During that time, I wrote an article on the unconscious fantasy, and got published. I found several new hobbies, moved my house, started dieting and living healthy, exercising, focusing on different theories, watching new films and so on. The curse of the thesis student was upon me as I was procrastinating in any way I could. What helped me to overcome this period was the act of writing itself. As I wrote my first chapter, I also draw an outline. After that I religiously followed that outline, and wrote the major part of my thesis with success. I had only one tiny flaw; I had no major perspective. The anthropological perspective I started with, withered as I was lost in the structure of a multi-disciplined document filled.

It was not easy to work on an interdisciplinary research. I had to include different disciplines, but as I failed to adjust them correctly, I had lost the main voice of it. Thankfully my jury member from the anthropology department, place I could call “mine” proudly, Assoc. Prof. Hilal Tuztaş-Horzumlu helped me to re-shape it to a proper one. I formed the methodology again to establish a self-reflexive work, and tried to explain the details of my experience, mistakes I made, and possible hardships, to help those who wish to work on a similar topic.

2.1.5 Traps and dangers of the field

As previously stated, what was “supposed to be” was quite different from the real situation. Working with the officials required a delicate touch, as well as working with the parents. The major requirement, in my opinion, is to have good people skills. Without it, it is not possible to do this research, or replicate it in any way. Without the proper funding, and connections, entering the field only depends on the personal reputation or connections of the researcher. Throughout my research I spoke to several researchers that focused on the children. I might humbly add that in several

researches, it is quite important to include the children themselves. Several media researches I read was only include the researcher's perspective.

Tobin asks “Why do media researchers and adults comment on the meaning without talking to the children?” (Tobin J. , 2004, p. 147). I think his question is just on point. Talking to children, and listening them is the most crucial aspect of working with them. Most adults tend to patronize them, feed them words, or do not really listen what they say. It is crucial to properly communicate with them. However, to do that, the person talking to them must have a genuine interest in what they say. As I had a quite established background with children, I thought I would have no problems with communicating with them. Although it was quite rare, I found myself not really listening to what they say from time to time, just because I was tired or my mind was busy. Children realize when an adult is not really listening to them. I tried to avoid this pitfall during my research, no matter how tired or busy I was. The researcher needs to earn their trust by listening them, showing genuine interest, and showing respect to who they are; young individuals.

Therefore, replicating this research or doing a similar one would require to have good relationship with children. If a qualitative research is planned, being familiar with the children and gaining their trust would also improve the success of the performance and would make children really comfortable and happy. Additionally, as presented in this chapter, conducting small surveys to draw a functioning outline would also improve the success of the research in my opinion. My pre-field research was to determine the connotations of the word “Hero”. Although it was brief and online, it really helped me to understand how to use the word “hero” and what to expect in most cases. I had also included RTÜK researches to give an outline of the situation in Turkey.

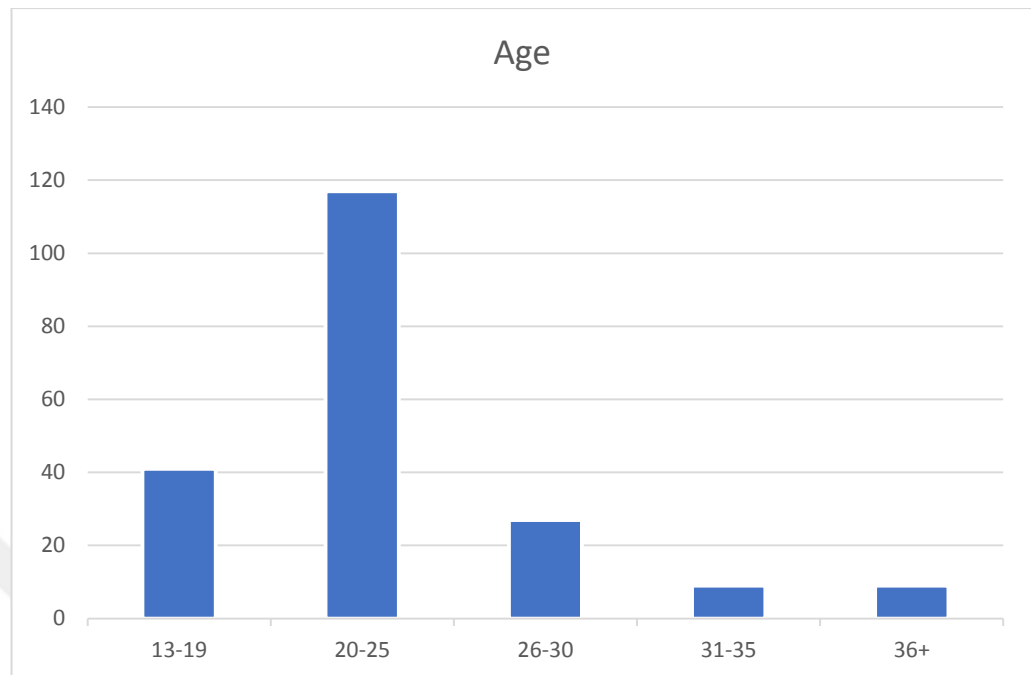
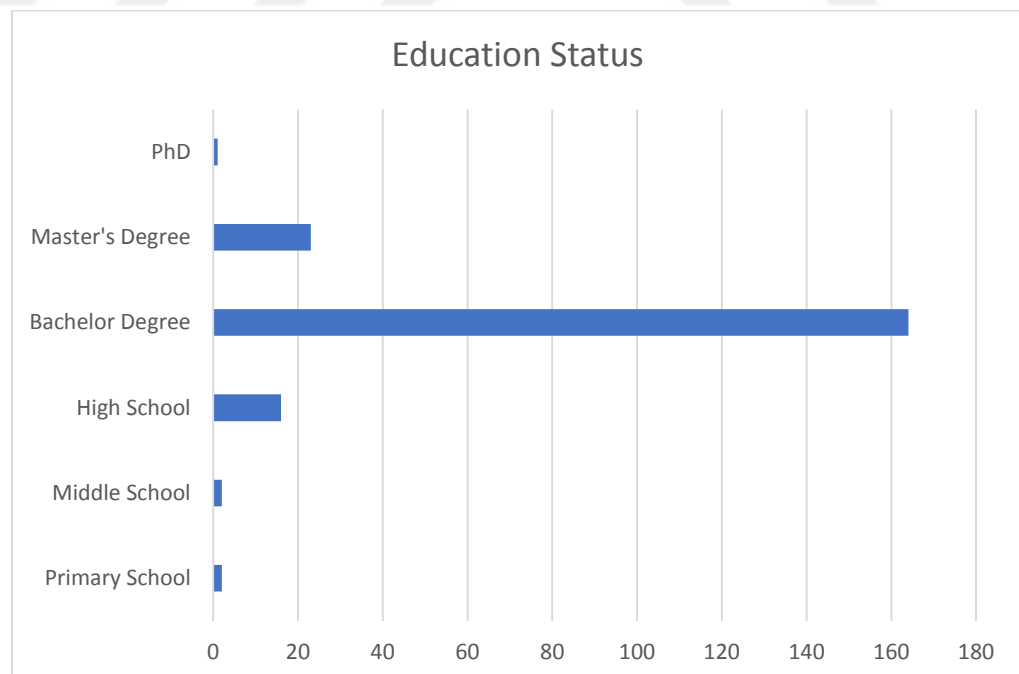
2.1.6 Pre-field survey on “hero”

This survey was conducted online to gather information on the general perception of the word “hero” and its connotations. Total of 203 people had attended to this questionnaire that was conducted through the google survey system. Although the responders’ age is 13 to 53, %77.5 of the participants are university students and belonged to the age group of 20 to 25. Although main aim was to focus on the participants from the university, the survey was not limited for a specific age group. Participants between the ages 20-25 were targeted for their popular media consumption and their possible knowledge on the previous generation of heroes and prominent figures from diverse fields.

Table 1

Demographic Data of the Participants

Age	13-19	20-25	26-30	31-35	36+	
Number of Participants	41	117	27	9	9	
Education Status	Primary School	Middle School	High School	Bachelor Degree	Master's Degree	PhD
Number of Participants	2	2	16	164	23	1

Figure 1*Age Demographic***Figure 2***Education Level Demographics*

Several participants answered the question “Who is a hero in your opinion?” by giving multiple examples. 75 of the 203 people used historical figures in their answers. 66 of the 75 participants who gave an historical figure as an example answered “Atatürk”, (28 of them only answered “Atatürk” and remaining 38 answered in multiple categories). 32 participants gave examples from their own families. 114 participants gave a fictional hero from a work of literature (mainly adapted to visual media) or from visual media. From the participants whose answers were only in one category, 89 of them gave fictional hero, 25 of them gave historical figure and 17 of them gave a family member as an example.

Figure 3

Distribution of the Answers

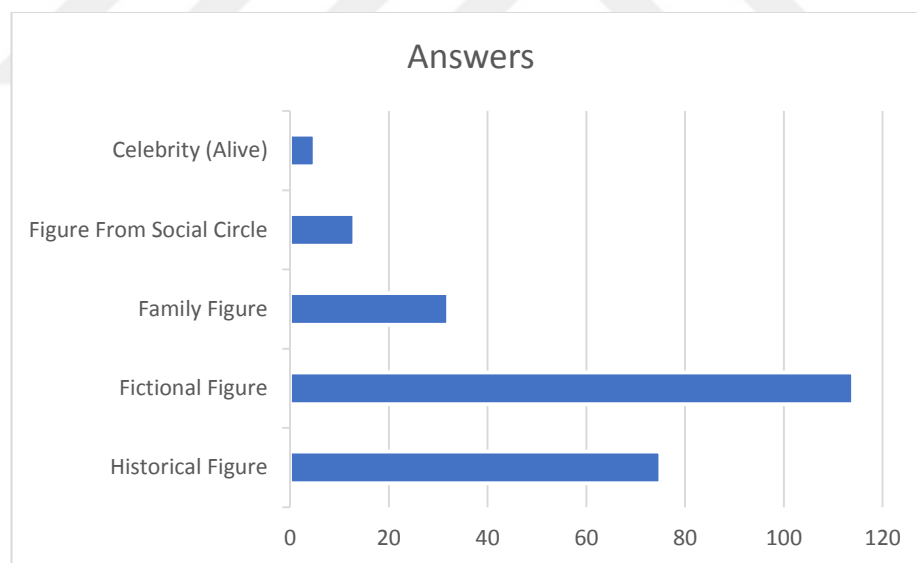
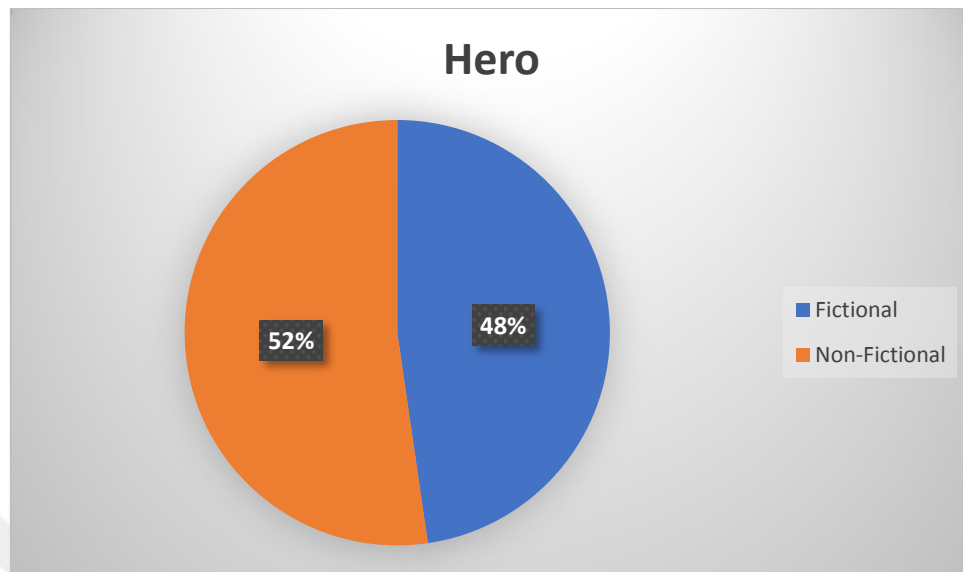


Figure 4*Hero Types of the Answers*

As the results of this questionnaire shows, when the topic of the hero comes into discussion, there is a %48 percent chance for the individual to think about a fictional hero. However, the other %52 percent gave examples from non-fictional heroes. This indicates a problem with the understanding of the word “hero”, as it has no unified connotation among the participants that attended this survey.

Thus, drawing a conclusion that the word hero might have a connotation of a figure of fantasy. Therefore, differentiating the types of the word/term “hero” seems to be a necessity in the field to gather better information from the work. All of the participants who came up fictional heroes belonged to a younger age group. Those participants that wrote down the names of non-fictional heroes are either at the same age or older than the others. This might indicate a perceptive difference according to the age group of the participants of this survey. It would require a greater survey and research to comment on the age difference of the perception of the hero figure in general though.

Results from this survey are analyzed to gain a better insight on the topic, and to create better questions for future researches. Although it is a basic pre-field online survey that had a small number of attendees, the results of it clarified important points that were not taken under consideration before. Therefore, research's topic is limited to the effect of "fictional heroes that are presented in visual media" on children's social cognitive learning from an anthropological perspective. As the limitations on the topic, and the medium (visual media, mainly television) are set, the necessity to have an overview of the field was imminent. As stated in the theoretical section, surveys and data gathered by the private sector might be debatable as the sponsors are prone to have their own agenda. Therefore, to have a basic overview of the situation, governmental researches are presented in the next section.

2.1.7 RTÜK researches on pre-adolescents and television in Turkey

RTÜK researches on pre-adolescent's television/media consumption are presented here to depict the general overview of Turkey. Unlike the researches that were conducted by the private parties, RTÜK's researches are done, analyzed and presented by the official governmental channels. This, debatably, indicates a hint of trustworthiness for the researches as they aren't (should not be) tied to any private network or corporation that holds an interest on the topic. Although these are not the first researches on the topic, the privately founded researches creates an ethical problem in some cases, as the sponsors might be tied to the network corporations, which might cause a specific perspective to prevail when presenting the results. Sigman states that the researches on television (and media in general) are quite problematic as the sponsors are mostly funded by big technological corporations that have special agendas (Sigman, 2010). The researches chosen in this part are from

RTÜK, Radio and Television Supreme Council of Turkey and MEB, The Ministry of National Education.

The results of the research conducted in 2006 with the purpose of gathering data regarding the television watching habits of primary school children were already depicting an alarming picture²² (Radyo ve Televizyon Üst Kurulu, 2019). The research was focused on the primary school children between the ages 7-14. The survey method was used on 1719 students in 17 provinces. In the research %64.6 of the students answered with “watching television” when they were asked about their free time activities. Participants stated that the primary activity they prefer in their free time is reading (%64.9), followed by watching television (%64.6). When students were asked what they would do if they weren’t watching TV, %63.3 percent of them answered “reading a book”. This indicates that the time spent for watching television and reading a book shares the same time slot. RTÜK’s results show that the increase in the television watching causes a decrease in the reading activity. Results show that while not watching television, participants choose the listed activities in the given order: Reading a book (%63.3), studying (%41.1), playing games (%39.7). As this research was conducted in 2006, social media and mobile phones and devices that enable consumers to play games, surf the internet were not popular as they are now. Therefore, television was the primary device of leisure for media consumers.

According to the research, participants, who were students between the ages 7-14, mostly watched television between 17:00-22:00. This period is also known as the prime-time for television channels. During prime-time hours the media products are mostly designed for the adult audiences, they include topics that attract viewers to improve the ratings. Which indicates an improper media exposure for the children. It

²² The original researches that are discussed in this part are in Turkish.

is shown with the research that the participants do not think that they are affected by watching television. Research states that the participants rejected the expressions as “I sleep late because I watch television”, “I do not study enough because I watch television”, “I want to act aggressively when I see an aggressive action in television” or “I spend less time with my parents when I watch television”. Neither kids (Radyo ve Televizyon Üst Kurulu, 2019) nor teens (Radyo Televizyon Üst Kurulu, 2016) accept the possibility of being negatively affected by the television.

RTÜK researches show that majority of the households have either one or more television in their homes (Radyo ve Televizyon Üst Kurulu, 2019) (Radyo ve Televizyon Üst Kurulu, 2013) (Radyo Televizyon Üst Kurulu, 2016). More than %70 of the participants stated that they watch television with their parents. As the highest television watching rate for children is the prime-time hours, it is normal for them to share such hours with their parents. Watching television together would give parents an opportunity to control what their children watch. But the mentioned researches show that most popular TV channels among children are not the “Kids Channels” but normal, or adult, channels with adult shows and news.

Another research on children and media habits shows that the primary school students have the highest television viewing time. The focus of this research was children between 6-18 years old (Radyo ve Televizyon Üst Kurulu, 2013). Total of 4306 children joined the research and %27.8 of them were between the ages 6-9, %37 of them between 10-13 and %35 is above the age 14. Among these age groups the first group has the highest television viewing time. This indicates that the exposure to television and media sources that are consumed in a passive state are more effective for the primary school children due to their long viewing hours. As debated in the previous chapters, observational learning is an important element when it comes to

watching television, and primary school children (age 6-9) are the most susceptible group among the researched.

The research also shows that %97 of the children has a television (one or more), %73.7 has a computer or a tablet and %63 of them has access to internet in their homes. Among these students, %75.6 of them has their own computers or tablets in their own rooms and %58.6 has internet connection with those computers/tablets. Interestingly the research results show that only %41 of the researched students have their own television in their room. This, as previously stated, indicates that watching television is considered as a family activity. Although it is a good thing for parents to be able to control the programs that their children watch, the results indicate that they don't exercise this ability that much. Research shows that the most viewed channels are not children-oriented but the regular ones. Therefore, if the prime-time hour is considered as the most watched hour range for children, it can clearly be seen that they watch "grown-up" shows, with or without their parents. Most viewed channels are listed as²³: %45 Kanal D, %38.6 Star TV, %35.3 ATV (Radyo ve Televizyon Üst Kurulu, 2013).

Channels that are specifically designed for children, although popular, never ranks first in any place in any of the mentioned researches. Although children claim that they love watching cartoons, their favorite channel is not listed as kids channel. There are two important factors in this subject however. First, the children's channels were not popular as they are now at the time of these researches. Second, with the popularity of the tablets and the internet, children can watch their cartoons anytime,

²³ Percentages and top three changes in other researches. ATV becomes the most viewed with %28 (Radyo ve Televizyon Üst Kurulu, 2013) with Kanal D and Show TV following. Although children say that their most favorite thing to watch is "cartoons," the prime-time viewing with the parents indicate that they also watch grown-up shows with their parents. This prime-time viewing can also include children shows, if a channel has one in those hours. Yet the majority of the shows include popular TV Series, grown-up game shows, movies and likes.

anywhere using other media devices and as a result, they might favor the channels that they watch with their parents, as they can watch their cartoons from other devices anytime. It is a possibility that they might not think what they watch as a “channel” when they use a tablet or a computer. The indication of channel is related to the television, not to other mediums²⁴.

These results show the change in media habits as well as the growth of media usage in recent years. Watching television is now a family activity that holds importance in daily routines. Visual media is now everywhere, in the rooms or in the pockets of the children. The several effects have already been discussed in previous researches but now it is possible to see them in a concrete form, as the subjects have grown up. With all these changes, it is important to have a basic understanding of the critical effects of the media on the crucial aspects of the child development in relation to the previous researches.

2.2 In The Field

2.2.1 Introduction: A day in Mehmet Akif Ersoy primary school

Mehmet Akif Ersoy Primary School is a public school. Therefore, I was required to get the proper permits from the headmaster and the head guidance counselor. As I had a positive reputation among several students in the school due to my work in the English course, headmaster agreed to meet me at a short notice. After explaining my study and the aim of my research, as well as presenting the necessary papers, they agreed to let me study in the school for a day. They decided that the best day would be the 24th of May (2019), as it was on a Friday, children would be more

²⁴ Mobile phone values are also listed in the research. %10.7 of primary school children have mobile phones of their own. (Radyo ve Televizyon Üst Kurulu, 2013)

relaxed and teachers would be able to spare a lesson for me to conduct my research. Headmaster also told me that any teacher who wants to join the research and contribute with their own opinions is free to do so. This was quite intriguing as her permission for me to talk to the teachers freely implied a total confidence in her management and also in her teacher.

I asked a friend of mine to help me on that day, as I couldn't carry all the papers, pencils, and different files with me and conduct the research at the same time. He agreed to help me and as he was also a teacher in the English course, he had experience with children. Our plan was simple, he would carry the files with me (too much for just one person) and help me to hand out the tests and blank papers if necessary, and deliver a message to the teacher of the class or the head guidance teacher if needed so that I would not leave the classroom unattended. Not leaving the children/classroom unattended is the first and the foremost rule while working with children, especially if you do not know them very well.

The weather was quite nice that week, except Friday 24th, when it poured down mercilessly. Head guidance counselor came in late as she was stuck in the traffic. After a brief discussion on the research, its process and the material requirements (we did not have any, as I brought my own colored-pencil & blank paper supplies with me) she guided us to our first classroom and introduced to us with the teacher there.

Our process was simple, after a brief introduction and a quick chat with the kids, we gave them the Torrance tests, explained how they were going to do it. We had 20 minutes for the test (as decided by my thesis supervisor) and 20 minutes for the free drawing exercise. Torrance tests were required the use of a lead pencil and we

provided them when it was necessary. I told the children to “complete the drawings in any way they want but only with a lead pencil”. I also asked them to write their names, classrooms and ages on the tests and on their drawings. Although there were some questions about the tests, most of the students understood what they would do and completed the tests without any problem.

Drawing exercises were not so smooth. Naturally, students were shy at first, but after 20 minutes most of them started to feel comfortable enough to chat. In every classroom at least one student asked if he/she can draw anything (any hero) he/she wants after I explained them the drawing exercise. I specifically used the sentence “Draw your favorite hero²⁵” every time²⁶. However, our chats yielded crucial information on the research and provided me with a better understanding of the media-children relationship.

My main goal was to gather sufficient data to gain a perception on children’s media worlds, especially on what is popular and what is loved. Drawing exercise was the key to gain that information. The application of the Torrance Tests of Creativity was to see if there was any correlation on the media consumption, especially computer games, and creative intelligence. Results of the drawing tests, as well as the Torrance Tests of Creativity is discussed in the oncoming chapters.

2.2.2 In the classroom

During our conversations with the students, I have discovered that most of them do know about popular heroes quite well, and they deliberately chose what they draw for the drawing exercise. In all classrooms students talked after the drawing

²⁵ Turkish: “En sevdiğiniz kahramanı çizin”

²⁶ This phrase was selected by me and my supervisor, and I used this specific sentence in every drawing exercise explanation from the beginning of my research, even in the trial period.

exercise, discussed what they drew and commented each other's selection of hero/heroes. Heroes seemed to have a specific popularity for different classrooms. In one classroom Iron Man was the most loved and discussed hero during the break time, but interestingly only three people drew Iron Man for the drawing exercise. I suspect that the popularity of the character is purely social, as most of them are just favoring him because others are. As previously stated, the children tend to claim watching shows they do not watch to keep their reputation in their social circle (Block & Buckingham, 2007, pp. 106-107). In another classroom most popular character was from a Turkish television series "Çukur" (Çatay & Diştaş, 2017-2021), which is not appropriate for the children of that age group. Still, after checking the drawing exercises, I saw that nobody drew anything related to "Çukur" or any other Turkish television series they discussed about. There was a group of children that played a fighting game during recess time. I learned that they were playing "Diriliş Ertuğrul" (Tekden, 2014-2019), historical-fiction Turkish television series that is based on the pre-Ottoman era Turks. I had no information on the characters of the series but the gist of the situation was clear enough for me to see that there were two opposite sides. The "bad guys" were defeated after a brief combat make-believe. In the final moments of the game (as the bell had rung) two children started to wrestle and fell on the floor. Their teacher warned and sent them to their classes. This made me quite curious as I had not seen anything on Turkish television series in previous classroom's drawings or tests, and I knew that at least one of the children that were playing that game was from the classroom I had just left.

