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Data Prepared for Analysis

PRIME TIME DRAMATIC PROGRAMMING

80 programs
 1,393 characters
 366 violence scenes
 293 ATOD (253 ATID)

PRIME TIME "REALITY" SHOWS

15 programs
 118 characters
 20 violence scenes
 10 ATOD (9 ATID)

SATURDAY MORNING CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS

20 programs
 238 characters
 150 violence scenes
 6 ATOD scenes

PREVIEW OF SOME FINDINGS

Analytical issues to be addressed in our final report will include (1) the frequency of portrayals over time, based on available trend data; (2) evaluative (positive, negative, neutral) and other tendencies and contexts of the representations; (3) the geography, demography, and action structure of substance use; (4) the connections between ATOD and violence.

In other words, our final report will focus on the social, moral, cultural lessons entailed in depictions of ATOD. For the purposes of the present report, here are highlights from a preliminary analysis of some aspects of ATOD in the world of television.

Programs

A high proportion (71%) of programs mention or show alcohol or tobacco or illegal drugs. Eleven percent of the programs are coded as having an ATOD theme as a significant or outstanding focus. A viewer is presented with an "ATOD SCENE" nearly five times every hour in the dramatic programming (see Table 1).

Cartoons aired in prime time contain over twice the number of ATOD scenes than sitcoms per program (Table 2). ATOD scenes in Saturday Morning children's shows are as rare as one scene for about every three shows.

We also find that the network that probably has the highest appeal to teenage and adolescent audience, the FOX network, has the highest level of ATOD content. (See the bottom part of Table 2).

Characters

Our final report will contain a thorough analysis of the demographics and fate of ATOD users. For the purposes of this preview, we present a few general observations.

Eleven percent of all dramatic characters use ATOD (see Table 1). When broken down into four categories (Tobacco, Alcohol, Illicit Drugs, and Prescription/OTC drugs), the proportions are 2.4%, 8.2%, 0.4%, and 1.1% respectively (see Table 3).

These numbers are higher than what an average viewer would experience "outside" the television world. For instance, 115 alcohol users (Table 3) mean that the average viewer encounters about 29 different alcohol drinkers every week. Similarly, six illicit drug users translates to the average viewer's encounter with more than 1 character (1.5) who uses drugs during a week of viewing. Considering the size of TV audience, the level of exposure to stories about ATOD on TV is far greater than from any other source.

Prime Time television tells the society that only a small proportion of ATOD users are likely to be "addicted" (3.4% of tobacco users, 2.6% of alcohol users, and none of the six illicit drug users, in our sample.)

On the whole, ATOD use is presented as a matter of little consequence for the user. Table 3 shows that about 80% of smokers experience no ill effects. Alcohol users are not only free of any health problems, but their substance use benefits them socially (less than one percent of them suffer negative health effects, but 10% have positive social gain from drinking.)

Fate

A fourth of all ATOD users commit violence. This is about twice higher than the proportion of violent acts among characters who do not use ATOD. They are not, however, victimized at the same rate. All categories of ATOD users, except prescription and OTC drug users, appear to get away with violence more than the total TV population. For every 10 drinker, smoker, or illicit drug user who commits violence, there are 10 who suffers. For every 10 violent non-users, however, there are about 14 who are victimized. Prescription and OTC drug users pay about twice more than other ATOD users for their violence (Table 4).

Similarly, ATOD users in general are less likely to be portrayed as villains than the total population of characters (Table 5). Smokers, however, constitute an exception to this pattern. They are more likely to be cast as villains than the rest of the TV world.

Scenes

An ATOD scene is defined by the visual presence or mentioning of tobacco, alcohol and other illicit or licit drugs. A scene starts when the substance

appears or is mentioned, and ends when it is no longer mentioned or shown. The same scene may include several different substances.

Typical viewer (watching one channel at a time) is presented with an "alcohol scene" an average of every 23 minutes. Tobacco is made available every 54 minutes, followed by illicit drugs every 77 minutes. On the whole, an ATOD is presented an average of every 12.5 minutes.

The frequency of occurrence is inversely proportional to the significance of the substance in the scene (Table 6). Alcohol is the most "casual" ATOD, followed by smoking. They are more often than not presented in passing, without any significance to the story line. In contrast, illicit drugs (and to some extent prescribed and over the counter drugs) are marked as more essential to the narrative.

The substances that are more "casual," alcohol and tobacco, are also visually depicted (rather than merely "mentioned") in over a third of the instances where they are present in a scene (Table 6). When these casual substances are visually present in the scene, they are also highly likely to be consumed.

