

Research Paper

TITLE: "Effects of Ben 10 on kids in the agegroup 5 to 8 years."

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Abstract

"The problem with our society is that our values aren't in the right place. There's an awful lot of bleeding and naked bodies on prime-time networks, but not nearly enough cable television on public programming."

— Bauvard, Evergreens Are Prudish

Technology has expanded the availability of information through various routes, such as, television, music, movies, internet and magazines. These routes avail children to endless learning venues about any issue that might be of interest to them. Television is a common media mode which is available to most Indian houses. As per the Turnaround Management Association 's TAM Annual Universe Update - 2010, India now has over 134 million households (out of 223 million) with television sets, of which over 103 million have access to Cable TV or Satellite TV. Kids are exposed to TV at a very young age and they view TV actively or passively without any filtrations, one program after the other. Unless parents are empowered with expert information, they are ill-equipped to judge which programs to place off-limits for their kids.

This retrospective descriptive study explores whether kids and their parents felt the side effects of viewing Ben 10. The sample population of 30 kids in the age – group 5 to 8 years old and their parents participated in the research. Factors examined in the study were psychological effects, health effects, TV contents rating views, etc.

The Ben 10 Diet Questionnaire was administered to kids and parents (N=30) to explore how much time and type of media they consumed as they were in their formation years. Data from the survey established that there are psychological and health effects of Ben 10 on their young kids. Results indicated that parents thought, 12-15 years is the right age- group for the kids to view Ben 10. They also thought that TV owes them *Proper Consumer Advice* related to the programmes they broadcast in form of TV content ratings according to Indian standards.

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1. Introduction

Today, TV viewing takes up a large part of children's waking time and they are deeply affected by it. Most kids plug into the world of television long before they enter school. According to the Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF):

- **11.** Two-thirds of infants and toddlers watch a screen an average of 2 hours a day kids under age 6 watch an average of about 2 hours of screen media a day, primarily TV and videos or DVDs.
- **12.** Kids and teens 8 to 18 years spend nearly 4 hours a day in front of a TV screen and almost 2 additional hours on the computer (outside of schoolwork) and playing video games.
- **13.** Kids who view violent acts are more likely to show aggressive behaviour but also fear that the world is scary and that something bad will happen to them.

TV characters often depict risky behaviour such as kicking, hitting, shooting, etc. They do so in order to destroy the bad guy and not try to solve the problems. In next episode another bad guy comes up with problems. The problem- solving ability of kids is totally crushed, with a lesson for the kids that hitting the bad person is the solution to solve the problem (justifying violence).

a. Statement and significance of the problem

We are immensely affected by what we see. And so is it with children. According to the Social Learning Theory (Bandura, Albert. 1971) it is clear that Children observe the people around them behaving in various ways ^[1]. Same is true for TV also. Children learn through imitation of characters on TV as well as movies. Today, TV is an easy alternative to a full- time nanny in almost every home. Children are mostly left unattended while watching TV. Most of the parents even today, still consider all cartoon animation programmes appropriate for their kids.

With high- level of creativity in the media field, today *all animations are not appropriate for all age-groups*. Gone are the days, when cartoon and animations were restricted to Mickey Mouse and Superman only. Today, on one hand there are *Family guy, South Park*, etc. as the adult animation, on the other hand *Dragonball Z, Pokemon*, etc. are the action adventure animation series. *Doraemon, Transformers:*

^[1] McLeod, S. A. (2011). *Albert Bandura | Social Learning Theory*. Retrieved from http://www.simplypsychology.org/bandura.html

Generation 2, etc. are a part of science fiction (sci-fi) animation series. The Simpsons, Courage the Cowardly Dog, etc. are the family animation series.

There are many more genres in the field of entertainment and just as 35mm motion pictures can be grouped in various genres, animation movies and animated tv- series can also be grouped in similar genres. The commonly overlooked fact is that animation is not a genre but an art form, a medium, a technique used in the entertainment field especially for kids but *not* only by kids.

A very popular animated television series is Ben 10: Alien Force. It is an American animated television series created by team Man of Action (a group consisting of Duncan Rouleau, Joe Casey, Joe Kelly, and Steven T. Seagle) and produced by Cartoon Network Studios. It is a sequel to *Ben 10* ^[2]. It was a very popular animated TV series which had forty- six episodes and ran for three years (2008- 2010).

In this research paper, *Effects of Ben 10: Alien Force (Ben 10: AF) have been studied on kids in the age-group 5 to 8 years*. This series of Ben 10 was very popular and influential. Children (esp. boys) followed it very closely and were highly affected by every episode. It was darker than its predecessor involving

unnecessary aggression, repeated & elongated action scenes and violence, high degree of consumerism, usage of American vocabulary, etc. Shortly after the launch of the series consumer market was flooded with toys namely Ben 10 Omnitrix, Tiffin boxes, bed sheets, T-shirts, video games, etc.

When kids got to touch and feel the Omnitrix (a very powerful, watch-like alien device attached to Ben's wrist which allows him



Figure 1: Omnitrix toy

to transform into various alien creatures) they related to it more closely and followed it more intently. Kids believed more in the TV series and believed that they might be lucky enough to get a real omnitrix someday. The T-shirts, masks, bizarre alien forms, etc. goods made them feel more close to their icon Ben 10, Gwen, Kevin, etc.

Ben 10 animated series extensively uses fluorescent colours in the animations. According to the Fluorescent colour theory "Where a clean, bright conventional color is able to reflect a maximum of 90% of a color present in the spectrum; a fluorescent color can reflect as much as 200% to 300%." There are a number of negative health effects that have been linked to working under fluorescent lights that are theorized to be caused by this body chemistry mechanism such as:

^[2] "Ben 10: Alien Force", <u>www.wikipedia.org</u>. Web. Last modified on 27 April 2013 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ben_10:_Alien_Force

^[3] The Mechanism of Color. http://www.dayglo.com/who-we-are/fluorescent-color-theory/

- Migraines
- Eye strain
- Problems sleeping, due to melatonin suppression
- Anxiety disorder, etc. [4]

Excessive use of fluorescent colours with constant flickering of light shown as an effect for bangs, weapons, explosions, etc. series of Ben 10: AF form a deadly combination for the eyes of their viewers. The bright lights make the viewers (kids) strain their eyes, keeping them hyper- alert causing eye- strains, while they are watching the program. As a matter of fact, *what we see makes us who we are.*^[5] So, the parents and the kids should be careful in making their choices for viewing the right contents and more age appropriate programmes.