I found out that my knowledge of heroes and cartoons made me an easily accepted person among the students. In every classroom, after I gave them the directives for the drawing exercise, children asked me if I knew "x hero from x"

(names of the heroes changed in every classroom, in some situations there were three or four questions about my knowledge on the heroes/cartoons). At first, I thought this as a test to see if I knew the heroes they wanted to draw. But later on, I saw that students were quite excited when I said yes, and started conversations about their favorite heroes. They were surprised that as an adult I knew so many of them. I learned that they thought I wouldn't know about any heroes or watch any cartoons since I was an adult and a teacher (as some of my students attended that school, and news travelled fast).

One of the students came to me during break and asked me about my favorite “girl” hero. I had only talked about male fictional heroes in that classroom, as all the questions were based on the marvel characters. But she asked me if I knew anything about her favorite cartoon “Powerpuff girls”. Luckily, I watched the cartoon several times before, while I was working in our kindergarten. We had talked about the show with that student and she seemed genuinely excited about me knowing all those things. She clapped her hands in joy and asked about different cartoons and characters. This phenomenon was not limited with one instance. There were other students that came to me during the recess, asking me about heroes, chatting, smiling and going back to their classrooms. In every instance I asked them why they were so surprised that I knew about those heroes and I got the similar answer every single time.

In three instances students drew characters that they thought I would understand. I had a conversation with one of the students, an eight-year-old boy, as he presented me his drawing.

Student: Here. I couldn't find something to draw so I drew Superman. Everybody knows Superman.

Me: Why is that?

Student: Because it is old. Grown-ups know Superman and sometimes Batman. They are old.

Me: Do grown-ups know about other heroes?

Student: Na-ah (sound that indicates a negative answer).

(D., 8, Mehmet Akif Ersoy Primary School, Ataşehir, 24.05.2019)

After a brief discussion about his other favorite heroes, he was convinced that I was an odd version of a teacher that knew about cartoons and heroes. However, I couldn't convince him to draw any other figure than Superman. As I asked about different heroes they drew, some of the students warned their friends, saying that "That is not appropriate for your age" to their friends. They were trying to warn them to not to draw characters from shows that they should not been watching. This behavior convinced me that it was not possible for me to obtain completely honest results with only one day of research. Children were trying to prevent their friends from drawing "forbidden" characters/cartoons. I did not know if the cartoons were forbidden by their parents or their children, nonetheless they thought they would get in trouble if they drew those. Interestingly most of the characters were from "grown-up" movies, and they had no means of watching them without their parents. However, I was still an outsider and some of them did not trust me enough to share their "forbidden knowledge". Still, this research proved to be quite fruitful and yielded

valuable information on the media selection and perception of the children and helped me a lot with my work in the English course.

2.2.3 Lunch break and teacher's lounge

During the lunch break we were invited to the teacher's lounge. The room was big and cozy. Like everything in the school, it was very well cleaned and organized. Teachers had fresh tea in the corner, a big table with chairs around (for meetings and such) and a cozy area that had small but comfortable armchairs. Teachers were quite friendly and nearly most of them were interested in my research and wanted to contribute.

Their main concern was the increasing media consumption among the students. They were trying to prevent it but were powerless as the students had mobile phones, tablets or other devices with them. The main problem was that the children shared all these devices to play games or watch movies (that they were not supposed to watch), watch YouTube videos that were not appropriate to their age group. All these were available with just one small mobile phone (smart phone) that parents let their children carry with them. There were some basic phones or phone watches that some children used. They were simple devices with only two or three functions, make a call, receive a call and show the time. Teachers were all agreeing that parents should use these kinds of devices and not give their kids smart phones or tablets when they come to school. We had a small chat with the teacher's whose classes I had been to about media and parents.

Teacher 1: Well, these kids are all on the computers or phones all day long. If they have a phone they don't go out and play.

Me: Do you have a policy about them in the school?

Teacher 2: Parents don't care. If you take the phones parents complain.

Teacher 1: And they say that they need to call their kids or contact them. They go so many courses after school. And they all love those phones and games.

Teacher 3: It is like smoking. Addictive. In the past everybody was smoking.

Everywhere people smoked. Television is just like that. Just like cigarettes we don't know it's effects on the health now. We will see it ten years later. Television is the most dangerous one.

Me: Why do you say so?

Teacher 3: Some parents ban phones, some computers, some tablets. But television is everywhere. They even put television in children's rooms.

Teacher 1: Yeah. And now with other things like phones and tablets it is even worse. And parents don't care. When we warn them they always argue.

Me: Can I ask what do they argue about?

Teacher 4: Oh you wouldn't believe (she smiles). They argue about anything! They all think their kids are so calm and innocent and never watch things they shouldn't.

When you tell them that their kid was playing with the phone or watching something that he shouldn't they never believe that. Never.

(Teacher's Lounge, 24.05.2019. Mehmet Akif Ersoy Primary School)

After talking about those problems and arguments, several teachers invited me to their classroom and asked me to work with them too. Sadly, I had a limited time and a specific age group to work with so I could not grant their wish, but we had a

small chat and they were quite interested with the idea. They asked me to go back there if I ever decide to do a research on their classroom's age group.

During my time in the teacher's lounge, I was trying to organize the documents, Torrance tests and drawings, and most of the teachers were looking at them. After a brief discussion about drawings, I realized that teachers did not know the cartoons or heroes that kids drew. There were few (once or twice) recognitions of Batman and Superman, but that was all. Teachers that I had conversation with had no knowledge on the characters kids drew in their drawing exercise. I asked them about some of the popular ones like Iron Man, or Thor, but mostly they did not know anything about them.

2.2.4 Findings: Torrance test of creative thinking

A total of 245 students of 8 – 9 years of age, 121 of which are girls and 134 of which are boys, took the Torrance Tests of Creativity. Students used 20 minutes of their time to complete the test and 20 minutes to participate the drawing exercise on their favorite heroes. Students were asked to use a lead pencil, and presented with one when needed. Students were kindly asked to not to look at other's papers, and the researcher was present during the test period to prevent it, however there were no observed attempts from students to look at other's tests.

The students asked similar questions regarding the test in every classroom. And in every occasion, those questions were answered in the exact same manner. The directive before the test was also same for every classroom. After a brief introduction period and some Q&A that lasted for a maximum five minutes, and explaining the basics of the test and drawing exercise (and giving colored pencils for those who did

not have any for the drawing exercise) students were given a single directive for the test:

“Please complete the drawings in any way you want. Only use lead pencils, you can use erasers if you need to. You can call me if you have any questions. When you finish your exercise, please call me so that I can give you your blank paper for drawing.”

Question example: *“Can we draw anything we want?”*

Answer from the researcher: *“Yes, you can draw anything you want”*

Question example: *“Do we have to finish all of it?”*

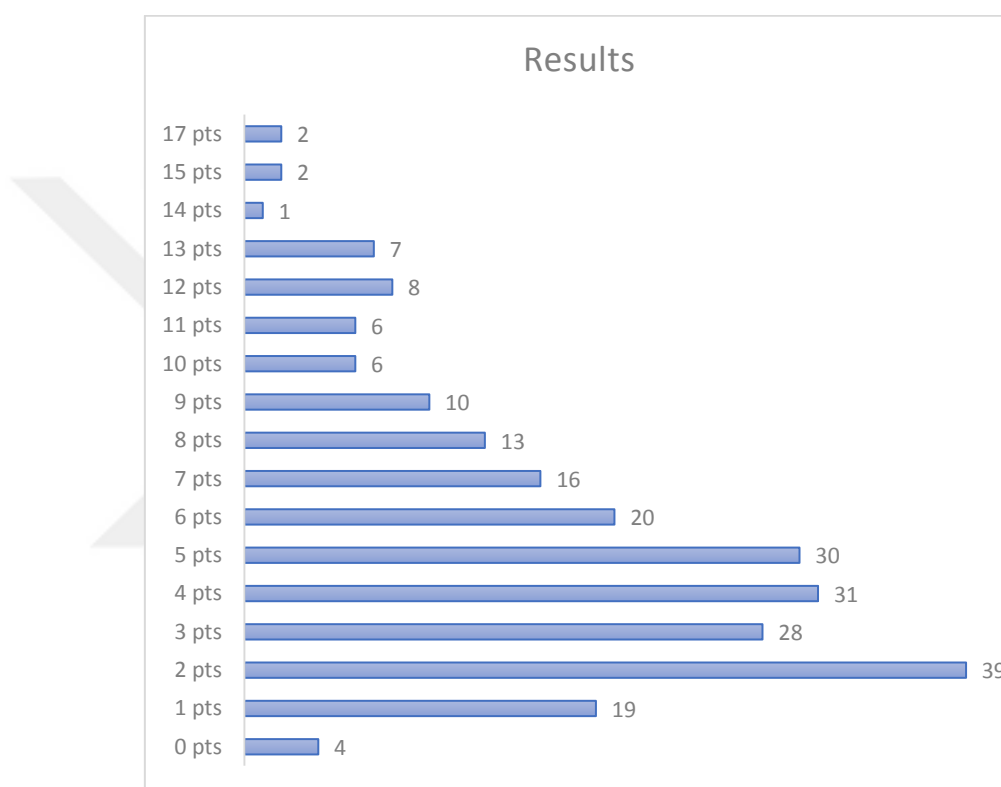
Answer from the researcher: *“No, of course you don’t have to you can stop whenever you want.”*

The questions were answered by the researcher in a kind tone and with a smile in every occasion. Students presented the tests whenever they finished it. Students were given a blank A4 paper for the drawing exercise, and colored pencils if they needed, after they finished the Torrance test.

Torrance tests were graded by the researcher according to the Torrance Test of Creativity’s own grading system. After the completion of the grading process, all grades were controlled by a qualified pedagogue, and also the advisor of this research Prof. Dr. Servet Bayram.

Table 2*Age demographics of students*

	Age 6	Age 7	Age 8	Age 9	Age 10
Boys	1	7	64	50	2
Girls	1	3	67	49	0

Figure 5*Torrance Test results of the students*

Among 245 participants, four of them got “0” grades as they either drew one or two lines to complete the pictures or did not draw anything at all. Majority of the participants got between 1-5 points, having the major elements of expressiveness and creativity explained by the manual (Torrance, 2018). For an easier grading, both criteria that are presented in the manual are combined into one single grading system, therefore enabling an overall analysis that is needed for this research²⁷. Students that

²⁷ The in-depth analysis of the completed tests can only be graded by a qualified Professional. As this research only needs a basic information for the time, the analysis is kept at the surface level, just

were given points for fantasy, abstractness of titles and/or unusual imagination got higher results than others. Storytelling articulateness, synthesis of lines, synthesis of incomplete figures, and extending or breaking boundaries were the rarest elements that were observed in the test results. Colorfulness of imagination was not considered as a key element as students were instructed to use a lead pencil to complete the test due to the shortage of time. Elements for grading from the manual are listed below:

Separate Norm-Referenced Assessments of Creativity: Fluency, Originality, Abstractness of Titles, Elaboration, Resistance to Premature Closure.

Criterion-Referenced Assessments of Creativity: Emotional Expressiveness, Storytelling Articulateness, Movement or Action, Expressiveness of Titles, Synthesis of Incomplete Figures, Synthesis of Lines, Unusual Visualization, Internal Visualization, Extending or Breaking Boundaries, Humor, Richness of Imagery, Colorfulness of Imagery, Fantasy.

The elements listed above were used together to grade the Torrance tests. The grading of the tests was completed by the researcher and double checked by Prof. Dr. Servet Bayram. Torrance tests of creative thinking deal with the cognitive capacity of the subject, and his ability to understand, process, recreate responses. As the tests were connected to the drawing exercises for the purposes of this research, it does not dismiss their singular value in analyzing the cognitive, and in some cases social abilities of the attendees.

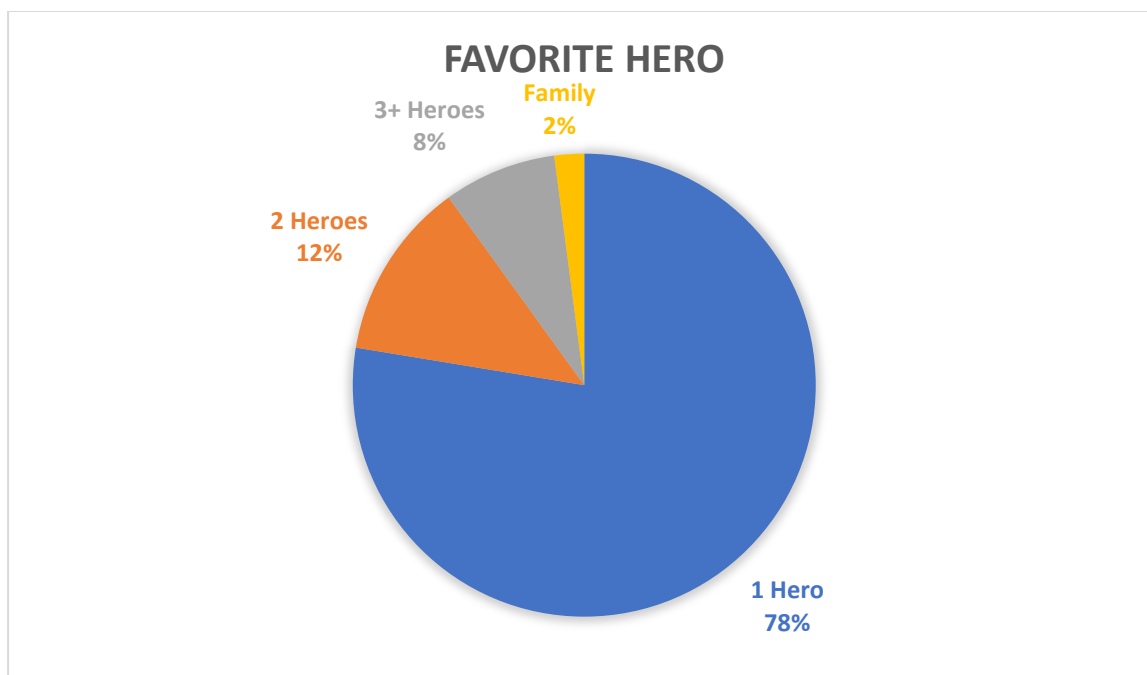
enough to see the overall points for the test. To achieve a consistent grading, the graded results were examined by a qualified professional.

2.2.5 Findings: drawing exercise

Since the drawing exercise has no grading system, and was never meant to be graded, its details are presented below with a basic analysis. All students were given blank A4 papers and asked to draw their favorite hero. They were free to use any colored pencils and were provided with them if they needed any. They were asked to complete their drawings in 20 minutes, however, as the exercise was conducted after the Torrance tests, time limitations changed according to the participant's completion of his/her Torrance test. Majority of the participants completed their Torrance tests in twenty minutes or less, and there were only few occasions that the test took more than twenty-five minutes. In all cases researcher gave extra time for the participants who needed it. Among 245 students that took the Torrance Test of Creative Thinking, 4 of them did not participate to the drawing exercise.

Figure 6

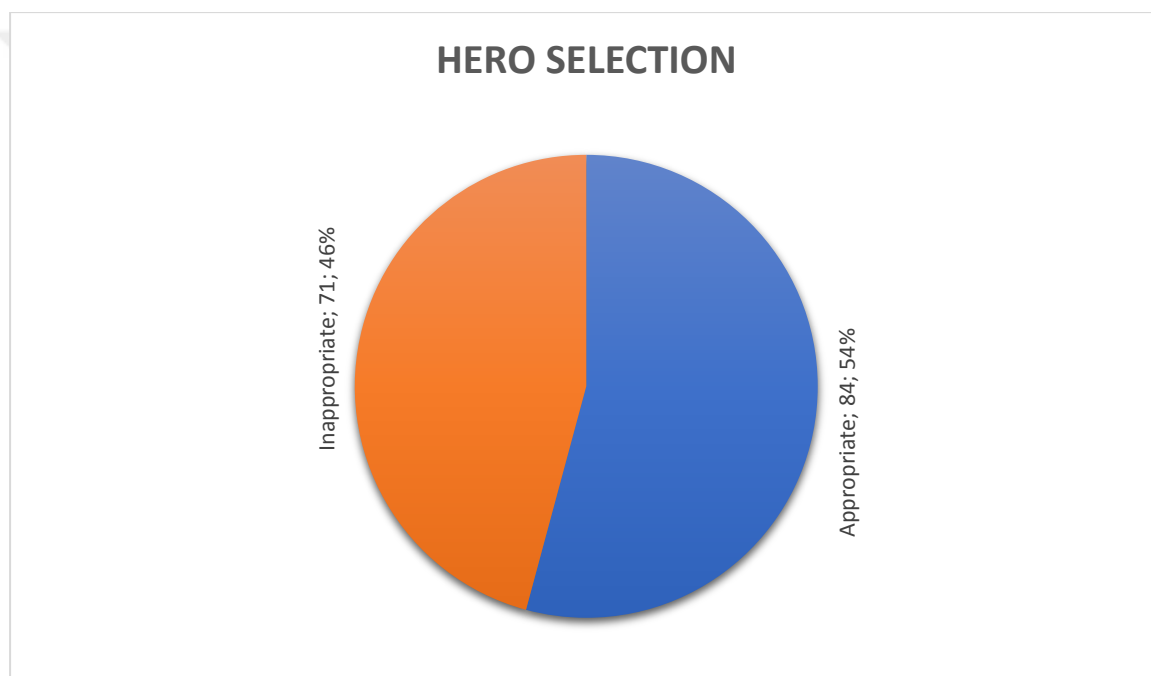
Numbers of favorite heroes



Among 241 participants, 187 of them only drew one hero or character. 30 participants drew two heroes or characters, and 19 of them drew more than three, either together or in a separated fashion. There were seven participants who drew their own families, however two of them put themselves and family members together with another hero in an adventurous setting. Only five participants drew their family members and did not include any fictional character from any media source.

Figure 7

Age appropriateness of drawn characters



Although the majority of the heroes are chosen from cartoons, it is important to consider that today's selection of cartoons is not only for children but also for adults. Especially with the comic-based heroes, it is quite impossible to define the source of the inspiration without having an interview with the participant. To overcome this problem, the researcher used his personal notes that he took during the drawing exercise. In many occasions the inspiration of the character (if not known) is

asked to the children and written down (or marked in the original paper). Only 84 of the participants drew exclusively age-appropriate cartoons and did not include any other. However, 71 of the participants drew at least one age-inappropriate character from an adult cinema movie or television series. Age appropriacy of the character or the movie he/she is taken from is based on the studio's age rating of the movie.

Ratings are taken from the "International Movie Database" (Internet Movie Database, 2021) (IMDB Help Center: Certificates, 2021) and double checked from the related studio's release of the movie in their official website.

24 participants drew characters from computer or mobile games, or heavily inspired from them.

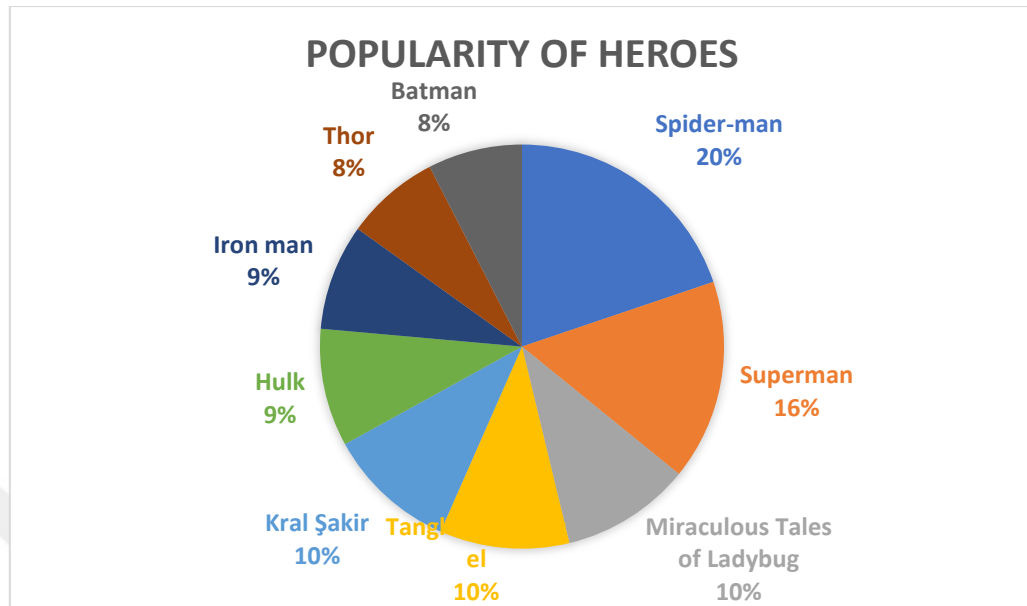
Table 3

Most frequent characters drawn

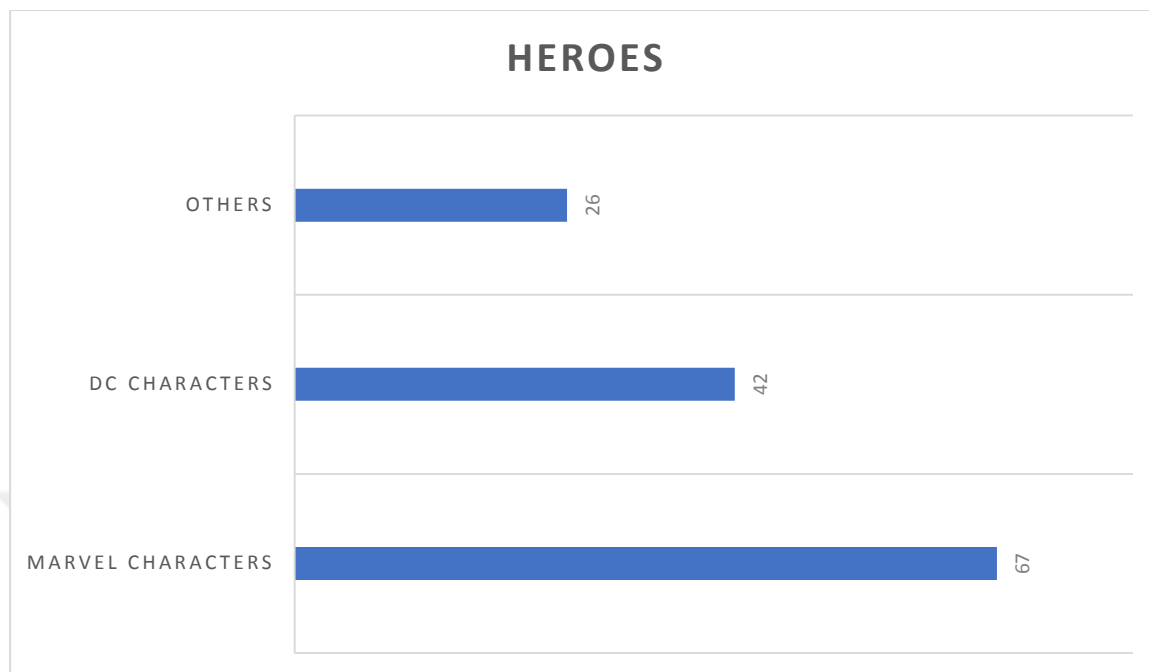
Hero	Spider-man	Superman	Miraculous Tales of	Tangled/ Rapunzel	Kral Şakir	Hulk	Iron Man	Thor	Batman
Number of occurence	21	17	11	11	11	10	9	8	8

Figure 8

Percentage of the frequently drawn characters



Most popular hero among the participants was Spider-man. Among 241 participants 21 of them drew Spider-man as their favorite hero, in addition to other hero figures in some cases. 17 of the participants drew Superman, making him the second most popular. The characters Ladybug from the “Miraculous: Tales of Ladybug and Cat Noir”, Rapunzel from the Disney animation “Tangled” and Kral Şakir from the Turkish cartoon series “Kral Şakir” were drawn by 11 participants. Hulk was drawn by 10 participants, Ironman was drawn by 9, Thor and Batman each were drawn by 8 participants. The rest of the characters were drawn by 6 or less participants, therefore is not shown in the graphic.

