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Article

Gender-sensitive Portrayal in Cartoon Shows for Preschoolers: A Critical Analysis of Masha and the Bear

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Kaifia Ancer Laskar¹ 

Abstract

Most of the studies on children's programming conducted in America or India, indicating an unbalanced and stereotypical gender representation, remain limited to those on older children. The present study explores if cartoon shows for preschoolers resort to the counter-hegemonic portrayal of male/female characters, and if thereby have any scope for representation of gender fluidity within it. Consequently, it also attempts to discern the ways in which interpersonal relationships between the protagonists, and between the protagonist(s) and the secondary character(s) portray any 'dominant/submissive' dichotomies. Drawing on Bandura's 'Social Learning Theory' and de Beauvoir's notion of the social construction of women as the 'other', this study presents the results of textual analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis of a popular Russian cartoon show 'Masha and the Bear' (M&TB) telecast on Nick Jr. The study findings indicate more gender-sensitive representation in the show for preschoolers than those for the older children. Bearing the tropes of Soviet Russian egalitarian and cultural traits, the characters of M&TB portray non-binary gender roles compared to their American or Indian counterparts.

Keywords

Gender, stereotype, cartoons, counter-hegemonic, preschoolers

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