There should be a precise, age appropriate and detailed Television content rating system in India to help viewers make right choices for the cartoon programmes for kids i.e. a proper Consumer Advice should be provided to the viewers of TV programmes. Parents and kids should be made more aware about the TV rating system for cartoons. As opposed to only two ratings on TV namely:- U – Universal and UA –

Parental Guidance there should be more child-specific, age-based rat

1. Canada Ratings

Figure 2: Canadian TV Ratings: C, C8, G, PG, 14+, and 18+

2. Australian Classification Board (ACB) TV ratings. [6]



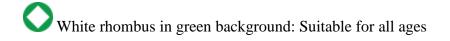
Figure 3: Australian Ratings

^[4] Adams, Chris. "How Fluorescent Lights Affect You and Your Health". http://ergonomics.about.com/od/lighting/a/How-Fluorescent-Lights-Affect-You-And-Your-Health.htm

^[5] Mark R Forehand; Rohit Deshpande JMR, Journal of Marketing Research; Aug 2001; 38, 3; ABI/INFORM Global (phrase has been picked-up by them but is used with cartoon program as opposed to advertising as in the original form)

^[6] Television content rating systems. <u>www.wikipedia.org</u>. Web. Last modified on 10 May 2013 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Television_content_rating_systems

3. Greece



White circle in blue background: Suitable for children over 10 years of age; parental guidance is suggested for those under 10.

White triangle in orange background: Suitable for children aged 12 and over; parental guidance recommended for those under that age. (only allowed between 7:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m.)

White square in purple background: Not recommended for anyone under the age of 15 (only allowed between 9:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m.)

White X in red background: Not recommended for anyone under 18. (Allowed only between midnight and 6:00 a.m. Foul language before midnight is punishable by fine, except when used in the context of the program.)

The color-coded ratings are mandatorily displayed and verbally announced at the beginning of each broadcast. These provisions are enforced by the National Radio and Television Council (ESR), an independent authority, the executive members of which are appointed by the leaders of all parliamentary parties, preferably by unanimous consent and in extremis by an 80% supermajority.

b. Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study is to examine the effects of Ben 10 shown on TV as an animation programme on kids in the age group 5 to 8 years only. It uses excessively (fluorescent) bright light and colours. Has lot of repeated violence scenes, incest, etc. shown in the episodes. Most of the parents regard all animations to be safe for kids today, where Ben 10 animation series have a wrong impression on the minds of very young kids.

The scary alien forms, make kids panic on and off. Bright lights and colours create eye strains. There is a high degree of consumerism for the products of Ben 10 where the markets flooded with wide range of goods in the market starting from pencil box, t-shirts, bedsheets to Omnitrix (watch- like gadget of Ben 10), bizarre Alien forms.

Benefits of the study may provide:

- Knowledge on how does the violence of Ben 10 effect the kids
- Do kids understand continuous violence shown in the animation series?

- How do parents deal with the negative characters of incest shown in Ben 10 (Ben falls in love with Gwen who are supposed to be cousins.) Continuously changing love subjects of Ben and Gwen.
- Intervention methods to prevent negative consequences caused by the influence of Ben 10 in the minds of kids.

Also, through the research it has been tried to find answer to the following research questions with the help of viewers and their parents:-

c. Research questions

- Q1. Is Ben 10 suitable for kids in the age- group 5 to 8 years with or without parent intervention? If not, then for which age- group is it recommended?
- Q2. Does the animation Ben 10 have any health side- effects because of the extreme violence and bright colours been shown in every episode?
- Q3. Should there be an expert advice given for kids (Consumer Advice) as Content Warning (TV Content Ratings) before screening the animation series on TV?

Summary: The aim of this study was to investigate the effects of Ben 10, a very popular TV program on the kids- psychologically and health-wise. In this randomized population-based survey questionnaires concerning TV viewers, their psychological beliefs, health impacts, etc. were administered to 23kids aged 5–8 years and their 23 parents.

Eye strains, headaches, anxiety, sleeping difficulties, etc. were the main problems noticed in the kids who were too small to tell other problems orally. Parents and kids also shared their views regarding the current TV content ratings and it was found that kids and parents were *strongly* in favour of getting Contents related warnings on TV prior to viewing the program.

Keywords: Children, sleep disturbances, TV viewing, Ben 10, psychological problems, health effects, Mass media, TV Content Ratings, Consumer Advice.

2. Review of literature

The impact of TV viewing on children's wellbeing and health is widely recognized and considered a serious problem in modern societies. The negative effects of TV have been thoroughly summarized in recent reviews (Andersson et al., 2003; McIlhaney, 2005; Strasburger and Donnerstein, 1999; Villani, 2001). TV & Children: Television, Health and Development ("TV-Children-Television-Health-Development." *Http://www.washington.edu/*. N.p., n.d. Web.) Violent content in TV programs causes aggressiveness, behavioral problems, and attentional problems, Health Effects of Media on Children and Adolescents (Victor C. Strasburger, Amy B. Jordan, PhDb, and Ed Donnerstein PhD. "Health Effects of Media on Children and Adolescents." *Health Effects of Media on Children and Adolescents*. PEDIATRICS Vol. 125 No. 4 April 1, 2010 Pp. 756 -767, n.d. Web.).

Only a few studies have assessed the affects of TV viewing on children's sleep quality even though sleep and psychiatric symptoms are known to be closely intertwined (Juulia Paavonen. "Sleep Disturbances and Psychiatric Symptoms in School-aged Children." Paediatric Graduate School Department of Child Psychiatry, University of Helsinki, Finland, n.d. Web). European Sleep Research Society example, been associated with many psychiatric symptoms, such as aggressive behavior (Johnson et al., 2002; Robinson et al., 2001; Singer et al., 1998), social problems (Ozmert et al., 2002), family interaction problems (Bernard-Bonnin et al., 1991) and attentional problems and hyperactivity (Christakis .et al., 2004b; Ozmert et al., 2002). Television programs also provoke fears in young children (Cantor, 1998; Lahikainen et al., 2003; Valkenburg et al., 2000). Links have been suggested with certain somatic problems s (Toyran et al., 2002) and obesity (Robinson, 2001). Violent content in TV programs causes aggressiveness, behavioral problems, and attentional problems (Singer et al., 1998).

a. Theories

SOCIAL LEARNING THEORY of Albert Bandura

Bandura's major premise is that we can learn by observing others. He considers vicarious experience to be the typical way that human beings change. He uses the term *modeling* to describe Campbell's two midrange processes of response acquisition (observation of another's response and modelling), and he claims that modelling can have as much impact as direct experience.

The Spread of TV Violence Through Modeling

Social learning theory is a general theory of human behaviour, But, Bandura and people concerned with mass communication have used it specifically to explain media effects. Bandura warned that "children and adults acquire attitudes, emotional responses, and new styles of conduct through filmed and televised modelling." George Gerbner was concerned that television violence would create a false climate of fear. Albert Bandura cautioned that TV might create a violent reality that was worth fearing.

Bandura's warning struck a responsive chord in parents and educators who feared that escalating violence on TV would transform children into bullies. Although he doesn't think this will happen without the tacit approval of those who supervise the children, Bandura regards anxiety over televised violence as legitimate. That stance caused network officials to blackball him from taking part in the 1972 Surgeon General's Report on Violence.⁸ It is doubtful whether TV sets will ever bear an inscription similar to that on packs of cigarettes: "Warning: The Surgeon General has determined that TV violence may turn your child into an insensitive brute." But if Bandura had been picked as a member of the research team, the report would have been more definitive in pointing out the causal link between television violence and aggressive behaviour.