Figure 9*Franchises of characters drawn*

Above graphic shows the popularity of the companies/sources that drawings are from. Majority of the drawings were from Marvel Comics Characters, especially the characters from the “Avengers” franchise were quite popular. Most of the characters are either directly inspired from the franchise, or drawn together with other characters from the franchise. Spider-man is the most debatable character as it also has a television cartoon that was quite popular. However, with the help of the observation, chatting and questioning the participants, I have discovered that most of the drawings of the Marvel Comics characters are from the Marvel Cinematic Universe. The result was quite different for the DC character Batman, as most of its drawings were inspired from the “Batman: Animated Series” which was quite popular among the kids at the time. Other characters were inspired by the movies as they had no popular cartoon shows during the time, and majority of the drawings depict character designs from the movies. The observational aspect was not quite adequate at that point, so the researcher asked questions about the characters and their origins of

inspiration while he was collecting the drawings. Only three of the participants claimed that they inspired their Superman drawings from the cartoons. Rest explained that they watched the movies (some even explained movie scenes) and got their inspiration from it/them.

Video games were another popular source of inspiration. Especially Brawl Stars and Minecraft were quite popular with the participants during that time. Majority of the inspirations were from the Brawl Stars mobile game, which also proved to be quite effective in the social lives of the children. There were other media sources that were designed for adult audience and definitely not be viewed by children like action movies with violence in it, Turkish television series that were designed for adult audience or YouTubers that were famous for their controversial behavior.

2.2.6 Discussion of fieldwork

My major aim for conducting this fieldwork was to see the correlation between the media (visual mass media) and its effects on the children's creative process. This work was also a great way to determine the most effective mass media tool. There were debates on it being computers or mobile phones in general but I had a specific age group in mind and wanted to observe and gather the data myself. My aim was to work in Ataşehir, in an English course, so Mehmet Akif Ersoy Primary school was a great place for me to work in. The school was in Ataşehir, and quite close to the course where I was going to do my research in, and it was a public school so there were children from different types of families, with different levels of incomes.

The headmaster was quite confident in her management as she gave me permission to talk with any teacher I wanted for my research and to do my research on any additional classrooms that were available. Teachers were also quite comfortable with me being around, talking to students. There were occasional excitements of course, when a problematic student wanted to say something or tried to cause some trouble. Still, when the teachers saw that everything was okay with me, and I could handle more spirited students as well, they sat back and just watched. Most of the teachers left me in charge and sat in front of the door and only came back when my work is done²⁸. Few teachers asked to observe the research, even asked me questions about it as they were professionally interested. Still, they did not do anything to undermine my authority in the classroom or anything that would disrupt my work process.

Research results was a little surprising for me. Although I had previous experience with the test and the drawing exercises, I thought the results would be quite different in mass scale. My initial thoughts were simple; children would draw characters from their own life in the drawing exercise, like their parents, friends or create their own heroes and draw them and I would analyze the test and the drawings to see if they were inspired from a fictional hero/character or not. I thought the majority of the children would create their own heroes and draw them, as it was always the case in my previous experiences. Back in my teaching days, the majority of the children would create their own heroes that were inspired from some cartoon or a media source. But the hero would be their own creation, and would have different

²⁸ I kept the doors of the classroom open in every single time where the teacher left and I was in charge. As a fellow teacher and a male researcher, this precaution was quite important for me and for the teachers to prevent any problems with the families. Although I was not asked for this, everyone was quite happy about it. I think they were also quite relaxed for not having to asked it from me.

traits from different fictional characters, even from real people that the child has in his life.

Results were quite different than I had expected. 98% of the children drew fictional heroes for their drawing exercises and only 2% percent drew actual people from their lives. There were 41 custom drawings that I deemed original in my initial study, however it turned out to be due to my lack of knowledge on popular cartoons and mobile games as I have learned during my follow-up research regarding the topic. A total of 7 of those 41 characters which I had gained previous information about during my studies on the subject were from mobile fighting games that took a lot of time and effort to find out, yet, the rest was from different cartoons that were (and are) somewhat popular with the kids. Combined with the Torrance tests, overall study indicated that the effects of the fictional characters were not related to the cognitive/creative capacity of the individual, as 98% of the attendees drew fictional characters quite similar to the original. The lack of creative points did not seem to disrupt the result of the drawing exercise. Lowest scored students also drew fictional heroes quite successfully, keeping their essence in their drawings. Of course, the ability to draw played an important role in depicting the characters in a better manner. However, to prevent the drawing skills to affect the study, I only focused on the ability to give the very essence of the character, like his clothing, colors, weapons/equipment, or any other supporting characters.

Popularity of the characters depend on several different elements. I know that characters of popular franchises, like Avengers or Justice League, were popular because their movies had featured recently. Therefore, the students who had seen the movies were quite fond of the characters. As the franchises had different characters with different traits, there were several options for the children to choose from. A

single cartoon having this much variety regarding heroes establishes a role division for children-hero pairing. I have seen this role taking (identifying with the specific hero) several times in children during my previous experiences. Through saying “this is me” or “I am this/him/her” child establishes an identification with the hero and attempts to prevent others to claim that specific hero/identity as their own. In some groups this identification through verbal claiming also helps the observer to understand the social dynamics of the group. Keeping in mind that these observations are nowhere scientific and purely personal, the identification with the alpha character usually shows that the identificatory is the alpha of the group too. I have witnessed this phenomenon while performing my fieldwork in the school, as I observed the children’s games during recesses.

2.2.6.1 Merchandise and heroes

Most popular characters/heroes were from the Marvel Comics, and all of them except one case were from the cinematic universe. I have observed that during the recess a group of children were playing “Avengers”, and they had distributed the roles of heroes and were playing against an invisible enemy (usually the best and the safest option as not many children want to be the bad guy). They had one Iron Man, one Captain America and one Hulk against invisible enemies. All the trademark moves were being acted through the battle, Iron Man shooting energy beams from his hands, Captain America fighting and using his shield, and Hulk fighting and roaring with anger. When I went to their classroom, I had seen that all had at least one school item that had their heroes on them. One had a Hulk school bag, other had a pencil case with Iron Man on it and the last one had Captain America water bottle. The rest of their school items were different in design, Superman, Batman, Minion or other popular heroes and characters could be seen on them. There were items that had

different or no pictures on them. For a while I thought the school items could be an indication of the favorite heroes, and could be researched additionally. But I could not understand why the frequency of the hero in school equipment and drawing exercise results were so different. Later on, I visited stationaries and malls around the school and saw that the items that the major reason that those items were popular was their availability. In every stationary I saw similar items with similar heroes on them. When I asked about this, the sellers told me that the items were both liked by the kids and parents for their price is reasonable compared to the others. The financial aspect of the situation dismissed my theory about the items, as it would be a different thesis topic altogether. Still, I have learned not to dismiss the financial aspects of the situation. I researched the current prices at the time and saw that the price range for items with popular characters on it were quite steep.

Nevertheless, sellers found an easier way to overcome this; if a character like Spider-man, Superman or Iron Man became popular, they would sell their brands. But they would also sell the cheaper versions of the items with the old versions of the characters. For example, with the Avengers franchise Thor became a popular figure. Items with Thor from the Avengers franchise on it were quite expensive. However, the items with Thor from old Marvel Comics were quite reasonable for the budget. Sellers told me that sometimes they supplied items with only the names of the heroes on it and not the picture, if the hero is widely popular. Kids would want the item as it had their favorite hero's name on it, and parents would agree because the price would not be much. There were also timeless heroes according the sellers I had interviewed with. They claimed that heroes like Spider-Man, Barbie or Minions would always sell as there were new movies or cartoons (or toys) every year. The complexity of the financial aspects proves that the media's financial gain is not limited with their media

products. This also made me realize that it is not very possible to understand the favorite hero of a child just from one or two items he had. Parents would buy the cheapest or the nearest item in some cases and the child would not object to it as it had bright colors and acceptable characters on it. As I previously stated, the complexity of this financial and material aspects would require a research on its own to properly comment on it.

I knew that age restrictions for some movies are not taken seriously. Still, seeing the results, it is evident that the children consume mass media products that are targeted for adult audiences. More than half of the characters drawn by children were from movies with PG-13 rating²⁹ but majority of the children told me that they watched those characters in the cinema with their parents when the movies came out. I have talked to the staff in three different cinemas in close proximity to school on this issue and all of them said that the children were frequently viewing superhero movies.

2.2.6.2 Teachers and media

As I have previously stated, the media had become quite the trouble for teachers in the school. Their major concern was the addictiveness of the mass media devices and products. Our discussions on the topic were basically centered around students and parents (and the media problem), however I also asked several questions about their knowledge on heroes, both from the cartoons and movies. I asked several questions about the heroes that children liked, as I wanted their opinion on those heroes and the behaviors they reflect on to the children. Yet, I saw that the teachers

²⁹ PG-13 (Parental Guidance -13) indicates that the movie, or scenes in the movie might not be appropriate for children under 13 years old, therefore the parents are strongly cautioned to review the film and decide if it is suitable or not (Collins Dictionary: PG13, 2021).

did not have any knowledge on the heroes. They knew some of them, true, like Batman, Superman or Smurfs. They knew the heroes of their childhood also. But most of them were clueless about the new heroes and cartoons that their students like.

My initial observation of the teachers' attitude towards heroes is that the majority of them thought the popular media was a waste of time. Their major argument on the technological advancements, especially computers and mobile devices were centered around their time-consuming aspects for the children. Especially six of the teachers (four 2nd grade, two 3rd grade) were quite vocal about the harms of the modern popular characters and games on the children. They said that the mobile phones made children quite distractive as they easily get used to having a visual material with lots of colors and action and this dependance on the active visual media material causes boredom in children when they read books or listen to the class. There was also an issue of aggressive behavior. Teachers claimed that the popular heroes served as negative role models for children as they promote aggressive behavior and bad language, and that parents do nothing about this even though they know of the as teachers voice them in every parent-teacher meeting.

They also claimed that they were having especially hard time with parents who bought their kids smart phones, tablets or other media devices and let them bring those devices to the school. School "had" a ban on the devices but there was a huge argument about it. Parents stated that the devices, especially mobile phones were crucial for them as they could track their children and talk to them if needed.

In my lounge room chats, I observed that nearly none of the teachers were knowledgeable regarding the popular heroes. They neither liked them nor knew anything about them. Even those who had kids had limited information on few of

them and dismissed the rest. I was trying to find whether the teachers knew about the heroes that were popular in their own classrooms, and saw that apart from some previously stated old/core hero figures, they had no information. This lack of information is naturally reflected on their communication with the students, as mass media has so much impact on their lives. However, it would be severely unfair to criticize the teachers with only a few hours of observation.

In my personal experience, I knew that there were teachers who aimed to utilize the mass media allure in teaching. However, majority of the teachers, and grown-ups do not have any interest in popular heroes children like. There are exceptions regarding the characters in the popular cinema movies, true. Still, when it comes to the cartoons and kids shows, children seem to be surprised and delighted to see an adult equipped with both the knowledge and the interest in them.

2.2.7 Conclusion

My work in Mehmet Akif Ersoy Primary School was enlightening in several aspects. First of all, the results were a complete surprise, as I thought I would be seeing more than %20 percent of non-fictional heroes in the drawings. Secondly, I initially thought to use the Torrance test as an indicator for the media inspiration of children that draw different figures and characters. As %98 percent of them drew fictional heroes, and there was no correlation between the creativity score they got in the Torrance test and their preference of heroes from the media. I have also witnessed that the children would not tell their preference of adult-targeted shows (and admit they watch them) if they are in an environment that forbids/condemns them. Children were quite informed about the modern Turkish television series, YouTubers, and R

rated movies. I had seen a group of children playing a game, acting a scene from “John Wick”. Another group was talking about a television series called “Çukur”. The word “hero” seemed to be misleading for the children, as they only focused on the fictional super-hero types or heroes from the cartoons. They were quite liked, true. But they were not the only media children consumed.

The results from the online mini survey seemed to be in coherence with the results from this field work to a point. The children all think about fictional heroes when one asks them to draw or tell their favorite ones. Major difference is that they either do not want to tell the adults about the shows they are not supposed to watch, or directly think about fictional super-ish heroes and focus on them. In my personal experience, I think that many of the children I talked with did not consider actual actors as “heroes”. They talked about their love for the characters from movies or television shows, yet they did not recognize any of them as heroes. There were two instances where football players were given as examples, but only after a super hero (as a secondary figure). Actors from television series, singers, or social media celebrities were not considered as “heroes” even if the child was a fan of that figure. This created a problem with surveys and quantitative approaches for my research, as I was aiming to focus on the mass media consumption and its effect on children in several areas. Without fully learning on the consumed media, I would not even be able to conduct a basic analysis. Although the survey and drawing exercise were quite an invaluable source of information, it also made it certain that a longer fieldwork with several different observations is certainly required to have a proper analysis.

I had also realized that my knowledge on the heroes, cartoons and games was an incredible tool. In every single classroom, children were quite happy with my knowledge and easily chatted with me when they saw that I knew and liked their

favorite cartoon. It did not only enable me to improve my status among them as an outsider adult, but also encouraged them to speak their minds more openly with me. Although the results were quite different than I had imagined, the experience I had during the fieldwork became invaluable later on.

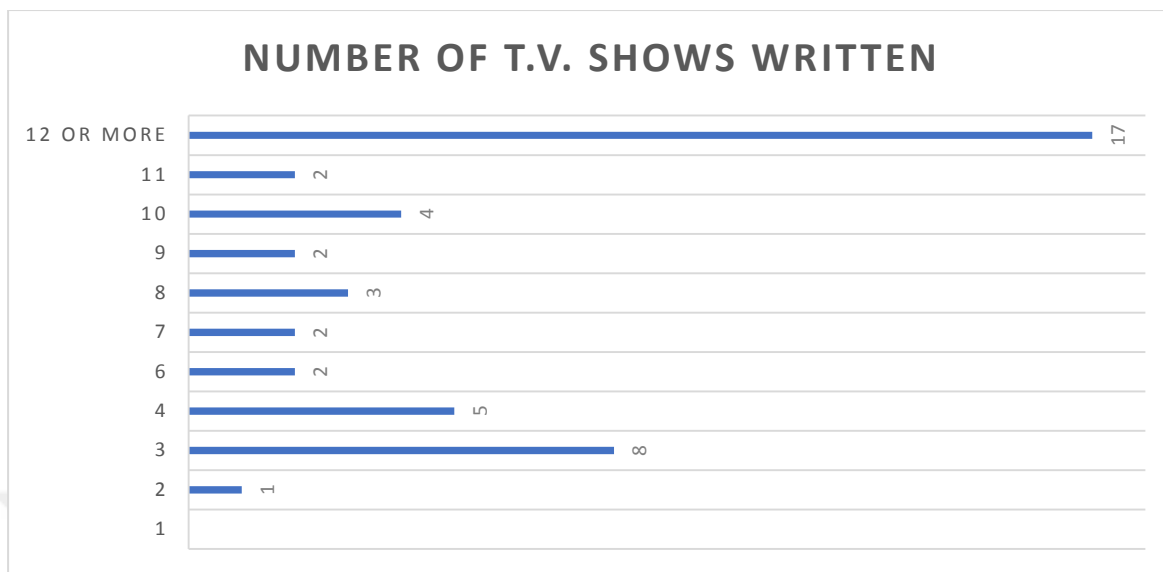
2.3 Children's Favorite TV Shows: Mini-Survey

This mini research was conducted in an English Course in Ataşehir in Spring 2019. As my field work in Mehmet Akif Ersoy Primary School revealed an interesting issue regarding the children's selection of the age-appropriate media, I wanted to conduct a mini survey to see it myself. I conducted this survey in the English course (in Ataşehir) I decided to study. My main aim was to get an overall idea on the children's television programming preferences and consummation. I also wanted to see if I could get an honest answer from children about the adult-targeted shows they watched when they know me and trust me.

Children between the ages of 6-10 were asked about their favorite TV shows and were allowed to write as many as they want on a blank paper. The question was "What is your favorite TV show?", and no other requirements, classifications or any other statements were made. Almost in every classroom (9 classrooms in total) participants asked if they could write more than one TV show as their favorite because they had more than one.

Figure 10

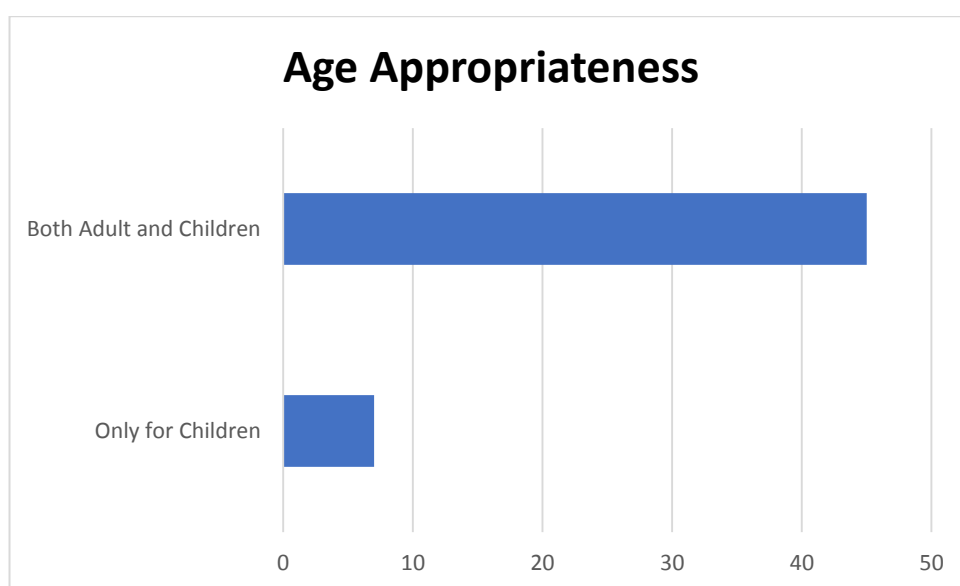
Number of TV shows written



The graphic above indicates that the majority of the children know and regularly watch more than five TV shows per week. 17 of them wrote more than 12 shows as their favorite, and provided extensive information about them when they were asked later.

Figure 11

Age appropriateness of written shows



The graphic above indicates that children's favorite shows include adult shows³⁰, that deals with adult life problems and events. Among their answers children also included several adult shows as their favorite. And when asked after the survey, they said that they watch those shows with their parents, together. Those shows are mostly air on prime-time hours, when the channels fight for ratings, thus usually include climactic topics like crime, love affairs, drama or even violence³¹. When the children were asked about the potential effects of those shows on them, they claimed that the shows would not affect "them" (individually) but "might cause problems for other children". The rejection of the possible effects also includes YouTube channels and mobile games. Although not asked, after survey discussions of children showed that the mobile games are also a crucial area, as many of the children either wanted to write examples of them or talked about them during the discussion. As a result, the definition and the performance of the survey has been altered to include those areas.

This is a small-scale research that was conducted to see the potential issues and arguments that can be made on television and children's habits. The results show that a majority of the children not only spend a respectable amount of time with television, but also frequently watch adult shows that are not appropriate for their age. It can be seen that the children have too many favorite television shows that they watch regularly, that are targeted for adults. Discussions also showed that these adult-targeted shows were watched with the families as a daily (or weekly) activity together. Therefore, this mini survey also proves that the forming of the research question should not be limited with the word "hero" but should be phrased as "the fictional characters" to include the television programs (series, films etc.) that are targeted mainly for adult audience, yet, also consumed by the children as well.

³⁰ Shows that target adult audience, and has content according to it. They are not "for kids/children".

³¹ This result is also compatible with the results from previous researches. (Page x).

2.4 An English Course in Ataşehir

After my field work in Mehmet Akif Ersoy Primary School, I decided that I should (must) spend a semester in the English course with different classes to conduct a better research. I chose 2019 Fall semester for this research. Reason for this specific time period was due to my preparation both in theory and in practice. I had read several different theoretical works on the subject as well as different works to gain a broader perspective. As I felt that I was quite ready for the main event, both mentally and physically, I talked with the manager of the course and asked for different classrooms. As previously stated, I had four different classes, one starter level, two A1 and one A2 class that I had been teaching for a year.

2.4.1 Classes

Starter group had the youngest students among my classes, as they were all 6-7 years old. The dynamic of the classroom was quite problematic as they were all from the same classroom (in their primary school). Although in some cases this familiarity makes activities easier, it also meant that the problems they encounter during the day might (and in most cases did) linger and reoccur in my classroom as well. Still, it was the parents' wish for their kids to be in the same classroom, and this classroom was specifically opened for them. The group had a kind dynamic and they seemed to be going along well in most cases. The twins in the classroom were another issue. They were smart, lovely and beyond the energetic border. I admit that I am not the best authority when it comes to discuss the more energetic students as I am quite energetic and easily bored myself. Still, twins were beyond the normal active levels and it required special attention and effort to balance the classroom dynamics.

First A1, A1-1, classroom was full of new faces. I had only two familiar students in these classes; one of which was a student in a different teacher's class, and the other was the sister of one of my students. I was quite shocked when I heard that all the parents demanded me as the teacher, and registered specifically for that reason. Although I had a good reputation as an English teacher, this was quite unexpected as the students were not from a single classroom (in their primary school). As soon as I saw their faces, however, I recognized them. They were from the Mehmet Akif Ersoy Primary School, where I had conducted the first foot of my fieldwork. They were all from the classrooms that I worked with during my fieldwork there³². I learned that all of them talked to their parents about me and asked to come to this English course to study with me. Astoundingly, only a few of those students were previously attending to any other English course. As a teacher this really made me happy, and as an instructor it made me think on the power of the media on social, as well as educational areas. All of the students were between 7-8 years of age in this classroom and attended to the same primary school in Ataşehir.

Second A1class, A1-2, was also a classroom with new students. Age group of this classroom was a little bit higher than the average A1 class, as the students were between 7-9 years old. There were a few problematic students in this class at first, however we got along quite well and, in the end, became fond of each other. As they were older, students in this classroom were more immersed in mass media, and technology. Most of them had at least one private media device, either a cell phone, computer at home or a tablet.

³² They learned that I was a teacher there, as I had to introduce myself to them properly and I did not hold any information back due to ethical reasons

My last class was A2, which we had been together for a year, and knew each other quite well. I had formed a good relationship with both students and parents, and already had been observing their media behaviors for a year. Their schedule was more intense than my other classes, as their level was higher, which left a short amount of time for extracurricular activities. Still, we found time to chat about their favorite shows, games and other media quite often, as they were an inseparable part of their social dynamics.

2.4.2 The English Course

The English course was part of a big franchise. It was an “early” language education establishment that targeted an age group of 5 to 14. It was located in Ataşehir, close to two big primary schools and kindergartens. It was registered as a language course, therefore subjected to the National Education Board rules and regulations.

The course building was quite modest. It was located on the first floor of an apartment, close to two major primary schools in Ataşehir. There were five classrooms, one small cafeteria room and one management office where the owner and her husband conducted the regulatory paperwork or had meetings with the parents. The desks for the frontline staff were in front of the main entrance. When I was conducting this research, there were two staff members (one full time one part-time), one cafeteria owner/worker, one cleaning lady (part time) working for the course.

The cafeteria was a tiny room that was run by a nice old gentleman. He was selling mainly snacks and making toasts for the kids. We chatted every Friday about the purchases children made, and the popularity of the products for that week. We

also chatted about the monthly sales, and the products that were popular and the kids who bought them. There were strict governmental regulations on the snacks due to the course being an educational establishment, yet the variety of the junk food that was allowed was still nothing to be dismissed.

The course started at 15.40 on Fridays and 9.30 on Saturdays. There were a total of five, standard forty-minute lessons each day with standard forty-minute lessons. Each class had two teachers, one for grammar who is usually a Turkish speaker, and one for the exercises, who is usually a foreigner. Every teacher had 2 classrooms that they were responsible for. There were also an additional “speak-up” lessons for each class, where the teacher played games with the kids to encourage them to speak in English. As I was the most experienced teacher they had, and somewhat in the coordinator duty, it was my job to find the proper games and teach it to other teachers. Although the resources were limited, we had various materials to work with. In most cases, what we had was enough to create games or do activities. The financial situation of the course was not quite cheerful due to an unsuccessful enterprise with their old partner. Still the basics were covered adequately for the course to function well.