Illicit drugs in prime-time have a significant narrative function in the story, but they are visually presented in only 14.6% of the cases, and never shown as being actually used by a character - however, a fifth of the illicit drug scenes showed the character(s) as "intoxicated."

Trade of illicit drugs is involved in 26 (54%) of the illicit drug scenes. Four of these scenes are also linked with violence.

In 4 of the 6 scenes where prescription and OTC drugs are related with violence, drugs appear after violence rather than before.

TABLE 1: SUMMARY OF ATOD/ATID IN PRIME TIME DRAMATIC PROGRAMS
SPRING 1995

| PROGRAMS | | | |
|---|-------|-------|--------------|
| TOTAL number of programs in prime time: | 80 | 100% | (61.5 hours) |
| ATOD coded as "significant" or "major" focus: | 9 | 11% | |
| Number of programs that contain ATOD SCENES: | 57 | 71% | |
| Average number of ATOD scenes per program: | 3.7 | | |
| Number of ATOD Scenes Per Hour: | 4.8 | | |
| CHARACTERS | | | |
| TOTAL number of characters (Major & Minor) | 1,393 | 100% | |
| Number of ATOD using characters | 156 | 11.1% | |

TABLE 2: SUMMARY OF ATOD/ATID IN PRIME TIME DRAMATIC PROGRAMS
BREAKDOWN BY GENRE, BY NETWORK, SPRING 1995

| | AVERAGE NUMBER OF ATOD SCENES | NUMBER OF PROGRAMS |
|--------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| TOTAL | 3.7 | 80 |
| feature film | 9.0 | 2 |
| TV movie | 5.4 | 5 |
| TV Drama | 5.3 | 25 |
| cartoon | 5.0 | 7 |
| sitcom | 2.0 | 41 |
| CBS | 4.4 | 11 |
| FOX | 4.4 | 28 |
| ABC | 3.5 | 21 |
| NBC | 2.6 | 20 |

TABLE 3: PATTERNS OF SUBSTANCE USE AND THEIR CONSEQUENCES
PRIME TIME, ALL CHARACTERS

| CONSEQUENCE" SUBSTANCE | N | PATTERN OF USE | | POSITIVE OR "NO WHEN CHARACTER USES | |
|---------------------------|--------------|----------------|--------------|--|------------------|
| | | "REGULAR"* | ADDICT | HEALTH | PERSONAL |
| TOTAL | 1,393 | | | | |
| TOBACCO | 33 2.4%** | 13 44.8% | 1 3.4%*** | 24 79.1%***** | 20 87.0%***** |
| ALCOHOL | 115 8.2% | 17 14.9% | 3 2.6% | 110 92.7% | 101 91.2% |
| ILLICIT | 6 0.4% | 4 66.6% | 0 | 1 33.3% | 1 33.3% |
| PRESC. & OTC | 17 1.1% | 8 47.1% | 2 11.8% | 14 77.8% | 15 93.8% |
| ANY ATOD | 156 11.1% | 41 27.2% | 6 0.4% | 134 86.5% | 137 88.4% |

- * A "regular" user is a user shown to use the substance "repeatedly."
- ** Percentage of all characters (N=1,393).
- *** Percentage of total N of users in the first column
- **** Percentage of characters who use the substance in question and, in the case of users of more than one type of substance, identified by the coder as the "most important" as far as health or personal/social consequences are concerned.

TABLE 6: DISTRIBUTION OF ATOD SCENES
PRIME TIME

| | | TOBACCO | ALCOHOL | ILLICIT | PRESCR.& OTC |
|------------------------------------|---|---------|---------|---------|--------------|
| Substance is Present* | N | 68 | 163 | 48 | 42 |
| | % | 23.1 | 55.3 | 16.3 | 14.2 |
| WHEN THE SUBSTANCE IS PRESENT:** | | | | | |
| Substance is Significant in scene | | 39.7 | 28.2 | 72.9 | 47.6 |
| Substance is Mentioned only | | 17.6 | 23.9 | 85.4 | 61.9 |
| Shown | | 82.4 | 76.1 | 14.6 | 38.1 |
| Substance consumed in scene | | 78.0 | 56.5 | 0.0 | 60.0 |
| Intoxication evident or mentioned | | 4.4 | 16.0 | 20.8 | 9.5 |
| Co-occurrence of violence with use | | 0.0 | 2.4 | 12.5 | 14.3 |
| Use preceding violence | | 0.0 | 0.7 | 1.7 | 0.0 |

* Percentages are of the total (295) ATOD scenes.

** All percentages under this line are of the total number for each substance, as presented at the top of each column, except for the item about "consumption versus holding," where the percentages are of those scenes that actually "show" the substance rather than just "mention."