Consider the case of Tyler Richie, a shy 10-year-old boy who has been raised on a Saturday-morning diet of superheroes. After school he's absorbed for an hour in helping Nintendo's Mario Brothers fight their way out of danger...

The combined four hours that Ty spends in front of the screen represent a typical day for boys in his class at school. Bandura considers "gentle" Ty a likely candidate to someday clobber his sister, shoot a prowler, or use criminal force to get his own way. Social learning theory postulates three necessary stages in the causal link between television violence and actual physical harm to another: attention, retention, and motivation.

⁷ 2. *Ibid.*, p. 39

⁸ Robert Liebert and Joyce Sprafkin, "The Surgeon General's Report," The Early Window: Effects of Television on Children and Youth, 3d ed., Pergamon, New York, 1988, pp. 79-107.

Attention: "I Never Thought of That Before"

...television professionals are experts at gaining and holding attention. Practitioners are committed to the drawing power of dramatized personal injury and physical destruction. According to Bandura, televised violence will grab Ty's attention because it is simple, distinctive, prevalent, useful, and depicted positively.

- 1. Simple.
- 2. Distinctive.
- 3. Prevalent.
- 4. Useful.
- 5. Positive.

Using violence in the race for ratings not only draws an attentive audience, it transmits responses that we, as viewers, might never have considered before. The media expand our repertoire of behavioural options far beyond what we would discover by trial-and-error and in ways more varied than we would observe in people we know. The unthinkable no longer is.

Retention: "I Figured Out What I Was Doing Wrong"

Bandura says it's fortunate that people learn from vicarious observation, since mistakes could prove costly or fatal. Without putting himself at risk, Ty is able to discover that a knife fighter holds a switchblade at an inclined angle of forty-five degrees and that he jabs up rather than lunging down. We hope that Ty will never have an occasion to put his knowledge into practice. It's certainly unlikely that he'll walk out of the house and immediately mimic the action he has learned; instantaneous reproduction is uncommon. In contrast to classical learning theory, Bandura says we can learn novel behaviour without any practice or direct reinforcement for its consequences. The action will lie dormant, available for future use, as long as we remember it.

Memory is a cognitive function, so Bandura's theory moves beyond mere behaviourism. Like most other communication theorists, he believes that the ability to use symbols sets humans apart from the limited stimulus-response world of animals. "Humans don't just respond to stimuli, they interpret them."

Bandura says that we store events in two ways-through *visual images* and through *verbal codes*. The more kids exercise the visual image or verbal codes, the stronger the memory will be in the future.

Bandura is convinced, however, that major gains in vicarious learning come when the observer develops a conscious awareness of the technique involved. These insights are stored verbally. Bandura says that learning through modelling is more a matter of abstracting rules than mimicry. It's not simply "monkey see, monkey do."

The entire acquisition process described by Bandura is a *spectator sport*. That's why television teaches violence so well. Ty doesn't have to actually do the aggressive behaviour; fantasy rehearsal in his mind will keep the act a live option for the future. If he ever does point a gun in anger, the act of force, after years of mental role-playing, will set his acquired behavioural disposition into granite. "The highest level of observational learning is achieved by first organizing and rehearsing the modelled behaviour symbolically, and then enacting it overtly."

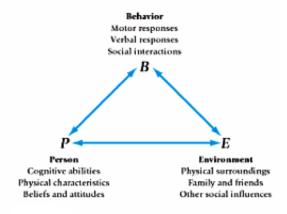
Motivation: "Why Not Do It? It Worked Out Fine for Them"

Without sufficient motivation, Ty may never imitate the violence he sees on TV. Bandura uses the term motivation to refer to the rewards and punishments. Bandura cautions that "the widely accepted

dictum that behaviour is governed by its consequences fares better for anticipated than for actual consequences."

Bandura says that the effects of TV violence will be greatly diminished if a youngster's parents punish or disapprove of aggression. He contends that unconditional love and approval merely encourage self-actualized tyrants.

He doesn't believe that people are "buffeted by environmental stimuli," nor does he accept the notion that they are "driven by inner forces." He sees external and internal rewards working together in a "reciprocal determination" to influence behaviour. But social learning theory focuses on vicarious reward as a third factor which causes acquired responses to break out into action.



Bandura's model of reciprocal determinism. (Adapted from A. Bandura, 1978, "The Self System in Reciprocal Determinism." American Psychologist, 33, 344–358. Copyright © 1978 by the American Psychological Association. Used by permission.)

reciprocal determinism

the notion that the flow of influence between children and their environments is a two-way street; the environment may affect the child, but the child's behavior will also influence the environment.

Television models do more than teach novel styles of conduct. When people on television are punished for being violent, the punishment reinforces society's sanctions against acting above or outside the law. But, when other characters in the story accept or applaud the use of force, that approval weakens inhibitions the viewer may have about hurting people.

Producers, writers, and directors are quick to argue that action sequences end up by showing that crime doesn't pay. Armed robbers, rapists, murderers, and terrorists are brought to justice by the final fade-out. But Bandura isn't worried about the bad guys glorifying violence. It's the aggression of the good guys that troubles him. *Crime may not pay on television, but physical force does*.

Consider the potential encouragement of violence offered by the 1989 motion picture *Batman*. In the first week of its release in the United States, over 10 million patrons watched the Joker's creative sadism amid squeals of delight in the theatres. While the average young male in the audience might have difficulty identifying with the bizarre Jack Nicholson, Michael Keaton looked like Everyman in his low-key portrayal of the wealthy young avenger. The producer, Jon Peters, wanted a story line that would provide "a great opportunity to have this guy kick some ass," which Batman does. In the end, Bruce Wayne gets the satisfaction of avenging his parents' murder, praise from the grateful mayor of the city, and the adorable Kim Basinger. These vicarious rewards would seem to justify almost any vigilante action. The filmmakers would claim that Batman is mere fantasy; Bandura would probably call it an effective classroom for life. (Bandura)

ii. Cultivation theory

It is a social theory which examines the long-term effects of television. "The primary proposition of cultivation theory states that the more time people spend "living" in the television world, the more likely they are to believe social reality portrayed on television."[1] Cultivation leaves people with a misperception of what is true in our world.

Effect of cultivation theory on children

"There was a positive relationship between childhood television viewing levels and social reality beliefs in young adulthood. The results of this study suggest that television viewed during childhood may have an impact on the social reality beliefs a person holds as an adult." "Accordingly, the present study focuses on the potential impact of childhood television viewing on social reality beliefs during adulthood. The focus of the present study will be childhood exposure to television genres that tend to be violent. Given that it has been argued and demonstrated that measuring exposure to violent content is a more appropriate method for cultivation analyses than measuring overall television exposure levels." ¹¹

⁹ "Batmania," **Newsweek**, June 26, 1989, p. 71.