As previously stated, I had my permits from the owner, my ethical committee report from Yeditepe, learned the regulations and necessities of working in a private education establishment from the District Directorate of National Education in Ataşehir. I had decided to do my research with two new classrooms that consisted of students from different age groups. Nevertheless, the course required me to have two additional classrooms as they were registered to me specifically. As a result, I have conducted my field research in four different classrooms, with a total number of X

students, for a full fall semester. The final part of the research was conducted in the beginning of the Spring semester to see the effects of the holiday period on children.

2.4.2.1 First day of the course / 20.09.2019

The first day of the course was always hectic. One week following the start of primary education, the course semester begins with a light hearted “meetings and greetings” day to form a bond with the students and teachers and to show students to their classrooms if they are newcomers.

Friday was the first day of the semester, and I had a new classroom (A1-1) with new students. Usually, I tend to greet the kids when they come in, and chat with them for a while before the bell rings. However, as it was the first day of the semester, I had been discussing the curriculum with the owner. I knew that all of the students in A1-1 registered to my classroom specifically, so I was quite curious about who they are. When I first entered into the classroom, I saw that the majority of my new students were from Mehmet Akif Ersoy Primary School, with whom I had the Torrance Tests and drawing exercise with. I remembered their faces; I had chatted with every single one of them during the breaks. Among them, there were also three former students, two from a different teacher’s classroom, and one that was the sister of my previous student. As a first day custom, we chatted for one hour about who they are, what they liked, how their week was. In the end of the first hour, I told them that we were going to have an exercise about their favorite television shows, series, cartoons and games they liked. This, of course, provoked some questions.

S1 (she was in another teacher’s class last semester): So are we going to write about them? (“Them” as their favorite media products)

Me: If you are okay with it, yes.

S1: But what are you going to do with them?

Me: I am doing a research about them.

S1: But how will you understand?

Me: What do you mean?

S1: I love cartoons but do you know cartoons?

Several students told “He knows, he watches cartoons” at the same time with a great enthusiasm.

S1: Like only boy cartoons?

Another Student (S2): Nooo, he knows Powerpuff girls too. He likes Bubbles and Mojo-Jojo.

(S1: İ., 8, & S2: P., 8, Ataşehir, 20.09.2019)

I was really surprised to hear that sentence from S2. We had a brief chat about the cartoon “Powerpuff girls”, as she was one of the students who asked me if I knew any girl cartoons too, but it was months ago, and the conversation was really brief. Still, it seemed that she was really affected by it and remembered it clearly. Interestingly, she was not the only one, as few of the others also echoed my preferences of cartoons from our chats, and assured S1 that I watched them. After this chat, S1 was quite convinced and seemed really excited about it.

I observed that my knowledge of cartoons and me watching them willingly, chatting about them, created a sense of affinity and equality that reduces the mental distance of me being an adult and them being children. It somehow created a

symbolic status for me. I was an adult, but also, I was less adult than other adults in a sense. I have witnessed this change of behavior towards me in my other classes, however the magnitude of this was quite new to me. After our classes, I talked to some of the parents of the children that attended A1-1, and learned that their children specifically wanted to come here, to my classroom. After my research in Mehmet Akif Ersoy Primary School, most of them talked about me at home, saying that a teacher came to their school and asked them about television and games, chatted with them, and he also knew and liked most of them. After hearing that, parents did their own research and talked to other parents (of my students), teachers and the head guidance counsellor in the school about me. After a rigorous research, they decided to register their children to the course.

In a sense, the mass media products acted as an initiator for me into the children's worlds. It is not only my knowledge but also my consumption of the mass media products that made my imaginary initiation possible. The forced liminality of my situation was due to my age and status. I was an adult, and their teacher, but at the same time I was someone that shared their hobbies. Although this did not make me their "friend" automatically, it established a relationship that is based on the common hobbies, which, in return, granted me some admiration and respect from them.

In our second lesson, I asked them to write three of their favorite television products³³. In my previous experiences I saw that this limitation of three television products never worked well. There was also the issue of "television", as many students seemed to use different platforms more frequently. As I presumed, they questioned whether they could write down more than three products/ programs and asked me if they could write down products from different platforms. I also asked

³³ The wording was quite different with children of course.

about the books they read during the summer period, apart from the ones that were given as homework.

(O: Male student, 8, I: female student, 8, L: female student, 7.5 D: female student, 8, 20.09.2019)

I: Teacher, can we write more than three? I have so much more than three.

(Approving murmurs among several students.)

Me: Of course.

L: Thank you teacher. It is too hard to choose only three.

D: Yes. I am done! But don't show it to anyone, ok?

Me: If you don't want me to show it to anyone, I will not.

(Most of the students asked me not to show their papers to anyone after this)

O: Can we write YouTube? I don't watch any television but I watch YouTube and Internet. I watch the shows from the Internet too.

Later on, I learned that O and his big brother had a tendency to overuse the computer. They spent a considerable amount of time in front of their computer/s and used the internet and YouTube frequently. I asked their parents if they used a parental control system for the internet/YouTube, and learned that they did not use any restrictions for either of them. O's parents were not the only ones. Throughout the semester, I have talked to several parents, and saw that none of them used a parental control system, or even a restriction on YouTube in general. Children were free to watch anything they wanted. Parents seemed to trust YouTube to prevent controversial content. This was quite an important issue as nearly all of the students

were either using YouTube themselves, or watching from their friends' devices at the school.

My second class that day was A2. Which was my class from the previous year. We had a long chat about how their summer holiday had passed, and their new media preferences. Again, I asked them to write down their favorite media products and give them to me. As we had been together for more than a year now, it was more of a reunion after a break, rather than a first day of meeting. I had learned that the children had a busy program, as most of them were attending more than two different courses like sports, math, music, study groups etc. They informed me about the latest trends in the media. I had learned that the mobile game "Brawl Stars" was the latest popular game in their school. Two of my male students were already playing it, but rest of the classroom only learned it from their friends, in their first week. YouTube was another rising star among them. Although most of them watched different YouTube channels, they were quite well-informed about the others' preferences. Still, I had not observed a commonality among their preferences at that time.

2.4.2.2 Second first day / 21.09.2019

Saturday was the first day for the weekend groups. I had two new groups, one starter, and one A1. I always came at least fifteen minutes earlier to have a little chat with the kids and the parents. I met with my starter group's parents, had a little chat with them and informed them about my studies and my background. After the ringing of the bell, I went into my classroom and met with my new group of starters for the semester. As I have stated before, this group had a dangerous dynamic. Majority of them were also going to the same primary school, and were in the same classroom.

This meant a danger of prolonged fights and arguments being brought up in my classroom. Luckily, I never had a problem in this area. Still, they proved to be a fun challenge to work with.

Among the students there were three that made a quite a bit impression. D & E were identical twins. D had a tendency to speak like a dubbed cartoon character. She was quite articulate and her tone was really similar to a cartoon character's way of speaking. Her sentences were also structured accordingly. She did not always talk like that, but still a considerable number of her sentences were constructed in this manner. She would say sentences like "What a lovely day it is, isn't it?", "How are you today friend?", "Teacher, I did not understand this sentence, how funny isn't it?". I tried to detect the source material of her imitation at first, but later on learned (and saw) that it was a combination of several different characters. She did not always speak like that, but still the frequency of it was intriguing. Her sister, on the other hand, had an entirely different persona. She was quite immersed in the YouTube, and wanted to be a YouTuber herself (later on I learned that she already had a YouTube channel). Her speech was normal for her age, but there were moments that she spoke like an adult and looked at her friends for their reaction, just like an actor on the stage trying to see the audience's reaction. Both of them were quite energetic, and D tended to speak without permission and interrupt everyone constantly. Still, when I kindly asked her to let her friends finish their sentences, she tried her best to do so.

Third interesting example was "C". She was going to the same classroom with the twins, and her way of communication was mostly focused on getting constant attention. She used the common "My stomach hurts, I don't feel good" excuse whenever someone else got all the attention. If she did not get the necessary amount, she would put her head on the desk and wait like that for a while. If she got the

attention she needed, then her behavior immediately changed and she became really cheerful.

In our first lesson I asked them about their favorite media products. As usual, I asked only top three yet they wanted to tell me more. We chatted about their favorite media products, they questioned me about my knowledge on cartoons and games, and when they were satisfied with my knowledge, they immediately got excited and told me more about their favorite shows and movies. According to my observations, when the children are convinced of my genuine interest in cartoons, films, and products they like, they start to open up and tell me more about themselves. Majority of the children held back information when we first chat about media. They did not tell me about the grown-up shows/games they watched, and only told me the ones that they were allowed to consume.

My second class for Saturday was an A1. As the students were older than my first class, they knew more about media and wanted to talk more about it. Majority of the class watched YouTube videos, played mobile and computer games, watched adult programs and shows with or without their parents. Few of them had their tablets with them and played during the break time. We talked about their media product preferences, and they questioned me about mine. After they were convinced that I genuinely knew “the stuff”, we had a nice long chat about their summer and themselves in general.

After my first lessons with all groups, I had seen that there existed common elements in all of them despite their age and school differences. First of all, YouTube was quite popular. Although my previous classes knew and used YouTube, it was never this popular among children. YouTubers were also quite popular and children

seemed to think it was a really good job option, as most of them wanted to have a YouTube channel, and some already had. Watching adult targeted shows and television series were quite common among every student, as most of them had at least two favorite shows that were inappropriate to their age. Students were quite well informed about the technology. There was an incident where a friend of mine, teacher of another starter group tried to teach them the word “play”, but saw that they only knew it as it was used in media devices.

Another issue was the common practice of watching television series with the family. Nearly all of my students watched adult-targeted Turkish television series with their parents. This was quite problematic as the television series included severely inappropriate content for the children, like physical or emotional violence, immoral behaviors, verbal or physical abuse. Watching these shows with the family members created a sense of approval for the children. They knew that they were not supposed to watch those shows, yet, they watched them with their parents. Hence, in a way they had their parents’ permission on the subject, even if they knew what they were doing was wrong. Some of the students were even dressing like the characters they liked from that television series. There were harmless examples, like a student of mine trying to look more like the Miraculous Ladybug, from the “Miraculous Ladybug and Cat Noir”. She cut her hair and made it just like the character. She started to wear red shirt with black dots (she made the dots herself with stickers) and used several products that had the character’s picture on it. She was also mimicking the character during the break time. Still, as the character was quite well-mannered and kind (as it was a child’s show) her behavior caused no problems. Unlike her, another student from the same classroom, A., was mimicking characters from the adult-targeted television series. I knew that her parents, especially her mother, has a

strong fashion sense and bought her several different clothes from different stores. Still, I also knew that A. chose her outfit herself, as both her mother and father told me. I could see that her fashion style, and her behavior, changed according to her favorite fictional character. She seemed to yell more than before, acted out harshly and her responses were wittier than a kid of her age (also phrases were directly copied from the television series). Most important part was that her behavior changed when she found a new favorite television show. There were two more students that had a similar behavioral pattern; however, I did not have adequate information on them at that time.

After our lessons, I talked to their parents, especially the parents of A2 class as I knew them before. Parents complained that the tablet and internet use among their children was getting out of hand. A mother of two of my students complained to me about their tablet situation and told me that she devised a way for her kids to encourage them to read more. She allowed her children to spend one minute with tablet for every page of book they read, and had encouraged them to read four different books in the summer. Although she admitted that she sometimes granted them twice the minute they actually earned, it was still more than I had seen from other parents. Her daughters were hardworking and kind students, and they did not seem to have a media dependency last year. This newly found media attraction was a recent problem that I had observed. A year ago, students knew about games and YouTube, but did not overuse them mostly. Only one of my students had a media addiction. However, I had observed a dramatic increase in the use of media among every single one of my students after the summer period. After seeing this increase, I went to talk to the parents of my media-addicted student. Last year, he spent so many hours playing mobile games from his tablet) that he could not finish his homework.

His hand-eye coordination was quite lacking, his writing was bad and he could not properly draw, or cut with scissors. I had only seen him once while he was playing with his tablet, and saw that his coordination was only lacking in the “real world”. His reflexes, his ability to use the device was more than I expected.

He was using his tablet too much. His parents tried to stop him once or twice, but gave up as he was in his room, safe and sound. I asked them if they used any form of parental control on the device, especially for YouTube and internet use, but their answer was negative. They told me that he was only using YouTube, and asked when he wanted to purchase an app, so they did not need to use parental control. I decided to interview additional parents about this issue in the oncoming days, and officially finished the first week of my research. As the first day is quite important to draw impressions and manage additional directions for the rest of the research, they are presented separately. Rest of the field observations are gathered under respective topics and presented as such, without additional theoretical information or commentary.

2.4.2.3 Access to media

During my field research, I have observed that the children could access to adult targeted media content without any problem. All of my students had access to YouTube without any parental control. In addition to that, several of them were free to access several different platforms like Netflix, social media or websites that include adult targeted audio-visual content. This indicated a problem, as the content was targeted for adult audience.

Several of the students in the A1-2 and A2 classes were quite free to access the internet without any restriction. Those who had a mobile phone, tablet or a computer at home were mostly consuming adult-targeted content. Although there were possible options for the parents to put a parental control on the devices, only one of the students had it on her tablet. This created two major problems in my opinion; first one is that the content accessed might be harmful for the children in behavioral or emotional way. From violence to horror movies, there are several harmful materials for the young individuals that are already labelled as +18 by the parental advisory boards. Second problem I observed was that children shared their devices and media, therefore having one device with free access meant that the friends of that person were also exposed to the questionable media content. There were several incidents on this topic during my fieldwork, however, two of them were major indicators of the possible consequences of these issues.

During my fieldwork, there occurred several incidents where the children had complete access to media. One of them was with my students from A1-2 classroom. It was our second week in the semester and children were still adjusting to their classes and teachers. During the break time I saw that two of my students, I. and F., two female students aged 9, were watching a video on I.'s mobile phone. Normally the course had a strict rule about mobile phones, they were forbidden. However, during the break time students tended to find opportunities to use them without supervision. This was one of those moments. I understood from their postures and random flinching that they were watching something scary, which was probably not suitable for their age. I silently approached them and said "Hello" in a kind voice. As I expected they got scared and screamed instantly.

Me: "Hi girls. What are you doing?"

I.: Watching a movie.

Me: What are you watching?

I.: A horror film (She was both excited and smiling. She was the alpha of her group so it was always her that answers the questions)

Me: Really? Can I see?

I.: You won't get angry at us would you?

Me: No. Why would I?

F.: It is forbidden to use phones in the classroom.

Me: Well, that is correct. But me getting angry won't stop two smart and beautiful ladies like you, will it?

(They both chuckle): Noo.

(I, 9 & F, 8, Both female students, 19.10.2019)

When they showed me the video, I was quite appalled as it was a full-fledged Hollywood style horror movie. As I was (and still am) clueless about horror movies I had no idea what it was. But the part I had seen included a supernatural horror scene followed by a bloody, and gory, murder. I chatted with the girls about their preferences, and learned that they stumbled upon this video on a web site and wanted to try. I. was a horror movie fan, but F. looked quite scared about it. The website they visited had no warnings and I.'s phone had no parental control on it. She was quite free to surf the internet as she liked, and as I had witnessed myself, she shared this freedom with her friends. I could not convince her to stop watching these kinds of movies, but I convinced her not to watch it during the course hours. I learned that she

was a horror movie fan also, and watched several of the genre. She was not an easy student to deal with, but knowing her hobby made it easier for me to talk to her and bond with her. I knew a few horror movies myself, and some of them were her favorite. Although they were not “horror movies” per se, they were still quite dark and mysterious. From that point on we had a good relationship, and she never broke her promise. She did use her phone though.

I had observed several examples such as this, as the parents did not use any parental control, children were mostly free to use whatever they want. Among the extreme cases there was one that required pedagogical help. A daughter of a person I knew started to have nightmares and asked her parents to check her room as she thought someone was there. First, they thought that it was just a phase. However, after a week they asked me for help, as they knew my teaching background. After a quick chat I learned that they gave their child a mobile phone and a tablet that had full access to the internet. Although they did put some limitations on the purchase options and banned sexual content, there were no restrictions on the websites and YouTube. They learned that she (their kid) watched horror movies frequently and got scared, and could not sleep after a while.

My second encounter about the potential consequences of media access for children was with YouTube. During the first month of my research, my friend Z. brought her child to work. He was 9 years old and quite smart. As she was working hard, he asked to use the computer. Z. let him use the computer and went to the other room to do her work. I had met with her child M. before, therefore went there to check if he was bored. I always kept some colored pencils and blank papers in my office, just in case. As I walked into the room, I heard someone swearing coarsely. After my initial surprise I saw that it was the video M. watching. It was an adult male

Youtuber playing a game that looked a little bit childish to me (I have to remind that my knowledge on the video games is quite lacking). He was constantly swearing, acting all vulgar, using curse words that should not be available to the public audience in my opinion. I asked M. about it and learned that the Youtuber was quite popular among his friends.

Me: Isn't he using a bad language?

M.: Yes but he is great!

Me: How?

M.: He plays the games really well and he is so funny. He gets angry and says fun things.

Me: And swears a little bit too much?

M.: Well...Yes. But he is great!

(Male, 10, Ataşehir, 11.11.2019)

I asked his mother about this incident, and learned that she had no idea about it. She did not know that YouTube had videos like that. She also told me that he always watched YouTube videos and played games a lot. After a few questions I learned that he also had some issues with swearing in school, and got warned about it. Although he had no problems at home, he got into trouble for swearing at school. I explained her that the videos he was watching had a really strong verbal content, and probably not suitable for a child of his age. She was quite shocked about it, and checked the videos herself. Next morning, she told me that it was unbelievable, as she thought YouTube checked these kinds of videos, and banned it.

These experiences were quite important for this research for two reasons. First one is that it showed the potential dangers of media accessibility without parental control. Children were free to access to the content in YouTube, and sometimes the entire internet. Parents generally seemed to focus on the sexual content, and disregarded the potential effects of violence, strong language or any kind of immoral behavior (without sexual depictions of course) in the media. Second is that the problems were neither localized in a certain social group or a place, nor as mild as I thought them to be. The illusion of safety in some platforms made the younger audience quite vulnerable.

Throughout my research, I have watched several YouTube videos that my students watched. %90 of them were not suitable for their age, as they included strong language, violence, immoral behavior or enabled them to access to a restricted media (for their age). Personal smart phones, tablets and computers children use were mostly uncontrolled. Especially the phones and tablets were quite a big issue as they were the most frequent media devices the children had, and brought to school. A single uncontrollable device created exposure for several children as they all shared the media they consumed.

As I found opportunities to talk to parents when they came to pick up their kids, I have learned quite a lot about the general approach to media accessibility. Although most of the parents were aware of the dangers of the internet, they were quite oblivious to the content in YouTube. Parents that installed parental control on their kids' devices thought the YouTube platform was quite safe, therefore let their children use it freely. There were a few exceptional occurrences where the parent/s watched YouTube (and internet) with their children and did not let them use any media device when they were not there. Still, from my experiences I knew that this

would not entirely solve the issue, as there were children that had free access to media and brought their phones or tablets to the school, but it was better than nothing.

Nevertheless, majority of the parents had no idea on what their children watched with their media devices, and considered several platforms and television series as “safe” for their children. Mobile games, streaming services, web sites that provided free movies or series and social media were quite accessible for children. There were also examples where the parents just gave up on controlling their children’s media habits, and just blocked products with extreme violence, or sexual content, and allowed the rest.

2.4.2.4 Secondary visual media

Although these two areas were not my primary concern in the beginning of the research, they became quite important in the later days. In the beginning, I did not even think about YouTube being an issue for the research as its impact would not be that much. However, both YouTube and mobile games proved to have a strong effect on the children’s lives. I named them as secondary visual media due to them being secondary in the focus of this research. The effects of YouTube and mobile games should be researched separately to have an in-depth understanding of their effects on the consumers.

During my field research, I observed that YouTube was quite common among the students that attended the course. Both for different types of videos and for watching YouTubers, students were using the platform regularly. Its main use was to watch the shows they liked whenever they want. Several programs, including cartoons, television series and shows are fully published in the YouTube. Children were using it to watch the shows they missed, re-watch the part they liked or just to

watch them with their friends during the break. The existence of the platform along with its function made access to media quite easy for the children. Watching and sharing videos were such a common thing that there were some students who wrote the links on their notebook to share them with their friends. Lack of control, access to various content and sharing with the friends during the break causes a major spread for the media product in the social group. Although this is quite valid for any type of visual media children consumed, being able to watch videos together seemed to accelerate the process.

YouTubers were another issue, as children both watched them and, in some ways, tried to imitate them. In my Starter group, one of the twins, E. was quite interested in becoming a YouTuber. At first, I did not take her serious, as I thought it was just her talking about what she wanted to be. However, in one of our lessons I learned that the situation was a little bit different than what I imagined. E. was quite well versed in the YouTuber lingua, and her knowledge on the topic was more than I had at that time. She told me that she had her own YouTube channel, with her special nickname, and had some videos in it. She was trying to get more followers and get people to watch her videos more. She explained me in detail that the nickname was an absolute must for a YouTube channel and she needed to publish videos every week to have a good rating.

Me: Where did you learn all these?

E.: I watch other YouTubers. They say these.

Me: Which YouTubers do you watch?

E.: Well, I watch some famous ones. But I should not watch them. I know.

Me: Why?

E.: They say some bad things. And they do some bad things. But they have so many followers! One of them have a million! (She was pretty excited about the number of followers)

(E., Female, 6, 26.10.2019)

Nevertheless, her knowledge on the potential harmful effects of the YouTubers was outweighed by their sheer number of followers. She knew that she should not be watching them, as they did not set a good example. She also knew that their behavior was not right. Still, she watched them on a regular basis and tried to learn their tricks to get more followers. Few of the YouTubers she mentioned were quite interesting, as they used vulgar language, exposed their sexuality, talked about immoral behaviors, or simply destroyed items to attract followers. None of these individuals were suitable for being role models with those kinds of behavior, and E. knew that. Still, as they got the positive results that she desired, so she tried to imitate them just to get the similar results. In my conversations with the children, I learned that being a YouTuber was quite a popular dream among them. They thought it as a fun and profitable job, and desired the attention and fame that came with it. Contrary to my preliminary ideas, there were several children that had their own YouTube channels. Although most of them had empty channels or with one or two videos of cartoons, there were also ones that had their own videos in it.

In my A1-2 class I had an interesting conversation on this topic. I had asked them to write down their favorite media products at the time. It was between A. and E., two nine-year-old boys that had quite an interest on electronic media.

A.: I wrote YouTube.

Me: You can write YouTubers if you want.

A.: Can I write myself? I am a YouTuber.

Me: Of course.

A.: Imagine that I wrote Enes Batur now. (Laughs)

E.: What is the name of your channel?

A.: It has no name. I could not find one.

E.: Tell me so I can subscribe.

A.: I couldn't name it. I couldn't do it.

E.: It is very easy.

A.: So you can teach me?

E.: Of course. It is easy.

(E., Male, 9 & A., Male, 9, 4.11.2019)

After our lesson, they spent their break time talking about YouTube channels, how to operate them, what are the basic needs and best ways to get subscribers. His advices included recording fights and accidents and then publishing them, talking about games and stuff, spending money on games and showing the items he gets, gambling in the games and publishing it, saying some mean words about games or products and destroying objects. All of these ideas were coming from one or two YouTube videos that he watched.

I observed that most of the children wanted to be YouTubers. During the “jobs week” when the topic of our study was “what is your dream job”, I observed that most of the children wanted to be a YouTuber, a famous person or a brain surgeon (Brain surgeon part was due to another media product, which is discussed in the later

chapters). Children thought being a YouTuber was the most interesting and profitable thing that could happen. Their perception on the topic was focused mainly on the fame and wealth that it would bring. However, they also thought that the job was quite easy and fun. I asked them about their favorite YouTubers and saw that majority of them knew, and regularly watched YouTubers that they should not. Interesting thing was that they all knew they should not watch those YouTubers, as their content included “bad things”. Still, most of them watched those channels, shared videos, talked about them or tried to imitate them in some manner.

Apart from YouTube, mobile games were another issue that I observed during my fieldwork. Personally, I thought mobile games as harmless and simple entertainment products that aimed to create an addiction of some sort to make the player keep playing. Their lack of graphics and simplicity made them harmless compared to the computer and console games in my opinion. In reality, mobile games were also advanced quite drastically with the technology. Graphics, effects and the content were improved to a level where the consumers would pay considerable amount of money for them. My previous apathy for the mobile platform changed drastically when I encountered its social effects among children.