¹⁰ Griffin, E. (2012). Communication Communication Communication. McGraw-Hill: New York, (8), 366-377.

¹¹ Cohen, J. & Weimann, G. (2000). "Cultivation Revisited: Some Genres Have Some Effects on Some Viewers". *Communication Reports*, 13(2), 99.

"Mean world syndrome" is a term coined by George Gerbner to describe a phenomenon whereby violence-related content of mass media makes viewers believe that the world is more dangerous than it actually is. Mean world syndrome is one of the main conclusions of cultivation theory. Gerbner, a pioneer researcher on the effects of television on society, argued that people who watched a large amount of television tended to think of the world as an intimidating and unforgiving place. ¹²

The number of opinions, images, and attitudes that viewers tend to make when watching television will have a direct influence on what the viewer perceives the real world as. They will reflect and refer to the most common images or recurrent messages thought to impact on their own real life. Gerbner once said "You know, who tells the stories of a culture really governs human behaviour," he said. "It used to be the parent, the school, the church, the community. Now it's a handful of global conglomerates that have nothing to tell, but a great deal to sell." 13

iii. Fluorescent Colour Theory

According to the Fluorescent colour theory "Where a clean, bright conventional color is able to reflect a maximum of 90% of a color present in the spectrum; a fluorescent color can reflect as much as 200% to 300%."[14] There are a number of negative health effects that have been linked to working under fluorescent lights that are theorized to be caused by this body chemistry mechanism such as:

- Migraines
- Eye strain
- Problems sleeping, due to melatonin suppression
- Anxiety disorder, etc. [15]

Excessive use of fluorescent colours with constant flickering of light shown as an effect for bangs, weapons, explosions, etc. series of Ben 10: AF form a deadly combination for the eyes of their viewers. The bright lights make the viewers (kids) strain their eyes, keeping them hyper- alert causing eye- strains,

¹² George Gerbner Leaves the Mean World Syndrome Posted by: Lex on http://PEJ.org Sunday, January 08, 2006, Peace, Earth & Justice News

¹³ Gerbner, G., Gross, L., Morgan, M., Signorielli, N., & Shanahan, J. (2002) In J. Bryant & D. Zillmann (Eds.), Media effects: Advances in theory and research (2nd ed., pp. 43–67). Mahwah, N J: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

^[14] The Mechanism of Color. http://www.dayglo.com/who-we-are/fluorescent-color-theory/

^[15] Adams, Chris. "How Fluorescent Lights Affect You and Your Health". http://ergonomics.about.com/od/lighting/a/How-Fluorescent-Lights-Affect-You-And-Your-Health.htm

while they are watching the program. As a matter of fact, what we see makes us who we are.[16] So, the parents and the kids should be careful in making their choices for viewing the right contents and more age appropriate programmes.

The constant flicker of florescent can affect the sensory system in some individuals. Some people's sensory system can detect the flicker that others cannot. It leads to complaints of headaches, migraines; eye strain and general eye discomfort have been increased. My Neurologist said "There have been increasing evidences that fluorescent lighting can increase seizures in those who are prone to seizures." ¹⁷

iv. How Violence on TV affects your child

To give you perspective on just how much violence kids see on TV, consider this: The average American child will witness 200,000 violent acts on television by age 18. Kids may become desensitized to violence and more aggressive. TV violence sometimes begs for imitation because violence is often promoted as a fun and effective way to get what you want.

Many violent acts are perpetrated by the "good guys," whom kids have been taught to admire. Even though kids are taught by their parents that it's not right to hit, television says it's OK to bite, hit, or kick if you're the good guy. This can lead to confusion when kids try to understand the difference between right and wrong. And the "bad guys" on TV aren't always held responsible or punished for their actions.

Young kids are particularly frightened by scary and violent images. Simply telling kids that those images aren't real won't console them, because they can't yet distinguish between fantasy and reality. Behaviour problems, nightmares, and difficulty sleeping may follow exposure to media violence.

Older kids also can be frightened by violent images, whether they appear on fictional shows, the news, or reality-based shows. Reasoning with kids this age will help them, so it's important to provide reassuring and honest information to help ease fears. However, consider not letting your kids view programs that they may find frightening. (Reviewed by: Steven Dowshen)

^[16] Mark R Forehand; Rohit Deshpande JMR, Journal of Marketing Research; Aug 2001; 38, 3; ABI/INFORM Global (phrase has been picked-up by them but is used with cartoon program as opposed to advertising as in the original form)

¹⁷ Connie C. The Health Effects Of Fluorescent Lighting - Are Fluorescent Lights Making Us Sick. February 20, 2009. Updated on February 20, 2009 http://health.gather.com/viewArticle.action?articleId=281474977600839

v. Media Violence

The American Academy of Paediatrics (AAP) recognizes exposure to violence in media, including television, movies, music, and video games, as a significant risk to the health of children and adolescents. Extensive research evidence indicates that media violence can contribute to aggressive behaviour, desensitization to violence, nightmares, and fear of being harmed. Paediatricians should assess their patients' level of media exposure and intervene on media-related health risks. Paediatricians and other child health care providers can advocate for a safer media environment for children by encouraging media literacy, more thoughtful and proactive use of media by children and their parents, more responsible portrayal of violence by media producers, and more useful and effective media ratings. (AAP 1222- 1226)

- Even "good guys" beating up "bad guys" gives a message that violence is normal and okay. Many children will try to be like their "good guy" heroes in their play. ¹⁸
- Children imitate the violence they see on TV. Children under age eight cannot tell the difference between reality and fantasy, making them more vulnerable to learning from and adopting as reality the violence they see on TV. ¹⁹
- A University of Michigan researcher demonstrated that watching violent media can affect
 willingness to help others in need. Comfortably Numb: Desensitizing Effects of Violent Media on
 Helping Others. (Anderson)²⁰

The American Psychological Association Help Center suggests that there are three types of harmful effects associated with viewing violence on TV. They are:

- 1. Learning aggressive behaviours and attitudes (like hitting in order to get a toy from a friend)
- 2. Becoming desensitized to real world violence (thinking that it's okay to tell people "I hate you" without talking about your feelings if you're angry)
- 3. Developing a fear of being victimized (feeling unsafe walking home from school)²¹

¹⁸ http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/resources/tip_sheets/superhero_tip.cfm

¹⁹ American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), Committee on Public Education. Media violence. Pediatrics. 2001 Nov;108(5):1222-6.

²⁰ http://sitemaker.umich.edu/brad.bushman/files/ba09.pdf

Bulletin #4100, Children, Television, and Screen Time. Prepared by Judith Graham. Revised by Leslie Forstadt. Children, Television, and Screen Time http://extension.umaine.edu/publications/4100e/

3. METHODOLOGY

This chapter will provide the reader with information on the study's design, setting, population, instruments, procedures, and data analysis.

Design

A descriptive and exploratory study was conducted on a set of 23 kids and parents randomly chosen to fill the 'Ben 10 Diet Questionnaire' prepared with the help of 5 point Likert Scale. In addition, a retrospective design was used on kids (boys and girls) and their parents to explore affects of watching Ben 10 animated series on kids in the age- group 5 to 8 years.

Setting

Families were selected randomly and contacted to ask the willingness to participate in the survey. Those parents who were willing and were ready to spare time were contacted as per their convenience and then approached. For some kids, the surveyor marked the answers in the questionnaire according to the opinion of the respondents (as they were very small to fill it themselves.)

Population and Sample

As the sample group of kids were of 5 to 8 years. As they were small, opinion of their parents were also taken into consideration for preparing the final result of the research. Total of 46 respondents (i.e. 23 kids and 23 parents) were taken. Mostly, mothers were requested to fill the questionnaire as they are more in contact with kids than the fathers who are away from home most of the time because of their work.

Measures

The Ben 10 questionnaire included 29 items for kids and 28 items for parents concerning the psychological, health and overall effect of Ben 10 on kids. As the kids as small, their parents views were also taken about their kids to get better results for the survey.

Questionnaire was administered only for those kids and parents who agreed that even though they did not watch Ben 10 regularly but they had a fair idea of the animation. Kids were given prompts (as the kids were small) to understand the questions well and for younger ones the surveyor marked the answers in the questionnaire according to the responses of the kid respondents.

For kids 21 Likert items and for parents 20 Likert items were rated on a five point Likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Neutral (N), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). Same questions were compared and their ratings were organized in form of tables.

Strongly Agree and Agree responses were added to get one set of opinions while Strongly Disagree and Disagree were combined to get another set of opinions. Neutral answers were left alone.

Instruments used

1. Ben 10 Diet Questionnaire

Opinions of kids and parents were collected through a questionnaire entitled 'Ben 10 diet questionnaire'. It helped to record various details regarding viewers in their formation stages (5 to 8 years) regarding psychological effects, health effects and opinions of kids and parents. Those kids and parents duo were chosen who either were Ben 10 fans or they had clear idea about Ben 10. See Appendix A for Kids and Appendix B for Parents questionnaires.

2. Likert Scale

A Likert scale is a psychometric scale commonly involved in research that employs questionnaires. It is the most widely used approach to scaling responses in survey research.

A typical question using a Likert Scale might pose a statement and ask the respondent whether they Strongly Agree (SA) – Agree (A) – Neutral (N) – Disagree (D) - Strongly Disagree (SD)

The data collected are ordinal, paired and dependent: they have an inherent order or sequence, but one cannot assume that the respondent means that the difference between agreeing and strongly agreeing is the same as between agreeing and being undecided.

- **3. Stacked Bar Chart (2D)** is used for analysis of individual questions for ordinal non-continuous data. It is used to compare the contribution of each value to a total across categories by using horizontal rectangles.
- **4. Median** is used if observations of a variable are ordered by value; the median value corresponds to the middle observation in that ordered list.

4. RESULTS

The purpose of the study was to explore three possible outcomes that may result from the influence of Ben 10 on kids in the age- group of 5 to 8 years. The first possible relationship is between Ben 10 and kids are the psychological effects. As kids are very small, views of their parents are also taken into consideration to examined side- effects of the animation series Ben 10.

Spearman Coefficient Correlation (r) has been used to find out the correlation between the views of kids and parents. Data is collected regarding their sleep pattern, scared behaviour of kids, effects of fluorescent colours on eyes, etc. which small kids are not able to clearly make out themselves. In the following table Coefficient Correlation (r) is shown for the paired groups: where

$$Correl(X,Y) = \frac{\sum (x-\bar{x})(y-\bar{y})}{\sqrt{\sum (x-\bar{x})^2 \sum (y-\bar{y})^2}}$$

 \overline{x} and \overline{y} are the sample means AVERAGE(SET 1) and AVERAGE(SET2).

In this research, two sets of data have been collected for every question i.e. same question has been asked for kid (k) and parent (p). Therefore, we have 10k and 10p indicated responses for question number 10

from kids questionnaire has been taken into consideration and same question exists in parents' questionnaire as question number 5. Their ranks from Likert scale have been put together in the table with column heading 10k and 10 p.

10**k** is for kids' ranks and 10**p** signifies parents' opinion for question number 10 but the responses are taken from question number 5 of parents' questionnaire.

For equivalent questions from kids and parent questionnaires respectively.

Q10=Q5, Q11=Q6, Q15=Q12, Q26= Q20, Q13= Q9, Q14= Q10, Q27= Q22, Q28=Q26

Correlation coefficients (r) whose magnitudes are

- between 0.9 and 1.0 indicate variables which can be considered very highly correlated.
- between 0.7 and 0.9 indicate variables which can be considered **highly correlated.**
- between 0.5 and 0.7 indicate variables which can be considered **moderately correlated.**
- between 0.3 and 0.5 indicate variables which have a **low correlation**.
- less than 0.3 have little if any (linear) correlation.

 \circ For e.g. 10k and 10p has r = 0.133 The t

The two variables tend to increase or decrease together and they have little if any (linear) correlation.

 \circ 15k and 15p has r = -0.1645

One variable increases as the other decreases.

Note: Remember, correlation does not imply causation.