During my research, most popular mobile game was the “Brawl Stars”. I have watched its popularity’s rapid increase in our course, and observed its effects on the children’s social interaction. I thought that the majority of the children did not have access to mobile games, as they did not have the mediums for it. I was terribly wrong. My initial observations showed me that the %65 percent of the students had their own tablets, phones or computers, and the remaining percent used their parents’ devices to play mobile games.

Brawl Stars is a multiplayer mobile game where the players fight other players and gain rewards according to their accomplishments. There is also a random reward system which unlocks new characters for the player. There are common characters that can be found in every players' account, and then there are rare ones that are quite hard to come by. This system imitates a gamble, as the rewards are based on luck. However, there are also purchase options in the application store that can be done by real money. I have witnessed several arguments between the children and the parents after the classes about the purchases, where the child begs his parents to let him purchase some coins or new items. Parents I talked to explained me that the purchase fees are not that high, and they let their children buy stuff as a reward for the hard work or good grades.

I observed that the ability to play the game is rather unimportant compared to having rare characters. The students regularly talked about their games, tactics or new items they found during the break time. They exchanged ideas and even coached their friends. I witnessed an experience player coaching a beginner after the course, while waiting for their parents. It was interesting to see that the more a student is skilled and knowledgeable in the game, the more others respected him. Even when the students talked during the break time, those who knew more about the game, or experienced more, held the reigns of the conversation. The knowledge and the skill commanded an amount of respect among his peers. Still, in my observation no amount of skill or experience could compete with having a rare character. Even if the person is an inexperienced player, getting a rare character in the game was the most important thing among the students. I knew that there were quite skilled players in my classes, especially in A2. The arguments and chats about the game was quite regular. In the beginning of the semester only three students in the class were playing the game.

However, after one month the number of players increased drastically. I asked around and learned that the game became popular in the school and majority of the students started to play it. Teachers were not happy about this, but they could not do anything but to repeat the dangers of the excessive gaming and depictions of violent behavior in the games.

A student of mine, A., a nine-year-old girl in A2 class, was one of the dominant figures in the class. She was smart, stubborn and occasionally caused trouble if she thought she did not get enough attention from me. She had no prior interest in the Brawl Stars game, and showed only a casual interest in playing other mobile games. After two months, she began to play Brawl Stars, and started to talk about it. When I asked her about her newly found interest in it, she said that it was because of its popularity. Everyone talked about that, so she wondered what it was. She was quite competitive in every area. In my personal opinion, the multiplayer aspect of the game also appealed to her competitive side. She began to play more and more, and after a month she got a rare character. She came to the class, and announced that she got a rare character last night, and everyone applauded her. I was quite interested as it was pure luck that she got that character. Still, the students congratulated her, asked her about the character, listened to her advices. Even the skilled players were listening to her advices.

Popularity of the game rose so much that the shops around the course (and the primary school) started to sell Brawl Stars merchandise, both original and counterfeit. Stationery owners started to put Brawl Stars stickers to random items to increase their appeal. It seemed quite successful as I started to see items with the stickers on it quite frequently. Language of the children also started to change rapidly. I was hearing gaming terms like “noob”, “headshot”, “game over”, “pro”, “e-z” and so on. It was

quite reflexive for the children to use those terms, which, in my opinion indicates the amount of time they spent playing the game.

2.4.2.5 Television

The main medium I was aiming to observe was television. My idea was to perceive the medium with the easiest accessibility, coupled with the most possibility to be overlooked. During my research I have not met any child, or parent, that was not watching television on a daily basis. Those who did not have television in their room either watched it with their parents or watched from an internet service. As a result, the exposure to television was far greater for this age group, than any other medium I encountered during my research. Major reasons for this increased rate of exposure are due to the accessibility of the television. However, another major element is the perception of it.

As previously stated, television is the most accessible media medium. According to my observations, students that I worked with watched and were exposed to television every day. They had their own television series, cartoons and programs that they followed regularly, and even adjusted their schedules according to them. All of the students I worked with had at least one weekly television show that they watched regularly. They were allowed to watch television without parental supervision in most cases, and even had their own television in their room, or at least used a separate one. Nearly all of them had the freedom to watch children shows and channels without adult supervision, and majority of them also watched adult television shows freely. Still, the active watching was not the only time when they were consuming mass media products. I have observed that many of the children were accustomed to the “background television”. During their daily activities, like doing

homework, drawing, playing games or eating for example, majority of the children were exposed to the television as it continued to work even if they were not actively watching it. In most of my chats, children told me that they usually had a background television while they were doing other stuff, or someone else was watching television (and they were just exposed to it). This was considered as a natural phenomenon for the parents too. Most of the parents either turned the television on while they did something else, or just turned it on to a cartoon channel to keep the child occupied while they did other work. Therefore, when the child is at home, he is constantly exposed to the television either audially/visually or both. Although most children had a daily time limit established by their parents for watching television, the passive exposure drastically exceeded it. Most of the parents told me that their children would play in the living room while they watch a program, therefore they are passively exposed to the programming that they should not be exposed to. Main reason for this was the perception of television, and its “safeness” when limited to the public/satellite channels.

Television was perceived quite different than other mediums by both the parents and the children. Parents had the idea that the television was harmless if it is limited with the public/satellite channels. During our chats, majority of the parents admitted that they only limited the “time” and did not have any limitations on the content, as the public television was not that dangerous. There seemed to be a general idea that the programs were not that “problematic” for children before the prime-time hours. Some parents even told me that “nothing dangerous aired before the news time”, therefore they were quite comfortable with their kids watching television. Additionally, several parents told me that their child was only interested in cartoons and only watched children’s channels on television when left alone, therefore there

was no need for them to limit the channels or supervise them while they watch television.

2.4.2.5.1 Perception of Television

During my research I had chatted with several parents about the mass media, and especially about television and its perception. All of the parents considered television as a part of their house, a major domestic appliance like a fridge, oven or a washing machine. The existence of television was a thing that was expected, or considered as normal. Absence of television, however, was considered “abnormal” or “marginal”. Although it is important to remember that the research was limited to the course and the parents in there, I think the general perception of television is not so different, as my chats with other people also yielded same results. The major difference was based on the service provider³⁴, as some people preferred a private media service provider to a public/satellite one. However, as major channels exist in all of them, and also, they have additional channels, the exposure is not reduced (instead increased).

Major issue was the idea that the television was a part of the home, and it is essentially harmless. “The background television” was quite popular among the children, as most of them admitted turning on the television while doing other things. From playing with toys to playing computer games, television was used as a background filler for both children and adults. Several parents admitted using television as a background noise while cooking, cleaning, doing work on the computer, reading a newspaper or checking the social media. There were also cases where the family is gathered in the living room, parents watching television, and

³⁴ Providers like Digiturk, D-Smart or so on. Netflix or Amazon Prime are not included, as they are streaming platforms.

children playing around or doing something near. After my conversations with different parents (and people outside the course), It seems that this passive exposure is something quite common among the consumers. My observations also showed me that the passive exposure is not considered as “viewing television” and thought to be a harmless act. Even several parents who were considerate about the possible dangers of television on their children did not regard background television (with adult oriented programs) as a dangerous or a potentially harmful act for their children.

On the other hand, there were several parents that had certain opinions about the channels, based on their ideologies. According to them, some channels were quite harmful as they represented a certain ideology or an ideological group in different ways, and some were more acceptable as they were closer to their own ideology. Although this is an entirely different topic, I still feel that it is important to include it to the perception of television. Among the parents I talked to, five of them were quite passionate about the ideological aspects of the channels and their harmful effects on children. Still, they did not consider the channels that represented their personal ideologies dangerous.

2.4.2.5.2 Watching Television as a Family Activity

Although parents had different opinions on the potential effects of the television, majority of them agreed that the adult oriented shows, especially those that aired in prime-time hours, were not appropriate for young audience. Majority of those shows include problematic content (sexuality, violence, immoral behavior), and are potentially harmful for young audience. Still, even if the content is not directly violent or immoral, the plot, events and the characters (including their behavior) might not be

suitable for a child, who has a limited social and cultural information, and behavioral filter and ability to discern the right/wrong behavior.

Some parents prevent their children to watch “grown-up shows”, or use a parental control system on the television to prevent the exposure to the potentially harmful content. During my research, I had observed that the different methods of preventing harmful content does not work in the end, as majority of the parents watch adult oriented television series/shows with their children, as a family activity. My first thought was that having a parent around while watching a problematic media content would be better for the child, as the parent would explain the necessary parts to lighten the problems. However, in most cases parents admitted that they did not explain anything, and just watched the show together. The shows they watched were mostly Turkish television series that included quite difficult concepts and problematic content for the children.

During one of my chats with one of my student’s mother, I asked her about her child’s media preferences. Her child, a student from the class A2, was talking a lot about television series, and she was modelling the behavior of the characters from those series, which were nowhere near appropriate to her age. When I asked her about those series and how did she know about them, she told me that they were watching them as a family. They had different television series on different days of the week, and they watched them together with her mother, while her father was working on the computer or playing games. I asked if her mother explained anything about the series they watched, behaviors, right or wrong, or any other event that occurred on the television. She answered me as “*We do not talk during the show, we watch it. Otherwise, we would miss what happens!*”. After this small chat, I asked her mother about it.

Mom: “Well yes, we watch it together. I know, I know, those are not really suitable for children but we spend time together and I get to watch my series. I know that they are not good for her but I work all day and come home tired. Only time I get to rest and watch something is the time when she wants to do stuff. So, we watch them together as I am really tired. Come home from work, cook, clean, do stuff... All of this is really tiring you know. It is impossible to find time for anything.”

(8.11.2019, Ataşehir)

I learned that many of the parents had the same problem. As their working hours and conditions were quite tiring, they did not have any time for themselves. They wanted to watch television and relax, therefore they watched it together. In most cases parents preferred this “watching together” event as it calms down the child, lets them to watch their favorite shows and gives a feeling of shared ritual between them and their child. In most cases parents regularly follow their television series, and talk about them with their friends or among themselves. During my chats I have observed that when both parents regularly follow a show together, most of the time the child follows it with them. Many students in my classes had their ritual shows with their parents that they regularly watch. Although this family time is a positive thing, the shows they follow are targeted for adult audience and the child is exposed to a content that he/she should not be exposed to. Additionally, this exposition is fortified as the child watches the show with his parents, together. I observed that the child does not disagree with the ideas in the show if his parent follows and likes the show too. Even when I challenged the ideas in the show, and provided a rational explanation for the behavioral problems, most of the children just answered me with “So if it is bad, then

why my parents watch it too?”, or “But the grown-ups watch it too” if the show is watched and liked by the adults around him.

Watching a show with the parents, if the parents do not explain and talk about the behavior they see in the show, is fortified in the minds of the children. During my chats with A. from A2 class, I have observed that her aggressive behavior was a direct result of the show she was watching at that time. For three weeks she was really aggressive, loud and she tried to patronize people. Although she was already a dominating figure among her friends, her behavior was never that aggressive. Her way of speaking had also changed and she used different “phrases” that looked like they were memorized from somewhere else. As I was observing her behavior, I heard that one of the parents said “Awww! Just like X. So cute. Like she is so precocious³⁵” and smiled at her. After a brief research on the internet, I saw that the character “X” was from a Turkish drama series. The show was nowhere appropriate to her age and included several problematic topics for her. One of the main characters in the show was a violent, beautiful and morally questionable woman (as she wanted to hurt everyone, we see in the show both emotionally and mentally). As her mother and her friends were also following that show, A. was trying to act like that character, using the same phrases (which were not really nice) or yelling people in a certain way, just like the character does when she gets angry.

Copying a behavior from a character was nothing new. However, as her behavior got attention and positive reactions from the grown-ups, it became escalated at this point. Although the behavior was clearly “bad”, the admiration and attention from the grown-ups gave a considerable amount of encouragement in this situation. I had warned her several times before when she tried to slap her friend on his cheek

³⁵ The actual phrase was:” Büyümüş de küçülmüş”.

when he told her to “not to yell”. After this incident I had to talk to her in a serious manner, and explained her that the behavior she expressed was not acceptable in any way. After my discussion with her, I had a brief conversation with her mother, and she admitted that they were regularly watching the show together, and A.’s imitation of the main character was adored by her, and her friends that visited recently. Only in three weeks, A’s behavior had changed drastically. Again, I had been observing children’s behavior and imitation of characters from visual media, but I had never observed a change at this level. Watching the show with her parents, getting positive feedback from the adults and creating an image like the character she imitated increased the intensity of this process in my opinion.

After this incident, I started to ask children about the shows they watched with their parents, and learned that the majority of them were watching at least one adult targeted show with their parents. There was one show that became quite popular during my research, and became the most mentioned show in that semester. Started with only ten viewers in the course, it became a widely known and regularly followed show only after a month.

2.4.2.5.3 Television, and Observed Behavioral Effects

Every month we did a little exercise with my students, where I asked what were their favorite media products (not in these words of course), and they wrote down a list for me. I watched the majority of them to have a better analysis on the effects of television. My main idea was to “know” the show really well, so that I could see its effects on the children (if any) and analyze it better. To do that, I asked them to write their favorite shows, games, YouTube channels and all other media products that they consume. What I had not known at that time was that the

preference of media products was quite a personal thing for them. For the first two months, the majority of the students wrote only age-appropriate media, and did not include the shows that they should not be watching. Similar to my experience in Mehmet Akif Ersoy Primary School, students did not trust me enough to write their true media preferences. Later on, I learned that the reason for this cloak-and-dagger approach was a direct result of being scolded by adults, primarily their teachers. Interestingly, children told me that even their parents warned them to not to watch adult oriented shows, yet, they watched several of them together as a family. As a reflex, children tended to keep their preferences to themselves to avoid being scolded.

It took me around two months to learn their true preferences. I was already teaching A2 class for a year, and I knew what they watched in reality. There was a tendency to watch Turkish drama series, especially the ones that aired during prime-time hours. All of the students were watching at least one grown-up show with their parents, and most of them were watching a few of them on their own. There was also the case of cartoons, as all of them watched cartoons and other children's shows regularly, and had their favorite characters that they tried to imitate. As I previously mentioned, one of my students from A2 got a haircut to look more like the main character Ladybug, in the cartoon "Miraculous: Tales of Ladybug and Cat Noir". She also had several items that belonged to the same franchise, erasers, pencil case, pencils etc. As her fondness increased, she started to wear in a similar fashion with the character, colors of her clothes were similar to the character she liked. She even wore her hair like the character did in the show. Although rarely, she also used phrases that her character used in the show. She was a kind and smart student. The character she loved was also like her, smart, funny, and kind. Therefore, her behavior was affected positively in my opinion. In our first year she was shy and silent.

Although she was kind and helpful, she was not courageous enough to offer her help to her friends, and chose to stay quiet in most cases. However, after modeling the character, she became much more courageous, started to talk in the classroom, started to voice her own opinions more frequently and seemed a little bit more confident. Although majority of these changes might be a result of her growing up, it was evident that she was modeling the character and trying to act like her in several situations, forcing herself to do more. I also asked her about her favorite character's qualities, and she responded in three words: "Smart, beautiful and brave!".

There were several different occasions where the child imitated a fictional (or real) character from a media. Imitations of the YouTubers were quite easy to observe as the children used their catchphrases repeatedly, tried to dress like them or changed their hairs to look like them. The attitude changes and the use of phrases were a direct result of the popularity of the YouTuber, and it usually included phrases that were not really appropriate to the children's age. Although not directly a curse word, the phrases used mostly had a connotation, and sometimes sexual innuendos, that could only be understood not by a child, but an adult. There were also "hip" phrases that spread by the social media and were being used by several people. Those phrases, behaviors, actions or fashion choices were quite visible yet really hard to analyze, as they could have been modelled by the original content, secondary content or from the peers.

Situation was similar regarding the television and the content it provided. As I have mentioned in my previous example, I had observed quite a number of imitations and modelling taken from television series. These imitations and modellings were not static in most cases, and shifted when the popularity of the series diminished or

another series became more popular. Best example for this was the television series “Mucize Doktor” (Bülbüloğlu, 2019-).

In the beginning of the semester, I heard children talking about a television series called Mucize Doktor. It was a brand-new program that was based on the life and adventures of a doctor with autism. It is adapted from the Korean television show “The Good Doctor” and the first episode aired on September 12, 2019. Even in our first week, when I asked the students about their favorite media, there were few answers with “Mucize Doktor”. The show was new and somehow made quite a sensation among the audience. I learned from the children that they were watching the show together with their parents. The show was quite the topic among the students, and as I heard later on, among the parents.

At first, I had only a few students that watched the show, although many of them knew about it already. In our second month of the semester, our topic was “the jobs” with A1 level. As an exercise I always ask students what job they would want to do when they grow up. For my surprise, aside from the three students that were aiming to become YouTubers, every student in the A1-1 and A1-2 class said they wanted to become a doctor. The answers were variable as they added other jobs or detailed the medical branch like “brain doctor”, “surgeon”, “neuro surgeon” etc. But every one of their answers included “doctor” in it. I asked them why they all wanted to be doctors, and majority of them answered that it was because of the television show. I learned that except for few students, everyone in the classes were watching the show regularly, with their parents. Those who were not following the show started to do so before the end of the semester.

I would like to admit that as the popularity of the show increased, I started to detect the imitations in the children more frequently. There were a few fans that were trying to imitate the main character (or other major characters of their choice) by copying the phrases or mimicking their facial expressions, or even trying to dress like them. Although it only lasted for three months (from its lowest point to its peak), the effects of the show lingered after that for quite some time. Still, it was one of the better shows compared to others, and I did not have any major problems regarding its imitation among students. There were other shows that became quite a hit among students. Majority of the A2 class knew the show “La Casa Del Papel” and liked it quite a lot. I learned that all of them watched the show with their parents. “Stranger Things” was quite a big thing in A1-2 class as most of the students knew about the show. I was sure that 5 of them really watched the show as their depictions were on point. I knew that they were watching shows from their friends’ mobile phones during breaks, in school. There were students in my starter, and several from A1-2 and A2 classes that were watching the television series “Çukur”. Students from A1-2 and A2 were also following or re-watching the shows “Avlu”, “Ufak Tefek Cinayetler”, “Benim Tatlı Yalanım”, “İstanbul Gelin” and “Yasak Elma”. I was amazed that so many students were watching shows that they should not. Although in some cases students were just claiming to be watching the show, majority of the students really knew the shows in detail, from characters to events. They could also describe to me their favorite parts or episodes, favorite characters and told me what would happen in the show in their opinion.

All of these shows had an observable impact on the behaviors of the students in one way or another. A student from A2 class, for example, thought that everyone was after her, lying to her, trying to deceive her. One of her favorite shows was “Ufak

Tefek Cinayetler (Ay, 2017-2018)” and the lies and deceit she saw there made her untrusting. It took me quite a lot of time to convince her that her friends were not lying to her. Another student wanted to become a mobster when he grew up, therefore started to act tough to his friends. In most cases I, or another teacher, had to intervene and talk to the student. In extreme cases, we tried to warn the parents about the situation. Still, the majority of the parents instantly dismissed the situation. Those who did not, however, got positive results and the child’s behavior changed in a short period of time. As most of it was a short-term imitation period, they did pass after a while. Those that were long-term needed addressing and, in some cases, pedagogical help from the school guidance counselor, classroom teacher or parents. It is important to emphasize that the problems I observed were also being observed by the school authorities, and their guidance counselor or class teacher usually intervened and helped the situation to get better. The cases I had to deal with it were either extreme, or lingered to the course as the student could not act them in their school.

The other problem I encountered related to the television was the wrestling-mania among the students. I stopped several students from hitting each other, who were trying to mimic the wrestling moves on others, and had to warn them about their aggressive attitude. Especially if the characters they liked was an aggressive one, they tended to act aggressive and sometimes physically violent against others. Majority of them knew that it was just a game, and never tried to hurt another deliberately. But few of the students took it a little bit more serious and started to act like the character, even tried to bully others physically. I had to intervene twice, and I was quite strict on this as one student tried to lift the chair to hit his “opponent” with it (this is a frequent event in the wrestling matches). We had no further trouble on this, yet, I heard the exact phrases (pre-match insults) being used one another.

There was a brief MMA (Mixed Martial Arts) hype in the November, but as I was prepared, and the children were cautious to not to imitate the moves, it went on without any incidents. These physical imitations were mostly done by the boys, however there were occasional girl contestants that wanted to join the game. As the physical aggressions were forbidden in the course, they tried to do the moves in slow motion, without touching their opponents. It was quite easy for me to guess when they were playing “wrestling”, as they always used pre-match insults (they tried to change them, remove the curse words and tried to add softer ones, but still it was quite obvious) against their opponents. I asked students about how they watched these kinds of shows, and learned that they were watching them from their friends’ mobile phones at school, during the breaks. The imitation of the moves and combat was not the major problem, as the children also wanted to act like the wrestler, or the fighter in their daily life. Most of the fighters were quite aggressive against their opponents (for entertainment reasons), cursed or attacked them in their pre-match interviews. I was quite amazed about this, as I had no previous information on these shows and matches, I only thought the fighters as “fighting figures”, existing only in arena in their fighter personas. I had not guessed the broad range of these characters’ reach.

These effects and observations, however, were not only limited with the grown-up shows. Children’s shows and cartoons had also considerable and observable effects on the children’s behavior. As children felt more secure to talk about the cartoons or children shows, it was considerably easier to gather information on them. Majority of the children had at least one show or cartoon that they regularly watched. In most cases, children were watching popular cartoons-shows in addition to their own favorite ones. Although the cartoons are usually thought to be safer for younger audience, the characters they presented are not always “good and nice”.

A student of mine from A2 class really liked the cartoon show “Powepuff Girls³⁶”. It was a cartoon, and aired on a children’s channel, claiming to be a children’s show. However, as the several other contemporary cartoons, it had quite a bit grown-up element/s in it that children could (and would) not understand. The images, and symbolisms are also questionable in some cases, as the Satan figure in it has high heels, fishnet stockings and a mustache. The dialogues had also contained several hints that only an adult would understand. However, as it was labelled as a “cartoon”, and as the main characters were three cute looking superpowered girls, it seemed quite safe for younger audience. My student, C., really loved the show and talked about it all the time. It was her new favorite show (she discovered it during her summer vacation), and started to buy several of its merchandise. The show has a main message in every episode that is really didactic for the children. By underlying the wrong behavior and its consequences, audience is prompted to avoid these behaviors. There are three different main characters in the group (there were, at least), and C.’s favorite was Buttercup, the most violent and aggressive among the three girls. Although her aggressiveness is criticized in the show several times, when it comes to defeating the villain, her abilities seem to work quite well. C. was already a dominant figure in the classroom, and her imitation of Buttercup made it quite challenging for the rest of her friends. She started to joke about “beating up” people when they made her angry, started to act tough like the character, and started to wear the color green more frequently as it was the color of the character “Buttercup”. All three girls had their own colors, and Buttercup had green. In two weeks, C.’s behavior escalated and she started to hit her friends jokingly. Nevertheless, her jokes about physical violence started to feel like threats, and I had to intervene when she tried to physically assault

³⁶ Show has changed quite a lot after its re-airing; therefore, I have to state that I am talking about the first version of the show, not the re-aired version.

one of her friends after a heated argument. I learned that her other teacher in the course tried to talk to her about her behavior before, but she did not listen any of her advices.

I sat down with C. and talked to her about her behavior, the situation she had with her friend, and the possible results. Her immediate reaction was to reject my words, going blank and looking far away. It was her usual behavior when she did something wrong. What she did not know was that I used to watch the show every morning with two of my students in the kindergarten. Therefore, I knew every single episode like the back of my hand. I started to talk to her about the show, characters, episodes, the behavior of Buttercup and mistakes she made. She immediately joined the conversation and made counter-arguments. We debated for twenty minutes, and she admitted that her behavior was not the best one she had. She promised me to be more careful, and (I hope) she understood the effects of violence and physical aggression. I knew that this phase would not last long. Usually this kind of fan behavior lasted quite short, and the child moves onto another show. In rare cases, however, it might be more than just a fan phase, and the modelling period might last for years. Luckily, in this case the it was just a phase, and in two weeks she already moved onto another character from another show.