1. Data obtained from Questionnaires of kids and parents

		10		11	tivillali	12		15		21		24		13		14		23		26		27		28
S.No.	10k	p	11k	р	12k	p	15k	р	21k	p	24k	p	13k	p	14k	р	23k	p	26k	p	27k	p	28k	p
R1	4	1	2	2	4	2	4	2	4	5	5	4	3	1	4	2	2	2	2	5	2	2	1	1
R2	4	2	3	2	2	2	4	1	2	5	2	5	2	1	2	3	4	1	3	4	1	1	2	1
R3	2	4	2	2	2	4	2	2	4	4	4	4	2	1	2	2	2	1	2	4	2	1	2	1
R4	4	1	4	1	1	2	3	2	5	5	5	4	3	1	4	2	2	1	4		4	1	1	2
R5	4	3	2	4	1	2	2	2	2	4	3	2	1	2	4	1	4	4	2	2	2	1	1	1
R6	1	4	2	1	3	2	2	2	2	4	2	4	4	2	3	1	5	2	2	4	4	2	2	1
R7	4	4	1	1	4	4	2	2	4	4	4	4	2	1	2	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	2
R8	4	4	2	1	3	1	2	1	4	4	4	4	2	1	2	1	2	2	4	2	2	3	2	2
R9	5	4	3	4	1	1	2	1	2	2	2	4	2	4	2	4	4	1	2	4	2	2	2	1
R10	2	1	2	4	2	2	2	2	2	4	2	1	2	2	2	1	4	1	4	2	4	2	2	2
R11	1	2	2	2	4	4	2	4	2	5	1	2	2	1	2	2	2	5	4	4	4	1	2	4
R12	4	4	2	2	5	4	1	2	3	5	4	5	4	4	4	2	4	4	4	5	4	2	2	2
R13	4	4	4	4	1	2	2	2	4	2	1	2	3	4	2	2	2	2	4	5	2	1	4	1
R14	5	4	3	2	4	3	2	2	2	5	4	2	2	4	2	3	2	2	2	5	4	1	2	2
R15	4	1	2		4	4	2	2	4	4	1	2	1	2	4	4	2	2	3		2	2	4	2
R16	4	5	1	2	2	2	5	2	5	4	2	1	4	4	3	5	2	1	4	5	4	1	4	
R17	1	4	2	2	2	3	2	2	5	2	2	2	2	1	2	5	1	1	2	2	4	4	2	1
R18	2	2	2	2	4	4	2	4	2	2	4	4	4	5	2	3	1	4	4	4	4	5	2	4
R19	4	2	3	2	4	4	5	2	5	4	4	4	4	4	2	2	2	1	5	4	2	4	4	1
R20	4	2	3	2	2	2	1	2	4	4	3	2	4	4	4	4	4	1	2	4	2	1	2	2
R21	2	2	2	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	4	2	2	4	1		4		4		2	1	2	
R22	2	2	2	2	4	2	2	2	2	2	4	2	2	2	4	2	4	5	4	4	4	2	2	1
R23	2	2	1	1	2	2	2	4	2	4	2	2	2	2	4	2	2	2	4	2	4	1	2	2
Corre I (r)	0.1 33		0.3 08		0.620 661		0.16 45		0.09 89		0.23 94		0.51 29		0.0 74		0.08 87		0.07 07		0.13 76		0.0 89	

Table 1: Showing all Likert Scale items for Kids (k) and Parents (p) for all the Questionnaire items and their Coefficient of Correlation (r).

Median is used to finally consolidate the views of kids and parents about psychological, health, and TV rating scale. Median is the "most typical" number in the series taken into consideration.

Qs. No.	Psychological aspects
10	Parents should accompany
11	Understand story on your own
12	Affected by action- fights
15	Anxiety/ Stress
21	Hit everyone to solve problems
24	Scared of Characters
	Health Aspects
13	Affected by bright and colours
14	Eye strains/ pains
23	Sleep pattern
	Content Warning
26	Suitable for 5 to 8 years
27	TV should warn for Contents
28	Follow the age- appropriate warning

Table 2: Likert items considered for each effect in kids and parents questionnaires.

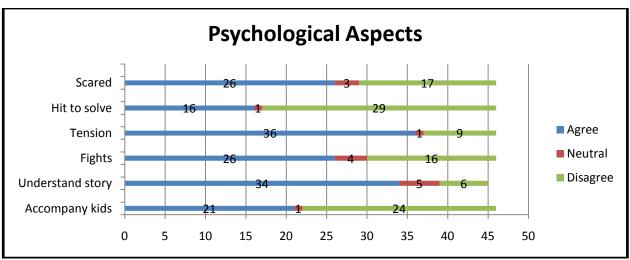
Strongly Agree (SA)	1
Agree (A)	2
Neutral (N)	3
Disagree (D)	4
Strongly Disagree (SD)	5

Table 3: 5 point Likert scale choices and their ranks

Demog	No. of				
kids	kids				
Kids 5 y	5				
Kids 6 y	5				
Kids 7 y	6				
Kids 8 y	7				
Boys					

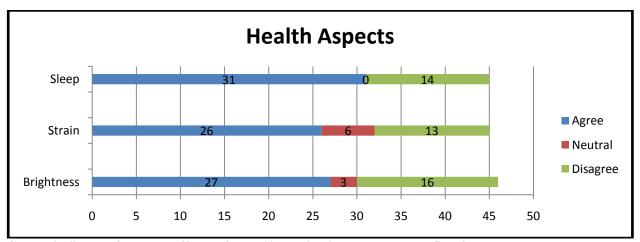
Table 4: Demographics

The Stacked Bar graphs were plotted to show how the opinions kids and parents highlight the side effects of Ben 10 in their everyday life. To make the graph simpler and information more clear, the researcher has combined the opinions of Strongly Agree and Agree. Strongly Disagree and Disagree have also been combined. Neutral opinions are left untouched.



Graph 1: Study of Psychological Effects of Ben 10 on kids in the age group 5 to 8 years.

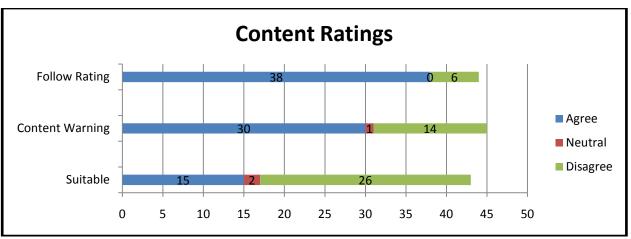
According to graph 1, kids and parent agreed that children feel scared, get into fights and understand the story. However, they disagree that watching Ben 10 leads to their psyche of hitting to solve problems and they also don't agree that parents' should accompany kids while they are watching the program on TV.



Graph 2: Study of Health Effects of Ben 10 on kids in the age group 5 to 8 years.

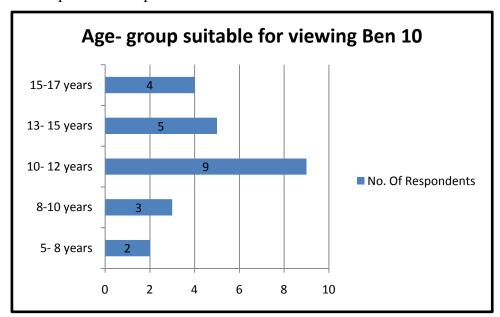
According to graph 2, kids and parent agreed that brightness of colours and lights affects kids' health. They also agree that bright colours and lights affect the viewer's health. Sleep is also affected as a result of watching Ben 10.

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Graph 3: Study of TV Content Ratings with reference to Ben 10 for kids in the age group 5 to 8 years.

Parental views were considered separately for the Likert item in the questionnaire for Q21. It states that "On the basis of your experience, viewing Ben 10: AF is appropriate for which age group of kids?" The answers of the parents were plotted on a stacked bar chart as follows:



Graph 4: Parental Views about suitable age for viewing Ben 10

9 + 5 + 4 = 18 out of 23 parents think that viewing Ben 10 is suitable for kids only above 10 years of age. i.e. 78% of the parents think that watching Ben 10 for kids below 10 years of age is unsuitable.

Finally, the results were drawn with the help of median calculation. The median is the number in the middle of a set of numbers.

Formula: $\{(n+1) \div 2\}^{th}$ value,

Where, **n** is the number of values in a set of data.

					1.1 ()	Health	()	
Names	Gender	AGE	Psych(K)	Psych(P)	Health (K)	(P)	Ratings(K)	Ratings(P)
Tejas	В	8	4	2	3	2	2	2
Dhurv	В	6	3	2	2	1	2	1
Twisha	G	6	2	4	2	1	2	1
Durga	G	8	4	2	3	1	4	2
Samad	В	8	2	3	4	2	2	1
Abha	G	6	2	3	4	2	2	2
Fareed	В	8	4	4	2	2	2	2
Kartik	В	8	4	3	2	1	2	2
Shreyas	В	5	2	3	2	4	2	2
Uday	В	6	2	2	2	1	4	2
Shaurya	В	5	2	3	2	2	4	4
Hrithik	В	7	4	4	4	4	4	2
Radha	G	5	3	2	2	2	4	1
Abhinav	В	7	4	3	2	3	2	2
Monica	G	5	3	2	2	2	3	2
Manvi	В	7	3	2	3	4	4	3
Simar	G	5	2	2	2	1	2	2
Neha	G	7	2	3	2	4	4	4
Nivedita	G	8	4	3	2	2	4	4
Mahira	G	6	3	2	4	4	2	2
Rohan	В	8	2	2	2	4	2	1
Shorya	В	7	2	2	4	2	4	2
Reena	G	7	2	2	2	2	4	2
Median			3	2	2	2	2	2
			Neutral	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree

Table 5: Comparing answers by kids and parents about all aspects and finding answers to research questions.

Median was calculated for all items i.e. psychological effects (for) kids' i.e.

Psychological Effects for kids= Median (10k, 11k, 12k, 15k, 21k, 24k) = 3 (Neutral) Psychological Effects for parents= Median (10p, 11p, 12p, 15p, 21p, 24p)= 2 (Agree)

Health Effects for kids= Median (13k, 14k, 23k) = 2 (Agree) Health Effects for parents= Median (13p, 14p, 23p) = 2 (Agree)

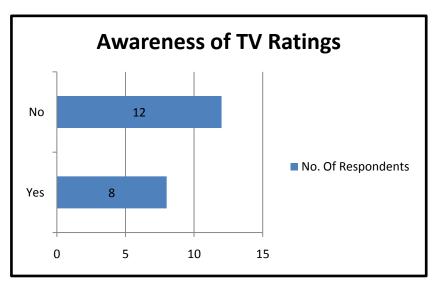
Content Ratings view of kids= Median (26k, 27k, 28k) = 2 (Agree) Content Ratings view of parents= Median (26p, 27p, 28p) = 2 (Agree)

Research questions:

- Q1. Is Ben 10 suitable for kids in the age- group 5 to 8 years with or without parent intervention? If not, then for which age- group is it recommended?
- Q2. Does the animation Ben 10 have any health side- effects because of the extreme violence and bright colours been shown in every episode?
- Q3. Should there be an expert advice given for kids (Consumer Advice) as Content Warning (TV Content Ratings) before screening the animation series on TV?

Answers to the Research questions

Additional Finding



Graph 5: Responses of parents regarding awareness of current TV ratings in India.

It leads to lower problem solving abilities as Ben and group takes to hitting, kicking, hurting, etc. as a solution to put aliens (enemies) down and sort out problems to get out of trouble. In their developmental stage (5 to 8 years) when their brain needs problem solving play games, they watch, un-necessary action sequences, on- screen romance, gadgets, weapons, blasts, etc.

Assumptions

The following are the assumptions related to this study:

- 1. The researcher will collect completed questionnaires from the participants.
- 2. The participants will provide truthful information on the questionnaires.
- 3. The participants will be able to correctly recall information and situations which are the deciding factors of the questionnaire (Likert items)
- 4. The participants will be able to read and comprehend English and understand and comprehend the questions on the questionnaires.

Limitations

- 1. All the effects of Ben 10 on kids have not been examined only two most important ones namely Psychological and health effects are chosen.
- 2. Active and passive viewing time of the kids has not been considered separately.
- 3. TV viewing on all weekdays has been assumed to be same and has been computed together.
- 4. Inaccurate information from the participants due to the study being retrospective.

Appendix A Ben 10: Alien Force Diet Questionnaire (For Kids) BASIC INFORMATION

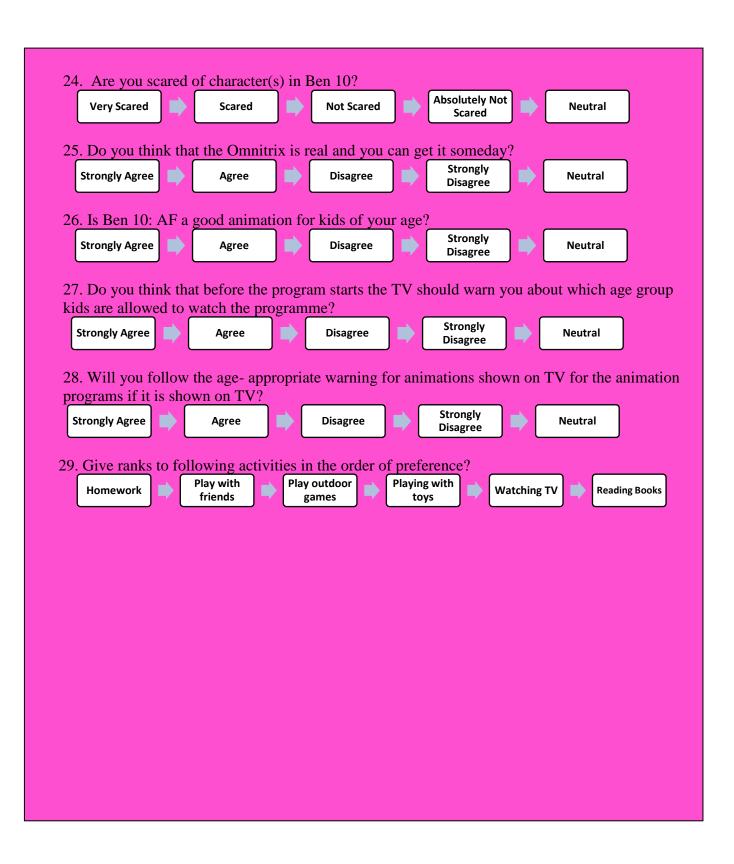
DEMOGRAPHICS											
Name: (Master/Ms.) Class: A	Age:										
School: Place: Date:	/2013										
Gender: M/ F											
Choose the correct answer with a tick (✓) mark:											
1. What are your favourite cartoon programmes?											
a b											
2. Do you watch Ben 10? Yes/ No											
3. For how many hours do you watch Ben 10 daily? hours											
4. Who is your favourite character in Ben 10: Alien Force? (Hero)											
Julie Julie	7										
Ben Tennyson Tennyson Kevin Levin Grandpa (Max Tennyson) Yamamoto/											
Why?	<i>_</i>										
5. Which of the villains is really bad in Ben 10: Alien Force? (Villain)											
Highbreed DNAliens DNAliens Vilgax Vilgax Vilganus	٦										
Validation	J										
Why?											
6. Which most important trait makes Ben/ Gwen a real hero/ heroine?	,										
Strength Smartness/ Macial Powers Fearless											
7. Do you try to follow your favourite character in real life? a) Dress up c) Talk e)											
b) Behave d) Fight											
8. Do you know about any of the bad habits of Ben/ Gwen? Yes/ No											
What is it?											
9. Do your parent(s) sit with you and explain about events when you watch Ben 10: A	F?										
Always/ Explain- Yes Seldom/ Explain- Yes No/ Explain- Always No/ Explain- Seldom Never/ Neve	r										
	_										
10. Do you like it when your parent sits with you and explain Ben 10: A F?	\neg										
Strongly Agree Disagree Disagree Neutral											
11. Are you able to understand the story of Ben 10: AF on your own ?											
Always Often Sometimes Never Doesn't matter											
Always Often Sometimes Never matter	J										
12. Do you get affected by the action- fights, hitting, shooting, etc. shown in Ben 10: A	F?										
Very Much Like it Not much Dislike it Doesn't											
The final matter											