Another one of my experiences was with a student from my starter class. As I previously explained, D., one of the twins, talked like a dubbed cartoon show. Her behavior was quite in sync with the show's didactic messages of the week, and I was a little bit worried about her perception of reality. She was talking and acting like one of the characters in the show. Her behavior was quite positive, as she was helping her friends, informing them about good and bad behavior, warning them kindly when they did something questionable. She was not always imitating the show, but when she

started to do so, I could not get her out of it. It was like she had a switch, and when it was turned on, she became a part of the show and started to act as she was a character in it. She required a constant attention, and tried to answer every question instantly, whether it was right or wrong. As my time with her was limited, I could not find the trigger that made her switch to the cartoon version. But as a solution I made her the class president and gave her responsibilities. Although she occasionally spoke like she was a character from the show, her behavior changed drastically. Previously she was interrupting everyone, not letting them to answer, or constantly interrupting the lesson with unrelated questions. After becoming the class president, she started to respect others speak, did not interrupt them in any way, and even kindly warned others when they interrupted. She still had unrelated questions, but based on their nature (if they were even remotely related to the lesson) I answered all of them. For the rest of her (and others') questions, I remained in the classroom during the break and answered every single one of them the best I could.

During our chats, I had seen that there were several more imitations and modelling(s) of fictional characters. As I learned their favorite characters, I was able to see the correlation between their behavior and the characters' in most cases. Although some of these "analysis" might be caused from my own desire to find a correlation, several of them, as I presented in the examples, were quite similar and observable. Phrases, key behaviors and gestures were all being mimicked, as well as the color palette of the characters' clothes or uniform. "Merchandise" was also a great hint, as the children seemed to cherish their favorite characters merchandise more than others. The characters they modelled, or even the shows they watched were not only effective on their own persona, but also effective on the interpersonal relationships with their peers, or even with adults.

2.4.2.5.4 Television, Peers and Social Relationships

Interpersonal effect(s) of the television was not something I was aiming to focus on before I had started my research. During my research I had seen that it was impossible to avoid the social effects of television in children's lives, as its impact was quite substantial. Primary social impact of the television is on the prestige/status of the child among his peers.

My first observations were about the prestige that the knowledge about a media product creates. As I previously described in the Brawl Stars example, having knowledge in a popular media product, although in this example they are passively consumed, brings a prestige among the peers. Students that had a wide array of information on a specific television show were seen as prestigious figures by their peers that follow (and like) that show. Those prestigious students acted as the primary authority and the tie-breaker in discussions about the show. This power of knowledge is similar in different types of shows, however they do not exist, as far as I observed, when it comes to non-fiction. Only with fiction this prestige can be attained, be it a television series or a movie franchise. Also, it seemed that the requirement for this prestigious situation is continuity. It did not work with stand alone movies or similar media products. This prestigious status brought a hint of respect, especially when the conversation is about the media product.

The prestige among the peers seemed to increase when the student also had a vast array of related merchandise products. In some cases, the uniqueness of the products also created an air of prestige. However, when the prestige is related to an item, the knowledge of the student became irrelevant. In a way, the student attained

the status by his items, not his knowledge. Naturally, this only worked with media products that had custom merchandise.

If the media was for an adult audience, and deemed as “forbidden” for the children, the prestige that came with the knowledge increased drastically. My student from A1-2 class really loved horror movies. Her knowledge and interest gave her an aura of “rebellion” in the eyes of her peers. She was seen as brave and her courage was derived from her interest in the horror movies. As most of the movies were quite gruesome, and she was quite well versed in the art of the horrific imager, her threats were quite brutal too, breakage or severance of a limb/organ, or any other horrific form of death or mutilation. I had to warn her four times about this. Luckily, she respected me well enough to be careful about it.

Marvel/DC franchise had a similar effect on the students. Those who had the specific merchandise and love for a character were identified with that character in the games they played. A student of mine really loved the character Flash from DC franchise. He had several school items, clothes and toys from the merchandise. In all the games they played, he took the role of the Flash without a debate. Those that wanted to be Flash either had to ask permission from him or wait for him to not be there to play the character. His knowledge and possessions made him the ultimate authority over the character. It was similar with Marvel characters (from the Avengers). Students had divided characters among themselves, and they were expected to act like the characters, or at least act according to the spirit of the character in every situation. “Captain America” was expected to share his food, help others, not to yell at others or help when there was a conflict. Hulk, on the other hand, was free to act as he liked, and was not expected to help at all. Still, as they were children with good hearts, they helped each other, even the student that was identified

as the Hulk helped others in the classroom. Their “persona” was for the break time mostly, but there were occasional events where the line was really blurred and the behavior lingered even during the class.

This was similar with the characters from “Kral Şakir”, as there were many characters in the show, students tended to share them among themselves. Although in this case the audience was younger, and they bored quite easily. Their identification with another character or role model lasted briefly in most cases, if the student was not a true fan and only took on the persona to play a game. If a student was a fan, however, things were quite different. The modeling process was effective in most parts of his life. A student who regularly followed a Turkish television series that included mobsters tried to act like one in the classroom until he was warned. Even after that I saw the hints of the characters from the show. As he showed no signs of disrespect, and behaved quite well with his friends, I did not meddle. But my curiosity caused me to ask about the show, and learned that he was watching it with his father every week, and they loved it. The character he imitated was their favorite, and his father always praised him when he acted like the character. I was quite surprised as this student was from my starter class and he was only seven years old. He was not supposed to watch that show or be praised when he acted like the character from it. Yet, as he was praised whenever he acted in that manner, his behavior started to cement in.

I observed that the modeling of a “questionable” character could not be easily prevented if the child is praised by the adults around him. If the admiration comes from the peers, it can be prevented, re-shaped, warned or redirected in several ways. It is even possible to forbid the behavior, as the admiration comes only from the peers and they are also subjected to the rules and regulations. However, when the

admiration or praise comes from an adult, the reinforcement functions much more effectively. Primarily, the most effective reinforcement occurs when the praise comes from parents, teachers or an adult that is loved and thought as a role model. During my research, I experienced that it was really hard, if not impossible to change this kind of reinforced behavior as a teacher, if not impossible. The only thing I could do was to restrict the behavior and reinforce the opposite examples as best as I could. Still, if parental reinforcement is a recurring event, it was not possible for me to change such behavior as a teacher whom they saw once or twice a week. As a personal note, praises that come from adults seemed to work as a justification of the behavior from the child's perspective. If it is praised and liked by an adult, and encouraged to be repeated, then the behavior must/should not be bad. As the results are beneficial, the reproduction of the behavior is mostly certain.

One of my students from A1-1 class was acting like a character from a popular television series. She was successfully mimicking the characters aggressive and snob behavior on her friends, and she was being praised by the adults around her. What intrigued me was that the friends around her, who were being subjected to a negative behavior and phrases, could not defend themselves as the behavior was praised by the adults. Even when there were no adults and the same behavior is repeated, the children being subjected to it did not react in any manner for quite some time. Only after I told the student that her behavior to her friends was not acceptable, the students started to voice their reactions.

I observed that the media, especially Turkish television series (for adults) had an initiation function. Those who were watching the shows were somewhat "more adult" than those who could not watch them (as their parents did not let them to watch). At the end of December, we were talking in my starter class about the

television series they were watching. Most of the students told me that they were watching “Mucize Doktor” every week, and they were loving it. Both boys and girls were talking about the show.

İ.: But isn't that a grown-up show? (Asking her friends about Mucize Doktor when they said they were watching it, and it was one of their favorite).

A.: Yes but I watch it. It is good.

E.: I watch it too! With my mom.

Ö.: I watch it, but I don't like it that much. Boring. (He loves war games, combat games and action films.)

İ.: Ah. Then I should tell my mother that everyone is watching it. She should let me watch it now. I was always wondering about it.

Me: Well, just because everyone watching the show does not mean that you should watch it too, right? Maybe your mother won't let you watch it still.

İ.: Ha ha! No (She was genuinely smiling). She lets me watch if other kids are watching too. She let me watch other shows like that. I will watch it this week.

A.: Nice! So we can talk about Mucize Doktor. I can explain it to you if you want. I know a lot you know. (She was one of the “authorities” on the television shows, especially the Mucize Doktor.)

(İ., Female, 7, A., Female, 7, Ö., Male, 7, E., Female, 7, 21.12.2019)

There were additional “Me too!” from other children. During the break there were quite a few people around İ., explaining the show to her. She was not an unpopular kid, but she had her own close friends. With her “initiation” to the show,

she started to hang out with others and from her drawings to getting a toast from the cafeteria, all of her classmates either helped her, let her go first or carried her bag after the classes (for a short time). It was quite perplexing for me too, as I did not expect a ritual function about a television show in this manner.

Television seemed to have a strong ritual function, which affected the social relationships and could be observed quite easily. I could observe the effects in three different elements. First one was the time. The airing time of the show was quite important, since if it was too late, parents did not let children to watch with them. Therefore, the prime-time hours were the best for a popular show. Every week, as a family, people sat down and watched their shows together. In most cases it was more than one program, or it was a daily activity among the family. The weekly shows seemed to create a lot of commotion, as the parents adjusted their schedules to watch their shows, and let their kids stay up late so they could watch it with them. I learned that most parents prepared special snacks, or even special dinner to eat while watching. In some cases, people even visited other families to watch the show/s together and talk about it afterwards if it was not too late. The day after the show was also special, as both the parents and students talked about it, shared their ideas. Although I could only observe the impacts of the shows that aired on Thursdays and Fridays (as the course was on Fridays and Saturdays), I saw that both parents and children talked about the popular shows the day after. There were instances where the show's popularity was so much that even after three or four days, people still talked about the last episode. *Mucize Doktor* was one of those that had a great popularity among the parents and children alike.

The connection that was created by the television show was so strong that, even the students that were regularly arguing had a chance to form a bond around it.

There were instances where the students that were not really close, or even had a negativity between them, started to talk about a television show and formed a bond around their shared love for it. Television (program) functioned as a common ground that they could meet upon, and gave them something to talk about.

An extreme example for this was the dialogue between İ. (girl, 9 yrs.) and P. (boy, 9 yrs.) from my A1-1 classroom. P. had a nickname that he did not like. Although there was a rule in the class (that I made up) which forbade students to use that nickname, they still did it after or before the course (as they went to the same primary school). P. really disliked that nickname, and İ. frequently used it to tease him. As we were talking about their favorite media, most of the students said that Mucize Doktor was their favorite.

P.: Ohoo I watch Mucize Doktor. Always. I always cry you know. It is sad.

Z: Yes. Me too. I cried like crazy this week.

P.: Yes it was so sad. You know when the kid gets really sick.

İ.: Where do you know it from?

P.: What? From the show.

İ.: Oh come on! You don't watch it.

P.: Allah Allah. I watch it. Why would I lie?

İ.: Then tell me what happened in this week's episode?

P. told her about the episode. İ. asked more questions about the previous episodes and P. answered them all. İ. asked about P.'s favorite episodes and scenes. P. answered them all. She seemed surprised and happy at the same time. They did not

go along well and I was quite sure that they were going to have a small fight because of her many questions. To my surprise, nothing happened. She just sat there without saying or doing anything for a while. P., continued his chat with his friend. He was used to being teased by her.

Me: Ok guys, let's start our lesson.

Í.: P.

P.: Yes?

Í.: I am not going to call you "X" (his nickname) from now on.

P. (smiles): Thanks.

Í. (smiles back)

(P., Male, 8, Í., Female, 7, Z., Female, 8, 03.01.2020)

During the break I saw them chatting about the show together. As this was an exceptional event, I carefully observed Í. after that day. She never called P. with his nickname again. Previously she was teasing him and was not really nice to him. After that day her behavior changed drastically. She was always nice to P. and P. to her. This was not the first time that a television program created a bridge between two students. Still, its extremity made it a unique event throughout my research.

There were other events where the new media created new friendships, and in some cases, new enemies. The desire to become the most knowledgeable person about a media product was observed to create several enmities among already conflicting students. Especially when two rival students identified themselves with the same character, and both desired the character to be exclusively theirs. This was a frequent battle when it came to the superpowered fictional characters. I have never witnessed a

fight about a character from a Turkish television series (for adults), as the concepts and characters, in my opinion, were not completely understood by the children. They tended to imitate without understanding, which made it quite dangerous as they did not understand the weight of their behaviors. Overly sexualized females, aggressive males, glorification of violence and power, praising financial success were all imitated by the younger audience. The social impacts of these imitations were quite serious in some cases. Especially when the behavior was reinforced again and again through exposure and praise from the environment.

What surprised me most was the parents' desire to make their children look like the character from the shows. Although not much, there were four distinct examples where the clothing and fashion style of the child was imitated from a television show (that they should not be watching). Combined with the imitation of the character, and the imitation of the costume/clothing, the reproduction of the character's behavior becomes cemented. As the reinforcement from the parents seemed to be the strongest form, buying clothing and equipment enhances it greatly. As the Turkish television series had no merchandise in general, the imitation of the clothing seemed the only available option. However, the lack of the merchandise, in this sense, was just an illusion. As I saw several clothing stores had mannequins dressed "exactly" like the characters from the mentioned shows. Therefore, the merchandise, although not "branded", existed in several different stores, for both adults and children.

I observed that in general media created a normalized sense of violence in the eyes of the children. The use of the violent language created a normalization of the act and event seemed to affect the children's perception. I experienced an example of this normalization during my research. There was an accident in front of the course. A car

ran over a cat. The scene was quite grotesque as the car ran over the cat's head and the result was not pretty. Teachers tried to shield the children from the scenery, and mostly succeeded. However, one of my students from my A2 class saw the event. She was a kind, animal loving child, who recently started to play mobile games a lot. She came to me and told me that there was a dead cat in the street.

Her: Teacher! Did you see the dead cat?

Me: Yes. That is sad really. (I was afraid that she would cry or react in a similar manner as she loved the cats too much, and always wanted to get a cat)

Her: Car hit a cat. Boooooom! Headshoooot! The cat's brains blew out! Haha! (And she went to the classroom laughing).

I was perplexed about her behavior as she loved the cats so much, and was a kind soul in general. She continued to love animals, tried to pet the cats she saw in the street. Her behavior about the animals did not change that much as far as I observed. Still, her reaction to the death of an animal was quite unexpected, as last semester she came to me really sad, told me that she saw a dead cat on the street. Of course, this might be a one-time event, yet the language she used was the “gaming language”, therefore I felt myself compelled to record this event.

There was also the event related to the google translate. A few of my students from A2 class used google translate to do their homework. As expected, the translation had some problems, and when I pointed that out, they all objected me, saying that they found it from the google translate. I explained them that the google translate was not always correct, and it only provided the closest translation. They were quite furious about this revelation. One of them told me that “The Big Google lies? What! I can't believe it. Shame!”. It took fifteen minutes for me to explain them

about the google translate and the internet's accuracy. Still, they were furious about the google translate, and did not forgive it at all. Their trust was shaken.

2.5 End of the Research

In the end of my research, I found out that the effects of the media, especially the most accessible medium television and the media it broadcasts are quite intense on the children's lives. My first thoughts and opinions about television and the extent of its effects (way lesser than my findings) changed drastically as I had observed it in the field. Children's usage of YouTube, mobile games, streaming platforms were more than I first anticipated. Their exposure to the adult-targeted content was also far greater than my preliminary thoughts. The increasing exposure to the prime-time television shows and series were also alarming when the media effects on the behavioral (and several other areas related to the behavior) functions taken under consideration. Parents' approval of the exposure enabled media to be more effective and permanent. Preventing the exposure to the inappropriate content seemed nigh-impossible when the peer-sharing of media was observed in schools. Personal devices, free access to some platforms, using parents' devices without any restrictions, are all important areas that increased the exposure. Imitating popular media characters affect several areas of the child's life. Relationship with their peers is directly affected, as does their status among them.

The imitation also includes the physical aspects like clothing, hair styles, choice of color, the items that are used. Frequent exposure to similar content proved to be effective on the perception of cultural events too. Majority of the children seemed to have an ideal New Year Holiday that is based on the media's presentation

(which is based on the Christian tradition of Christmas); eating turkey, having presents, hanging red socks on their doors and so on. When I asked them about the New Year Holiday, a huge majority of them shared the same mental image, which was also quite familiar to me; a cartoon-ish/ movie-ish Christmas. As they had no notion on the nature of the holiday, their ideal New Year was a combination of New Year and Christmas. The details of it were from different movie or cartoon scenes, or at least I thought that. Those who included socks hanging on the wall, or New Year Tree into their depictions all used the same colors and mostly same designs. I even asked few of them to draw the scenery, and saw that it was mostly similar in items, and colors. Similarly, the ideal Term Break/Holiday was depicted as skiing, or the ideal food was depicted as fast food that is frequently shown in media. Halloween was reduced to a costume wearing event that included mock-scary ornaments hanging around. Children had no notion about the customs of wearing scary costumes, making jack-o-lanterns, or trick-or-treat events. They only knew about the costumes and orange-black decorations that included cute bats. Of course, they also liked the junk food aspect. These examples are given to underline the different areas that are also affected with the media exposure. Negative values that were addressed in the popular media (of the time) were also proved to be impactful, as it affected the children's behavior and their perception in various areas. It is important to keep in mind that any symbolic adoption from the media comes along with its related merchandise, and provisions. Therefore, one model brings along several different effects with it.

Lastly, I must admit that my preliminary/pre-field thoughts on the effects of the media on children's behavior, and relevant areas of their lives, proved to be naïve and uninformed at best. My observations proved to me that "the reality" was much

more intense. It was not only the social, cognitive, behavioral, or financial but also physical and biological as Sigman stated in his research (Sigman, 2010).



3. DISCUSSION

In every step of the research, I have benefitted from Bandura's theories. Social Cognitive Learning Theory was the foundation of my observations, as well as my analysis of the behavior and behavior adoption of children. Considering the personal preferences of the children, and their own personality, application of the theory gave me a solid insight on the effects of the fictional figures. Considering the self-efficacy and its link to the collective efficacy, Bandura's theory explains the media-individual relationship without disregarding the individual differences and preferences, and including the possible social and cultural effects (Bandura A. , 2002; 2001; 1969).

After two fieldworks, and several talks/interviews with children and parents, this research answers its question; the fictional figures presented in the visual media effect the social cognitive learning of children, between the ages 6-9. This chapter analyzes these results briefly. Starting with Bandura's theory, chapter focuses on the financial, and social/cultural effects to present an analysis of the fieldwork. However, it is vital to keep in mind that the situation of the field was not in any way crafted by the children that participated this research. The existence of the brands, their popularity, and their dominance was already established by the adults. Therefore, it would be a true hypocrisy to turn the gaze solely on children.

3.1 Fictional Figures in Visual Media and Effects on Social Cognitive Learning

Bandura states that the media models are also included in the identifying sources (Bandura A. , 1969, p. 215). His claim is made in an age where the exposure

to media is miniscule compared to what the world has today. His theories on observational learning and vicarious reinforcement, as well as the acquisition of behavior through modeling can be traced in every step of the fieldwork. Through the observation of positive outcomes, children replicate the behavior of the model they observe. However, this replication depends on different aspects. It was observed that the allure of the fictional character depends on the personal preference of the child. Not every popular figure is liked and his/her behavior is adopted by the children. Their own agency decides on the acquisition of the behavior, as well as the likeability of the character. Still, one must add that the agency is also limited with the choices that are available, in addition to their reinforcement by the environment.

Abstract modeling is also observed, as several children apply what they learned to other situations successfully (Bandura A. , 2001). When the behavior is good and altruistic, the social repercussions of it enhances the behavior. The student who imitated the Miraculous Ladybug, adopted the positive behavior of the character. Even when helping others was disadvantageous for her (like missing the break time, losing her place in the line etc.), she continued to act like the model. It was her own choice to adopt the behavior of the fictional figure, as during that time the cartoon was not as popular as others. However, she chose to model it, and did not prefer any other fictional figures. On the other hand, there were negative behavior adoption examples like "C.". After watching Powerpuff Girls with her friends, she started to dress like a character from the show, Buttercup. Buttercup is a physical character that defeats her enemies by brute force, and the most aggressive of the three characters. Media's depictions of conflicts are already argued in the previous chapters (Ball-Rokeach, 2009). The observation of the character, and the positive results she gets, probably encouraged C. to behave in the same manner. By vicarious reinforcement, C.'s

perception of violence seemed to change, and she started to hit their friends, first in a joking manner. Her behavior got escalated, and she tried assault one of her friends after an argument. Another example is A.'s behavior. When she started to watch a new Turkish television series, she started to act more aggressively and yell at her friends, bully them around. In both examples the behavior of the modeled character is used as a justification as it was argued in the previous chapters (Bandura A. , 2001; Ball-Rokeach, 2009). In C.'s example, the character was well liked and her behavior was met with laughter by her friends. With this additional reinforcement, she started to increase her adoption of the behavior. In A.'s case however, the behavior was nowhere well-accepted by her peers. Even herself admitted that the character in the show was not a good person. Her behavior remained because of her family's approval (or enjoyment). In the case of the student who liked *Miraculous Ladybug*, her behavior changed towards more beneficial, and improved her relationship with her friends. What is common here is that, the possibility of the modeled behavior being altered by the parents' approval and guidance decides on the outcome. Whether the behavior will be adopted, or not, depends on the outside guidance and reinforcement. A media product can attract the attention of the audience. Yet, according to Bandura's theory, adoption of the behavior depends on the positive outcomes (potential and immediate) of the modeled behavior. Therefore, if the behavior is not reinforced by the environment, the percent of it being adopted drops critically. Main argument against the parental-adult reinforcement would be the peer effect on the behavior. Although it is quite true, the peer behavior can also be reinforced, or discouraged by their relevant parental figures.

Another issue on the "effects of the fictional figures presented in the visual media" is the fictional figures themselves. Nature of the fictional characters that are

marketed to the audience is one of the major elements of the research. As it was seen in the fieldwork, the consumption of the younger audience is not limited to the products that are only designed for them. They seem to consume adult oriented media products as well. In most cases, as it is given in several examples in the previous chapters, the overall exposure time to adult oriented media products is quite formidable. Combined with the reinforcement of the models' behaviors, both vicariously and individually, the possibility of adoption is quite high (Bandura, Underwood, & Fromson, 1975). Keeping this in mind, the nature of the fictional characters seems to be increasingly violent in many examples, from adult oriented programs to cartoon characters that were designed for children/young audience.

In the case of the drawing exercises that were commenced in the Mehmet Akif Ersoy Primary School, majority of the fictional characters tend to solve their problems through violence. The violence, in this case, is softened by the lack of blood, and no dire consequences suffered through it. In the example of the Powerpuff Girls, the solution to most problems are delivered through violent acts by the supernatural physical capabilities of the character. These violent solutions are common to most of the fictional figures, especially among those that can be considered super-heroes. Combined with the violence depicted in the adult targeted media, young audience seems to be surrounded by similar fictional models. What is crucial is that the behavior adoption is not limited with a singular occasion but can be transferred in other instances by symbolic modeling (Bandura A. , 1977, pp. 38-39). The result of the behavior is the determining force in most cases.

Therefore, echoing Bandura's claim, if the aggressor's behavior is effective, observers will identify with him, even they dislike it (Bandura & McDonald, 1963, p. 218). Adding the positive feedback from the adults, and dressing like the character to

fortify the identification, A.'s adoption of the behavior continued. The merchandise, in this sense, not only fortified her behavior but also encouraged it as the items were bought to her by her mother, another fan of the same show and character.

3.2 Merchandise and Identification

It is observed that the possession of the paraphernalia of a character improves the identification aspect, and creates an idea of “belonging” among peers. Friedman states that the act of consumption is directly linked with the act of identification (Friedman, 1994). My personal experience in the field proves that the consumer habits of children are immensely fortified by the mass media in every possible chance. It can be argued that the fictional figures presented by the visual media are just like brands. They have their own merchandise, color, logo etc. Through the advertisements, children are bombarded with brands (Rideout, Roberts, & Foehr, 2005). Today, children's programming contains several different advertisements for products that are designed for children. Keeping in mind that the children are not born with consumer habits, they need to be actively guided (Giroux & Pollock, 2011). This “guidance” is committed by their favorite heroes, fictional characters and so-called educational cartoons. As the field notes argue, the school objects that have characters' name on it, toys, comic books, or expansive versions of the toys both fortify the identification with the character, and improve self-esteem. Parents complain about the prices of these merchandise also support Spiegel's claim, advertisers are not only making children buy things, but also make them nag their parents to spend more (Spiegel, 1998).

Major problem is the shifting of the previous elements. Fictional characters are now “brands and logos”. The fieldwork conducted in Mehmet Akif Ersoy Primary School proves that the children are informed about several different fictional figures, their weapons/items and even their clothing. The depictions of the fictional figures have correct costume details and colors in most cases. Therefore, the outfit of the child, with correct details and colors, might also be important as it fortifies his identification with the selected figure.

In the example where the student “A.”, wearing similar clothing with the fictional character enhances the identification, and shifts the behavior similar to the imitated figure. As Punch describes; having certain merchandise like clothes might cause changes in the attitude of the child (Punch, 2007). When the parents buy these items, they also approve the imitation of the character in some sense. Especially in A.’s case, the clothing is bought by her mother to match the character in the Turkish television series. Combining this with the appreciation she got from other adults, her behavior is immensely reinforced. The vicarious reinforcement she got from observing the character reflects directly to her behavior. As her behavior is reinforced both real and vicariously, the behavior becomes cemented until she gets negative reactions that can erase the positive ones (Bandura A. , 1977). As she is the prestigious figure among her friends, and gets positive results, her behavior has the possibility to affect her social circle.

The paraphernalia issue is an ever-present one in today’s media. As previously discussed, the results of the media exposure and behavior adoption is not always negative. Based on the self-efficacy of the child, the adopted behavior/s can vary from negative to beneficial. As it can be seen in the previous chapter, the beneficial results are no small matter. One of the students (E., female, 9) really liked the character

Miraculous Ladybug, and she started to adopt her behavior. Her self-confidence improved, her relationship with her peers became better, she started to act as a problem solver, and helped her friends whenever she can. Her previously shy attitude left its place to an active and helpful one. However, she also bought several of the character's merchandise, ranging from school supplies to clothing. She cut her hair like the character, and started to dress in similar colors. Her beneficial/positive behavior seems to be reinforced by the characters merchandise.

In both cases, the effects of the merchandise seem to be considerably visible. Although it would not be fair to comment as “their self-expression is reduced to what they can buy”, their material possessions surely affect their behavior, and through them, their environment. Therefore, the media consumption, together with the paraphernalia and adoption, is both an individual, social and in some cases cultural phenomenon.

Therefore, it is crucial to keep in mind that the effects of mass media are not only limited to the individual, but also includes social, and therefore, cultural.

3.3 Social and Cultural Affection

There is a social and cultural side of consuming media, especially television (Block & Buckingham, 2007). Larkin's research depicts the social and cultural effects in Nigeria (Larkin, 2002a; 2002b), Abu-Lughod's focus on Egypt (Abu-Lughod, 2002b), Mankekar's focus on India (Mankekar, 2002). Mass media and its cultural effects are no strange topics for anthropology.

The act of consuming, and identity forming are linked (Kincheloe, 2002). It is not only on individual level but also on the social level that his identification is

presented. The acquisition of paraphernalia fortifies the identification of the individual, therefore creating a desired image that holds the symbols of the figure he identifies. This identification is not limited with the individual level. As the paraphernalia increases the prestige, the individual also starts to affect his environment more. People tend to imitate the prestigious figures more than others (Lefkowitz, Blake, & Mouton, 1955). Therefore, on a social, as well as cultural level, every act of identification (and consummation) has a direct or indirect effect. A single popular cartoon creates a giant wave among the shops around the school, and make them start selling paraphernalia of it. Similarly, fashion stores, boutiques and other shops start to sell similar accessories, outfits, or even make special creations based on the show. As in Hannah Montana example, the self-expression is tied to the financial capability of the children, and parents (Sorensen & Mitchell, 2011; Mayes-Elma, 2011).

It is important to keep in mind that the effects of the media are not only limited with specific shows, but also with consistent messages. During the fieldwork, I have interviewed children about their New Year Holiday. Their depictions were similar of a Disney's Christmas scene. Most of them told me that they ate turkey, they had presents, a decorated pine tree (fake one mostly), red and green clothing. Of course, none of them believed in Santa Claus, but still they mentioned him as bringing them presents. Even if the events are not true, the depictions of the holiday, in a glocalized way of course, is directly taken from the media. The Disneyfication of culture³⁷, in this sense, creates a strong perception of a "perfect holiday" in the eyes of the children (Giroux & Pollock, 2011). The multiple modeling, in this example, can be argued to increase the adoption of the behavior (Perry & Bussey, 1979; Bandura A. , 1986). The

³⁷ Similar critique was also directed at McDonald's (Ritzer, 2019)

repetitive messages presented by the media form a hybridized image of the New Year Holiday. Therefore, the perception of it shares certain similar elements among the audience.

In addition to that, one must also consider the vastness of the merchandise that is tied to a fictional figure. A modelled character, like Spider-man, has several different products that children desire to buy. As previously stated, the effects of possessing certain merchandise related to the character improves the identification, as well as boosts self-esteem, and self-expression (Pugh, 2009). It is true that children do not perform everything they learn, however they are motivated by prestigious figures, successes of others, and by those they can identify with themselves (Bandura A. , 1986; 2001; 2002). Fictional figures that are presented in visual media can be included in all three of these areas, and with the frequency and vast number of the figures in it, it is quite possible, and probable for the children to model characters from it. A prestigious, or heroic figure has several different merchandises. From school objects to clothing, from computer games to food and drink, the vast market of the fictional figure paraphernalia covers nearly every area of a child's life. Distributed to a global market, these products reflect the culture they come from. Although they are glocalized in some cases like McDonald's, or Pokemon there are also those who still contain its cultural elements in them, and can create a change among the youth (Iwabuchi, 2004; Kincheloe, 2002). Soyaya books are great examples of this change created by the media (Larkin, 2002a). However, in most cases the creation of the "new" element for the youth is based on the profit margin of the product, and its potential benefit to the corporation (Giroux, 2000).

Violence, and sexualization are two crucial effects that can be traced in the media that children consume. Effects of violence, and its frequent depiction in the

media as a conflict resolution in both adult targeted media and children shows are previously argued in this work. Still, the possibility of a violence-less solution and its total disregard is a problem (Hall & Whannel, 2018). However, combined with the sexualization of the characters, the effects become quite worrying. “Bratz”, a children’s toy brand that makes little dolls are a great example of this sexualization, as the dolls themselves are dressed in adult clothes that are heavily sexualized (Wu, 2019). As in most children products, the brand expanded into several platforms including the cartoon movie and the computer game, as well as the fashion industry. Keeping in mind that the brand is specifically created for children, these dolls and related merchandise are currently being distributed globally to the children around the financially able world. As they are designed for children, and marketed as such, they are a part of the children’s private cultural world, or kid-zone, as previously explained. The suspicion on them, therefore, is reduced. Although their major issue is the sexualization problem, in the sense of marketing they are quite similar to the Barbie, existing in different platforms, having various merchandise unrelated to their original function (Steinberg, 2011).

The creation of a global image seems to be possible through the mass media exposure, keeping the globalization-hybridization relationship in mind (Pieterse, 2006). The media changes the original by its representation, and creates an image that serves its own agenda (Poster, 2000). However, this is not only limited with the global economics, or created consumerism with the media. Increased media exposure also creates a high possibility to internalize the stereotypes presented in the media, especially for children (Rothschild, 1984). Frequent exposure to a character, combined with its various merchandise that include junk food (loved by most of the children), toys, computer games, or other merchandise, enhances the possibility of it

being modeled, or identified with. As the audience is not completely passive, children's self-efficacy has the last word. However, it is quite possible that among the vast number of visually, and emotionally attention-grabbing content, and observing the positive results of the character, as well as the positive feedback from the social environment, a person can find it quite easier to find desirable traits in it. Which, as a result, can enhance the possibility of modeling it.

Therefore, the media has a direct effect on the perception of the individuals, and through them the collective. As the efficacy of the collective is tied to the individual, the changes in the individuals combined also affects the collective (Bandura A. , 2002). Mass media, especially television, controls the idea of the “prestigious” elements. By creating prestigious and desired figures, they set the tone of what is acceptable, what is beautiful, and what is not. Through the figures and their actions, media presents what action is transgressive, and what is justifiable (Ball-Rokeach, 2009; Bandura A. , 2001). If a Powerpuff Girl hits her enemy, and gets praised for it, a child would also imitate her. If all the adults are watching MMA matches, and praise people for the physical violence, the child would also imitate them. The vicarious reinforcement does not only affect individual modeling, but also collective behavior. By imitating the prestigious ones, children learn also learn from their peers. Just like with *Mucize Doktor*, most popular shows spread quickly. Through the abstract modeling, the behavior of the popular (loved and reinforced) characters of these shows are learned by the observers and repeated in different environments. Combined with the praise coming from the adults for imitating the behavior, the adoption of it becomes most probable. Controlling the representations, or the stereotypes, mean also controlling the general approach to that group. Controlling the acceptability of the transgressive behavior means controlling what is

right and what is not. Through personal experiences, the media shapes the collective efficacy. Therefore, as Steinberg says: “Not only does the study of children’s popular culture grant insights into childhood consciousness; it also provides new pictures of culture in general.” (Steinberg, 2011, p. 22)

3.4 Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking and Drawing Exercises

Although the fieldwork in the Mehmet Akif Ersoy Primary School presented a different type of data than that was aimed in this research, the data gathered from the fieldwork still indicates a strong cognitive affection from the televised characters. As previously explained, the characters children drew in the exercise were censored, as most of them did not include the characters that they should not know, or media products that they should not consume. As children have their own cultural districts, this act of knowledge prevention from an adult makes sense (MacDougall, 2020). The act of consuming has a direct relationship with the identification (Kincheloe, 2002). As the children have their own agency, they “choose” what media products they consume, and what characters they identify with. The identification process is increased when the model shares similar qualities with the observer, in this case the children (Bandura A. , 1969). These qualities range from physical to social, and can be either substantial, or even be miniscule compared to other possible options. However, when this link is established, and the identificatory process is increased, the effectiveness of observational learning is heightened (Nabi & Prestin, 2017; Bandura & Bussey, 1999).

Figures drawn in the exercise reflect the main visual qualities of the characters children preferred. The physical and visual qualities of the characters are well known

and replicated by the children, which indicates their knowledge on the characters, as well as the main qualities of the characters. In the Drawing Exercise Example 1 (Appendix B), the character Venom is depicted. His black and white costume, facial features and even his muscular physique is reflected in the drawing. In Drawing Exercise Example 2, two characters from the famous cartoon movie “Frozen” are depicted in a similar fashion. Their color scheme, outfits, and major features are similar to the original. In the Drawing Exercise Example 3, the artistic ability of the child was not quite adequate to give a clear depiction. However, the main features of the characters are still in line with their original appearance. Captain America has a blue and red uniform, and a shield, Hulk is muscular and green (the muscles were specifically drawn) and Thor even has a hammer. The drawing ability of the child did not prevent him to give the “necessary” details. These details are the symbolic qualities of the characters including their color scheme and outfits. In Drawing Exercise Example 4, Wonder Woman even has her “Lasso of Truth” hanging on her belt. From the hair colors, to the equipment, all of the fictional figures were drawn according to their depictions in the media, regardless of the artistic talent of the student.

In the most basic sense, the flow of media-audience-media, where the popular concepts are produced more as the audience likes them and audience is affected more as they are exposed to similar content, creates a loop that effects the social and cognitive learning of the children (Bandura A. , 2001).

Regardless of their creativity levels, a huge majority of the children drew characters from media that were depicted quite similar to the original. Most of these media are emotionally charged and stimulate the audience by their flashy and colorful content, which increases the attraction of the observers, therefore increase the

retention, and therefore adoption possibilities (Bandura & McDonald, 1963; Bandura A. , 2001; Nabi & Prestin, 2017). These characters depicted in the drawings are from mass media. They are products, and even some of them are “brands”, as the companies produce several merchandises based on them, which, increases the identification with the character, and as a result increase the adoption of the character’s behavior, or even his perspective (media producer’s perspective to be exact) (Gerbner & Gross, 1976; Gerbner G. , Gross, Morgan, Signorelli, & Shanahan, 2002). Considering the increased depiction of violent solutions to the conflict resolutions, the adoption of behavior can also be argued to include the aggression of the model, if the model’s actions produce positive results (Hall & Whannel, 2018; Baer & Sherman, 1964; Valkenburg & Piotrowski, 2017). As a result, the frequency of the fictional figures, as well as their accurate depictions, and their equipment, proves that they can hold the attention of the children that observe/watch them, and be successfully remembered with their own symbolic functions. Considering that the students, at least most of them, were trying to censor their media preferences, the drawn figures are just products of their well-functioning retention process.

Although the results were not the ones that was being researched for, they are still valuable for this research, as they show the effectivity of the fictional figures depicted in the visual media, even when they are not the number one choice of the audience.

4. CONCLUSION

When I first started my research, I believed that the effects of television and media, although existent, would not be “that” much. After all this research, fieldwork, interviews and observation, I can proudly say that “I was direly mistaken.” The effects of television and media were much more important, frequent, strong and imminent than I first imagined. Through a self-search, I found out that many of my current behavior, likes and dislikes are tied to the cartoons and movies I watched as a kid. Comparing the exposure between my youth and now, the importance of media studies feels more and more crucial. It is not all bad, of course. The positive possibilities of the television and media, if freed from its commercial bonds, can be an important asset to the lives of children. Personally, I feel that those commercial bonds will only tighten. The world has suffered, and is still suffering a global pandemic. The importance of media studies multiplied as the children all around the world became locked inside. Those who have the means are forced to attend online classes, spend their time in front of the computer or television. The exposure to media has increased drastically, and it is all permitted, and regulated by the adults, as they were also locked inside. This new at home life brought new media advances in people’s lives. As there are new technological advances, like new streaming platforms, new devices or so, new approaches, and new perspectives are needed to study them (Turner, 2019).

Studying the relationship between television, or media and children feels like a responsibility now. Seeing that the effects are so vast, it is under social sciences’ responsibility to see that the situation is researched properly. The commercial culture of the global media world should not be left to reign freely. Children are agents of change. How they grow up directly effects the world itself. But this does not mean

that the children need to be controlled. Individuality of children should not be overlooked, as they are neither objects to be protected, or tiny adults that should shoulder the burdens of an adult life. Joseph Tobin asks “Why do media researchers and other adults feel they can write confidently about the meaning of a text intended for children without talking to children?” (Tobin J. , 2000, p. 147). He is quite right of course. Without talking to children, and listening to them, it is not possible to understand their relationship with media, and its effects on their lives. However, what I learned is that the effects of the media are not limited with the fictional figures only. It is a multi-platformed, and multi-layered marketing power that cannot be understood by simply focusing only one aspect of it. There is a dire need for media literacy, for both children, and parents, as they are both consumers in today’s global, corporate world (Evans , 2020). So, what can be done about these?

The starting point would be to shed the hypocritical approach to the media-children relationship. Children are surrounded with today’s media, but they did not create them. They are only allowed to choose from the given possibilities. It is not children’s deliberate proneness to violence but the shift in the role models. The current trend of anti-heroes presents a violent, lawless and somewhat cruel examples to both children and adults. Solutions are mostly violence-based, and in some cases the gore depictions and bloody acts get more praise than peaceful ones. Word “hero” has different connotations than it had before. In the pre-field survey, the word was associated with both fictional and historical figures. During my fieldwork I have seen several different examples for heroes given by children. The common aspect among them was that they were fictional, and in most cases above human capacity.

Therefore, it is not unexpected for the young audience to think heroes as super-human beings. So, to be able to analyze the relationship better, the literary

aspects of the hero myths and fiction must be included into a wider research.

Sociological aspects of the media and individual relationship must also be taken under consideration, as well as relevant media theories. Media theories, like Social Cognitive Theory or Cultivation Theory, provides the basic understanding of the individual-media relationship and the results of it, as well as the reasons for the affections. This provides a better understanding of the media as a part of the individuals personal and psychological life.

Wider research would yield better results, as this research was limited in several sense. To be able to draw a better analysis, it should be applied to a much larger population, with tweaks and adjustments according to the necessities. A research done in every school in İstanbul would yield considerably different results altogether. The diversity of a bigger universe would bring an encompassing perspective and analysis on the topic. Although I worked quite hard on this research, I also admit that it was limited due to manpower, finances, time and other social/environmental requirements. Differences in population, customs, finances and other aspects might yield a detailed analysis, and would help the researchers to comment on the possible adjustments of the media relationship.

Most important aspect of the children-media relationship is the adults. As seen in the field, as well as in Bandura's theories, the active participation of an adult has the ability to change the outcome entirely. Still, we must also admit that the children are not the only ones that are affected by the fictional figures, as we are not immune to the media effects (which was already argued in the first part of this research). The considerable power and influence of the media holds a great dominance over our lives. It is a multi-layered and multi-functioning element, and as a result the approaches towards it should include multi-disciplined perspective. As a researcher,

and a student of the social sciences, I do not think that a single discipline (in the sense of a single perspective) would be enough to commence a research on media. Ability to control the image of a group holds a great representative power on the people, for both the represented and the perceiving ones.

However, as media aims for its own survival, the financial aspects of it, and politics tied to the finances, must also be considered when doing a research on media. Without interdisciplinary approach, one cannot do a comprehensive study on media, and interdisciplinarity also requires a hybrid but a fresh perspective in this case. One must not forget that when they are studying media, they are also studying “people”. Human element, agency, and nature should not be overlooked. In some cases, this might also mean to transcend the previously accepted borders, and to create different approach that would provide a better perspective, and analysis. To put it into better words:

Media is a varied, multi-branched, and everchanging force. To study it, one must have a broad perspective and be adaptable as it is.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A. Ethical Committee Approval



SAYI : 75078252-050.01-0470
KONU : Etik Kurul Onayı

04.05.2018

İLGİLİ MAKAMA

Yeditepe Üniversitesi, Fen Edebiyat Fakültesi, Antropoloji Bölümü Doktora Öğrencilerinden **Burak AKKURT'a** ait "Medyada Sunulan Kahraman Figürlerinin Çocukların Bilişsel ve Duygusal Gelişimine Etkisinin Antropolojik Açıdan İncelenmesi" başlıklı araştırmasının Beşeri Bilimler etik standartlarına uygunluğu, Yeditepe Üniversitesi Beşeri ve Sosyal Araştırmalar Etik Kurulu tarafından değerlendirilmiş ve onaylanmıştır.

Prof. Dr. Duygun YARSUVAT
Etik Kurul Komisyonu Başkanı

Prof. Dr. Servet BAYRAM
Eğitim Fakültesi, Bilgisayar ve Öğretim Teknolojileri Öğretmenliği Bölümü

Prof. Dr. Suat ANAR
İletişim Fakültesi, Gazetecilik Bölümü

Prof. Dr. Zeynep Aslı ALICI
Ticari Bilimler Fakültesi, Uluslararası Finans Bölümü

Prof. Dr. Ayla ERSOY
Güzel Sanatlar Fakültesi, Sanat Yönetimi Bölümü

Prof. Dr. Mehmet BAYRAKTAR
Fen Edebiyat Fakültesi, Antropoloji Bölümü

Prof. Dr. Saffet BABÜR
Fen-Edebiyat Fakültesi, Felsefe Bölümü



SAYI : 75078252-050.01-513
KONU : Etik Kurul Onayı

03.07.2018

İLGİLİ MAKAM'A

Yeditepe Üniversitesi, Fen Edebiyat Fakültesi, Antropoloji Bölümü Doktora Öğrencilerinden **Burak AKKURT'a** ait "Medyada Sunulan Kahraman Figürlerinin Çocukların Bilişsel ve Duygusal Gelişimine Etkisinin Antropolojik Açıdan İncelenmesi" başlıklı araştırmasının Beşeri Bilimler etik standartlarına uygunluğuna ilişkin Yeditepe Üniversitesi Beşeri ve Sosyal Araştırmalar Etik Kurul Onayı ekte sunulmuştur.
Bilgilerinizi rica ederim.

Prof. Dr. F. Yeşim EKİNCİ
Rektör Yardımcısı

Appendix B. Torrance Tests and Drawings Examples

I-RESİM TAMAMLAMA

Bu ve bunun arkasındaki sayfalarda bitmemiş şekiller var. Bu şekillere çizgiler katarak, ilginç şeyler ve şekiller yapabilirsiniz. Tamamlayacağınız şekillerin ilginç bir hikaye anlatması da gerekiyor. Bunun için, önce ilk aklınıza geleni çizin, sonra da buna, diğer aklınıza gelenleri ekleyin. Bu iş bitince, yaptığınız her resim için ilginç bir başlık bulun ve bulduğunuz başlığı, her karenin alt tarafındaki numaralı çizgi üzerine yazın.