24



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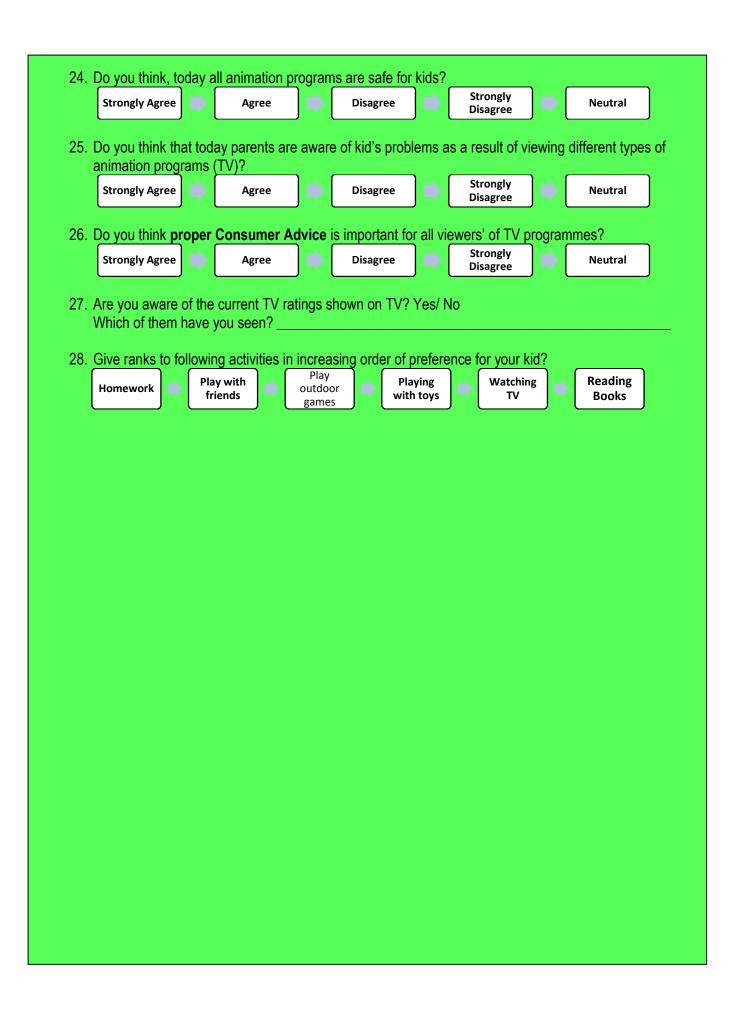
Appendix B Ben 10: AF Diet Questionnaire (For Parents) BASIC INFORMATION

DEMOGRAPHICS													
Name: (Mrs/Mr.) Number of kids:													
Place:	Gender: M/	F											
Place: Date: _//2013													
Choose the correct answer with a tick (\checkmark) mark:													
Choose the correct answer with a tick (*) mark.													
1.	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·												
2.	For your kid which	n m <u>ost important</u>	trait in	a real hero/ h	eroine	?							
	Strength	Smartness/ Beauty		Magcial Powers		Fearless							
			, (, (, (
3.	Does your kid try			ite character i		ife?							
	a) Dress up b) Behave) Talk l) Fight		e) _	<u></u>		_					
,			, 0			. I D 40							
4.	Do you sit with you	Seldom/) (No/ Explain-	n tney	No/ Explain-) (1				
	Explain- Yes	Explain- Yes		Always		Seldom		Never/ Never					
5.	Do you think it is	required to accor	T) (*)	kids when the	ጎ .		1)]				
	Strongly Agree	Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Neutral					
				40.4=									
6.	Does your kid und	derstand the stor	y of Be ໂ	n 10: AF on h	is/ her	own?) . () 				
	Always	Often		Sometimes		Never		Neutral					
			,		,		,						
7.	Watching Ben 10	: AF infuses child	Iren wit	h excitement,	action	, drama and c	onflict.	. Is it too exciti	ng for				
	your child?		٦ _ ١		ר ר	Strongly	٦ ـــــــ ()				
	Strongly Agree	Agree		Disagree		Disagree		Neutral					
8.	Do you think water	phing Pon 10· Λ E	- offoot	e the clean na	ttorn o	fyour kid?							
0.			7) ,	Strongly	ا 🚣 ()				
	Strongly Agree	Agree		Disagree		Disagree		Neutral	J				
9.	Is your kid affect	ad by the fluores	cent co	loure used in l	Ren 10)· ΔΕ2							
9.) , (Absolutely	ا حـ (
	Very Much	Slightly		No		Not		Neutral					
	Which colour at	ffects most?											
10	Exposure to brigh	t colours and brid	aht liah	t affects or st	raine	eves of your l	id whi	le watching Re	en 10:				
10.	AF?	it colours and bri	grit ligri	t anects of st	lallis	eyes or your r	da wiiii	ie watering be	iii 10.				
	Strongly Agree	Agree		Disagree		Strongly		Neutral					
						Disagree			J				
11.	Does your kid like	the action sequ	ences	in Ben 10: AF	?								
		Like it		Not much		Dislike it		Doesn't					
								matter					

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Other References

- * AAP, Committee on Public Education, 2000–2001. "Media Violence." <u>AAP, PEDIATRICS Vol. 108 No. 5</u> (November 1, 2001).
- * Anderson, Brad J. Bushman and Craig A. "Comfortably Numb." <u>Association for Psychological Science</u> (2009): 273- 277.
- * Bandura, Albert. <u>Chapter- 31 SOCIAL LEARNING THEORY of Albert Bandura.</u> McGraw-Hill, n.d. Reviewed by: Steven Dowshen, MD. "How TV affects your child." http://kidshealth.org/. http://kidshealth.org/.