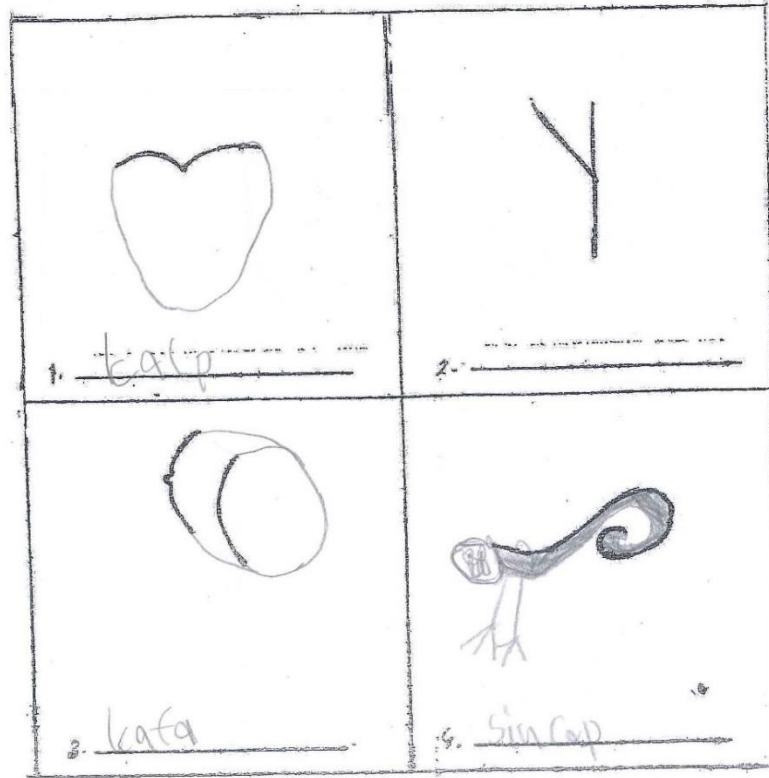


Figure 1 Torrance Test Example 1

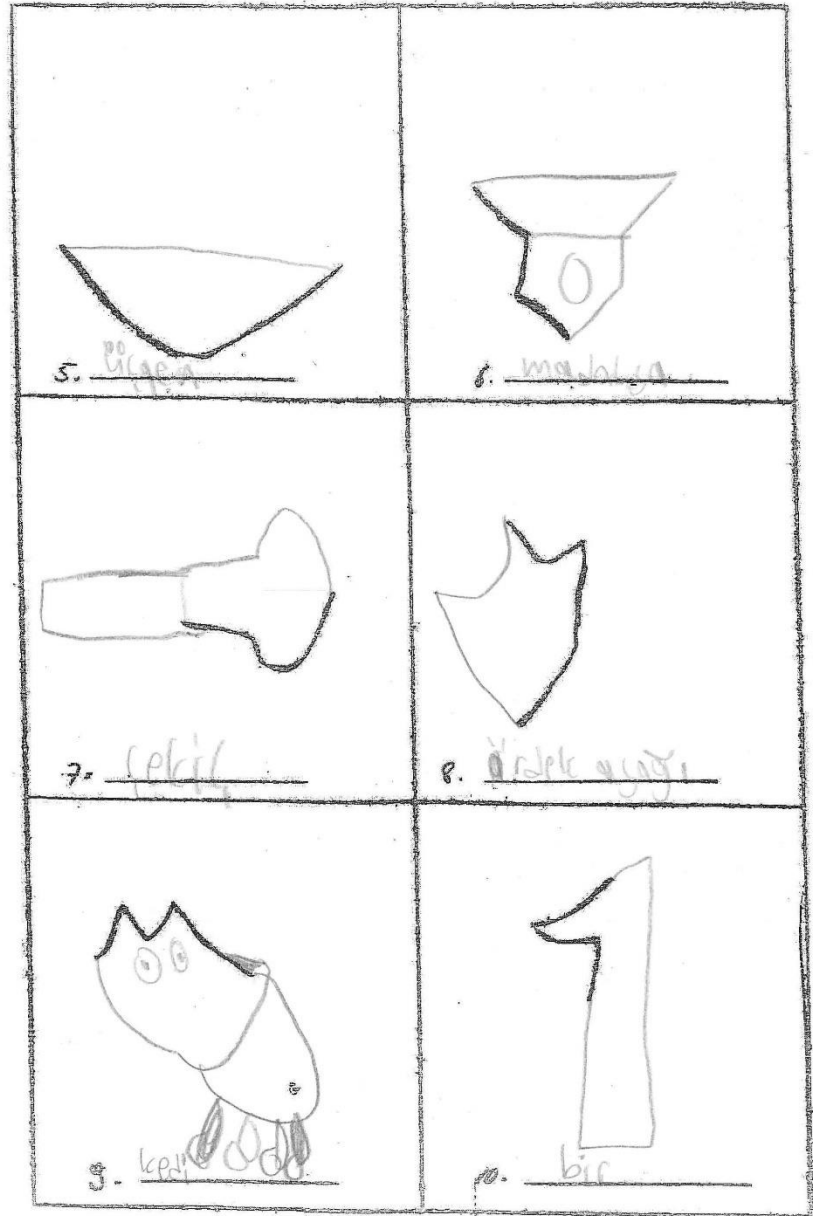


Figure 2 Torrance Test Example 1

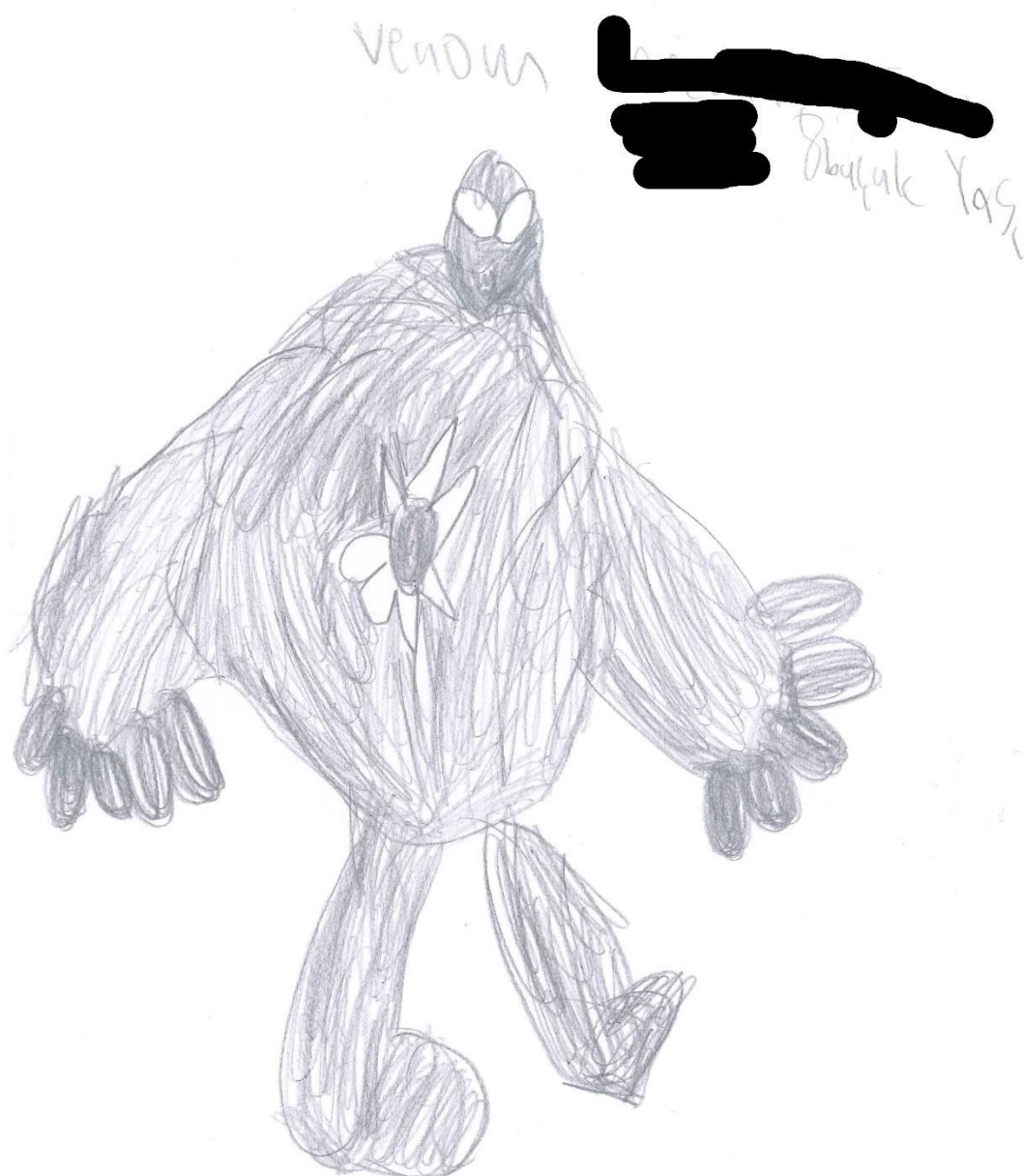


Figure 3 Drawing Exercise Example 1

Yas: 7

I-RESİM TALAFATANA

Bu ve bunun arkasındaki sayfalarda bitmemiş şekiller var. Bu şekillere çizgiler katarak, ilginç şeyler ve şekiller yapabilirsiniz. Tamamlayacağınız şekillerin ilginç bir hikaye anlatması da gerekiyor. Bunun için, önce ilk aklınıza geleni çizin, sonra da buna, diğer aklınıza gelenleri ekleyin. Bu iş bitince, yaptığınız her resim için ilginç bir başlık bulun ve bulduğunuz başlığı, her karenin alt tarafındaki numaralı çizgi üzerine yazın.

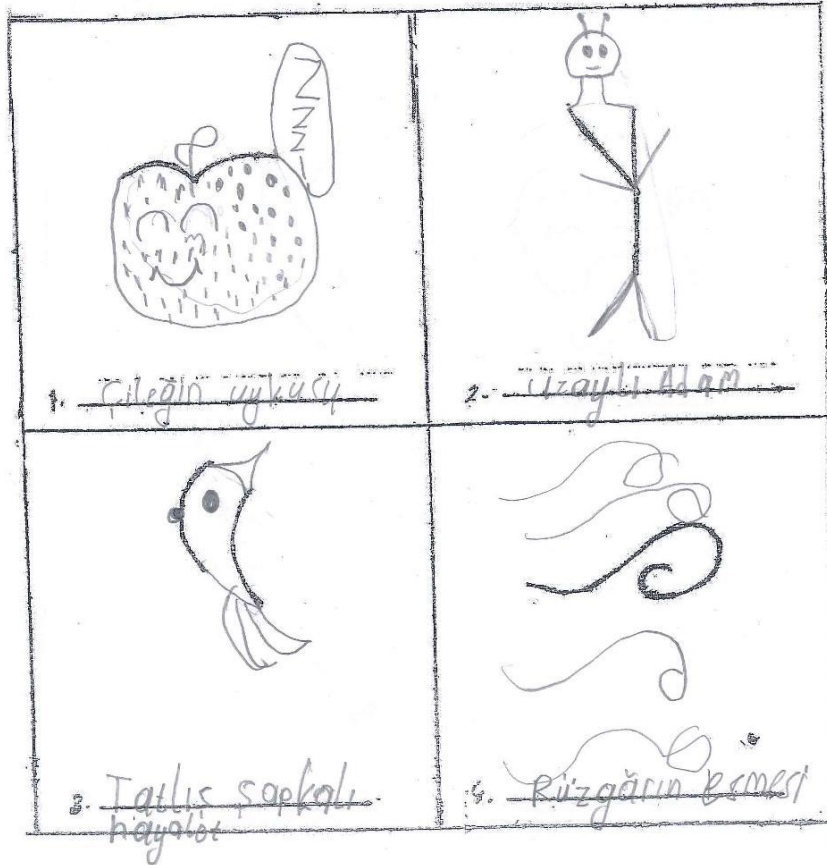


Figure 4 Torrance Test Example 2

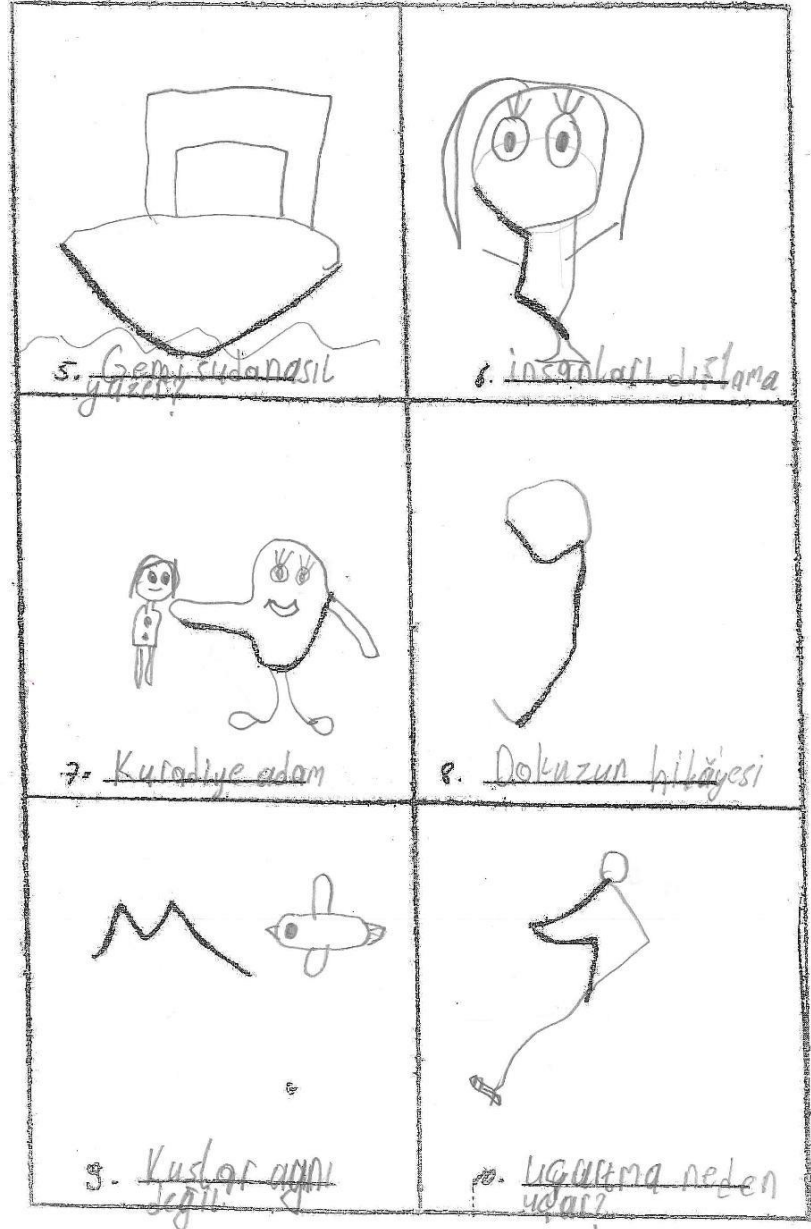


Figure 5 Torrance Test Example 2



Figure 6 Drawing Exercise Example 2

9

I-RESİM TAMAMLAMA

Bu ve bunun arkasındaki sayfalarda bitmemiş şekiller var. Bu şekillere çizgiler katarak, ilginç şeyler ve şekiller yapabilirsiniz. Tamamlayacağınız şekillerin ilginç bir hikaye anlatması da gerekiyor. Bunun için, önce ilk aklınıza geleni çizin, sonra da buna, diğer aklınıza gelenleri ekleyin. Bu iş bitince, yaptığınız her resim için ilginç bir başlık bulun ve bulduğunuz başlığı, her karenin alt tarafındaki numaralı çizgi üzerine yazın.

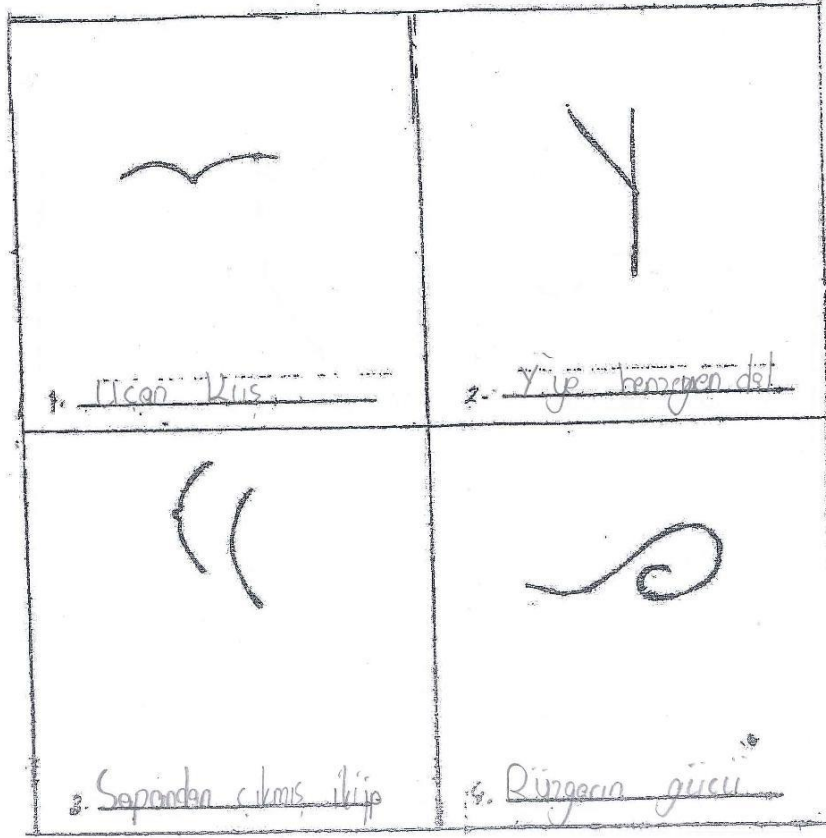


Figure 7 Torrance Test Example 3

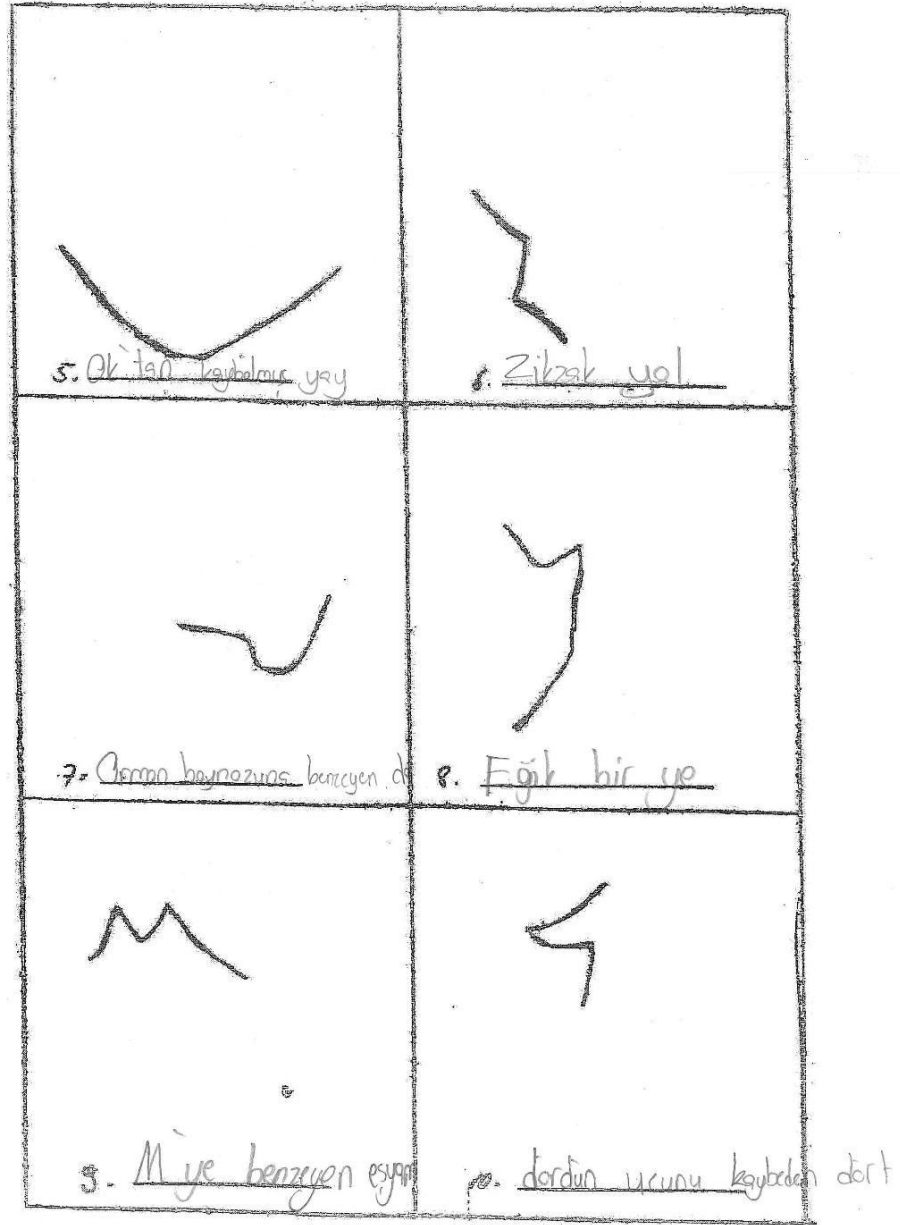


Figure 8 Torrance Test Example 3



[REDACTED]
9 [REDACTED]

Figure 9 Drawing Exercise Example 3

yaş=7-8 arası

I-RESİM TALİMLERİ

Bu ve bunun arkasındaki sayfalarda bitmemiş şekiller var. Bu şekillere çizgiler katarak, ilginç şeyler ve şekiller yapabilirsiniz. Tamamlayacağınız şekillerin ilginç bir hikaye anlatması da gerekiyor. Bunun için, önce ilk aklınıza geleni çizin, sonra da buna, diğer aklınıza gelenleri ekleyin. Bu iş bitince, yaptığınız her resim için ilginç bir başlık bulun ve bulduğunuz başlığı, her karenin alt tarafındaki numaralı çizgi üzerine yazın.

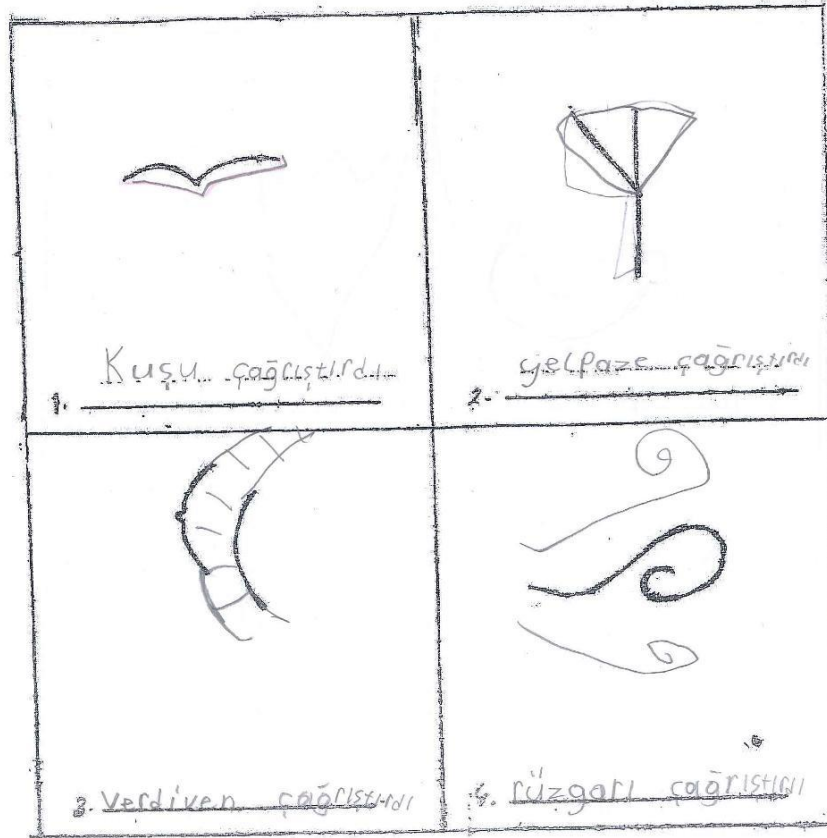


Figure 10 Torrance Test Example 4

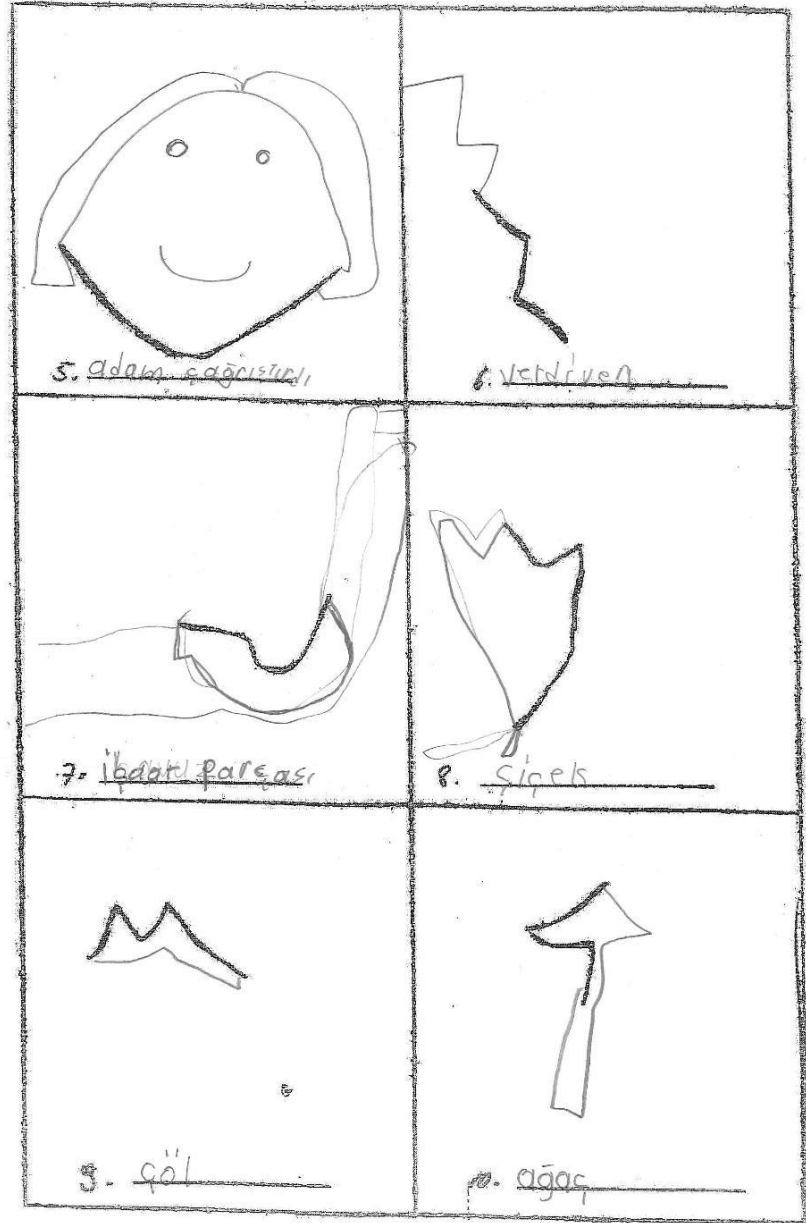


Figure 11 Torrance Test Example 4



Figure 12 Drawing Exercise Example 4